



European Economic and Social Committee

SOC/219
**Immigration in the EU and
integration policies: cooperation
between regional and local
governments and civil society
organisations**

Brussels, 13 September 2006

OPINION
of the
European Economic and Social Committee
on
**Immigration in the EU and integration policies: cooperation
between regional and local governments and civil society organisations**

On 14 July 2005 the European Economic and Social Committee, acting under Rule 29(2) of its Rules of Procedure, decided to draw up an own-initiative opinion on

Immigration in the EU and integration policies: cooperation between regional and local governments and civil society organisations.

The Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 13 July 2006. The rapporteur was Mr Pariza Castaños.

At its 429th plenary session, held on 13 and 14 September 2006 (meeting of 13 September), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 181 votes to 7 with 8 abstentions.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 In 2002, the EESC drew up an own-initiative opinion on *Immigration, integration and the role of civil society*¹ with the purpose of stimulating a political and social debate at Community level aimed at ensuring that integration policies are included as a basic component of common immigration and asylum policies.
- 1.2 One of the opinion's proposals was that the European Union should draw up a Community programme to promote the social integration of immigrants. The EESC believes that programmes need to be set up to promote the integration of new immigrants and of people arriving on the grounds of family reunification. The same also applies to refugees and asylum-seekers who, as well as having European status, are protected by international law.
- 1.3 The EESC held a conference for this same purpose on 9 and 10 September 2002, in cooperation with the Commission. It was attended by more than 200 representatives of the social partners and the most representative NGOs of the 25 Member States and of European networks. The aim of the conference was to involve civil society in promoting European integration policies.
- 1.4 The conclusions of the conference stated that "the social partners and civil society organisations have a key role to play in integration", and that "The European Union and its Member States should **foster the integration** of immigrants, minorities and refugees,

¹ OJ C 125 of 27.5.2002 (rapporteur: Mr Pariza Castaños; co-rapporteur: Mr Melícias).

particularly at regional and local level. A European programme to advance integration is needed"².

- 1.5 In 2003 the European Council set up the National Contact Points for integration, and instructed the Commission to present an annual report on migration and integration³. The Commission also drew up a *Communication on immigration, integration and employment*⁴ adopting a holistic approach to integration, which was endorsed by the EESC in its opinion at that time⁵. In November 2004 the Commission published a *Handbook on Integration for policy-makers and practitioners*⁶.
- 1.6 The Hague Programme, adopted by the European Council of 4 and 5 November 2004, underlines the need for greater coordination of national integration policies and EU initiatives in this field, and declares that EU policies should be based on common principles and clear means of evaluation.
- 1.7 A more developed policy and legislative environment for immigration policies is now in place. The present opinion represents a fresh contribution from the EESC, which focuses on the social and political players at regional and local level, since this is where challenges can most effectively be met and where policies can achieve the best results.
- 1.8 In conjunction with the drawing up of the opinion, the EESC held a hearing in Barcelona in order to exchange local and regional authorities best practice (a report on the hearing is in Appendix 2) and another in Dublin, in cooperation with the ILO and the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working conditions, to analyse best practice on integration and anti-discrimination measures at the workplace (Appendix 3 contains a report on the hearing).

2. **The Common Agenda for Integration**

- 2.1 On 1 September 2005, the Commission published a Communication on *A Common Agenda for Integration – Framework for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the European Union*⁷, which the EESC welcomes and supports, as it sets out to flesh out the proposal made by the Committee in the 2002 opinion and conference.

2 See the conference General Conclusions.

3 COM(2004) 508 final.

4 COM(2003) 336 final.

5 OJ C 80 of 30.3.2004 (rapporteur: Mr Pariza Castaños).

6 http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/doc_centre/immigration/integration/doc/handbook_en.pdf.

7 COM(2005) 389 final.

- 2.2 The communication calls upon the Member States to step up their efforts concerning national strategies to integrate immigrants, and seeks *greater consistency* between these strategies and actions taken at EU level.
- 2.3 The present opinion is at the EESC's own initiative, and is therefore not specifically on the Commission's communication. It does, however, also incorporate the EESC's views on COM(2005) 389 final.
- 2.4 The Justice and Home Affairs Council of 19 November 2004 adopted a set of **Common Basic Principles** to underpin a coherent European framework for integration policies. The Commission is putting these principles into practice in the form of actions which "should be seen as main elements of all national and EU integration policies"⁸. The actions are organised around eleven principles⁹. The EESC views these principles, fleshed out in the Common Agenda, as a proper basis for balanced and coherent integration policies at European and national levels.
- 2.5 The establishment of a **European Fund for the Integration of Third-country Nationals**¹⁰ is proposed under the 2007-2013 financial perspectives, to be based on these common principles. The EESC supports the proposal¹¹ and hopes it will be included in the future EU budget.
- 2.6 The Agenda suggests actions to be carried out at national level and others at Community level. The Commission wants to carry out continuous assessment of the programmes.
- 2.7 The Commission argues that "with due consideration to the competence of Member States and of **their local and regional authorities**, it is essential to foster a more coherent EU approach to integration"¹².
- 2.8 The Commission had proposed an open method of coordination¹³ for immigration policies, which was not accepted by the Council. The EESC¹⁴, which supported the Commission's proposal, sees the network of national contact points, the common principles and the

8 See COM(2005) 389 final, point 2.

9 Appendix 1.

10 See COM(2005) 123 final.

11 See EESC opinion on management of migration flows, OJ C 88 of 11.4.2006 (rapporteur: Ms Le Nouail-Marlière).

12 See COM(2005) 389 final, point 3.

13 COM(2001) 387 final.

14 OJ C 221 of 17.9.2002 (rapporteur: Ms zu Eulenburg).

evaluation procedure for integration policies as a step forward in coordinating national policies, and as part of a common approach. The EESC proposes that the Commission and the Council adopt the open method of coordination, on the basis on these encouraging experiences.

- 2.9 Development must continue of a legal framework (common policy) governing the conditions of admission and stay for third-country nationals at European level. The Member States must properly transpose the directives on long-term residents and family reunification¹⁵ which were adopted in 2003.
- 2.10 The close connection between a common "immigration" policy and a common integration strategy is highlighted by the Commission. However, the directive on the admission of economic migrants has still not been adopted. The EESC¹⁶ agrees with the European Commission's view that "any future migration instruments should take into account equality of treatment and rights for migrants"¹⁷. The Commission has announced a second edition of the Handbook on Integration, an integration website, the creation of a European Integration Forum, and the reinforcement of the annual reports on migration and integration. The EESC supports these aims, and is willing to cooperate with the Commission.
- 2.11 The EESC firmly supports the implementation of the Agenda, and recalls its views as stated in an earlier opinion: "The EESC proposes that the Commission could manage a European integration programme, equipped with sufficient economic resources and within the framework of coordination of national policies, and stresses how important it is that the Council grant the Commission the political, legislative and budgetary means needed to promote the integration of immigrants. The EESC highlights the importance of establishing positive and effective immigrant arrival programmes in cooperation with civil society organisations"¹⁸.
- 2.12 In addition, the EESC also proposes that the EU dedicate adequate funds to humanitarian conditions for the many undocumented migrants arriving in the countries of southern Europe. The EU Member States must display a sense of solidarity and responsibility if Europe is to act with a common policy.

15 Directives 2003/109/EC and 2003/86/EC.

16 Opinion on the Green Paper on an EU approach to managing economic migration (rapporteur: Mr Pariza Castaños), OJ C 286 of 17.11.2005.

