



Integration of third-country migrants

Background paper



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EU strategy for integrating migrants

In its Communication on ‘Migration and development’, the European Commission has proposed to the Member States a strategy for integrating migrants from third countries (European Commission, 2005). This strategy rejects any approach based on the extremes of complete assimilation or of permissive multiculturalism. Assimilation would put the responsibility for integration wholly on to the migrants themselves, requiring them to adjust completely and swiftly to the economic, social, cultural and societal requirements of the receiving society. Permissive multiculturalism, by contrast, would put the onus on the receiving society to accept without qualification migrants’ social and cultural differences. The receiving society would bear the responsibility for improving migrants’ economic and social status, without any corresponding obligation upon migrants to integrate.

With the experience gained from its work on the integration of migrants, the Foundation supports the general direction of the Commission’s integration strategy for third-country migrants. Integration should be a two-way process, balancing the rights and obligations of both migrants and the receiving society; it should allow some degree of cultural diversity. The receiving society should promote equal opportunities and non-discrimination for migrants in all key life domains, such as employment, education and housing. In return, incoming migrants should respect the fundamental values of the European Union and acquire a basic knowledge of the host society’s language, history and institutions.

Integration should be seen as a reciprocal process of adaptation over time between the individual migrant and the receiving society. This process comprises four interrelated elements:

1. structural integration into employment, education and housing;
2. socialisation through the acquisition of knowledge, cultural standards and competencies;
3. social integration through social interaction and the formation of networks and social relations between the host society and the migrant;
4. identification of the migrant with the host society – this can have intellectual and emotional dimensions.

Certainly, at least as far as the first three elements are concerned, the process must operate in both directions. The receiving society has to provide opportunities for structural integration, which migrants – in turn – must accept and make use of. Migrants have to be willing to acquire a basic knowledge of the host society; the host society must enable migrants to do so by providing them with the appropriate means and infrastructure. Social integration is by its very nature a two-way process, which requires the active involvement of migrants and members of the host society.

The integration of migrants raises the challenge of managing change (OECD, 2006). Effective integration requires that migrants be helped to manage the rapid changes that are happening in their lives; at the same time, integration must ensure that the receiving society itself evolves and responds positively to changes in its population and local fabric. National and local policymakers need to manage the consequences of structural change, whereas migrants ‘need clear road maps to guide them between the various services which will support their transition into a new life’ (OECD, 2006, p. 15).

Principles of successful integration

The broad direction required for a successful strategy of integration has been outlined; this can be broken down further into principles of successful integration for each of the key domains of living and working conditions.

Successful economic integration requires that:

- migrants contribute to the gross domestic product (GDP) and the social security systems of the host country;
- migrants receive an income sufficient to keep them and their families above the poverty line.

In terms of labour-market integration, the following goals should inform policymaking:

- high employment rates, and low unemployment rates, for migrants;
- retention of migrant workers in employment;
- putting migrant workers' human capital to good use;
- the integration of migrant workers into high-quality employment;
- the provision of equal rights and opportunities for migrant workers in the labour market (to include non-discriminatory employment practices and parity of working conditions).

The successful social integration of migrants requires:

- that migrants be willing to integrate, and do so in practice, in all four elements of the integration process;
- the provision of equal opportunities and the avoidance of any discriminatory practices on the part of the host society;
- establishing a reciprocal relationship of rights and obligations between both sides.

Societal integration can be said to have succeeded when:

- a high degree of sustainable social cohesion exists in society;
- political and social unrest are absent;
- a low level of xenophobia, in terms of attitudes or behaviour, exists in the receiving society.

Given the differences both between and within EU Member States in terms of migration policies and practices, there is a need for an open and organised public dialogue in European societies on the strategic direction and principles of a successful integration policy.

Often, when integration policies fail, this gives way to a flagrant disregard for the human and social rights of migrants. Such failure may also adversely affect the receiving society: it may be perceived as xenophobic and therefore unattractive or even dangerous for potentially valuable economic migrants. This may, in turn, reduce Europe's chances of successfully competing for the 'best brains in the world'.

Based on these principles, it is recommended that indicators for the successful integration of migrants be developed at the European level, and that developments on the ground be monitored at the level of the Member State.

