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**The consolidation of the EU framework on integration
Report to the 2010 Ministerial Conference on Integration**

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1. INTRODUCTION

For the European Union and its Member States, immigration represents an opportunity for cultural and economic enrichment. To maximise the immigration benefits, integration as a dynamic two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and nationals, must be retained as a priority of national and EU agendas.

A *new legal and policy context* will shape the future of immigration and integration policies within the EU.

The Lisbon Treaty provides, for the first time, an *explicit legal basis*¹ to pro-actively develop European cooperation in the field of integration of legally staying third-country nationals. The European Parliament will be on an equal footing with the Council. EU action will become more comprehensive and will allow the further development of integration policy through measures which provide incentives and support for the action of Member States.

The EU *policy context* in this area will be framed by the Stockholm Programme which was adopted by the European Council on 10 and 11 December 2009². The Stockholm Programme is ambitious with regard to integration; in particular, it invites the Commission to support the Member States' efforts by developing a coordination mechanism based on a common reference framework which is intended to improve the structures and tools for the exchange of knowledge at European level.

As was underlined in the Commission's Communication of 10 June 2009 on 'An area of freedom, security and justice serving the citizen'³, the Stockholm Programme further emphasises that a key aspect of this policy context should be the improved consultation and involvement of civil society.

In this respect, two instruments of information and exchange were launched in April 2009: the *European Integration Forum* and the *European Web Site on Integration (EWSI)*. The Forum⁴ constitutes the 'physical platform' for a dialogue on the current challenges and future priorities for integration policies. The EWSI⁵ is the 'virtual platform', an online toolkit for all those involved with immigrants.

¹ Article 79(4) TFEU states that 'the European Parliament and the Council, acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, may establish measures to provide incentives and support for the action of Member States with a view to promoting the integration of third-country nationals residing legally in their territories, excluding any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States'.

² Presidency Conclusions, document EUCO 6/09. The Programme itself is in document 17024/09.

³ COM(2009) 262 final

⁴ <http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/policy/legal.cfm>

⁵ www.integration.eu

With the implementation of these tools, the EU framework on integration as set out in the 2005 Common Agenda for Integration⁶ has been consolidated.

Other instruments are working successfully, such as the network of *National Contact Points on Integration (NCPIs)*. Representatives of the 27 governments of the Member States played an essential role in this framework. Sub-meetings on specific issues were held to address questions in depth and to find common solutions to integration challenges.

As regards financial instruments, the *European Fund for the Integration of third-country nationals (EIF)*, with €825 million for the period 2007 – 2013, helps to enhance, put in practice, monitor and evaluate the integration strategies of Member States, and has so far financed 70 transnational projects which promote the exchange of information, good practices and cooperation among various stakeholders. The Commission has launched a comprehensive evaluation of the functioning of the EIF. Results will enable a greater in-depth analysis of the financing of specific actions and projects in order to meet the envisaged aims and to carry out a preliminary assessment of the results.

In April 2010, the Commission will present the third edition of the *Handbook on Integration for policy-makers and practitioners*⁷. The preparation of the handbook involved experts and practitioners coming from national and local levels, as well as NGOs. The handbook provides a precious tool for identifying common solutions to the relevant integration challenges by promoting good practices and experiences.

Political debates on integration are held regularly as part of the *Ministerial Conferences on Integration* (Groningen 2004, Potsdam 2007, Vichy 2008).

In order to contribute to the forthcoming ministerial conference, which is due to be held in Zaragoza, Spain, on 15 and 16 April 2010, this report highlights the progress made and the steps that must be taken in the context of the Stockholm Programme in order to promote and improve integration strategies.

As requested by the Council Conclusions of 27 and 28 November 2008 (point 7)⁸, the Commission was invited to support the NCPIs in giving priority to certain tasks. This report presents the state of implementation of those priorities, namely the *promotion of common EU values*, the *gathering of the general public's perception* of migrants and legal immigration, the development of *European modules* on integration and the identification of relevant reference *indicators* to evaluate results.

