



What does the EU do on integration?

Elizabeth Collett, April 2008

Background

The European Union has focused on integration policies since 1999, when the Member States called for more dynamic policies to integrate third-country nationals (that is, migrants from countries outside of the EU) at a European Council meeting in Tampere, Finland. Five years later, Member State governments strengthened this call at a similar meeting in the Netherlands, and European work on integration began in earnest.

The European Union defines integration as “a two-way process based on mutual rights and corresponding obligations of legally resident third-country nationals and the host society which provides for full participation of the immigrant.”¹

The competence for dealing with integration policy is centered in the Directorate General (department) for Justice, Liberty, Security (DG JLS) of the European Commission, but the Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs (DG Empl) and the Directorate General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) also play a role in promoting the integration of migrants. However, the EU Commission does not have exclusive competence for integration policy, and relies upon direction from the 27 Member States, as it does for immigration policy.

DG JLS looks at the integration of first-generation migrants from outside the European Union, as part of the EU’s efforts to create a common legal immigration policy. DG Empl focuses more broadly on social inclusion and anti-discrimination, covering second- and third-generation migrants, as well as mobile EU nationals. Here, the inclusion of migrants into the labor market and society is seen as a key element of the ‘Lisbon Agenda’ to maintain Europe’s competitiveness in the world.

State of Play

The EU’s work in the area of integration can be broken down into three main strands:

1. Normative Framework

- The *Racial Equality and Employment Equality Directives* (2000) are designed to eliminate inequalities on a number of grounds, including gender, age, and race. However, both Directives exclude nationality as a ground for discrimination.
- The *Common Basic Principles on Integration* (2004) are intended to “underpin a coherent framework on integration of third-country nationals.”² These principles outline the priorities which any national integration policy should address, such as employment, education, access to services, as well as language and culture.

2. Framework for exchange of information and experience

- *National Contact Points on Integration* are designated government officials from each Member State. They meet several times a year and exchange information and best practices with the goal of improving policy coordination on integration within the EU.
- The *Handbook on Integration* – now in its second edition – is designed to support practitioners and is the focus of work for the National Contact Points. It identifies best practice and policy in particular thematic areas.

¹ European Commission. 2003. Communication on Immigration, Integration and Employment. COM(2003)336

² European Commission. 2005. Communication on A Common Agenda for Integration. COM(2005)389

- The *Annual Report on Migration and Integration* monitors policy developments on admission and integration of third-country nationals in the EU Member States, as well as new initiatives at the European level. The third report was published in late 2007.
- The *Integration Portal* is currently in development to be rolled out later in 2008. It is aimed at practitioners at all levels of civil society, and will collect and disseminate information on integration for stakeholders across Europe.
- The *European Integration Forum* is also at the discussion stage, but is intended to be the main mechanism for EU policymakers to consult with platform civil-society organizations on integration policy. It is expected to meet for the first time in October 2008.
- Migrant integration will be included as a focus for the *Open Method of Coordination on Social Protection and Inclusion Policies*. This process brings Member States together to better coordinate their policies on particular social issues through national reports.

3. Funding for integration projects

- The *Integration Fund (2007-13)* is focused on the integration of newly arrived third-country nationals, and forms one of four funds devoted to Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows. Most of the money will be channelled through national governments on the basis of multi-annual programs, but a small percentage will be available for European-wide integration projects, continuing the work of the INTI Fund (2003-2006).
- The *European Social Fund* is intended to prevent social exclusion, promote active inclusion on the labor market, and equal opportunities, amongst other things. As such, this funding can be directed towards the integration of migrants (including second- and third-generation migrants). This is the framework funding for a number of programs, including PROGRESS, below.
- *PROGRESS (2007-13)* is the new community program for employment and solidarity, which focuses on social inclusion and protection, as well as diversity and anti-discrimination.

Prospects

Integration continues to be dealt with by a number of DGs in the European Commission, with different targets and goals. Ensuring coherent policymaking remains a challenge. Vertically, the EU relies on Member States for core direction and support. The Lisbon Treaty will give the EU a stronger legal basis for initiating integration policies for legally resident third-country nationals, through Article 63a(4), as long as this does not involve the harmonization of national laws.³ It is due to come into effect in 2009.

To date, the EU has put in place a strong framework for discussing integration at the European level, and is now ready to focus on particular themes. In 2007, Member States set out a number of priorities for future discussion, under the heading *Unity in Diversity*.⁴ In their conclusions, the Council emphasized the need to involve all actors in the debate, including the host societies, the media, business, and civil society.

Beyond this, the National Contact Points were asked to focus on the following:

- the various conceptions of **participation, citizenship, and the naturalization systems** applied by Member States;
- the possibility of developing **common European modules on integration** such as the introduction of language courses, the involvement of the host society, and promoting the participation of immigrants in local life;
- measures that can be targeted at **the host society** in order to improve the public image of migration, and manage diversity in society;
- how integration programs may help prevent **radicalization**;
- the development of **common indicators and indexes** to assess integration policy outcomes.

³ Presidency of the IGC. 2007. Consolidated Draft Treaty Amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty Establishing the European Community. 5 October.

⁴ Council of the European Union. 2007. 2807th Justice and Home Affairs Council Conclusions. 12-13 June.