Chapter 4

Migration and Social Cohesion: Enabling Integration

For decades after the Second World War, the belief prevailed in most of Europe that immigration was not a permanent phenomenon. Guest workers were by definition temporary. Refugees often were left in limbo, unable to work, unclear whether and if they could settle permanently. The corollary to this non-immigration presumption was an almost universal failure to develop policies for the integration of immigrants and their descendants. The Netherlands and some of the Nordic countries have been the most noteworthy exceptions in this regard.

In the 1990s, this started to change in many member states. But the scale of the integration challenge financially, politically, and in terms of ideas, is far greater than the resources allocated to it. At the level of the European Union, integration has gained greater prominence, and has been the subject of increasing focus by the European Council and the European Commission. Several relevant directives and communications have been issued since 1999; however, the Commission does not yet have a significant legal basis for common action.

Nonetheless, given that immigrant integration has risen to an exigent challenge for the Union as a whole — affecting not only its economic prospects, but also its social cohesion and its strategy for enlargement — there is clearly an overriding political imperative for action both at the EU level and the individual member state level.

The first imperative is to agree on what integration means, and to liberate the term from ideological debates such as those that surround multiculturalism and/or assimilation. Integration flows from the totality of policies and practices that allow societies to close the gap between the rights, status, and opportunities

of natives and immigrants (including their descendants). Whether in the realm of education, the job market, housing, health, social services, or political and civic participation, integration efforts should aim to close the persistent opportunity and outcome gaps that marginalise immigrants and undermine social cohesion. The children of immigrants should have the same chances of success at school and in the labour market as the children of natives, and the same likelihood of achieving goals and ambitions.

Nonetheless, charting a course for successful intervention with respect to integration is especially challenging. A broad range of factors — from the reasons for migrating through to conditions in the host society — impact on integration processes. Legal rights are a prerequisite of integration but an insufficient condition for attainment. Migrants face a range of barriers to integration, including restrictions attached to their immigration status, hostile public attitudes and discrimination.

There are, furthermore, status differences within the migrant population, particularly after waves of regularisations and amnesties for illegal or irregular immigrants. Legalisation creates heterogeneities within the migrant group. This leads, in turn, to insider and outsider status with regard to the labour market and the social security system. The status levels are varied, and call for a multiform response from integration policies: some migrants are newly legalised; others remain illegal by choice or because they do not meet the requirements for legalisation; some previously legal immigrants, for various reasons, relapse to illegality; new illegal immigrants in the meantime arrive, hoping for later legalisation; and there are legally resident but clandestinely employed immigrants.

There are also significant differences between and within migrant groups after arrival; such differences are particularly influenced by age and gender. Although some migrants are not disadvantaged relative to the host population, on average migrants are disproportionately disadvantaged in education, housing, health and civic participation (Spencer and Cooper, 2006). The second generation is usually more integrated but can feel excluded or relatively deprived especially if they compare their own opportunities to those of natives, rather than those of extended family members back in their parents' countries of origin (Stark *et al.*, 2006). Identification with their parents' home country or faith is also common and can hinder full integration. Success of integration is difficult to measure because migrants can be well integrated in one sphere but not in another (Spencer and Cooper, 2006).

Based on these observations, policy makers face four challenges in the realm of integration:

— providing fair and equal access to the labour market at the earliest point in the immigration experience for all migrants and their family members;

— providing access to the educational system, and to specialised language and other classes, at the earliest possible stage in the immigration experience for all family members;

— providing access to the social security system for migrants and their families, contributing according to their ability; and

— enabling the fullest participation of immigrants in the political and social life of their new country, and developing the notion of *EU Multicultural Citizenship* as a long-term holistic framework.

There are many other areas in which action is called for by governments at all levels. Among the areas where sustained policy intervention is required are housing and health care. Innovative approaches must also be developed to address integration challenges specifically linked to gender and faith, while obstacles confronting the second and third generation descendants of immigrants deserve special attention. And as with all public policy, constant monitoring, evaluation and adjustment of policies are essential.

In order for all immigration and integration policies and practices to work more effectively than they do now, it is necessary to engage migrant organisations, associations and networks. This was perhaps the most consistent finding across all the analyses conducted for this project, in nearly every policy field. The scope for action in this regard is summarised in chapter 6.

Fair, Equal and Early Access to the Labour Markets

Employment remains the single most effective prerequisite to integration. A set of studies on the impact of cultural versus economic factors on the integration of migrants in the Netherlands concluded that labour market factors are dominant and have a greater impact than any other policy intervention. Immigrants with jobs are more closely bonded to their host society: they learn the language at higher rates, become embedded in social and cultural networks, and often start their own businesses, building on their work experience. Equally, employed migrants contribute to a positive public image of immigrants (i.e. as hard-working, rather than as a drain on public resources).