Moreover, recent developments in the strategies on *employment, social inclusion and education* are presented. As was also underlined in the Stockholm Programme, the promotion of a cross-cutting integration policy and the improvement of structures and tools for knowledge exchange and coordination with relevant policy areas are considered key elements of the EU integration framework.

⁶ COM(2005) 389 final

⁷ Previous editions of the handbooks are available on: http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/about_us.cfm

⁸ Council Document 15251/08

2. PROMOTING EUROPEAN VALUES: FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS, INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

According to Article 2 TEU, the 'Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.' It is also affirmed that 'these values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.'

Additionally, the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum⁹ highlights human rights, freedom of opinion, democracy, tolerance, equality between men and women, and compulsory school attendance for children. The Stockholm Programme recalls that the Union is based on common values and the respect of fundamental rights.

The November 2008 Council Conclusions invited the NCPIs, with the support of the Commission, to give priority to 'the development of information material featuring content on European values which is common to the Member States, for use during the immigrant introductory phase under practical arrangements to be defined by each Member State'.

Technical seminars¹⁰ enable all relevant stakeholders to analyse this issue from three particular perspectives: *fundamental rights, intercultural dialogue* and *active citizenship*.

2.1 Fundamental Rights

Fundamental rights lie at the heart of European legislation. According to Article 6 TUE, "the Union recognises the rights, freedoms and principles set out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union [...] which shall have the same legal value as the Treaties". The Charter, which is legally binding, embodies the Fundamental Rights as guaranteed by the ECHR¹¹ and as they result from the constitutional traditions common to Member States.

The EU Treaty enables the EU to accede the ECHR. This accession will strengthen the coherence of the protection of fundamental rights in Europe as European law will be submitted to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights.

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) plays a key role in collecting and analysing data on the situation of fundamental rights in the Member States¹².

With respect to immigrants, the aim of the 2009 annual work programme for Community actions of the EIF¹³ is to encourage respect for equal rights and opportunities. Transnational projects directly engaging immigrants and their associations in the exchange of various aspects of integration with host societies, such as common values, the understanding of diverse cultures and dialogue between religions, are promoted.

⁹ Council Document 14368/08. The Commission will present annual reports on the implementation of the Pact, including in relation to integration policies.

¹⁰ Such as the Tallin technical seminar on 'European Cooperation mechanisms' which took place on 19th and 20th February 2009.

¹¹ European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

¹² Such as the EU-wide survey of ethnic minority and immigrant groups' experiences of discrimination: http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/products/publications_reports/publications_reports_en.htm

¹³ http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/funding/integration

National programmes implementing the EIF provide actions which put the Common Basic Principles for immigrant integration policy in the EU (CBPs)¹⁴ into practice¹⁵. Such initiatives are primarily targeted at newly-arrived third-country nationals and include programmes and activities designed to introduce such individuals to the host society and to help them acquire basic knowledge regarding the host society's language, history, institutions, socio-economic features, cultural life and fundamental norms and values.

In discussing the Fund's future priorities, participants at the second meeting of the European Integration Forum¹⁶ underlined the need for further projects that translate equal rights into equal opportunities.

2.2 Intercultural dialogue

Effective intercultural dialogue contributes to building mutual understanding, reducing prejudice, enhancing the participation of immigrants in the formulation of integration policy, finding common ground, and agreeing on values at both EU and national levels.

Intercultural exchange must be enhanced, since it can represent an opportunity for sharing views between immigrants and host societies and for preventing misunderstandings of values within a diverse society. Due to the increased interaction between people of different backgrounds, solutions are often found for combating actual or presumed conflicts of values.

Within dialogue platforms, information materials and activities can be provided in order to inform immigrants and host societies about their respective rights and duties.

The Council Conclusions of June 2007¹⁷ underlined the relevance of intercultural dialogue in fostering the successful integration of citizens of different origin, culture and religion in Europe and in counteracting racism and extremism. Since then, two sub-meetings have been held: one in the UK, on the theme of resilient communities, and the other in DK on the subject of institutionalised dialogue and dialogue with young people.