17 See COM(2005) 389 final, point 3.2.

18 OJ C 80 of 30.3.2004, point 1.10 (rapporteur: Mr Pariza Castaños).

3. **Integration policies**

- 3.1 Integration is a two-way process, founded on the rights and obligations of third country nationals and the host society, enabling immigrants to participate fully. In another opinion, the EESC defined integration as "bringing immigrants' rights and duties, as well as access to goods, services and means of civic participation progressively into line with those of the rest of the population, under conditions of equal opportunities and treatment"¹⁹.
- 3.2 This two-way approach means that integration applies not only to immigrants, but also to the host society. It is not so much a question of the integration of immigrants into the host society, but rather with the host society: in other words, both sides must integrate. Integration policies must shape both sides, the purpose being to achieve a society in which all citizens have the same rights and obligations, and share the values of a democratic, open and pluralist society.
- 3.3 Immigrants have a duty to understand and respect the cultural values of the host society, which in turn has a duty to understand and respect the cultural values of immigrants. Cultural issues are often manipulated for discriminatory purposes. Integration does not mean the cultural adjustment of immigrants to the host society. This mistaken attitude has led to a number of failures. European societies are pluralist from the cultural point of view, and this trend is set to be further reinforced in the future as a result of increasing and more widespread immigration.
- 3.4 It should not be forgotten that several Member States have sizeable minority populations of various national or cultural origins, whose rights must also be upheld and guaranteed.
- 3.5 The EESC is convinced that cultural diversity is a feature of a pluralist and democratic Europe, as is the principle of religious neutrality on the part of the State. Immigration from non-EU countries contributes new ingredients to our diversity, enriching our societies socially and culturally. Culture in human societies cannot be understood as a fixed entity, but rather as a process in permanent flux which is enriched by the most diverse contributions. An administration that applies the principles of independence and neutrality towards religions helps to create a good relationship between immigrants and the host society. European societies need to promote intercultural training programmes. The UNESCO convention on cultural diversity²⁰ is a crucial tool for European policies.
- 3.6 The social integration of immigrants also means a process of putting their rights and duties on an equal footing, and is closely linked with the fight against discrimination. Discrimination is

¹⁹ OJ C 125 of 27.5.2002, point 1.4 (rapporteur: Mr Pariza Castaños).

²⁰ Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. See http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=11281&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.

an illegal means of undermining personal rights. The right to family life is not sufficiently guaranteed in some Member States due to highly restrictive laws on family reunification. Neither is the directive adopted by the Council appropriate²¹.

- 3.7 The principle of subsidiarity indicates that integration policies, within a coherent European framework, are not the sole responsibility of the Member State governments. Such policies will be more fruitful if regional and local authorities are involved in them, and if they cooperate actively with civil society organisations. The EESC proposes that local and regional authorities step up their efforts and promote new integration policies.
- 3.8 In keeping with the powers which they have in the various Member States, local and regional authorities possess political, legislative and budgetary instruments which they must put to good use in integration policies.
- 3.9 Both immigrants and host societies must display an integration-friendly attitude. The social partners and civil society organisations must be actively involved in integration policies and anti-discrimination measures.
- 3.10 The fundamental challenge facing civil society organisations is to foster an integration-friendly attitude among European host societies. The social partners, human rights organisations, cultural and sports associations, faith communities, neighbourhood associations, educational communities, the media and so on must be at the forefront of integration. To do this, they must open their own doors and seek to get immigrants involved.
- 3.11 Discrimination, racism and xenophobia are on the rise in some small sectors of European societies, fuelled by some irresponsible politicians, and by elements in the media which amplify the social impact of such behaviour. However, many of Europe's civil society organisations are engaged in the social and political struggle against such behaviour.
- 3.12 Together with civil society organisations, local and regional authorities bear a responsibility to inform immigrants and the host society about their rights and duties.
- 3.13 Immigrant organisations and communities are playing a key role in integration. These bodies must also generate an impetus for integration among their members and step up their links with host society organisations.
- 3.14 Local and regional authorities must support the work of these organisations and consult them before taking policy decisions.

²¹ See Directive 2003/86/EC and the EESC opinions in OJ C 204 of 18.7.2000 (rapporteur: Ms Cassina) and OJ C 241 of 7.10.2002 (rapporteur: Mr Mengozzi).

- 3.15 Anti-discrimination directives²² have been adopted and transposed into national law. The Committee hopes it will be informed about the reports evaluating their impact and results.
- 3.16 However, many immigrants and their descendants, or people belonging to ethnic or cultural minorities, suffer from workplace discrimination (with equal vocational qualifications): greater difficulty in gaining employment, low-quality jobs and more frequent dismissal.
- 3.17 It is essential that the social partners at local and regional level combat these discriminatory practices, which infringe European legislation and are obstacles to integration. Discrimination at work is also an obstacle to successful businesses. Workplace integration, ensuring equal treatment free of work-related discrimination vis-à-vis national workers, is a prerequisite for business success and social integration²³. Appendix 3 contains a report on the hearing held in Dublin to examine best practice in employment integration.

4. **Regional and local integration programmes**

- 4.1 It was, in the past, believed in some Member States that there was no need for integration policies, since they considered immigrants to be no more than "guests" who would return to their countries of origin when they finished working. This mistaken approach has caused numerous problems of segregation and social marginalisation, which present policies are attempting to resolve.
- 4.2 The thinking in other Member States was for years that immigrant integration would happen easily and automatically, without active policies. However, segregation and marginalisation have solidified with time, triggering serious social conflicts. New policies are now setting out to put right the problems of the past.
- 4.3 It must be remembered that immigration through irregular channels is an obstacle to integration policies, since undocumented immigrants are in an insecure, highly vulnerable position. Procedures have been introduced in some Member States to regularise the residency status of such people, thereby promoting their integration.
- 4.4 Although some doubts about subsidiarity persist in the Council of the European Union, most leaders believe that coherent integration policies need to be promoted at all levels: Community, national, regional and local.
- 4.5 The EESC considers that if such policies are to be effective, they must be proactive and be pursued as part of a coherent and holistic approach. Authorities often work only reactively, once problems have appeared and are difficult to resolve.

²² Directives 2000/43/EC and 2000/78/EC.

²³ Cf the positive work of the social partners in Ireland, as referred to in Appendix 3.

- 4.6 Integration is a process with many dimensions, and must draw in all the different public administrations and social players. European, national, regional and local authorities should draw up programmes reflecting the scope of their respective powers. In order to guarantee the efficacy and overall consistency of the programmes and actions, they must be properly backed and coordinated.
- 4.7 The general public and local authorities suffer the consequences of mistaken government policies. Urban authorities are the first to bear the consequences of these policies' failures. As a result, numerous local and regional governments have long been pursuing their own introduction and integration policies. Their experiences vary widely: some offer examples of best practice, while others have failed.
- 4.8 The scale of the problems, and of present and future migration flows, suggest that the challenges are great – but the economic means and political work of local and regional authorities are not enough.
- 4.9 The EESC believes that local and regional governments should, in cooperation with civil society organisations, draw up integration plans and programmes which lay down the objectives and allocate the necessary resources. "Paper policies" – programmes without funding – are ineffective.
- 4.10 In the EESC's view, it is reasonable to earmark a part of the economic benefits generated by immigration for introduction and integration policies.
- 4.11 It is highly important that the most representative immigrant associations are consulted when integration programmes and plans are being drafted.
- 4.12 A number of municipalities and regions in Europe have participatory and advisory bodies which bring civil society organisations together with the authorities in framing and implementing integration policies.
- 5. Instruments, budgets and evaluation**
- 5.1 Adequate budgets must be allocated to local and regional integration plans and programmes, and they must be equipped with their own management and evaluation instruments.
- 5.2 There are many examples of European cities and regions which have dedicated bodies and services, with wide-ranging policy and technical content.
- 5.3 Many cities also have advisory and participatory bodies for civil society organisations. A number of forums and consultative committees have been set up, in which civil society organisations and immigrant associations take part.

- 5.4 The EESC sees these as examples of best practice which should be extended across the EU.
- 5.5 Some cities also provide examples of specialist services for immigrants, which implement practical aspects of integration plans.
- 5.6 There is an on-going debate about the risk of segregation arising from immigrants being dealt with by specialist services set up for them. The EESC believed that segregation in the use of public services is to be avoided, although dedicated services may sometimes be necessary, especially for the initial reception of immigrants on arrival.
- 5.7 The EESC is convinced of the necessity of involving the social partners and other civil society organisations in drawing up and operating regional and local integration plans and programmes.
- 5.8 Encouraging cooperation between the local and regional authorities of European host societies and their counterparts in the countries of origin is also helpful. There are examples of good practice which should be replicated.
- 5.9 Some authorities only allocate funds to reduce conflict once it has broken out. Integration policies must be proactive if they are to be effective.
- 5.10 Integration poses a challenge to European societies. Recent events in a number of countries have highlighted that the aims are not being met. Although circumstances vary between Member States and some problems are country-specific, policies for equal treatment, integration and combating discrimination need to be improved throughout Europe.
- 5.11 The EESC proposes that the various public administrations, at European, national, regional and municipal level – in keeping with each country's particular practices – prepare integration programmes, with adequate funding, which have a proactive approach.
- 5.12 These programmes need to possess evaluation systems, with accurate indicators and transparent procedures. Civil society must be involved in evaluation procedures.

6. Objectives

- 6.1 The issues and approaches which must be covered by regional and local integration programmes are highly diverse; the most important are as follows:
- 6.2 *Observing the actual situation.* The reality of immigration and the position of minorities in a given territory must be analysed by the institutions in order to devise appropriate future actions.