It should be stressed that the successful integration of migrants is a demanding process, which requires an holistic policy approach. Such an holistic approach has four main aspects:

- the relationship between economically-orientated immigration policies and integration policies;
- the vertical relationship between the EU, Member States and the local level;
- the horizontal exchange of knowledge and experience of migration policies between the Member States and between local actors;
- a partnership approach involving all relevant parties in the governance of integration policies at the European, national and local levels.

Economic migration and integration

The four forms of integration outlined above – economic, labour market, social and societal – are strongly interrelated and interdependent. Consequently, any policy concerning the economic immigration of third-country migrants should be accompanied by parallel policies of social and societal integration.

Europe should learn from the mistakes made by some Member States which in previous years introduced ‘guest-worker’ programmes. These programmes attracted foreign workers and were based on the assumption that migrants would automatically return after some years to their countries of origin. Experience, however, has shown that many economic migrants stay for a longer time than originally foreseen. Some migrants will bring their families over after a number of years and many will stay for good, applying for permanent residence status in the receiving societies. A feature of the previous guest-worker programmes was that the receiving societies did not engage in serious efforts or investment to facilitate the societal integration of migrants and their children. As a consequence, some Member States are now experiencing spatial and social segregation between migrants and the host society, the development of parallel societies, and other social and economic costs of failed integration.

Importance of quality of employment

Labour market integration involves more than just access to jobs: it also concerns the ‘quality of entry’ into the labour market. The positions that migrants occupy when they enter a national labour market should reflect their qualifications, skills level and experience. Responsibility for this should lie with employers, the public employment services and local authorities. However, it is also the responsibility of migrants themselves to provide potential employers with the best possible, and the most up-to-date, information. In many labour markets, the point of entry determines to a large extent the long-term career trajectory of a migrant worker.

If it happens that a migrant worker enters the labour market at a lower level, this can have serious consequences for all parties: migrants can suffer the loss of lifelong income and career prospects, employers under-utilise the human capital available to them, and the wider economy also suffers a loss of income and wealth.

A recent comparative report from the Foundation shows other serious deficits in terms of migrants’ working and employment conditions (Ambrosini and Barone, 2007). Based on national contributions from the network of the

¹ A Canadian study from 2001 indicates an annual loss to the Canadian economy of between CAD 3.5 billion and CAD 5 billion, a result of the suboptimal use of the human capital of the migrant workforce.

European Working Conditions Observatory (EWCO), 11 of the national experts drew attention to the fact that being over-qualified was a greater problem for migrant workers than for non-migrants. For instance, 17% of all non-migrant workers in Austria are over-qualified for their current job. However, the proportion rises to 38% among migrant workers (those who are either born abroad or do not have Austrian citizenship). It is also the case that a higher proportion of migrant workers were employed in low-paid work in nearly all countries – the Netherlands being an exception with little difference between migrants and non-migrants.

Migrant workers are also more likely to be working on temporary employment contracts than are nationals of a country. This may be due to:

- government policies that issue work permits of limited duration (as in Belgium, Cyprus, Hungary, Luxembourg and Slovenia);
- the high incidence of seasonal work among migrant workers, especially in agriculture (for example, in Austria and Italy);
- the fact that temporary agencies play a particularly important role in recruiting migrant worker recruiters (as in the UK and Sweden).

It is not clear to what extent these non-standard jobs represent ‘traps’, in which work becomes increasingly precarious, or ‘windows’ of opportunity leading to future stable employment. Nonetheless, the fact is that temporary jobs offer – by definition – lower levels of occupational security. They are also associated with other negative dimensions of quality of work, such as reduced access to training. (It should be noted, however, that data on the training and career advancement opportunities open to migrant workers are lacking in most countries.)

The Foundation’s report notes that ‘this deficiency is particularly problematic considering that, in the few cases where information is available, it points to a situation of strong disadvantage for migrant workers’ (see Table 1).