The 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue has mobilised new civil society platforms and promoted several actions in this field¹⁸. A new Open Method of Coordination (OMC) on culture was launched and the Platform for Intercultural Europe¹⁹ was funded to provide greater coherence in various issues related to diversity.

In addition, the 3rd edition of the Handbook on Integration analyses dialogue platforms as a tool for negotiating integration. Good practices are identified which allow an open and respectful exchange of views and assist participants in recognising common ground for cooperation regarding the needs of their community.

¹⁴ Council Document 14615/04

¹⁵ Priority 1 of the EIF Strategic guidelines, C(2007) 3926 final

¹⁶ Held in Brussels on 12-13 November 2009. The final report of the conference: <http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/policy/legal.cfm>

¹⁷ Council Document 10504/07

¹⁸ <http://www.interculturaldialogue2008.eu/>

¹⁹ <http://www.intercultural-europe.org>

The EIF has been instrumental in the creation or development of dialogue platforms, through both national programmes and Community actions²⁰.

Efforts aiming at identifying interesting initiatives using ICT for intercultural exchange are also taking place²¹.

2.3 Active citizenship

'Active citizenship' initiatives and civic education foster individual participation in community and democratic life and can therefore facilitate the concrete understanding of the values and rights of individuals in the society. Practices of active citizenship and measures facilitating empowerment and participation of immigrants encourage the exercise of rights, the promotion of values and knowledge of responsibilities which foster a shared sense of belonging in a diverse society.

The 3rd edition of the Handbook examines the links between the acquisition of nationality and the integration processes. The increase in participation and interest among the general public, as part of the facilitation of naturalisation procedures, has taken on greater importance in certain Member States. Once nationality has been acquired, the encouragement of active citizenship among both new and old citizens allows them to shape a shared future for their societies. Active citizenship binds together the multiple identities of its members, thereby enabling them to contribute fully to the economic, social, cultural, civic and political life of the country.

Moreover, the EWSI brings together more than 600 initiatives ranging from good practices implemented at national level to initiatives organised in cities across Europe on issues related to active citizenship. The link to the 'European Union Democracy Observatory on Citizenship'²², a transnational project financed by the EIF, is particularly useful as it contributes to updating and understanding current trends in citizenship policies.

Ongoing projects funded within the 6th and 7th Framework Programme for research in the field of social integration of migrants, citizenship and cultural dialogue (Social Sciences and Humanities Programme – SSH) are also to be mentioned in this context.

3. UNDERSTANDING THE TWO-WAY PROCESS: BUILDING AND GATHERING GENERAL PUBLIC AND MIGRANTS PERCEPTIONS

Gathering citizens' perceptions of immigration and integration processes, *building a true image of immigration* and *collecting immigrants' views* on their integration experiences are key elements in the better shaping and targeting of policies concerning integration.

²⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/funding/integration/funding_integration_en.htm. The 'Direct' and the 'Miracle' transnational projects addressed the issue of inter-religious dialogue and the role of religious leaders in the integration processes from a different perspective

²¹ <http://ipts.jrc.ec.europa.eu/publications/pub.cfm?id=1888>

²² <http://eudo-citizenship.eu/>

The November 2008 Council Conclusions²³ encouraged NCPIs, with the support of the Commission, to continue working on 'the general public's perception of migrants and legal immigration'.

As already stressed in the Commission's previous report on integration²⁴, **media** and **awareness raising** are two key tools for both gathering and building perceptions on immigration and integration processes.

The 3rd edition of the Handbook also considers the role of mass media in immigrant integration and the importance of public awareness-raising and migrant empowerment. The media possess powerful tools for influencing attitudes and providing information. Through awareness-raising, policymakers and practitioners can increase the general public's knowledge of integration issues. Awareness contributes to empowerment and thus develops more informed opinions on diversity.