- 6.3 *Initial arrival.* Establishment of reception centres; health care and legal assistance; temporary accommodation for specific cases; introductory language courses; information on the laws and customs of the host society; help in gaining initial employment, etc. Particular attention needs to be given to minors and other vulnerable persons under this action.
- 6.4 *Language teaching.* Local and regional authorities must pursue active language learning policies, since adequate knowledge of the host society language is necessary for integration. Language courses should be held in locations close to the places of residence, and with highly flexible timetables. It is incumbent upon the authorities to ensure that all immigrants have the opportunity to attend courses.
- 6.5 *Access to employment.* Work is certainly a priority aspect of integration. Public employment services should operate appropriate programmes: vocational training courses, careers advice, etc.
- 6.6 Workplace discrimination is a major obstacle in the path of integration. Partners at local and regional level should be active players in opposing discrimination.
- 6.7 *Access to housing.* Discrimination-free access to decent housing is one of the greatest challenges for local and regional policy. Authorities must prevent the formation of run-down urban ghettos in which large numbers of immigrants are concentrated. To this end, urban planning policies must be adjusted in good time. Improving the quality of life in such areas must be a priority.
- 6.8 *Education.* Education systems should ensure that the children of immigrants have access to high-quality schools. Over-concentration of these pupils in poor quality "ghetto-schools" – as frequently occurs – must be prevented. School education, at all stages, lays down the foundations for the integration of new generations.
- 6.9 Education should reflect the internal diversity of European societies. Intercultural mediators should be available and teaching resources should be boosted in order to resolve linguistic and cultural difficulties.
- 6.10 Adult education programmes should draw in the immigrant population, especially women. Training for employment is vital to facilitating access to employment for immigrants.
- 6.11 *Access to health.* Access to health and health care for immigrants should be promoted. The help of intercultural mediator services may be necessary in some circumstances.
- 6.12 *Adjustment of social services.* Immigration often places demands on social services for which they are not prepared. Adjustments must be made in line with the new state of diversity.

- 6.13 *Training for the professionals.* Those working in social services, education, police forces, health services and all other public services should receive new training courses so that they can deal appropriately with immigrant and minority populations.
- 6.14 *Diversity is a good thing.* Cultural programmes ought to recognise cultural diversity. Diversity is a typical feature of present-day European cities. Religious beliefs are also diverse.
- 6.15 There is also a need for local authorities to promote *learning to coexist*, and encourage everyone, of whatever origin, to adjust to the lifestyles of the cities in which they live. Both immigrant and host society populations must play a part in this process of learning, in order to increase understanding between cultures and foster social integration.
- 6.16 Everyone should be able to exercise the right to live with their family: this is one of the fundamental rights recognised at international level by human rights conventions. In spite of this, many national laws – and even the European family reunification directive²⁴ – fail to provide sufficient guarantees for many immigrants that they can exercise the right to family life, although this is a very beneficial factor for integration policies.
- 6.17 *The gender dimension.* The gender dimension must also be mainstreamed in all integration policies. Policies on training for employment, aimed at facilitating access to employment, are of especial importance.
- 6.18 *Public participation.* Access to means of civic participation is one of the key components of integration. Citizenship rights and the right to vote in municipal elections must be guaranteed for third-country nationals who are stable or long-term residents, as the EESC has proposed in several opinions²⁵.
7. **New strategies for local and regional authorities** (some conclusions from the Barcelona hearing)
- 7.1 *The need for networking and coordination between different institutions*
- 7.1.1 Networking and inter-institutional coordination is crucial, and takes two forms: horizontal, between local authorities; and vertical, between the local, regional and state levels of government. The challenges of immigration and integration cannot be met by individual authorities in isolation. The EESC proposes that the public authorities improve coordination arrangements and that evaluation procedures should be introduced for networking. The EESC

²⁴ See Directive 2003/86/EC and the EESC opinions in OJ C 204 of 18.7.2000 (rapporteur: Ms Cassina) and OJ C 241 of 7.10.2002 (rapporteur: Mr Mengozzi).

²⁵ See EESC opinion on Access to European Union citizenship, OJ C 208 of 3.9.2003 (rapporteur: Mr Pariza Castaños).

would also like to forge closer cooperation links with the Committee of the Regions to promote integration policies.

- 7.1.2 Some regions, such as Catalonia and Schleswig-Holstein, reported that one of the central planks of their approach has been to involve local authorities in planning their initiatives. The Campania region also pointed to its decision to forge networks with trade unions, church bodies, etc. Local authorities, for their part, emphasised the importance of networking with specialist bodies in areas such as initial reception.
- 7.1.3 Experience with networking between local government and the European level is growing. *Eurocities* was set up in 1986, and now has a membership of 123 European cities. It is organised into working groups, one of which deals with immigration and integration. A number of the cities present at the hearing, such as Rotterdam and Leeds, belong to this working group. As well as exchanging experience and best practices, the working groups promote European projects involving a number of cities.
- 7.1.4 Another more recent network, ERLAI, is specifically geared to immigration and integration. 26 local and regional authorities have already joined the network. It also sets out to swap information and experience, and to carry out joint actions and projects.
- 7.1.5 Other ventures are also being promoted by a range of bodies. The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions also works through a network of cities to coordinate integration policies.
- 7.1.6 At European level, the purpose of the network of National Contact Points for integration, coordinated by the European Commission, is also to exchange experience. It helped to draw up the Handbook on Integration²⁶ and the annual report on migration and integration²⁷.

7.2 *Integration plans and civil society participation*

- 7.2.1 Those local and regional authorities which have drawn up comprehensive plans, and which have integration management services, obtain better results than those which only mount one-off actions. Planning, provision of resources and management instruments are necessary if immigration and integration are to be addressed.
- 7.2.2 The EESC believes it is of great importance that civil society organisations play a part in drawing up policies and implementing actions. If an integration plan is to succeed, it is important for civil society to be involved. The Schleswig-Holstein region has understood this, and brought in social players and a range of bodies in a broad debate on integration before

²⁶ http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/doc_centre/immigration/integration/doc/handbook_en.pdf.

²⁷ COM(2004) 508 final.

adopting its project. As a result, society was alerted to the need for integration policies. Other cities and regions (including Copenhagen, Barcelona and Helsinki) also offer examples of participatory processes.

7.3 *European Fund for Integration*

7.3.1 The effectiveness of local and regional authorities is enhanced when they can rely on economic support from Member State governments: integration policies require economic resources and the Members States should make a greater commitment. The Schleswig-Holstein region mentioned this aspect, indicating that much of its work has been directed to confronting the German federal government with the need to respond to this requirement, having achieved encouraging results in this regard.

7.3.2 Other local authorities, as in the cases of Ljubljana and Brescia, have pointed out that the scant support they receive from their respective governments prevents them from implementing more wide-reaching policies in this sphere. The problem is worse still where regional governments have few own resources. This was mentioned by the French Midi-Pyrénées region.

7.3.3 The European Fund for Integration, approved by the Council and Parliament for the 2007-2013 period, is essential, since it will mobilise significant economic resources for integration policies and help to ensure that policies are carried out within a coherent and comprehensive EU framework, which respects subsidiarity. The new Member States have voiced particular interest in this fund. The EESC again expresses its support for the establishment of the fund, and urges the Commission to consult the Committee when preparing the relevant regulation.

7.4 *Specialist services must not generate segregation*

7.4.1 The creation of dedicated services for immigrants must not be allowed to breed segregation. The Budapest representative, for example, reported that in Hungary, local authorities have family support, early childhood, employment etc. services, which immigrants – along with all other citizens – must use. In general, however, all cities and regions which have drawn up integration policies have done so by developing specific plans and providing dedicated resources and services. The Helsinki representative argued that "specialist services for immigrants should not be necessary – but they are", showing that support from general services alone cannot cope with the shortcomings, disadvantages, difficulties and special needs experienced by immigrants.

7.4.2 Specific plans, projects and resources are needed for immigration and integration. The problem of how to move forward from this point towards a more normal situation continues to give cause for concern: how to prevent specificity generating segregation? The Brescia representative pointed out that the immigration-related services that had been set up "are not

parallel, but complementary, services". They do not replace the other ordinary services, to which immigrants must apply for all the matters for which such services are responsible.

7.4.3 Copenhagen also emphasised that one of the concerns of its Integration Council is that its work should not legitimise any form of segregation of immigrant or minority populations. The aim is for its actions to be inclusive, encouraging a closer relationship and integration between all sectors of the population.

