Questioning the Evidence on the Integration of Immigrants in Europe

An array of data types are used to support different narratives about the integration or non-integration of European populations, including data related to educational and professional outcomes, marriage and domestic life, participation in civil society, religious observance, criminal or terrorist behavior, and national allegiance.

This Matrix Theme Team is exploring how these various types of data are used to support (or challenge) the integration of various immigrant populations and their descendants in Europe. Their work is closely aligned with the Matrix theme, "Questioning the Evidence," as it highlights the nature and usage of different types of information around important social issues.

This topic is particularly urgent as Europe faces an ongoing and unprecedented influx of migrants from the Syrian Civil War. "There is increasing pressure to evaluate Europe's capacity to integrate immigrants," the researchers explained in their proposal. "Politicians use data to make decisions—but

in many cases that data is very questionable. Where does the data come from, who do we interview, what types of questions do you ask, what do you look at when you collect data regarding integration—and what do you define as integration in the first place? Those are important questions."
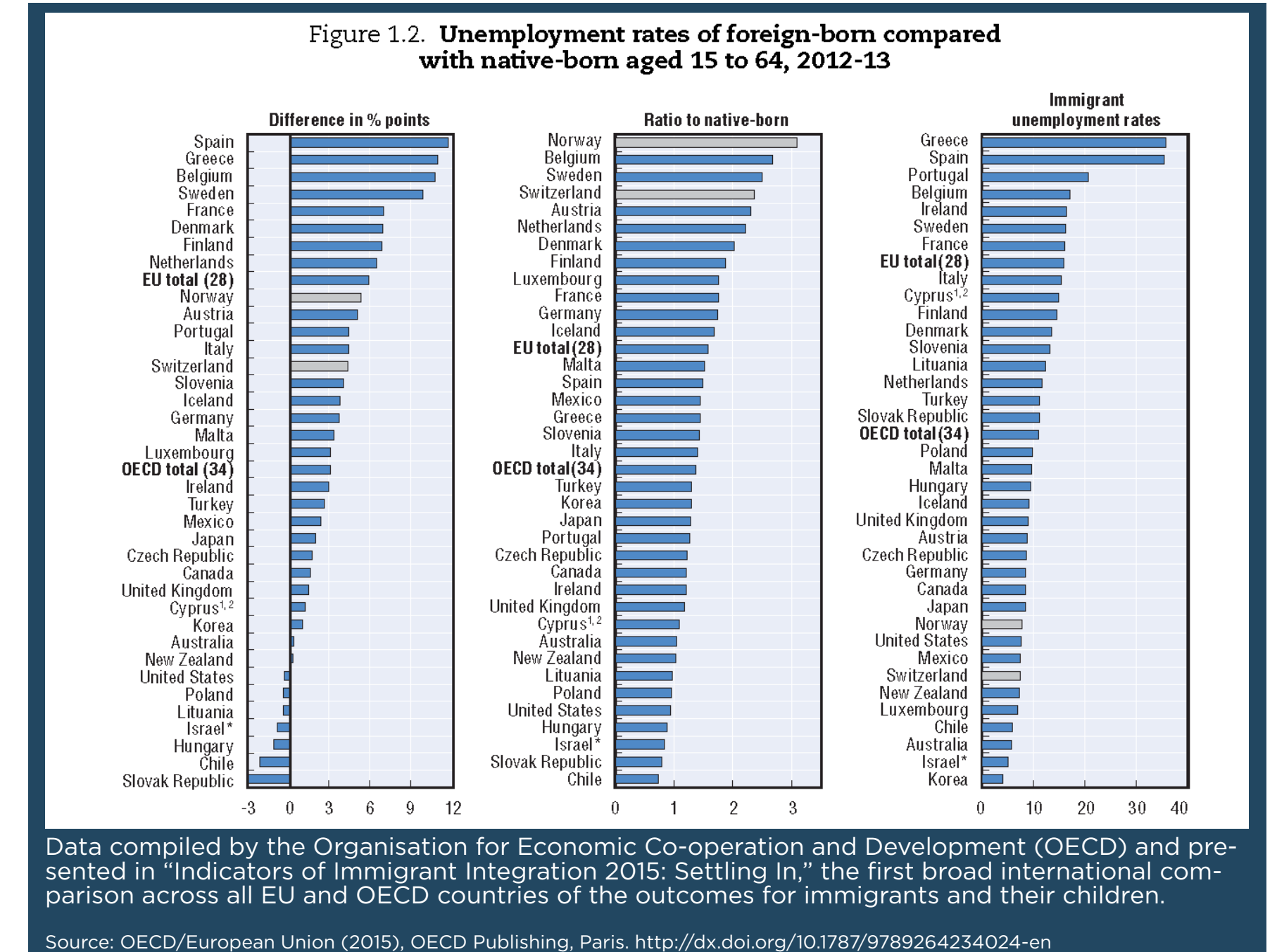
The Theme Team is composed of an interdisciplinary group of scholars—led by Jeroen Dewulf, faculty member in the Department of German and Director of Berkeley's Institute of European Studies, and Elena Kempf, PhD candidate in the Department of History—who are building on the dialogue and academic community they established through "A Polarizing Europe," a previous Matrix Research Team that examined diverse challenges that have led to political and social polarization across Europe in recent years.