Table 1: *Factors hindering labour market opportunities for migrant workers*

Country	Factors mentioned in national reports
AT	Fewer opportunities for training; language barriers
BE	Limited access to the public sector; ethnic prejudices
CY	Language and legal barriers
CZ	Discrimination by colleagues
DE	Educational qualifications
DK	Educational qualifications
EE	Limited access to the public sector and to managerial positions
ES	Discrimination by employers; bureaucratic barriers to full labour-market integration
FI	Ethnic prejudices; educational qualifications; language barriers
FR	Educational qualifications and discrimination related to ethnic prejudices
NL	Ethnic prejudices
LT	Language barriers
LU	Ethnic prejudices
MT	Language barriers; ethnic prejudices
SE	Fewer opportunities for training; discrimination by employers
SI	Educational qualifications

Source: *National contributions of EWCO correspondents, Ambrosini and Barone, 2007*

It is possible to identify a number of solutions to the issues identified in Table 1. First, employers could structure the work biographies of migrants in a more flexible way by providing second and third chances for the migrant worker to redirect their career path within a company. This can be done, for example, by putting in place regular assessments after a certain length of job tenure; another approach is the provision of in-house training for migrants. If migrants are to find good quality employment, their previous qualifications must be recognised. Furthermore, they should be assured of equal and non-discriminatory access to the higher segment of the labour market. In order to ensure this, third-country migrants should have equal labour market and social rights as those of EU citizens. Companies can support migrants by establishing systems for formally recognising their qualifications.

Secondly, companies should provide equal opportunities for migrant workers in all dimensions of the employment relationship: equal access to permanent employment contracts, training and promotion, equal pay and conditions, good health and safety provisions, protection against racism and harassment at the workplace. Companies should also accommodate migrants' cultural and religious requirements.

Thirdly, local authorities can become a positive role model for the private sector: in their personnel policy, they can strive to achieve an adequate representation of migrants or persons from ethnic minorities in local authority employment, and in those public enterprises that the local authority owns or controls.

Role of EU in integration policies

Integration of migrants happens at the local level. Local authorities in the EU are both implementing national integration policies and in many cases are also centres of innovation in terms of policy and practice. A core element of integration policy is to provide effective local solutions to the global challenge of large worldwide migration streams.

Many European cities, in particular those with strong economies, have for decades experienced substantial immigration, which has often substantially changed the composition of the local population. This has led to the challenge for cities of integrating a heterogeneous and culturally diverse population into the local community. Many cities and municipalities have extensive experience in this field and often became centres of competence in developing and implementing strategies for integration. Furthermore, it is they that must deal with the consequences of failed or failing integration processes. For this reason, cities and municipalities have a genuine interest in successful local integration practices: successful integration means that they can avoid costs and can mobilise the potential of their immigrant populations.

Given the importance of the local policy arena, the EU should systematically support the horizontal and vertical exchange of local authorities' knowledge and experience – a horizontal transfer of 'good practice' and successful policies between cities, and a vertical exchange of knowledge between the European, national and local levels.

Effective knowledge transfer between cities

The EU should support the development of networks between cities, which facilitate an effective and efficient learning process and the transfer of experience. In 2006, the Foundation – together with the Council of Europe – began building a network of around 30 European cities, which share their experiences in a structured and targeted way. The process of building this network of cities for local integration policies (CLIP) will continue until 2009.

Based on the experience with the CLIP network, it is suggested that any European programme in this area take into account the following recommendations:

- make systematic use of the experience of local administrators and policy makers, treating them as experts in their own right;
- provide high-quality scientific support to the network of cities, using research centres of proven excellence that have experience of working in a comparative and policy-orientated manner;
- establish effective cooperation between researchers and local practitioners and maximise synergies between both groups;
- create a relationship of trust between the network of cities, and between cities and researchers;
- provide arenas of moderated exchange of experience;
- facilitate a partnership-based approach at the local level, by involving all relevant parties (such as migrants' organisations, NGOs, employers, unions and churches);
- systematically combine networks of partnership within cities with a network structure operating between cities;
- as tangible outputs, produce readable, policy-relevant recommendations for local policymakers;
- provide medium-term funding for at least three to four years in order to stabilise the network and to create trust;
- ask for input from, and partial coverage of the costs by, participating cities;
- achieve an adequate cost-benefit balance for the participating cities;
- evaluate the effects of the knowledge transfer;
- provide good quality network management, avoiding relying too much on the ability of participating cities to manage the network themselves.

In addition, the EU should encourage the European institutions and organisations that represent cities to engage more actively in establishing and managing effective city networks. Such organisations include the Committee of the Regions, Eurocities, Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in the Council of Europe.

More generally, the EU should reflect on how effective the exchange of experience may be outside structured networks (for instance, in fora such as one-off conferences, seminars and workshops). A feasibility study carried out by the Foundation raised some doubts regarding the effectiveness for joint learning of such fora.