7.4.4 It is important, in this regard, that the local population should not see initiatives geared to immigrants as a form of privilege, which could accentuate prejudice and foster segregation. Catalonia is aware of this, indicating that when implementing tailor-made actions for the immigration population, great care must be taken regarding the possible feelings of rejection this may trigger among the local population. The steps taken by local and regional governments concerning immigrants must be clearly and carefully explained.

7.5 *Integration objectives*

7.5.1 A number of cities and regions contributed their ideas regarding integration as a concept, demonstrating that this is an on-going debate in Europe, since it contains differing political and legal cultures, as well as differing models for integration.

7.5.2 Following a major debate, the Schleswig-Holstein region argued that integration should focus on three central aspects: equal participation, equal rights and duties, and inclusive, anti-discriminatory measures involving both immigrants and the host society.

7.5.3 This inclusive line is followed by the *Misericórdia* church-based social work organisation in Portugal, which directs integration policies in the country. The emphasis is mainly on equality policies and on facilitating access to Portuguese nationality.

7.5.4 Barcelona identified three areas of action: promoting equality (recognition of rights, promotion of equal opportunities and treatment); recognising cultural diversity; and promoting coexistence (facilitating initiatives for social cohesion and preventing the growth of parallel societies between the local population and immigrant groups).

7.5.5 A major debate was launched in Rotterdam in 2004, challenging the integration model so far followed. The need for the debate arose from the observation that although active integration policies had been implemented for years, society was becoming fragmented and a process of segregation was under way (particularly concerning the Muslim population). The most intensive discussions centred on the "us and them" attitude which had permeated society.

7.5.6 The *European Liaison Committee for Social Housing* couched the debate on integration in terms of removing inequalities and equal opportunities. Their work focused on housing, and

they explained that discrimination in this area was one of the main causes factors in the segregation of immigrant populations.

7.5.7 The EESC is convinced that the 11 common basic principles (set out in Appendix 1) governing the European integration programme have a proper and balanced focus. The majority of participants at the Barcelona hearing agreed with this view.

8. **New challenges for employment integration** (some of the conclusions of the Dublin hearing)

8.1 Through their work, immigrants make a positive contribution to Europe's economic development and social well-being. The EESC considers that immigration in Europe can provide new opportunities for company competitiveness, working conditions and social well-being.

8.2 Employment is a key part of the integration process, because decent jobs are vital to immigrants' self-sufficiency, and they enhance social relations and mutual understanding with the host society. The EESC proposes that integration into the labour market should take place on a level playing field, without discrimination between workers from the host country and immigrants, taking the necessary professional requirements into account.

8.3 Europe's migrant workers must be treated fairly, because they are protected by international human rights conventions and the principles and laws enshrined in the ILO conventions. The EESC reiterates its proposal that EU Member States sign up to the UN's 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

8.4 The EU directives on equal treatment in employment and equal treatment irrespective of racial or ethnic origin are essential legal instruments in shaping legislation and practice in the Member States in combating discrimination and fostering employment integration.

8.5 In the field of employment, legislation and public policies must complement one another through cooperation with the social partners, because integration into the labour market is also an issue of society's attitudes and of commitment on the part of trade unions and employers.

8.6 Public employment services must boost programmes to help immigrants find work and these programmes might include: helping with the recognition of professional qualifications, improving language learning and occupational training, and providing adequate information on employment systems in the host country.

8.7 At grass-roots level, unions, employers' organisations, immigrant associations and other civil society organisations play a key role in conveying information and in helping immigrants to

find employment. Social organisations are actively involved across Europe in helping immigrants and their children to find employment by means of vocational training courses, employment advice, support for small business start-ups, etc.

- 8.8 Companies are increasingly benefiting from the opportunities and growing diversity brought by the integration of immigrants into the labour market. The EESC considers that companies could help to raise awareness within the host society against discrimination, and provide employment contracts that are not xenophobic and do not encourage exclusion.
- 8.9 Procedures must be set up based on the planning of migratory flows, which should be carried out in the source countries and should reflect the real possibilities for labour integration and, therefore, of social integration.
- 8.10 Poor quality employment is also a factor for discrimination, when immigrants are used as the "most vulnerable" workforce available.
- 8.11 Trade unions sometimes demonstrate corporatist tendencies, only defending a few vested interests and excluding immigrants. The EESC considers that trade unions must welcome immigrant workers into their ranks and help them to attain representative and management positions. Numerous trade unions implement best practices which guarantee that workers enjoy equal rights, regardless of their origin or nationality.
- 8.12 Employers' associations face a major challenge in terms of ensuring transparency in the labour markets. The EESC considers that, together with the trade unions, they must cooperate with regional and local public authorities to avoid situations of discrimination and to foster attitudes that favour integration.
- 8.13 The social partners, who are key players in the operation of the labour markets, and who are cornerstones of Europe's economic and social life, have an important role to play in integration. In the context of collective bargaining, they must accept their share of the responsibility for integrating immigrants, eliminating any direct or indirect discrimination from collective agreements and from employment laws and practices.
- 8.14 There are many examples of good practice amongst the social partners and civil society organisations in Europe, which the EESC would like to see more widely adopted. At the Dublin hearing, positive experiences in businesses, trade unions, employers' associations and social organisations were looked at, and some that the Committee wishes to highlight are: the commitments given by the social partners in Ireland to manage diversity within companies and to combat discrimination, and the agreement reached by the social partners in Spain to legalise irregular employment and immigration and to manage labour migration through cooperation and social dialogue.

- 8.15 The EESC believes that active policies and new commitments on the part of the social partners are needed, in order to foster social attitudes that encourage integration, equal treatment and the efforts to combat discrimination in the workplace. European social dialogue can provide an appropriate framework enabling the social partners to give new commitments as they see fit.
- 8.16 European social dialogue is the exclusive responsibility of the social partners; the ETUC and UNICE have drafted the agenda for European social dialogue and the EESC hopes that the objectives it sets out will be attained.
- 8.17 The EESC can form a permanent forum for dialogue on good practices in the areas of integration and immigration is set to continue working in cooperation with the Dublin Foundation and the ILO to foster the development in Europe of integration-friendly policies and practices. It will organise further meetings and forums bringing together the social partners and other civil society organisations with the aim of examining and exchanging instances of current best integration practice in Europe.

Brussels, 13 September 2006.

The President
of the
European Economic and Social Committee

The Secretary-General
of the
European Economic and Social Committee

Anne-Marie Sigmund

Patrick Venturini

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N.B.: Appendices overleaf.

APPENDIX 1

Common Basic Principles

1. "Integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States".
2. "Integration implies respect for the basic values of the European Union".
3. "Employment is a key part of the integration process and is central to the participation of immigrants, to the contributions immigrants make to the host society, and to making such contributions visible".
4. "Basic knowledge of the host society's language, history and institutions is indispensable to integration; enabling immigrants to acquire this basic knowledge is essential to successful integration".
5. "Efforts in education are critical to preparing immigrants, and particularly their descendants, to be more successful and more active participants in society".
6. "Access for immigrants to institutions, as well as to public and private goods and services, on a basis equal to national citizens and in a non-discriminatory way is a critical foundation for better integration".
7. "Frequent interaction between immigrants and Member State citizens is a fundamental mechanism for integration. Shared forums, intercultural dialogue, education about immigrants and immigrant cultures, and stimulating living conditions in urban environments enhance the interactions between immigrants and Member State citizens".
8. "The practice of diverse cultures and religions is guaranteed under the Charter of Fundamental Rights and must be safeguarded, unless practices conflict with other inviolable European rights or with national law".
9. "The participation of immigrants in the democratic process and in the formulation of integration policies and measures, especially at the local level, supports their integration".
10. "Mainstreaming integration policies and measures in all relevant policy portfolios and levels of government and public services is an important consideration in public policy formation and implementation".
11. "Developing clear goals, indicators and evaluation mechanisms are necessary to adjust policy, evaluate progress on integration and to make the exchange of information more effective".

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**Hearing on Immigration and integration
cooperation between regional and local governments and civil society organisations**

**Organised by the European Economic and Social Committee, the Generalitat de Catalunya
and the Barcelona City Council
(2 and 3 February 2006 at the Casa Llotja de Mar, BARCELONA)**

REPORT ON THE HEARING

1. Introduction

The hearing was organised by the EESC in cooperation with the *Generalitat de Catalunya* (Catalan regional government) and Barcelona city council. The Barcelona Economic and Social Council and the Labour, Economic and Social Council of Catalonia also contributed.

