

Integration of immigrants in the European Union

European Parliament resolution on strategies and means for the integration of immigrants in the European Union (2006/2056(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission Communication of 1 September 2005 entitled 'A Common Agenda for Integration - Framework for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the European Union' (COM(2005)0389),
 - having regard to Article 13 of the EC Treaty,
 - having regard to the EC Treaty, which confers on the Community powers and responsibilities in the spheres of immigration and asylum, and in particular to Article 63(3)(a) thereof,
 - having regard to the Presidency Conclusions of the Tampere European Council of 15 and 16 October 1999, of the Laeken European Council of 14 and 15 December 2001, of the Seville European Council of 21 and 22 June 2002 and of the Thessaloniki European Council of 19 and 20 June 2003, which stress the importance of developing cooperation and exchange of information within the framework of the newly-established group of national contact points on integration with a view in particular to strengthening coordination of relevant policies at national and EU level,
 - having regard to the Hague Programme adopted by the European Council on 4 November 2004, which set the objectives to be implemented in the area of freedom, security and justice in the period 2005-2010,
 - having regard to the informal ministerial meeting in Groningen on 9 November 2004, where ministers responsible for integration policy met for the first time,
 - having regard to the Common Basic Principles for immigrant integration policy in the European Union adopted by the Council of the European Union on 19 November 2004,¹
 - having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and in particular Articles 18, 20, 21 and 22 thereof,
 - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (A6-0190/2006),
- A. whereas the challenge of integrating immigrants is one to which the EU has risen before; whereas a quarter of a century ago, most of its immigrants were southern Europeans; whereas today, southern Europe is a thriving part of the Union and its citizens are no longer perceived as immigrants, though at the time many considered them alien and

¹ Document 14615/04 of 19 November 2004.

'unintegratable'; whereas the accession of their countries of origin to the Union strengthened the EU as a whole; whereas likewise, citizens of the new Member States are now full EU citizens,

- B. whereas today the Union faces an integration challenge of a different sort, in that it can no longer assume that most of its immigrants will eventually become integrated as their countries of origin join the Union,
- C. whereas the number of immigrants in the EU is estimated at 40 million, and their descendants total millions more; whereas this growing population is extraordinarily diverse but confronted by similar problems: their rate of labour-force participation is well below average and their success rates in school lag markedly behind; whereas they are politically under-represented at all levels of government, including in Member State political parties and in European institutions,
- D. whereas although these over 40 million immigrants might be seen as the EU's 26th Member State (and its fifth largest in terms of population), and the EU's concern and efforts to integrate this population should be equivalent to EU commitments to integrate accession countries, the Union has, in trying to overcome this integration challenge - the failure of which could undermine the EU socially, economically, and politically - committed precious few resources; whereas not only must long-term funding be allocated to the new European Fund for the Integration of third-country nationals (COM(2005)0123), but it should be ensured that the relevant Commission DGs earmark of their funding towards EU integration policy,
- E. whereas the European Union's commitment to integration has long been curbed by the commonly-held idea that 'integration is local'; whereas, in fact, integration is just as global in its implications, especially when it fails, since the failure by a single Member State to implement successful integration policies can have adverse consequences for the Union as a whole, for example:
- under-employment of immigrants, weakening the entire Union economy and thwarting fulfilment of the Lisbon agenda;
 - high- and low-skilled workers needed by the EU, seeing how inhospitable Europe can be to them, being driven into the underground economy or into the arms of the EU's economic competitors;
 - absence of effective integration policies, leading to negative perceptions of immigrants and to defensive immigration policies;
 - fear among citizens subverting respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities;
 - perceptions and prejudices about immigrants who have not integrated undermining the Union's successful enlargement,
- F. whereas the success of integration will strengthen the Union's economy in the face of global competition; whereas the Union, while cognizant of the need to prevent brain

drain, will attract the workers and entrepreneurs its economies need, as well as the scientists and students who are the bedrock of its ability to innovate; whereas EU cities will be safer and communities stronger where a focused, consistent and adequately-funded integration policy applies; whereas xenophobic tendencies will be diminished and respect for the fundamental rights of all fortified; whereas Europe's position in the world will be enhanced,