Actions which provide for the **involvement of the host society in the integration process** and which address effective ways of raising awareness and actively involving the host society are a specific priority for EIF funding²⁵.

Good practices collected in the 3rd edition of the Handbook and on the EWSI demonstrate how successful experiences of awareness-raising begin with a mapping phase, where surveys and polls provide a solid baseline of the general public's perceptions which can be regularly evaluated.

Surveys at all levels of governance, particularly those that aim to assess the actions and thoughts of immigrants and the host society concerning integration, should be further promoted. In order to facilitate comparisons and transnational cooperation, there is a need better harmonised statistics, more reliable cross-national surveys and reviews that take greater account of immigrants' perceptions.

EU opinion surveys for integration are collected in the Eurobarometer²⁶ and in surveys conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights²⁷. The EIF has founded transnational projects whose aim is to provide data on integration processes: one example being the Migrant Integration Policy Index²⁸ project which inter alia examines perceptions on specific issues and particularly immigrant rights and anti-discrimination policies - from a public support perspective.

In the EIF's 2009 annual work programme for Community actions²⁹, the Commission proposed to further promote the knowledge and understanding of migrants' contributions to European societies, as well as the benefits produced by legal migration. It further wished to enhance the capacity of the media to reflect the increasing diversity in European societies and

²³ Council Document 15251/08

²⁴ SEC(2008) 2626 of October 2008

²⁵ EIF strategic guidelines C(2007) 3926 final

²⁶ Special Eurobarometers in 2008 (296) and 2009 (317) on Discrimination in the Union; a flash Eurobarometer (217) for the 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue.

²⁷ EU-MIDIS, 1st EU-wide survey of immigrants and ethnic minorities, http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/eu-midis/eumidis_details_en.htm

²⁸ <http://www.integrationindex.eu/>

²⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/funding/integration/funding_integration_en.htm

to foster an understanding of the processes and individual stories of immigration and integration.

The EWSI and the Forum are precious tools in that they gather direct feedback from civil society on how immigrants and nationals perceive the integration situations and processes.

4. NEW EU TOOLS OF INTEGRATION POLICY GOVERNANCE: MODULES AND INDICATORS

The European Integration Forum and the EWSI were the last mechanisms announced by the Commission in its 2005 Communication 'A Common Agenda for Integration'³⁰ which had to be implemented in order to complete the Common European Framework on Integration. Together with the NCPIs network, these two complementary instruments help to develop a community of integration practitioners that share information and good practices.

4.1 European Modules to coordinate and support integration policies

Three series of technical seminars³¹ to prepare three editions of the Handbook on Integration for policy-makers and practitioners have resulted in a European infrastructure for the exchange of information and practice on a wide range of thematic and governance issues. This exercise will form the basis for the development of a new instrument of cooperation: the *European Modules for Migrant Integration*.

In the Council Conclusions of November 2008, the NCPIs, with the support of the Commission, were invited to develop European modules. The Stockholm Programme provides for 'the identification of joint practices and European modules to support the integration process, including essential elements, such as introductory courses and language classes, a strong commitment by the host community and the active participation of immigrants in all aspects of collective life'.

Common European modules are intended to constitute an established point of reference that can be adapted to different contexts and can contribute to the design of integration programmes across Europe. The modules should be the building blocks for comprehensive strategies covering various aspects of the integration process. They should be a tool at the disposal of policy makers and practitioners. With the support of technical assistance, European modules will enhance the mutual learning process, systematise existing expertise and benefit further from the existing European standards which form part of the Common Basic Principles and the EU legal framework. They can be used to design and improve integration strategies within Member States at both national and local level.

The involvement of immigrants themselves in this process must be promoted further, as it can contribute to the improvement of the phases of elaboration and implementation in the European modules. The Forum can contribute to this by ensuring that point of view of civil society organisations and migrants' associations is heard on issues that are relevant to the success or failure of specific integration measures. The EWSI, by collecting the good practices of practitioners directly working in the field, can be a source of information to be involved in drawing up the modules.