The hearing was held as part of the preparation of the EESC opinion on immigration in the EU and integration policies: cooperation between regional and local governments and civil society organisations. With this own-initiative opinion, the EESC wishes to contribute to the on-going important European-level debate on immigration and integration.

The following local and regional institutions, together with representatives of a number of organisations active in this field, took part in the hearing:

European regions

Campania
Catalonia
Scotland
Midi-Pyrénées
Schleswig-Holstein

European cities

Barcelona
Brescia
Budapest
Copenhagen
Helsinki
Leeds
Ljubljana
Oslo
Rotterdam

Organisations

ERLAI
Eurocities
European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions
European Liaison Committee for Social Housing
Misericórdia charitable organisation, Portugal

The following also took part in the discussion panels

European Commission
European Parliament
European Economic and Social Committee
Labour, Economic and Social Council of Catalonia
Barcelona Economic and Social Council

2. Enormous diversity of experiences in integration at local and regional level in Europe

The hearing highlighted the interest of local and regional authorities in carrying out initiatives to foster integration between local and immigrant populations, but also revealed that although highly diverse experiments have been carried out, dissemination of their results has been poor.

This diversity reflects first of all the diversity of migration movements and processes experienced by European cities and regions. At the hearing, cities and regions – including a number from Spain, Italy and Portugal – described their experience of rapid and recent growth in migration, while in others, such as some in Germany, France, etc., immigration had begun decades ago and was continuing at a moderate rate.

This diversity extends to processes of very different kinds, such as those in some of the countries which joined the EU in May 2004. Immigration to Hungary, for example, began in the early 1990s, and consisted chiefly of people of Hungarian origin; the issues it raised were very different from those facing countries taking in labour migrants or refugees from every part of the world. There have also been very particular experiences, such as that described by the city of Ljubljana, where certain groups within its own population, who had never considered themselves as immigrants, were now perceived as such as a result of the conflicts and extreme nationalism which had previously swept the region. Here, the greatest need for efforts now is to overcome the stereotypes thrown up by these conflicts among the second generation.

A very diverse range of initiatives was also presented. Some local and regional governments have integrated and comprehensive plans designed to encourage integration in all the relevant areas (employment, housing, health, education, public awareness-raising, etc.), while others focus on more specific aspects, such as exposing and combating racism, or work-related integration. Similarly, the organisations working in the field are highly diverse: some are management bodies set up by local or regional authorities themselves, while others are participatory councils.

Not all the local and regional governments who attended are mentioned in each of the sections below: rather, their comments are included in whichever section is relevant to their particular contribution.

3. **Examples of institutional action**

The first to be presented are those by local or regional governments whose action forms part of a comprehensive plan; those focusing on more specific programmes follow.

Catalonia has introduced a Citizenship and Immigration Plan. Immigration has grown very rapidly and very recently in this region. The Catalan population has grown by 500 000 in the last five years, and 90% of this growth is due to immigration. Foreigners now account for 12% of Catalonia's population. The Citizenship and Immigration Plan comprises policies and measures in three areas: initial reception, promotion of equality, and adaptation.

Under the plan, reception policies are directed towards immigrants at the early stages following their arrival. They centre upon familiarising them with their new environment, language-learning, training for job-seeking, and housing. Some of these policies also cover irregular immigrants. The Plan defines policies for equality and adaptation as seeking to banish inequalities, promote participation and manage diversity – in other words, they aim to put immigrants on an equal footing with the host population and to build a society in which diversity is seen as an asset. At each of these levels, measures are taken in fields such as housing, health, education, work, culture, etc.

The Catalan Plan is therefore a comprehensive plan. A number of institutional instruments have been created for the purpose, including the Interdepartmental Committee, bringing together all Catalan government services, and the Advisory Council, a participatory body on which social bodies are represented. Immigration and integration policy is governed by a government department, the Secretariat for Immigration.

The Schleswig-Holstein region also has a comprehensive plan in this area. Its immigrant population is much longer-established than in the preceding case, and is made up of people from Turkey, Eastern Europe and elsewhere. Here, integration policies concern both immigrants and refugees although, unlike in Catalonia, only those with legal status are covered.

Its integration programme touches upon areas such as German language teaching, intercultural education, vocational training, housing, health, social services, participation and legal advice. A number of official instruments have been put in place in order to implement it. The region has a Reception Division, and a special commission deals with urgent humanitarian cases; a joint group also provides a participatory forum in which the entire social spectrum affected is represented, including trade unions and other bodies. Schleswig-Holstein is an example of a regional government which has promoted local government involvement: a number of local authorities have joined the project and are implementing their own measures.

The city of Brescia, in the Lombardy region, has one of the highest concentrations of immigrants in Italy (14.5% of the population of the province of Brescia is foreign). Its immigration policy intervenes in areas such as language learning, cultural activities, access to housing, etc.

The comprehensive nature of this policy is reflected, as in the other cases mentioned above, at local government level by an inter-departmental management body. As far back as 1989 the city council initially set up a guidance service for foreigners, which has since developed and grown, and it now has a fully-fledged Department for Integration and Citizenship.

The city of Copenhagen is pursuing a local integration policy, focusing on aspects such as education, minority access to employment, prevention of ghetto-formation, and dialogue between minorities and the rest of the population. The local government has a Department for Integration and Employment.

Copenhagen's Integration Council represents a major experiment in participation. The Council is a consultative, participatory body set up in 1999, which is consulted by local government on all matters concerning the integration of minorities. It is defined as a neutral body in party political terms, responsible for monitoring the actions of the local administration and representing immigrants' interests. The central issue that concerns it is combating discrimination, which it does through a variety of activities (including awareness-raising campaigns). Similar Councils exist in other Danish cities, with a national body comprising representatives of each of them.

The city of Barcelona, with a 15% immigrant population, also has a comprehensive plan, the Municipal Immigration Plan, covering aspects such as reception, access to housing and spatial planning policy amongst others. The city's efforts are concentrated primarily on initial reception, dealing with issues such as access for immigrants to basic services, legal advice, and others. Reception is handled in cooperation with a raft of relevant social organisations, under a reception plan which seeks to coordinate the work of these bodies with that of the city council.

Rotterdam, almost 50% of whose population was born outside the Netherlands, was one of the first cities in Europe to introduce global policies for integrating minorities and to set up dedicated services in this field. A debate is currently under way however, which could lead to radical changes to its integration policy. This will be discussed further in a later section.

Other local and regional governments do not apply comprehensive plans, but focus their immigration-related work on specific or partial aspects. The city of Ljubljana has a project to prevent the social exclusion of young people in certain neighbourhoods, which was initially launched by a youth centre but has now become a fully-fledged municipal project. It is geared to integrating young people of the second generation whose parents experienced the war most intensely, and focuses on the dormitory suburbs where the risks of exclusion are greatest. The main aim is to counter stereotypes.

Helsinki has set up immigration services covering areas such as housing, education and others, but its main current project focuses on employment. The city has an immigrant population of 5.2% (mostly from Eastern European countries and refugees from Africa and Asia), but unemployment within this population stands at 28%. The "Majakka-Beacon" employment project is also being extended to other

Finnish cities, and is equipped with instruments such as guidance services for immigrants, language courses and vocational training. Social bodies (including immigrant associations) are involved in the project, especially its information work.

The French Midi-Pyrénées region also concentrates on employment. The unemployment rate among young people of immigrant origin is very high, reading 50% in the suburbs of Toulouse (the region's capital). Regional governments possess few powers in France, but the Midi-Pyrénées government has earmarked resources for a number of immigration-related projects. The most important of these is represented by the "second-chance schools", which seek to draw young people into vocational training and help them find jobs. The project is implemented in a broad partnership with NGOs, professionals and the social actors (trade unions and employers' associations).

Other cities are running projects in other spheres. Leeds, for example, has set up a project for older people from minorities, which seeks to ensure that they receive equal care from the social services, especially health.

Oslo concentrates its efforts on educating the local population to deal with immigrants on an equal footing and to appreciate diversity. It has been running the "Oslo extra large" campaign for the last five years, which was set up in response to a racist murder which mobilised the population against racism. Its work is primarily directed towards children and young people, and is largely carried out in schools.

Campania, an Italian region where the level of immigration is still low, runs a number of specific programmes or services: intercultural mediation, anti-discrimination (particularly in access to housing), and employment training (especially for immigrant women).