The EU may also consider how best to disseminate information to other local authorities in Europe and incorporate their experiences in any recommendations. In this respect, regional and national seminars and conferences should be organised.

In terms of finance and programming, the European Commission and the Member States could consider using parts of the budget of the newly created European Fund for the Integration of Third-country Nationals to support the horizontal transfer of knowledge and experience between local authorities.

Improving information channels between local, national and European levels

The main stakeholders of integration policy in Europe operate on three different policy levels – the local, national and European level. (Regional authorities, to varying extents across Europe, may also play a role in integrating migrants.) A pre-condition for a successful integration policy is that these three levels work together effectively in exchanging knowledge and experience and in developing and implementing policy. In terms of the relationship between ‘Europe’ and the cities, European policymakers should know what is happening on the ground, while national and local policymakers should know what is going on in Europe as regards strategy and policy for integrating migrants.

The experience that the Foundation has gained in the CLIP network indicates that there is room for improvement at both European and local levels. At the local level, preliminary results based on CLIP research on the management of diversity in local authorities appear to indicate a lack of knowledge of European anti-discrimination legislation. There is also a lack of information on opportunities offered by European programmes and initiatives. CLIP tries to fill these gaps by providing information on EU legislation and activities; in addition, it provides a platform to create consortia between cities in order to apply for assistance to European programmes.

At the European level, a direct exchange of communication between the cities and European policymakers is limited by the small number of existing arenas for such exchange: the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Another impediment is the small number of organisations representing the interests of cities at the European level, and their limited resources: Eurocities, CEMR and the Congress in the Council of Europe. Another serious limitation lies in the lack of a systematic collation, analysis and comparison of concrete practices and policies of cities in Europe and the communication of these results to European policymakers. Here Eurocities, the Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and CEMR have provided some valuable insights in the past.² The CLIP network and the Council of Europe hope to provide tangible outputs in the near future on issues such as housing and segregation, personnel policy and service provision for migrants as part of diversity policy, intercultural dialogue with Muslims and ethnic entrepreneurship.

Another avenue for a better vertical exchange between European and local levels is the network of national contact points on integration policy organised by the European Commission. This network could provide an arena for reflecting on, and disseminating, innovative policies and measures by local authorities. In addition, the planned European Integration Forum will assemble key stakeholders to exchange experiences and draw up recommendations; a significant representation of local authorities and their concrete experience can be expected. Finally, it is suggested that the planned website of the Commission supporting the promotion of information on integration should also include reports on the relevant strategies and policies of local authorities, and the concrete measures that they have implemented.

Towards a partnership approach

The holistic and complex nature of the challenge of integrating migrants requires the participation of migrants and their organisations. It also requires cooperation and partnership with a range of local organisations such as NGOs and welfare organisations, churches, chambers of commerce, trade unions, landlords’ and tenants’ associations, schools and sports clubs.

² The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) was formerly the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC).

Based on its experience, the Foundation supports the suggestions made by the European Commission to encourage, at the EU level, the opening up of mainstream organisations to third-country migrants and the creation of organisations to represent the interests of migrants across the Union (European Commission, 2005, p. 10). One way to implement this would be to foster the creation of a platform of migrants' organisations at EU level.

At local level, the CLIP network encourages the hosting of regular round-table events, and meetings with external experts and representatives of civil society, with regard to issues of housing and integration. In addition, European integration policies should promote good community relations, participation and empowerment. Good community relations (in particular, intergroup relations) are an important factor in effective integration. The active participation and involvement of residents in local activities and projects contributes to good community relations. A critical factor is this mobilisation of local residents: strategies for empowerment aim at overcoming citizens' passivity and frustration by encouraging them to share responsibility.

However, the use of partnerships raise some fundamental issues which should be highlighted by European policies. Firstly, local authorities confronted with the challenge of integration must decide whether to deal with the issue by encouraging existing local mainstream organisations to look after it, or whether to create new institutions and partnerships (or whether to do both). The temptation exists for many local authorities to create new institutions instead of encouraging existing institutions to meet the challenge. For instance, organisations dealing with adult education or social housing issues could be encouraged to take into account the specific needs of migrants. According to the OECD, good examples of using existing organisations can be found in many cities around Europe (OECD 2006, p. 16).