"In the course of our past discussions," they explained, "we realized that the intricate phenomena of immigration and integration figured centrally in all of these questions, and in fact tied them together.... Data is powerful. It allows actors in politics, laws, academia, media, popular culture and the arts to make arguments about who is or is not integrated, what a given country—or Europe as a whole—is or is not, and what should or should not be done."
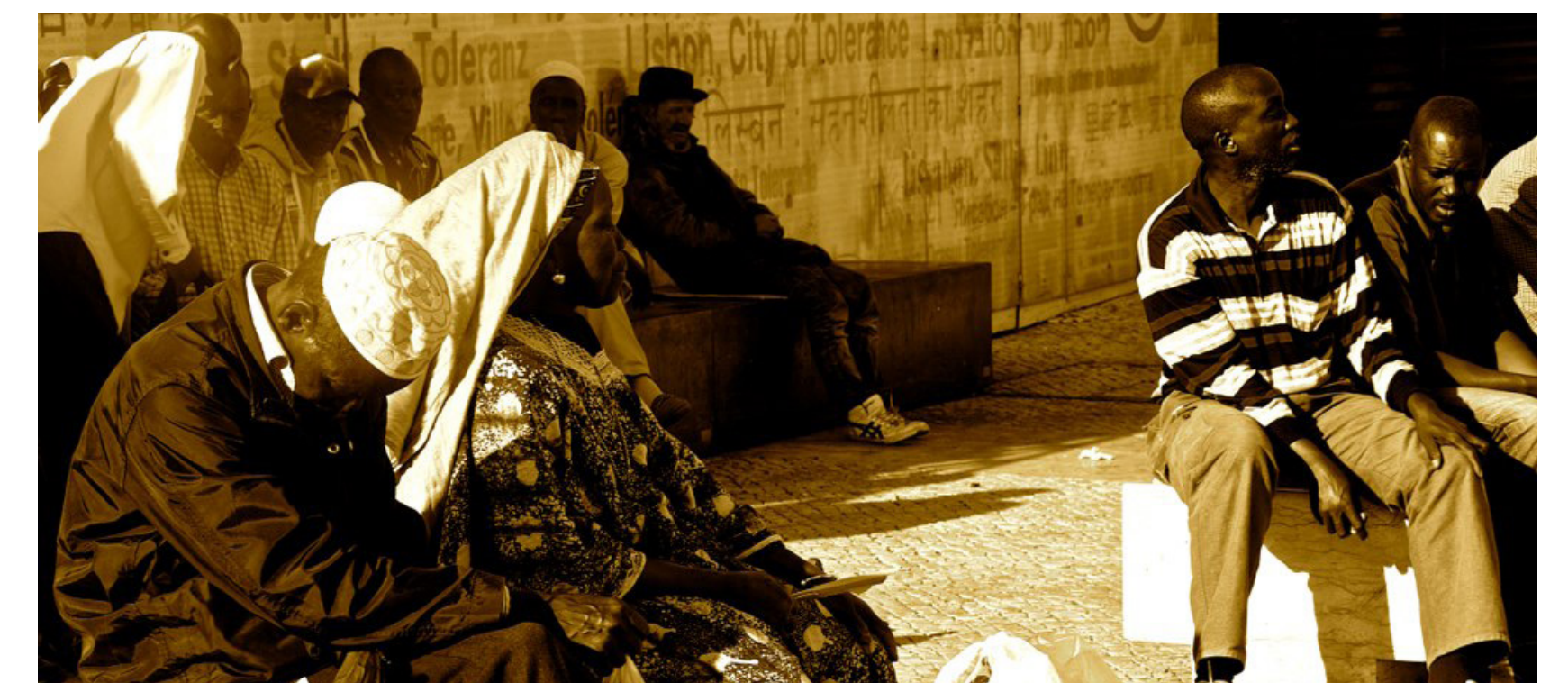
The team's members are exploring opportunities for continuing this work in the future, including developing a new

Figure 1.2. **Unemployment rates of foreign-born compared with native-born aged 15 to 64, 2012-13**

Data compiled by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and presented in "Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015: Settling In," the first broad international comparison across all EU and OECD countries of the outcomes for immigrants and their children.

Source: OECD/European Union (2015), OECD Publishing, Paris. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264234024-en

course focused on immigration and refugee integration. But they also are interested in bridging their work directly to civic institutions that make decisions about immigration on a daily basis. "We want to make sure," they explained, "that the research team serves as a pathway to bring together policy-makers and scholars, and creates a platform whereby both can learn from each other."

RESEARCH GOALS

- Analyze the different stories told about the integration of immigrants and their descendants in Europe.
- Examine how data is gathered, analyzed, and presented to make certain arguments about the recent history of immigration in Europe.
- Investigate the source and collection method of the relevant data, the way it is depicted, and the effect that it has on its intended audience in their perception of immigration and integration.

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