Another example of a specific programme is provided by Scotland, where the "Fresh Talent" project covers not only integration but also how to attract migrants. Its main aim is to attract skilled workers to settle in Scotland, in response to Scottish employers' needs. To this end, services are geared to providing a warm welcome for those wishing to live and work there. It also encourages students in Scottish universities originating from other countries to remain after they complete their studies.

Some cities and regions do not have specific immigration or integration measures. This is the case in Budapest, where the main thrust of local policy is for immigrants to use common municipal services. At national level, there is a specific service for immigrants, run by the Hungarian Ministry for the Interior.

4. **Factors for debate on local and regional policies**

A number of factors and concepts emerged at the hearing, which may be helpful as part of an exchange of experiences and in identifying best practice. Some of the most prominent points are set out below.

- 4.1 **Need for networking.** This aspect was mentioned by various speakers, in connection with both interinstitutional networking and coordination between institutions and social bodies. Two forms of networking and interinstitutional coordination were discussed: horizontal, meaning between local governments, and vertical, between local administrations on the one hand and regional and state authorities on the other. It was concluded that the challenges of immigration and integration could not be successfully met by each administration in isolation.

Some regions, including Catalonia and Schleswig-Holstein, reported that one of the central planks of their approach has been to involve local authorities in planning their initiatives. The Campania region also pointed to its decision to forge networks with trade unions, church bodies, etc. Local authorities, for their part, emphasised the importance of networking with specialist bodies in areas such as initial reception.

Experience of networking between local government and the European level is growing. Eurocities was set up in 1986, and now has a membership of 123 European cities. It is organised into working groups, one of which deals with immigration and integration. A number of the cities present at the hearing, such as Rotterdam and Leeds, belong to this working group. As well as exchanging experience and best practices, the working groups promote European projects involving a number of cities.

Another more recent network, ERLAI, is specifically geared to immigration and integration. 26 local and regional authorities have already joined the network. It also sets out to swap information and experience, and to carry out joint actions and projects.

Other ventures are also being promoted by a range of bodies. The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions also works through a network of cities to coordinate integration policies. At the time of the hearing, it was organising a meeting to be held in June 2006, at which it hoped to bring together some 30 cities to discuss integration.

Experiences of this type are complemented by the network of National Contact Points for integration, organised by the European Commission, whose aim is also to exchange experience in this field. It meets six times a year, draws up an annual report, and has contributed to the Handbook on Integration.

- 4.2 **Participation-based preparation of plans and projects.** It was clear, from what the different local and regional governments had to say, that those with the most comprehensive plans, and with formal management structures to implement them, are performing the broadest range of integration-related tasks. Planning, provision of resources and management instruments are necessary if immigration and integration are to be tackled properly.

At the same time, the importance of involving social bodies and the general public in planning and implementing projects was strongly emphasised. If an integration plan is to succeed, it must be fully taken on board by civil society. The Schleswig-Holstein region has understood this, and brought in social players and a range of bodies in a broad debate on

integration before adopting its project. As a result, society has been made aware of the need for integration policies. Other cities and regions also cited examples of participatory processes, pointing out that the greater the social participation in projects, the better the results.

- 4.3 **Need for support from higher institutions.** The effectiveness of local and regional authority action is greatly diminished when it cannot rely on the necessary economic support from Member State governments: integration policies require economic resources and the Members States must accept this fact. The Schleswig-Holstein region raised this point, indicating that much of its work has been directed to confronting the German federal government with the need to respond to this requirement; it had achieved encouraging results in this regard.

Other local authorities, as in the cases of Ljubljana and Brescia, have pointed out that the scant support they receive from the respective (Slovenian and Italian) governments prevents them from implementing more wide-reaching policies in this sphere. The problem is worse still where regional governments have few own resources. This was mentioned by the French Midi-Pyrénées region.

A common thread throughout the hearing was the significance of the financial support the EU can provide. Clear support was given to the European Commission's proposal to set up a Fund for Integration under the 2007-2013 financial perspectives.

- 4.4 **Debate on individual and common features.** Are special resources and services for immigrants needed, or is it simply a matter of making common services work efficiently? This has long been a moot point in immigration policies, and the issue arose several times in the course of the hearing. There is concern that creating dedicated services for immigrants could breed segregation, and this leads to hesitation between specificity and normalisation.

The Budapest representative, for example, reported that in Hungary, local authorities provide family support, early childhood, employment etc. services, which are to be used by immigrants, along with all other citizens. In general, however, all cities and regions which have drawn up integration policies have done so by developing specific plans and providing dedicated resources and services. The Helsinki representative argued that "specialist services for immigrants should not be necessary – but they are", showing that support from general services alone cannot cope with the shortcomings, disadvantages, difficulties and special needs experienced by immigrants.

A degree of consensus exists to the effect that specific plans, projects and resources are needed to deal properly with immigration and integration. The problem of how to move forward from this point towards a more "normal" situation continues to give cause for concern: how to prevent specificity generating segregation? The Brescia representative pointed out that the immigration-related services that had been set up "are not parallel, but complementary, services". They do not replace the other ordinary services, to which immigrants must apply for all the matters for which such services are responsible.

Copenhagen also emphasised that one of the concerns of its Integration Council is that its work should not legitimise any form of segregation of immigrant or minority populations. The aim is for its actions to be inclusive, encouraging a closer relationship and integration between all sectors of the population.

It is important, in this regard, that the local population should not see initiatives geared to immigrants as a type of privilege, which could accentuate prejudice and foster segregation. Catalonia is aware of this, indicating that when implementing tailor-made actions for the immigration population, great care must be taken regarding the possible feelings of rejection this may trigger among the local population. The steps taken by local and regional governments concerning immigrants must be clearly and carefully explained.

4.5 **Contributions on the concept of integration.** A number of cities and regions spoke either to challenge, or to contribute ideas about integration as a concept, demonstrating that this is an on-going debate in Europe.

Even following a major, participatory debate, the Schleswig-Holstein region had failed to fully define this concept, but argued that it should focus on three central aspects: equal participation, equal rights and duties, and inclusive, anti-discriminatory measures involving both immigrants and the host society.

This inclusive line is followed by the *Misericórdia* church-based social work organisation in Portugal, which directs integration policies in the country. The emphasis is mainly on equality policies and on facilitating access to Portuguese nationality.

Barcelona identified three areas of action: promoting equality (recognition of rights, promotion of equal opportunities and treatment); recognising cultural diversity; and promoting coexistence (facilitating initiatives for social cohesion and preventing the growth of parallel societies between the local population and immigrant groups).

A major debate was launched in Rotterdam in 2004, challenging the integration model so far applied. The need for the debate arose from the observation that although active integration policies had been pursued for years, society was becoming fragmented and a process of segregation was gaining ground (particularly concerning the Muslim population). This process might have been boosted by the prevailing multicultural model. The most intensive discussions centred on the "us and them" attitude which had permeated society.

The European Liaison Committee for Social Housing couched the discussion on integration in terms of removing inequalities and equal opportunities, reflecting a shift away from the multiculturalism-assimilation debate towards aspects such as equal opportunities. Their work focused on housing, and they explained that discrimination in this area was one of the main factors for the segregation of immigrant populations.

The definition of 11 common basic principles by the European Commission, which incorporated into the Hague Programme, was welcomed in the course of the debate on the concept of integration. The 11 points are not listed here, since they are set out in the EESC opinion which the present report accompanies.

5. Some specific policies highlighted at the hearing

The final section of the present report lists a number of specific policies in various areas such as employment, housing etc. which the local and regional government representatives indicated as crucial to the process of integration.

- 5.1 **Employment.** This is a key aspect of integration, as revealed by labour statistics, where young people descending from immigrant families experience far higher rates of unemployment than the general population. Many of the projects presented during the hearing are concerned with promoting employment. Two examples are set out below.

As mentioned earlier, the "Majakka-Beacon" employment project in Helsinki covers a range of actions, and has entailed setting up a raft of new services, such as immigrant guidance monitors, language courses, employment guidance courses, etc. It is an example of an active employment policy pursued with the involvement of social bodies, particularly immigrant associations.

The "second-chance schools" project in the Midi-Pyrénées also merits careful attention on account of the encouraging results it is achieving. It is aimed at unqualified young people (of immigrant parentage) with low levels of training, who know what job they are interested in, but have language problems. It operates through links with employers, and a personalised training plan is drawn up for each pupil. This is backed up with social and sporting activities, etc. for pupils, aiming at all-round personal development. The results in terms of integration into society and work are promising.

- 5.2 **Housing.** As pointed out by the representative of the European Liaison Committee for Social Housing, "no-one can integrate when living six to the same room, or in a house without hot water". Housing is without doubt another central aspect of integration, and much local and regional government work is directed to it.