³⁰ COM (2005) 389

³¹ Financed first by the INTI Programme and then by the EIF

Ongoing transnational projects financed by the EIF³² will also provide the initial building blocks for the modules. The Commission has selected several projects aimed at promoting mutual learning and exchange of good practices, plus other dissemination measures and proposals at EU level. The projects focus on issues such as *linguistic integration in primary schools, training courses for police and social workers, integration and naturalisation tests, secondary education for young migrant women, training of religious leaders as integration agents, empowerment of actors working on the issue of health, and policies for migrant elders*.

4.2 European Indicators to evaluate the results of integration policies

Another key aspect of policy governance at EU level, as confirmed in the Stockholm Programme, is the evaluation and monitoring of the integration strategies and measures. The NCPIs, with the support of the Commission, gave a new impetus to the '**identification of relevant reference indicators**' which could be used for the evaluation of the results of integration policies'.

The importance of monitoring and evaluating integration policies has been recognised since the very beginning of EU co-operation in this policy field³³. Various projects introduced by the INTI Programme and by the EIF were created in order to develop a common index³⁴.

The Commission encourages the use of indicators to identify areas of data deficiency and to formulate or re-formulate priorities through the assessment of the EIF national programmes and projects. Indeed, Member States have an obligation to foresee the 'development of indicators and evaluation methodologies to assess progress, adjust policies and measures and to facilitate co-ordination of comparative learning'. As part of their multiannual planning, all Member States must therefore measure and monitor policies and activities, and develop clearly-defined objectives and assessment instruments, at all levels of integration governance.

In June 2009, a conference was held in Berlin which further advanced the discussion on this issue at high level. Recommendations as to the process for identifying core indicators as a basis for monitoring and as a complement to the evaluation of the results of integration policies in each Member State were collected in a multilateral document and served as the basis for an expert meeting on the integration of new arrivals, which was held in Malmö on 14-16 December 2009. A number of key policy fields of relevance for monitoring the outcome of integration policies were identified, namely: employment, education, social inclusion and active citizenship. In further work on the core indicators due attention will be given to work undertaken on indicator development in other policy areas. The Presidency's conference conclusions on 'indicators and monitoring of the outcome of integration policies' stress that the policy areas and core indicators identified will be the subject of a further process during the Spanish Presidency of the EU and will feature among the topics addressed at the ministerial conference in Zaragoza.

5. PROMOTING A CROSS-CUTTING INTEGRATION POLICY

³² http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/funding/integration/funding_integration_en.htm

³³ CBP n. 11

³⁴ Recently, the 'OPC-Outcomes for Policy Change Common European Monitoring' builds on and improves the MIPEX – Migrant integration Policy Index, adding new indicators and priority areas, such as education, and covering all MS.

Over the past few years, the integration of immigrants has become a key dimension of policy-making and implementation across a wide range of policies, in particular in the context of *employment, social policies* and *education*.

The evolving economic crisis has had severe implications for employment, resulting in widespread high levels of unemployment for immigrant workers. With approximately two million third-country nationals unemployed in the EU, immigrants are among the most vulnerable groups of the population³⁵. The risks of exploitation, economic inactivity and exclusion are much higher, particularly for specific categories of less educated immigrants, women and those who have recently arrived.

The integration dimension is promoted as part of **EU Employment and Social Policies** through the European Employment Strategy, the Social Inclusion Strategy and the fight against discrimination. The Integrated Employment Guidelines 2008-2010 call on the Member States to pay due attention to the integration of immigrants in EU labour markets. Moreover, the European Social Fund (ESF) prioritises action to increase the participation of immigrants in employment, thereby strengthening their economic and social integration. Furthermore, the European Strategy for Social Protection and Social Inclusion sets out a framework for defining common policy objectives in this particular field. The Social Protection Committee will continue to mainstream social aspects of migration in 2010. The commitments made as a follow-up to the Vichy conference included an agreement by Member States to promote 'the introduction or development of mechanisms to encourage due consideration for diversity at work and combat discrimination'. The Commission is monitoring the implementation of this anti-discrimination legislation³⁶, while at the same time promoting a range of actions funded by the Progress Programme, namely awareness-raising campaigns and providing support to a broad range of civil society organisations representing population groups facing discrimination.