However, if local authorities support only existing mainstream organisations, this can reduce the flexibility, quality and coverage of services. Such an approach may reduce the coverage of services as local mainstream organisations may not be able to reach certain groups of migrants. It may under-utilise the good will and the time resources of volunteers and may again result in a reduced quality or coverage of service. It may also threaten the existence of migrant organisations' 'one-stop shops', which provide a hands-on neighbourhood-based support system. It may also weaken the innovative potential of bottom-up approaches by migrant organisations, NGOs and churches. As a consequence, local authorities need to reflect and decide what to do on a case-by-case basis. Rather than deciding on one approach, or the other, what is required is to make the right choice and to consider a broader combination of existing actors and new actors, cooperating in local partnership.

Secondly, as far as the governance of successful local integration policies is concerned, many experts think that local partnerships are the only way forward; indeed, some regard local partnerships as a panacea. However, other analysts (such as the OECD and others), while supportive of local partnerships (for example, within territorial employment pacts as in Italy) are still somewhat sceptical of them. They see the establishment of an area-based partnership as not being a sufficient condition for good local policy coordination, pointing out three important issues:

- the different organisational and administrative cultures of the organisations involved;
- the need to manage these differences effectively;
- the need to strengthen the accountability of partnerships – between member organisations, between representatives and their organisations and between the partnership and the public.

Thirdly, a frequent challenge – for both the activities directly implemented by the local authority, and the activities of NGOs and migrant organisations funded by the local authority – is the lack of resources for local integration policy. Deciding on the allocation of public money is always a difficult process; however, structural underfunding leads ultimately to the 'burn-out' of local actors. Strict methods of performance management, which public authorities

increasingly use, may encourage short-term solutions in terms of a rapid integration of migrants into the labour market. However, they may not enable a migrant worker to enter the sort of ‘quality employment’ that accurately reflects their level of skill and experience.

Raising awareness of innovative approaches

The experience of the CLIP project, and of other international projects on local economic and employment development, indicates that European and national initiatives should aim to raise the awareness of local and national policymakers on innovative approaches to local governance in terms of integrating migrants. Awareness can be raised through a number of media – broad national campaigns, research programmes and seminars and workshops.

Any awareness campaign should focus on the following issues.

- **Adequate information and intelligence.** Local policy-makers should collect, and analyse, comprehensive and in-depth information regarding the number, structure and dynamics of migrants. In addition, they need accurate knowledge of the employment and living conditions of migrants, based on an indicator system and systematically monitored over time. Holistic and preventive integration policies must be based on adequate information and analysis.
- **Need for cross-departmental cooperation.** Given the complex nature of migration, the integration of migrants should be mainstreamed into all major local policy areas. Therefore, an integrated, cross-departmental approach is strongly recommended. Such an approach could result in regular internal working groups held between relevant departments of the local administration (such as housing, urban planning, social affairs and welfare, health, youth, integration and diversity, education, and law enforcement institutions). Such an approach might also result in integration policy being centrally coordinated in the local administration, in the department with the greatest competency in the area.
- **Support for preventive measures.** Central government initiatives should promote preventive measures – for example, in terms of segregation. Such initiatives should also support the development of early warning systems for social and spatial indicators.
- **Support for a culture of evaluation.** National policy should encourage and support the evaluation of integration measures in general, and the effects of specific local policies on the integration of migrants and minorities.
- **Support for anti-discrimination measures and monitoring.** National policy should provide support and criteria for the effective monitoring of discrimination, and should support the implementation of anti-discrimination measures.

Suggestions for housing policy

Decent and affordable housing is a fundamental human need and a prerequisite for a satisfactory quality of life, for both migrants and non-migrants. However, the housing situation of migrants differs from those of non-migrants: general migrants and ethnic minorities belong to the more vulnerable groups on the housing market. The following principles should be borne in mind by local policymakers regarding their housing and anti-segregation policies.

- Social housing cooperatives can assist migrants, under certain circumstances.
- Better access to the local housing market is needed; better information and discrimination monitoring can help achieve this.
- Affordable home ownership for migrants is possible, as indicated by a number of innovative practices cited by the CLIP network.

- Personal security must be improved in neighbourhoods with a high proportion of migrants; cities in the CLIP network can provide practical approaches to this challenge.
- Anti-segregation policy is important; again, the CLIP network provides examples of ways to create more integrated neighbourhoods.
- Community relations, participation and empowerment are all important ‘soft’ approaches to housing integration.

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