MIGRATION
LETTERS

Editorial:
Special issue on protecting and including 'new' and 'old' minorities

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Questions concerning the rights of minorities and the preservation of social cohesion in ethnically diverse societies are among the most salient on the political agenda of many States. The growing diversity of national communities has generated pressures for States to create and adopt new models to accommodate diversity.

Migration is becoming an increasingly important reality for many sub-national autonomous territories where traditional-historical groups (the so-called 'old minorities') live, such as Catalonia, South Tyrol, Scotland, Flanders, the Basque Country, and Quebec. Some of these territories have attracted migrants for decades, while others have only recently experienced significant migration inflows. The presence of old minorities makes the management of migration issues more complex. Indeed, it is acknowledged that the relationship between 'old' communities and the 'new' minority groups originating from migration (the so-called 'new minorities') can be rather complicated. On the one hand, the interests and needs of historical groups can be opposite to those of the migrant population. On the other hand, the presence of new minorities can interfere with the relationship between the old minorities and the majority groups at the State level and also with the relationship between old minorities and the central State, as well as with the policies enacted to protect the diversity of traditional groups and the way old minorities understand and define themselves.

Generally, claims of migrants and historical minorities have been perceived as challenges to the traditional model of homogeneous 'nation-states' and thus

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often seen as allies *vis à vis* the capitals of nation-states. Often, both groups seek to increase the opportunities for individuals to express their identities and diversities, and so they share a commitment to principles of pluralism and the recognition of difference.

In the eyes of a nation-state's majority, old and new minorities are perceived often as a threat on various grounds. Historical minorities and individuals with migration background are thought of as 'foreigners' in the country of residence despite the fact that they possess the citizenship of this country. Old and new minorities are seen as loyal to a specific religion or a traditional culture, a kin-state or the country they come from, unless they are absorbed by the country of residence through forms of assimilation.

As a matter of fact, the relation between the two groups is more complicated and, historically, it is marked by tension. Large-scale immigration has typically been seen as a threat to historical minorities because immigrants have often shown a tendency to integrate into the dominant culture, which usually offers greater mobility and economic opportunities. When migrants settle in the territories traditionally inhabited by historical minorities and they integrate into the group – dominant at the state-level – sometimes encouraged by States, then the national minority risks being increasingly outnumbered and powerless in the political life.

This special issue focuses on old and new minorities that share cultural, linguistic, or religious backgrounds. By comparing analogies and differences in terms of language protection, religious rights, and other safeguards that exist for these communities, potential synergies that facilitate enhanced protection and inclusion might emerge. Three case-studies will be presented: the Albanian migrants and the historical Arbëreshë minority in Italy (*Old and New Minorities: The Case of the Arbëreshë Communities and the Albanian Immigrants in Southern Italy* by Antonella Liuzzi), the officially recognized minority groups and their co-ethnic migrants in Hungary (*With or without you: Integrating Migrants into the Minority Protection Regime in Hungary* by Balázs Dobos), and finally the Roma from Eastern Europe and the Gitanos in Spain (*"Roma" migration in the EU: the case of Spain between 'new' and 'old' minorities* by Tina Magazzini and Stefano Piemontese). The three case-studies will be introduced by four theoretical papers on old and new minorities that will serve as a framework to understand the interrelationship between these groups (*Changing Paradigms in the Traditional Dichotomy of Old and New Minorities: A Legal Perspective* by Roberta Medda-Windischer; *'Old' vs. 'New' Minorities – An Identity-Based Approach to the Distinction Between Autochthonous and Immigrant Minorities* by Katharina Crepaz; *"Old" Natives and "New" Immigrants: Beyond Space-Time as Kymlicka's Criteria for Granting Group-Rights* by Darian Heim; and *Learning by sharing: what old minorities can teach new ones in Italy* by Roberta Ricucci).

The aim of this special issue is to analyse whether it is possible to bring together the claims of historical minorities and of new groups originating from migration, and whether policies that accommodate traditional minorities and

migrants are allies in the pursuit of a pluralist and tolerant society. Studying the interactions and complementarities of these two minority groups is regarded as an important task for future research in Europe where many States have established systems of rights for "old" minority groups, but have not yet developed sound policies for the integration of new minority groups originating from immigration, and where the two topics are generally discussed in isolation from each other.