In relation to **education**, it should be noted that immigration is a phenomenon which is having a growing impact on school systems in the EU. While some immigrants are exemplary in terms of academic excellence, there is consistent evidence that migrant pupils have lower levels of educational achievement and leave school earlier than their native peers.

Addressing these challenges, the European Council conclusions of 13-14 March 2008 urged Member States to take practical action to improve the achievement levels of learners with a migrant background³⁷, and the November 2008 Council Conclusions pointed out that the education of immigrant children should be a priority from the time they arrive in the host country.

In July 2008 the Commission published a Green Paper on Migration and Mobility, which was the start of a public consultation on the challenges and opportunities created by migration in European school systems. The need for more policy coordination with other policies, and the need to strengthen the equity dimension in education, including through combating school segregation and strengthening anti-discrimination mechanisms, were among the main challenges highlighted by respondents. Policy priorities identified by the consultation include the development of policies for language learning, partnerships with parents and communities,

³⁵ EUROSTAT 2009 (qo2)

³⁶ The Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EC) and the Employment Equality Directive (2000/78/EC).

³⁷ Council Document 7652/08

developing teacher education, strengthening intercultural education, increasing access to quality early childhood education and care, combating school segregation and increasing quality in underperforming schools, as well as providing additional support through tutoring, mentoring or guidance. Council Conclusions building on the outcomes of the consultation have recently been adopted³⁸.

The new strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ("ET 2020") included the education of immigrants as one of the short-term priorities of the open method of coordination. The NCPIs have also engaged in this reflection on the education of immigrant youth and identified good practices, which are collected in the 3rd edition of Handbook.

As regards financial instruments, the Lifelong Learning Programme, the ESF and the EIF all support projects related to intercultural education, school integration of migrant pupils and social inclusion for disadvantaged young people.

The dimension of integration has also been promoted in the context of the i2010 and e-Inclusion initiative. The Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme - ICT Policy Support Programme has financed a thematic network for social integration and cultural diversity (*Bridge IT*) which aims at identifying good practices in areas such as ICT for immigrant's jobs and their participation to the economy, ICT for empowerment of civil society and social capital.

With respect to access to **health**, the Commission published in October 2009 a Communication "Solidarity in Health: Reducing Health inequalities in the EU" in which it drew attention to the fact that people from migrant backgrounds, experience particularly poor average levels of health for reasons including poor housing, poor nutrition and health related behaviours as well as discrimination, stigmatisation and barriers to accessing health and other services.³⁹ Initiatives will be taken forward in collaboration with Member States to raise awareness and promote actions to improve access and appropriateness of health services, health promotion and preventive care for migrants. As a follow-up to the Vichy conference, Member States undertook to enhance information, prevention and, if necessary, law enforcement measures concerning acts of discrimination or violence which could be committed against migrant women. In order to **promote gender equality**, migrant women will continue to be considered as a specific priority of the EIF⁴⁰. One of the main outcomes of the discussions which took place during the two meetings of the Forum was an increase in funding for this specific target, by not only considering women as beneficiaries, but also promoting projects that included migrant women as actors in integration projects and activities.

In order to better ensure an effective right to **family reunification**, following the Commission report on the implementation of the Directive on family reunification⁴¹ a wider consultation will be launched, in the form of a Green Paper, on the future of the family reunification regime. One relevant aspect of this debate is to ensure that the 'integration conditions' required by some Member States are aimed at facilitating integration and not at preventing the observance of this right.

³⁸ 2009/C 301/07

³⁹ COM(2009)567

⁴⁰ An ongoing project lead by the Mediterranean gender institute addressed the specific needs of young migrant women in secondary education with the aim of enhance their integration processes.