- G. whereas local, regional and national authorities play an essential role and whereas their responsibilities in areas such as town planning, housing and education have a direct impact on the integration process; whereas such authorities should become more closely involved in the European debate; whereas through the Community Structural Funds the European Union provides important support for initiatives taken at these levels,
- H. whereas there is no such thing as one clear-cut solution for successful integration in the European Union; whereas local, regional, and national authorities (and especially urban centres, where the majority of immigrants is concentrated) should have the ability and funds to determine and implement precise integration measures, and Member States and the Union as a whole must zealously develop integration strategies and monitor the effectiveness and outcomes of these integration measures in a more active and effective way, thereby ensuring the implementation of integration strategies whose outcomes advance the Union's common interests, and to this end the Commission must carry out the proposed research to map levels of participation and integration across the EU,
- I. whereas integration is a 'two-way process' that presupposes both the immigrants' willingness to, and responsibility in, integrating into their host society and EU citizens' willingness to accept and include migrants, and consists in integrated actions aimed at influencing the behaviour of both immigrants and host societies on all relevant levels and mobilising resources on both sides in order to implement policies; whereas this two-way process involves a mutual commitment, with both rights and obligations, for the host society and immigrants,
- J. whereas the priorities that guide EU actions in the field should include:
 - improving the employment prospects of immigrants and reducing the employment gap with the host population, including through the provision of appropriate information and training programmes by public authorities and social partners and the recognition of immigrants' training and professional qualifications, while taking into account particularly the situation of migrant women, among whom the unemployment rate is often higher,
 - enhancing educational and language opportunities for immigrants and their descendants, including through funding from Commission DG Education and Culture, eventually eliminating the performance gap with others, recognising, *inter alia*, that children of immigrants studying in a different language and trying to adapt to new customs may encounter more difficulties in the learning process than their schoolmates, which may, in turn, lead to difficulties in their adaptation to and integration into society, and also recognising that even migrants who already have high-level qualifications may still need to adapt them to what is required in the host society,

- increasing political and civic education, participation and representation of immigrants in all appropriate domains of governance, civil society and decision- and policy-making,
- fighting racism, xenophobia and discrimination against immigrants, especially in the workplace, schools, housing, health, public services, the mass media and politics, increasing mutual respect and understanding of each other's similarities and differences and facilitating access to information on equal rights and opportunities tailored to linguistic needs,

whereas the EU institutions should ensure that their well-meant initiatives do not simply become symbolic policies with no added value,

- K. whereas promotion of fundamental rights, equal opportunities for all and non-discrimination are of key importance to integration; whereas the proposal to make 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All and the plans for a European Year of Intercultural Dialogue in 2008 are major awareness-raising initiatives that will help to achieve these objectives,
- L. whereas there is a clear link between a successful EU integration policy and the European Union's endeavour to develop a legal immigration and migration policy; whereas the first practical step should be to improve coordination between the authorities responsible for the admission of immigrants and the authorities responsible for the integration of immigrants,
1. Urges the Commission to ensure the effective implementation of the existing Directives linked to integration, notably Council Directives 2003/86/EC of 22 September 2003 on the right to family reunification¹, 2003/109/EC of 25 November 2003 concerning the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents², 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin³ and 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation⁴; whereas many Member States lag behind in effectively implementing these Directives, and it is critical for the Commission to monitor more rigorously both the transposition of integration-related Directives and the effectiveness of administrative practices that implement the relevant legislation in the day-to-day lives of immigrants;
 2. Welcomes the Commission proposal to establish the abovementioned European Fund for the Integration of third-country nationals for the period 2007-2013 and urges that use of this fund follow six concrete principles, namely:
 - (a) a single annual focal point should define disbursements, allowing the Commission to develop a critical mass of expertise and more rigorously to assess, evaluate, and invest in programmes; target investment areas should include reducing the employment gap between immigrants and others, improving immigrant participation and performance in education, advancing the education and

¹ OJ L 251, 3.10.2003, p. 12.

² OJ L 16, 23.1.2004, p. 44.

³ OJ L 180, 19.7.2000, p. 22.