At present, too many obstacles stand in the way of immigrants who seek jobs, and as a result their employment rates are consistently far below those of natives in many (though not all) EU member states at almost all skill levels[1]. This stands in sharp contrast to the situation in the United States, where employment rates of immigrants, especially the unskilled ones, are much higher than those of natives.

In this realm, unlike others related to integration, the necessary policy tools are readily at hand. In many EU countries, the main impediments immigrants face are labour market rigidities, incomplete recognition of degrees and/or inappropriate skills acquired outside of the EU by receiving societies, and discrimination. Breaking down the barriers to employment, therefore, should be the highest priority for European policy makers.

We therefore recommend that member states:

• Facilitate access to their labour markets for all newcomers and their family members from the earliest points in their stay (including asylum seekers who do not enter irregularly, after a reasonable waiting period)

• Introduce better links between training and employment, apprenticeships and life-long training schemes, especially for vulnerable groups, including women, young people, and elderly workers

• Establish common standards for the recognition of degrees and qualifications held by immigrants in partnership with sending countries, including the right to an expeditious appeal to an independent body

• Set up the means by which immigrants can challenge discriminatory behaviour efficiently and without risk to their jobs, including protections for informants and investments in (state-sponsored) strategic litigation

• Strengthen anti-discrimination and anti-racism laws and enforce existing ones, and consider appropriate affirmative action legislation for migrants in all appropriate fields, using as a guide the experience of those member states where affirmative action has been a success[2]

• Create robust job-information systems that provide preferential access to job openings to established residents (to reduce public criticism that immigrants are taking jobs that should have gone to citizens)

• Establish integrated support centres (i.e. "one-stop shops") for immigrants — such as the National Support Centre for Immigration in Portugal run by the High Commission for Immigration and Ethnic Minorities (ACIME) — to allow immigrants to address efficiently all work-related (and other integration) obstacles, with the assistance of an independent advocate

Education, Language and Adult Learning

Education is an important pathway to integration for children and adults (See Spencer and Cooper, 2006). The social integration of children occurs first and foremost at school, through the acquisition of new skills and through interaction with other pupils. Adult migrants are more likely to encounter this mechanism of integration informally at work or in social settings, though formal introduction programmes can help them acquire some language skills, social orientation, job training and the opportunity to participate in their new community.

Box 4.1 Immigrants, Language, Learning: What Works?

Education systems in most EU countries have not led to the equality sought by integration. Migrant children are disproportionately represented in secondary schools that do not give access to higher education, in special schools, and among those with lower educational attainment (Luciak, 2004). School-based segregation can be marked, leading to children growing up with little contact with members of other communities.

When do immigrants' children succeed in school? Research has identified a wide range of factors as relevant to education outcomes for migrant pupils. The contributing factors include gender, language, age at immigration, socio-economic background, parents' education level, teaching techniques, discrimination, effective induction, and the school's ethos and experience (Spencer and Cooper, 2006; OECD, 2004; OECD, 2006). Authorities need to ensure that the equal right of migrant children to progress in education is not marred by prejudice or by mistaking language difficulties for learning difficulties. It is imperative that migrant children have the opportunity to learn the language of the host country, but it should not be assumed that this will be sufficient to ensure progress at school. It should be noted however that migrants' attachment to their ethnic culture is not found to have a detrimental impact on performance.

Learning the native language of the host country is a key factor in success in education and in the labour market (Van Ours and Veenman, 2001; Reyneri, 2004; O'Leary *et al.*, 2001; Esser, 2006). The OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment study (PISA) of 2004 confirms that poor language knowledge is one of the main factors associated with the disadvantage experienced by students with a foreign background, whether born in the host country or abroad. Results from Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland show that students who do not speak the language of assessment at home are at least 2.5 times more likely to be in the bottom quarter of performance indicators.

Box 4.1 (contd.)

Migrants' propensity to acquire the host country's language is in turn conditioned by their age at immigration, length of stay, parents' background and educational level (Luciak, 2004; Esser, 2006). Linguistic differences, the value of the migrant's own language as a vehicle for worldwide communication, and the migrant's social distance from mainstream society negatively impact language acquisition. Competency in the language of the migrant's country of origin brings no advantage in terms of host-country educational attainment, and conditions that favour the retention of language of origin usually hinder the acquisition of high competency in the host country language (Esser, 2006). Other studies confirm the importance of starting education in the host country at a young age (Spencer and Cooper, 2006).

While retention of migrants' own language might offer little advantage for educational attainment, it might nevertheless boost the migrant's sense of belonging and access to ethnic networks. There are thus conflicting views on the value of own-language teaching at school, historically a feature of education policy in some member states (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2004). Many parents value teaching minority languages in schools, particularly those who speak such languages at home, but the broader impact of such programmes is less clear (Aarts *et al.*, 2004).