Poor management of housing policy has harmful effects, leading to segregation or the formation of ghettos – the polar opposite of integration. When matters are left to market forces, a set of discriminatory factors emerges, as witnessed by all European countries to one extent or another. Access to housing is a right which requires public intervention and, where immigrants are concerned, must be provided without discrimination and be spread across the urban fabric – in other words, what the European Liaison Committee for Social Housing describes as an ethnic mix.

A number of official approaches were outlined at the hearing. Barcelona has opted to set up mediation channels between immigrants and landlords to encourage renting. The aim is to reassure owners who rent accommodation to immigrant families, and to minimise the risk of discrimination. The city also has a policy of upgrading and providing facilities in neighbourhoods with high immigrant populations.

Several regional or local governments, such as Campania, Copenhagen and the Midi-Pyrénées, have set themselves the aim of preventing the formation of ghettos. In Copenhagen, the Integration Council, mentioned above, has the prevention of segregation as one of its objectives. In the Midi-Pyrénées region, and Toulouse in particular, efforts are directed to preventing the consolidation of ghetto areas by promoting employment for young people, and also by means of housing-related measures.

A different approach is reflected in measures to encourage home ownership. One example is in Brescia, where agreements have been signed with the banks to facilitate home ownership by immigrants.

- 5.3 **Voting rights.** The right of long-term immigrant residents to vote in local elections was mentioned by several local and regional government representatives, citing a range of initiatives supporting its introduction (in countries where this right is not yet recognised; some EU Member States have already done so).

The issue was raised in Schleswig-Holstein ten years ago, but ran counter to the German federal constitution. The question has been debated ever since, and the regional government supports moving in this direction. Discussions are under way in Brescia too, with current proposals for neighbourhood-level involvement and a further project to promote voting rights. Abolition of the discriminatory provision whereby non-nationals cannot enter public service is also under consideration. The city of Barcelona also supports voting rights for foreign residents. The same applies in Campania.

In Copenhagen (as throughout Denmark), foreign residents already have this right, but additional forms of political involvement have also been developed. The city's Integration Council is freely elected by the various minorities, becoming a further channel through which they can participate. This approach was not, however, endorsed by other representatives of local and regional government.

- 5.4 **Other significant aspects.** Other aspects, testifying to the wide range of factors involved in integration, were raised at the hearing. Learning the language of the host society, for example, was mentioned by several speakers, underscoring the need for dedicated resources for this purpose. The importance of education to integration was also mentioned. Intercultural education is seen as a necessary component in integration, as argued, for example, by the representatives of Schleswig-Holstein and Brescia. The latter city has been implementing intercultural education programmes since 1994.

Preparing and informing the host population is another important aspect covered by the integration plans and projects of several cities and regions. Integration is seen as a matter for everyone, immigrants and locals: any discriminatory attitudes towards, or rejection of, immigrants among the host population must be combated vigorously. Local people must be actively involved in building an open society in which immigrants can be integrated, and campaigns are conducted for this purpose.

"Oslo Extra Large" is an example of such a campaign, seeking to combat racism and promote equality for all. It is promoted by the city authorities, and its aim is to ensure that all the inhabitants of Oslo are treated equally, and that the city's diversity should be reflected in all positions of responsibility. The campaign involves a wide range of bodies as well as the city authorities. The mayor takes part in events such as the annual awards for anti-racist work. The campaign's main work, however, is carried out in schools, youth centres and anywhere where young people are active, taking the view that it is young people who should be the main focus of attention in countering racism.

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Report on the Hearing on immigration and integration: Roles and initiatives of the social partners and civil society organisations

22 and 23 June 2006,

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Dublin

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) held a hearing in Dublin on 22 and 23 June 2006, in cooperation with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. The main aim of the hearing was to gather information about the experiences and good practices of the social partners in preventing discrimination and facilitating integration, with particular focus on employment.

The specific objectives of the hearing were as follows:

1. to present and analyse practical examples of initiatives and measures adopted locally and nationally to prevent discrimination and facilitate integration in the labour market;
2. to study the best ways to develop effective and innovative models in these areas and the approaches taken by employers, trade unions and other civil society organisations; and
3. to identify experiences and good practices that have proved effective in promoting the fight against discrimination, fair and equal treatment and overall integration in the labour market.

The underlying premise of the hearing was that employment is a crucial component in the processes of migrant integration. Inclusion in the labour market is the key to protecting and ensuring human dignity and independence.

The social partners play a pivotal role in the integration of ethnically and culturally different communities in this sector of the economy. There is a direct link between the labour market – and its impact on the social sector – and the commitments made by trade unions and employers. Public policies and legislative frameworks at international, European and national level must therefore be accompanied by strong teamwork and cooperation from the social partners. This is the only way to ensure that migrants are successfully integrated into the social and economic fabric of the host society.

The European social dialogue, which is the responsibility of the social partners (ETUC and UNICE), could provide a framework that would enable the social partners to assume their new commitments and face up to current challenges.

Starting from the basic premise that there must be full equality of treatment and no discrimination so as to integrate migrant workers into the labour market, the hearing was divided into five different panels, each dealing with one of the following topics:

1. The European framework
2. Cooperation between the social partners: Member States' experiences
3. Employer initiatives to fight discrimination
4. Measures adopted by trade unions and workers' organisations
5. Cooperatives and organised civil society.

1. **The European framework**

Immigration in the EU could provide new opportunities for business competitiveness, working conditions and well-being, and could help to confront the multi-faceted challenges facing the EU. In this respect, Mr Fernández (Research coordinator at the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions) mentioned that a social and economic change is occurring: certain job markets are suffering labour shortages, Europe's business sector lacks competitiveness and there are signs of a demographic shift as the active population ages. Although immigration alone is not a miraculous cure-all for the challenges facing the EU, many issues could be tackled by prioritising the creation of joint, open policies that facilitate legal immigration and labour integration.

Mr Malosse (president of the SOC Section of the EESC) pointed out that the EU had to assume responsibility for the free movement of workers and the labour market for immigrants from non-EU countries, and pointed out that under the Treaty establishing the European Community, the EU has new powers in the field of immigration. Immigration plays a key role in the European single labour market, and is a very important factor for economic development.

Moreover, as pointed out by Ms Passchier (Confederal secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)), debates on immigration are dogged by a series of contradictions: immigration is more often seen as a problem than as an opportunity. When one considers immigration and the policies implemented nationally and at EU level, one can see that although regulation does exist, it is based on the idea that immigration is a temporary phenomenon. This does not take into account the fact that immigrants are human beings, and runs counter to current policies. In Ms Passchier's opinion, the positive aspects of immigration need to be officially recognised. There is also a need to make the EU's common immigration policy more rational. The common admission policy should also include low-skilled workers and ensure that social standards and fair, equal treatment are correctly applied in the employment field.

In the EU, the two Community Directives that relate to a framework for equal treatment (the Directive on Equality in Employment (2000/78/EC) establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation and the Directive on Racial Equality (2000/43/EC) implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin) are sound legal instruments and are beneficial for the development of policies at national level. Mr Gauci (Adecco) explained that discrimination in the labour market and the principles of equality and fair treatment

have only recently begun to be tackled in France. He felt that the existence of discrimination has not been properly acknowledged. Nonetheless, the EU has had a positive influence, through Article 13 TEC and the adoption of the two EU directives on equality of treatment.

However, as Mr Taran (World Labour Organisation) pointed out, to date only Finland has correctly transposed the two Community directives, and what is more, these directives do not fully respond to all the problems that arise in practice. What is needed are more active policies and new commitments on the part of the social partners, to combat discrimination and foster integration and inclusion in employment.

In addition to the rules established in EU sphere, the rights and freedoms of migrant workers are also protected by the international human rights conventions and the principles enshrined in the ILO conventions. The ILO has played a key role on the international stage in combating discrimination and promoting labour integration. Mr Taran remarked that the international community has made use of these rules in order to map out the campaign against discrimination and ensure that migrants are included in the labour market. He considered that the EU Member States should adopt the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, which represents a roadmap for migration policy. The EESC expressed a similar position in its opinion of 30 June 2004²⁸.

2. Cooperation between the social partners: Member States' experiences

Integration must occur above all at local level, and the social players must cooperate actively with one another. Civil society's role is essential in order to ensure that discrimination is combated successfully and conditions and measures are implemented that will guarantee fair and equal treatment in employment.