⁴ OJ L 303, 2.12.2000, p. 16.

employment prospects of women, language and introductory programmes, health, housing and urban living and enhancing political and civic participation of immigrants;

- (b) the fund should favour initiatives with the greatest potential to be broadly applied throughout the Union;
 - (c) the Commission should dedicate a reasonable and defined percentage of the fund's resources each year to underwriting evaluations by independent experts of the effectiveness of the programs financed by the Commission;
 - (d) once these experts have identified promising programmes, immediate priority should be given to disseminating and adapting best practices from these programmes for use in other Member States;
 - (e) efforts should be supported among Member States to coordinate their integration efforts and exchange best practices should be supported;
 - (f) there should be a focus on the integration of newcomers, ensuring nevertheless that programmes that target second and third-generation immigrant descendants also receive funding; programmes aiming to help refugees as they prepare to enter and integrate into EU societies should also be considered;
3. Welcomes the reference in the abovementioned Commission communication to the Common Basic Principles (CBPs); is of the firm belief that the CBPs represent a sound set of recommendations which should be the foundation of EU integration policy; regrets that Member States have failed to follow up the CBPs in any meaningful way since their adoption in 2004; calls on the Finnish Presidency to put the CBPs back at the heart of the agenda, especially those principles relating to employment (no. 3), interaction (no. 7) and participation (no. 9);
 4. Welcomes the Commission's proposal to promote an annual Integration Forum to facilitate the exchange of best practice, especially in policies where the EU has a limited role to play but where some Member States operate policies which could offer guidance to others; considers that this Forum should seek the participation of representatives from all the authorities involved in integration, being local, regional, national, or EU authorities, as well as of immigrants themselves;
 5. Calls on the Commission to clarify, expand and coordinate responsibilities for integration across DGs, including reviving and maintaining a cross-DG working group on integration and defining the precise integration responsibilities among the various DGs; further calls for action to be taken to make the new European Integration Fund and the European Social Fund complementary;
 6. Welcomes the Commission's recognition of the need for research into and a mapping exercise of Member States' integration policies and levels of participation of immigrants; considers that this information is a pre-requisite for any EU policy aimed at fostering better integration in the EU and that, for such a mapping exercise to be of use, the terms of the EU debate on integration need to be clarified, given that the word 'integration' itself is open to many different interpretations;

7. Calls on the Commission to create a permanent contact group of immigrant representatives, experts, NGOs and others to advise it on all policies related to integration;
8. Calls on the Commission to place special emphasis on promoting immigration and diversity in the EU and on mainstreaming integration at all times through its communication strategy and initiatives; calls on the Commission and Member States to launch information and awareness-raising campaigns to improve understanding of migration and of the economic and social contribution immigrants make to society;
9. Calls on the Commission to establish rigorous monitoring mechanisms for the evaluation of integration programmes in the Member States, including through the use of independent experts, and to launch a rigorous and practical biannual report on migration and integration that:
 - focuses on rigorous indices that measure Member State performance with respect to the CBPs on integration,
 - makes Member State reporting of accurate and complete data obligatory; in the absence of such data, alternative means of gathering data consistent with the Report's indices should be developed,
 - enhances the role of national contact points and their cooperation with independent experts,
 - looks to the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report and the European Inclusion Index as models,
 - is released at the annual meeting of EU integration ministers;
10. Encourages the Commission to consult, as appropriate, migrant communities in defining and implementing European aid and development policies in their home countries;
11. Asks the Commission to multiply research and analysis initiatives aimed at understanding what works in integration and to ambitiously expand effective efforts to disseminate best practices in cooperation with Member States and local authorities, not only through the proposed website but by as many other reasonable means as possible;
12. Calls on the Commission and Member States to utilise the broad potential of Commission delegations and consular authorities throughout the world to assist in integrating potential immigrants through familiarising them with EU and Member State culture, history, language and civic rights and responsibilities;
13. Stresses the importance of the composition of the European institutions' staff and the Member States' public administrations reflecting the composition of the Union's and the Member States' populations;
14. Urges the Council to use the bridging clause of Article 67(2), second indent, of the Treaty to give Parliament co-decision powers on integration and legal migration and qualified majority voting in the Council; considers that it is important for Members to have the power of co-decision on integration policy, given that they represent the political voice of

the EU, and considers, therefore, that they should represent the opinions of both immigrants and citizens and should share responsibility for making integration policy in the EU legislative process;

