

MIGRATION POLICY GROUP AND RUNNYMEDE TRUST JOINT PRESS RELEASE

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NEW LANGUAGE TESTS COULD THREATEN UK'S PROGRESS ON INTEGRATING MIGRANTS

The UK has become more effective at integrating new migrants, but new language tests could threaten this progress, a new study has shown.

The study, published today by the Migration Policy Group, shows that the UK government's decision to remove the burdensome "Earned Citizenship" path has improved the UK's standing in the "MIPEx" international ranking for effective integration policies. However, current proposals would make it harder for non-EU migrants to learn English, which is crucial in encouraging participation in local communities and employment.

Ranked 9th for its integration policies out of 33 countries, the UK guarantees better opportunities for migrants to integrate than most European countries, but still trails behind Canada (3rd) and Australia (5th), largely due to these countries' strong support for all residents to successfully learn English and their programmes on family reunion.

In particular, cuts to English classes means it is harder to learn English in the UK, and language requirements for family reunion and citizenship will be higher than all other English-speaking countries.

In addition, the new UK condition that applicant non-EU spouses must first speak the language before entering the country is totally absent from English-speaking countries like Australia, Canada and the US, and very rare in Europe.

As a contrast, Australia and Canada invest in migrant's abilities to participate in society by providing free language classes once they arrive, and support for immigrant organisations in local communities.

"The approach of combining demanding requirements with poor support may work more as an obstacle to learning English than as the incentive that has made integration work more effectively in Australia and Canada," said the author of the study, Thomas Huddleston.

Rob Berkeley of the Runnymede Trust, the UK partner organisation for the project said: *"Learning English is recognised as a crucial part of the route to integration. The UK government should ensure that there are opportunities for immigrants to learn English rather than making short term cuts which will lead to exclusion for migrants and their families in the longer term".*

Commenting, Cedric Manen, Chair of the Settlement Council of Australia (SCOA), said:

"The UK can take lessons from Australia where they provide free English classes and additional support through settlement programs, particularly to those who are vulnerable. The settlement process has been strengthened through renewed focus on multicultural policy at a time when European counterparts took a more conservative stance on multiculturalism."

Notes to Editors

1. For press queries and to arrange an interview with the author Thomas Huddleston, please contact Emilie White, Communications Officer at MPG on +32 (0)2 234 50 47 or email ewhite@migpolgroup.com
2. The full report is available here: www.mipex.eu/blog
3. The Migration Policy Group is an independent non-profit European think-tank committed to contributing to lasting and positive change resulting in open and inclusive societies (www.migpolgroup.org).
4. The Runnymede Trust is a social policy research organisation focused on race equality and race relations. It works By identifying barriers to race equality and good race relations; enabling effective action for social change; influencing policy at all levels through providing thought leadership and robust evidence
Further information is available on the Runnymede website: www.runnymedetrust.org
5. **Information on the study:**
The study, entitled "Promoting integration through English & multiculturalism: Australia & Canada compared to the UK", used data from the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) which is a reference guide and fully interactive tool to assess, compare and improve integration policy. Using 148 policy indicators the MIPEX creates a multi-dimensional picture of migrants' opportunities to participate in society by assessing governments' commitment to integration (More information on MIPEX below)
6. The Migration Policy Group (MPG) has used the MIPEX tool to update the data for the UK and compare it with new results from an MPG-led MIPEX assessment of Australia. The Runnymede Trust is the UK national partner for the project. The Australian partners are Monash University and the Settlement Council of Australia.

7. About the Migrant Integration Policy Index III (MIPEX III):

- The MIPEX III compared and ranked 31 countries' scores across 148 policy indicators. It provided objective and comparable data presented in a reference guide and an interactive online tool to help policymakers, civil society advocates and researchers assess, compare and improve integration. Countries included in the MIPEX III study: all 27 EU member states, Norway, Switzerland, Canada and the USA. The MIPEX tool now includes two new countries: Japan and Australia, with a research cut-off date of September 2010, containing information comparable to the MIPEXIII cut-off date of May 2010.
- The MIPEX III project concluded in June 2011 and contains data from the research cut-off date of May 2010. The tool was developed for continuous data collection and assessment.
- The MIPEX III was co-financed by the European Community under the European Integration Fund. The British Council project managed the initiative with the lead research partner, the Migration Policy Group. Over 37 national-level partners contributed to the Index study.
- The first edition of MIPEX was published in 2004 and the second edition in 2007, leading to its use by governments, press, civil society organisations. See www.mipex.eu for more information.
- The MIPEX is not used to study migration; it is about integration of legal migrants. It does not look at increasing or decreasing influxes of migrants but instead considers whether immigrants have the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities as nationals.
- The responsibility of ideas or opinions expressed in the Index lies with the Migration Policy Group.
- All research partners are scholars and experts on their countries' integration policies, independent from government.