Among the examples of good practices in the EU that were discussed, the experiences and commitments of the social partners in Spain and Ireland were highlighted. Both countries have taken positive steps to tackle the diversity and disparity within their labour markets and to combat discrimination, racism and xenophobia; both were once countries from which people emigrated, but are now destinations for immigrants.

Ms Loughheed (Irish Business and Employers Confederation - IBEC) explained that in Ireland there have been agreements between the social partners since 1987, which have served as a basis for agreements with the government on the issues in question. These agreements define criteria for economic and social development in the country and, in Ms Loughheed's view, are a reliable and effective reference for all sectors.

²⁸ Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the International Convention on Migrants, SOC/173, 30 June 2004, Brussels.

A new social partnership agreement is being negotiated in the country. Mr Joyce (Irish Congress of Trade Unions - ICTU) explained that negotiations have been greatly influenced by the positions of the various parties involved (workers, employers and other civil society organisations) regarding the positive aspects of immigration and integration. The new draft agreement is a very good example of the new paradigm. However, there is still a need for an agreement with a longer validity period that would, for the first time, also cover economic and social policies. Ireland is also a good illustration of how the social partners and public authorities can cooperate in drawing up such partnership agreements.

With regard to Spain, the discussion highlighted the social partners' commitment to "regularise" the employment sector and irregular immigration in the country, and to manage labour migration through social dialogue. Mr Ruiz (Comisiones Obreras trade union - CCOO) pointed out that the election of the new Spanish Government in March 2004 had led to a strategic turnaround in immigration policy, establishing a link between immigration and the labour market. A social dialogue has been set up and negotiations initiated with the main social players (employers and workers); the dialogue focuses, in part, on the measures that could be taken to improve the situation of irregular immigrants in the country. In this way, the special process of regularising the situation of migrants was initiated. Mr Ruiz stated that the process has been a success and that all the proposed objectives have been adequately met, with the "administrative regularisation" of around 600 000 people.

The social dialogue promoted by the Spanish government has also resulted in the creation of a permanent forum – the Comisión Laboral Tripartita (Tripartite Labour Committee) – made up of workers and employers and also dealing with immigration policy. The general objective of this committee is to boost legal immigration, focusing on the need to manage migratory flows (stepping up recruitment at place of origin), to pursue and penalise bad practices, and to have a flexible system enabling employers to act swiftly. Mr Ruiz stated that social dialogue is a good practice, and essential when tackling immigration; it is also needed in order to ensure that the rights acquired thus far are maintained.

3. Employer initiatives to fight discrimination

One of the ideas discussed at the hearing was that employers needed to stop recruitment practices which are discriminatory and do not comply with State labour laws. In this respect, Ms Passchier (ETUC) stressed the need to guarantee employment that is high quality and worthwhile in terms of contracts, career prospects and the fight against segregation in the labour market. The labour situation and working conditions should be protected, better integration policies are needed, and trade unions should communicate directly with migrants. Only then will it be possible to overcome the vulnerability of migrant workers.

Mr Ruiz (CCOO) also stated that being in an irregular situation is one of the greatest causes of vulnerability. Employer organisations should take a common stance against bad practices by employers that hire irregular immigrants, as this has a negative effect on honest employers and is bad for the labour market. In his opinion, an employer that hires irregular migrants should not only be

penalised financially, but should also be subject to prosecution by the State. Hiring irregular immigrants is tantamount to the exploitation of individuals and is therefore a crime.

He also mentioned the shared belief that employers should resist all xenophobic, discriminatory or exclusory conduct when hiring workers. Mr Taran (ILO) spoke about a study that his organisation is conducting on indirect discrimination in the labour market and the conditions of access to employment. He explained that the study has highlighted the practice of discrimination between persons with exactly the same professional and educational qualifications but different racial or ethnic backgrounds. The data shows that a native candidate has more opportunities than one from a migrant community.

In this context, Mr Gauci (Adecco) pointed out that his company was one of the first in France to carry out an audit and assessment of discrimination in-house. This self-assessment showed that discrimination was a standardised, common practice. The company decided to implement a series of measures in order to overcome this regrettable situation. Adecco is a good example of an employer initiative to fight discrimination and ensure integration in its work, and in terms of cooperation with the public authorities.

Mr Gauci believed that it was necessary for trade union organisations to become more professional and to improve communication with federations and social partners. The different trade union bodies should also work together and adopt a common position on discrimination and equal rights.

As pointed out by Mr Taran (ILO), practices are deemed "good" when they are strategic, planned and fall within the framework of a comprehensive approach. The Dublin Bus company is another example of good practices. Ms Normanly explained that the company has adapted extremely well to the changes that have occurred in the city in relation to the challenges of immigration and diversity. The Equality and Diversity Strategy that it has adopted involves supporting and protecting staff within the company, advising managerial staff and implementing professional policies to promote dignity and respect in the workplace. Dublin Bus has set up a number of projects which aim to implement intercultural policies targeting workers, customers and the community.

The success of companies depends on their being open and adapting to the diversity that is inherent in modern societies. Companies should include immigrants in their executive and managerial structures, and should also recognise, promote and facilitate the diversity that is present within them. In this context, Mr Meyer (Fraport AG) presented the strategy implemented by his company and explained why including an intercultural component was a prerequisite for the success of the business and for greater customer satisfaction.

Lastly, one aspect common to all three companies that presented their experiences at the hearing (Adecco, Dublin Bus and Fraport) is their implementation of training projects and educational programmes aimed at managerial and non-managerial staff.

4. **Measures adopted by trade unions and workers' organisations**

Ms Hamalainen (SAK, Finland) stressed the importance of making the trade unions' voices heard when it comes to immigration and the integration of immigrants. She presented two of her organisation's most important projects: ETMO – multi-culturalism as a feature of the working community, and PETMO – initiating multi-culturalism in the workplace.

Mr Sullivan (TUC) spoke about the background to immigration in the United Kingdom. British policies have essentially been based on the racial equality of immigrant communities. The result is that there is no framework for social partnership, which makes it difficult to resolve immigration dilemmas and find a consistent response thereto. He also felt that British policies are based only on economic aspects. Lastly, Mr Sullivan mentioned the existence of a joint declaration with employers and the Home Office recognising the labour market's need for immigration, along with campaigns and sponsorship to fight exploitation, raise awareness among those involved and provide advice for migrants.

Another of the topics debated at the hearing was that unions sometimes show corporatist tendencies, only defending a few vested interests and excluding immigrants. Unions should welcome immigrant workers into their ranks (at all levels) and help them to attain representative and management positions. Mr Umberto Saleri (Italian general labour confederation – CGIL) explained that his confederation is ethnically diverse and that its articles of association establish rights for all, including immigrants, who are represented within the confederation. Mr Saleri also mentioned the XV Congress of the CGIL held in Rimini in March 2006, at which the issue of migrant integration was specifically discussed.

5. **Cooperatives and organised civil society**

Ms Preis (Xpandia Vision) presented the experiences of this cooperative which was set up in 2001 to work for integration, employment and democratic participation. In particular, Ms Preis talked about the *ST-Young* project, which aims to boost cooperation with municipalities and associations and create a work model with young unemployed people. In her opinion, integration essentially means full, non-discriminatory access to the labour market.

Mr Gulia (Italian Christian Workers Association – ACLI) spoke about the two areas of action pursued by his organisation: the reorganisation of services in the area to reflect the needs of the new immigrants that have arrived in Italy, the integration of workers into cooperatives, services and research centres. In relation to this, a further two focus areas have been developed: raising awareness of immigrants' culture and managing diversity, and taking action on the ground. According to Mr Gulia, the ACLI's organisational structure encourages respect for and development of territorial diversity. As part of its services, the ACLI and the local authorities have together set up a local healthcare structure and classes on Italian culture and language in order to make it easier for migrants to find work and housing.

Mr Kolat (Turkish community in Germany - TGD) explained that his organisation represents all the Turkish associations in Germany and has a threefold objective: 1) to combat racism, xenophobia and prejudice against Islam; 2) to campaign for equal rights; 3) to support Turkey's accession to the EU. He felt that Germany has a number of major problems in these fields. The German labour market is faced with serious structural problems due to the high unemployment rate, particularly within the migrant population. Mr Kolat said that one positive factor in the country is that the trade unions do not require German nationality, which means that foreigners can join. He also mentioned the education campaign to be launched to encourage parents to focus more on their children's education. He believed that the EU and Germany need legislation that reflects the particular situation of migrants. Lastly, he highlighted the need for more targeted assistance for young migrants, to enable them to make use of all their skills and avoid the type of social conflict that has been seen in other European countries.