15. Urges the Council to make permanent the annual meeting of integration ministers, inaugurated by the Dutch Council Presidency at Groningen in November 2004;
16. Calls on the Member States, when making their final considerations on the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, seriously to consider a role for the agency in promoting trust and good relations within neighbourhoods and to develop this role organically through the successive annual programmes envisaged for the agency;
17. Urges the Council to reconsider the Commission proposal to apply the open method of coordination to integration policy; in this respect, calls for the involvement of Parliament in the whole procedure;
18. Urges the Council to establish a comprehensive and forward-looking framework directive on legal migration, with due regard to the need for integration;
19. Encourages Member States to assign responsibility to a single cabinet minister to monitor immigrant integration policies, to ensure that policies are mainstreamed throughout agencies at all levels of government and to consider the appointment of a High Commissioner on Integration or an Integration Ombudsman in each Member State to coordinate implementation of policies, disseminate information to migrants, review migrant complaints and take action to correct problems;
20. Calls on every Member State to provide an audit of all government agencies at every level that have or should have responsibilities related to immigrant integration;
21. Calls on the Commission to examine the possibility of incorporating the integration of third-country nationals in the future multiannual programmes of the Fundamental Rights Agency;
22. Calls on Member States to encourage the political participation of immigrants and discourage their political and social isolation; in this regard, calls on the Commission to carry out a legal review of existing provisions relating to European civic citizenship in the various Member States as well as of current Member State practices regarding the right of long-term resident immigrants to vote in local and municipal elections;
23. Calls on Member States to establish transparent, humane, fast and reasonable procedures for the granting of long-term resident status, for family reunification and for the naturalization of long-term resident immigrants and their children, taking into account especially the fact that many of those children are born in the territory of a Member State;
24. Draws the Member States' attention to the dependent legal status of immigrant women joining their spouses under family reunification and calls on Member States to review their legislation so as to ensure that spouses and children are granted an individual status and work permit independent of that of the principal legal status holder at the earliest opportunity in order to guarantee and protect their rights fully and facilitate their social integration;

25. Encourages political parties, trade unions and civil society as a whole at national level to include immigrants as full members at all levels of their respective structures;
26. Is in favour of integration programmes applied by certain Member States involving a mutual commitment by the host country and immigrants; hopes that immigrants can in this way be made more aware of the European Union's fundamental values and be enabled at the same time to acquire basic knowledge on the functioning of the host society; stresses the importance of encouraging the learning of the host society's language and organising civic education courses;
27. Encourages Member States to strengthen anti-discrimination and anti-racism laws, enforce existing ones and consider appropriate affirmative action legislation for migrants in all appropriate fields, using those Member States where affirmative action has been a success as a guide;
28. Calls on Member States, in order especially to prevent the potential maltreatment of immigrant women, to provide them with easily accessible information as regards the legislation of the host country on gender equality and the rights and protection that derive from that legislation, including the available legal and administrative remedies;
29. Calls on Member States and regional and local authorities to stimulate interaction between immigrants and their host society by promoting, inter alia, shared fora, intercultural dialogue, seminars, exhibitions and cultural and sports activities; further calls for the creation of new, or the support of existing, structures to allow immigrants to integrate into the host society in order to avoid the social exclusion of newcomers and of those who have already settled but who find it difficult to integrate; moreover, calls for support to be provided to migrant organizations in their territories and for the strengthening of ties with the migrants' home countries;
30. Encourages Member States to make provision for integration-related measures for refugees during the reception phase, such as language courses or voluntary work activities, taking into consideration the fact that the integration process for refugees starts during the reception phase;
31. Stresses the importance of developing a comprehensive framework for European civic citizenship with the cooperation of Parliament, the Council and the Commission;
32. Stresses the importance of establishing annual hearings on integration with the participation of Parliament, national parliaments and civil society, especially NGOs and immigrant associations, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the Union's integration efforts and assess developments regarding immigrant integration at Member State level;
33. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments of the Member States.