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Political Representation of Immigrant Minorities in Europe: A Qualitative Comparative Analysis of Opportunities and Constraints

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[The Representation of Citizens of Immigrant Origin in Established Democracies](#)

Abstract

The presence of immigrant minorities in decision making bodies, namely their descriptive representation, has been a core step on the way towards political incorporation. Increasing numbers of representatives with migratory backgrounds provide reasons for optimistic accounts. However, systematic comparisons on underlying factors that construct favorable atmospheres for 'minority representatives' are

less than conclusive. This study endeavors to investigate under what combinations of conditions 'descriptive representation' of immigrant minorities is strongest. In pursuit of this aim, this paper analyzes a wide range of factors ranging from institutional structures to culture, attitudes and international relations, i.e. electoral rules, party systems, party selection procedures, citizenship regimes (legal and cultural), presence/absence of anti-immigrant parties, attitude towards minorities, (lack of) dominance of the Muslim identity among immigrant minorities, and historical relationships between sending and receiving countries.

The study benefits from the recent developments in qualitative comparative analysis in its aim to identify multiple combinations giving way toward or hindering a stronger presence of immigrant minorities in parliamentary institutions. Purely statistical approaches and single case studies either analyzed the impacts of different variables without in-depth analysis of the particular characteristics or delivered thick explanations of very few cases. Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), a medium – N technique, can combine the advantages of large N studies offering systematic comparisons and small – N studies providing detailed explanations. The study focuses on the West – European countries where intensive debates on the political representation of immigrant minorities have taken place in recent years. The EU- 15 countries, the 15 member states of the European Union before the enlargement in 1 May 2004, are covered providing a comparable data set of population characteristics.

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