⁴¹ COM(2008) 610

Integration policy is cross-cutting not only with respect to other policy areas, but also with regard to the various levels of integration policy governance.

The **fundamental role of local actors** must continue to be recognised. Cities play an essential part in shaping the urban interaction between immigrants and the host communities and in building neighbouring policies which support integration. The involvement of immigrants in local life will have to be further encouraged. Relevant ongoing projects were financed by the EIF, such as 'Inti-cities'⁴² and the 'DIVE - Diversity and equality in European cities'⁴³ which aim at benchmarking and peer reviewing successful integration governance structures in European cities.

The Commission will continue to ensure that the partnership principle⁴⁴ is respected and implemented in practice in every project financed by the EIF. Moreover, the 2009 Annual Work Programme for the EIF provides for promoting 'the role of civil society organisations and the local authorities in shaping integration strategies'⁴⁵ as a matter of priority.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This report underlines the main achievements of the Commission in the light of the most recent Council Conclusions and the Vichy Ministerial Conference on Integration, and it also underscores the measures being taken to consolidate the Common Agenda for Integration.

The Zaragoza Ministerial Conference will provide new input and impulse to a 'second phase' of this common integration framework. It will be the first high level meeting on this issue taking place in the context of the new Treaty. The new legal and policy framework will encourage the development of even more ambitious integration strategies both at EU and at national level.

A relevant challenge lies within the economic and demographic context. The global crisis has implications both for origin and host countries. However, as recognised by the European Council, in the context of the demographic changes that the Union will experience in future with an increased demand for labour, immigration policies will make an important contribution to the Union's economic development and performance in the longer term.

The European Social model has an essential role to play in creating the conditions for the effective integration of migrants. In order to prevent and tackle the marginalisation of immigrants, the EU has to reinforce inclusion policies and to boost measures of integration of immigrants, especially in labour market. Solidarity, respect for human rights and the fight against discrimination have to be further strengthened.

In the Stockholm Programme, the European Council invites the Commission to support Member States' efforts 'through the development of a coordination mechanism involving the Commission and the Member States using a common reference framework'.

⁴² <http://www.intocities.eu/en/>

⁴³ http://www.eurocities.eu/minisites/dive/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=64&Itemid=86

⁴⁴ Art. 10 of Council Decision of 25 June 2007, 2007/435/CE, establishing the EIF

⁴⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/funding/integration/funding_integration_en.htm

The current work on indicators will be a relevant opportunity in this respect encouraging the monitoring and evaluation of integration measures and legislation in order to propose and share improvements in integration strategies.

The elaboration of the European Modules, which will be a reference to support the development of the Member States' activities in this field, will help to shape the new framework and will enable better coordination of national integration policies.

A coordination of national policies should be promoted in this field, in particular by means of incentives and support to Member States.

The Stockholm Programme also highlights that Member States integration policies should be supported through the further development of structures and tools for knowledge exchange and coordination with other relevant policy areas, such as employment, education and social inclusion. This approach will facilitate the mainstreaming of integration priorities in all areas of relevance.

The existing instruments of dialogue and exchange for integration policy governance at EU level – particularly those involving civil society organisations – should be reinforced.

The role of the National Contact Points on Integration as a place for exchange of expertise and shaping of future policy initiatives should be enhanced.

The European Integration Forum and the European Web Site on Integration will be key tools in the development of new initiatives. By means of these two instruments, the voice of civil society will be taken into consideration in relevant integration proposals at EU level.

In parallel, all existing instruments for exchange of information and good practices should be enriched. The third edition of the Handbook is a compilation of good practices in key integration areas, such as mass media, awareness raising and migrant empowerment, dialogue platforms, citizenship, youth, education and the labour market. As described above, this learning process should be taken a step further with the development of the European Modules for Migrant Integration.

Future concrete and ambitious strategies will focus on new integration priorities to be defined within the framework of the Stockholm Programme.