The following recommendations address the critical role of education in integration.

- ## Provide housing opportunities that allow for better integration

In order to reduce segregation in schools, authorities need to address the housing segregation that is one of its primary causes (Spencer and Cooper, 2006). While some residential segregation benefits migrants, authorities need to ensure that there are opportunities for jobs, education and accommodation elsewhere so that migrants are not trapped in areas cut off from the rest of society: that is, authorities should focus on increased choice, not compulsory dispersal. To facilitate access to suitable housing — which is crucial for health, employment and youth education — authorities can assist through direct provision of accommodation, through providing information and advice, and by using the existing regulatory framework to protect tenants' rights without giving the perception of any special treatment or priority access for migrants (and by countering any misinformation to that effect).

- **Provide host-country language instruction classes for all ages of children, including pre-school age children**

All schools should provide language instruction for immigrant children to promote the educational and integration benefits that accompany language acquisition. Pre-school facilities focusing on native-language acquisition should be developed to give those under school age an early start. Crucial to this recommendation is the design of appropriate programmes and policies (Crul, 2007).

- **Provide second chances to help secondary students overcome linguistic and cultural disadvantages**

School systems that necessitate selecting a scholastic pathway (e.g. choosing to focus the latter years of secondary schooling in the sciences, humanities, social sciences or non-academic curricula for future education) can be disadvantageous for immigrant youth. Children of immigrants usually start school at a linguistic disadvantage. It takes time to make up this disadvantage, and so children in systems with early selection fare worse than they otherwise could (Crul, 2007). There are a number of alternative models to later selection that do not impose fundamental structural change on school systems. The general rule of thumb in all alternative models is to ensure there is a second chance, and that choices made in earlier years will not have lasting effects on future chances in education or the labour force.

- **Combat implicit and explicit discrimination that hinders minority access to higher-education institutions**

Recruitment and admissions processes at universities should be vetted and reformed to eliminate biases that disadvantage minorities. All admissions should be based on equal access and non-discriminatory policies. Equal access implies that anyone who is eligible to apply to be a student should face no barriers to acceptance in comparison with other eligible applicants[3].

While most literature on integration and education outcomes assesses the role of education for children in schools, there is a growing focus on the role of education in adult integration (Spencer and Cooper, 2006).

Most formal immigrant integration programmes for adults in the European Union primarily consist of education practices in three forms: language training, social orientation courses, and occupational integration measures or vocational training. Integration courses, including language classes, are mandatory in some EU member states. Adult integration programmes, however, can take a collective (i.e. one-size-fits-all) approach, neglecting the differing needs of migrants. The European Commission Handbook on Integration offers detailed guidance on the design and organisation of programmes (European Commission, 2007*a*; see also Spencer and di Mattia, 2004; Urth, 2005).

The available evidence is already sufficient to provide pointers to policy makers. There is clearly value in combining language instruction with social orientation and in tailoring programmes to meet the actual needs of individuals. It is also important to ensure the availability of classes in areas and at times when migrants can attend. Finland is among those countries that create individual integration plans for unemployed migrants, and designates specific actions to help migrants improve their language or other skills. However, introductory courses for migrants in a number of member states are insufficiently tailored to meet the individual needs of migrants and thus have high dropout rates. Some experts propose combining language and orientation components, and using positive rather than negative sanctions to encourage attendance. Where sanctions are used, these should be enforced to retain credibility in the system (Entzinger, 2004). In a number of European countries, the mentoring of adult migrants by longer-established migrants or members of the majority population has value (Sijlbing, 2005; Withol de Wenden, 2005).

For adults in particular, skills-focused education programmes that enable migrants to participate fully in the labour market facilitate social integration as well. Programmes that help to accelerate the acquisition of accreditation in critical occupational categories are important contributors to social integration. Those whose skills are not transferable or whose foreign diplomas are not accepted by the host country cannot obtain jobs that meet their qualifications, thus they do not have the opportunity to integrate with work colleagues with similar educational backgrounds.

Limited access to affordable language tuition and the lack of availability of classes appropriate for migrants' needs thwarts many who want to study. Immigration status can also restrict entitlement to higher and further education, particularly through a requirement to pay international student tuition fees (Griffiths, 2003; Warren, 2006).

Given this landscape, and the importance to integration of educating adult immigrants, we recommend that EU member states:

- **Invest in adult language and introductory programmes, and that this be done in close co-ordination with private-sector actors**

It is clear that the success of such programmes hinges on where and when they are offered. For employed adult immigrants, training courses should be offered at the workplace, and should be organised in tandem with employers (the latter can also be offered tax breaks or other incentives). For unemployed immigrants, courses could be made available in their neighbourhoods at low or no cost, perhaps in conjunction with retraining initiatives. And for those immigrants who run households, especially women with school-age children, the most effective locus for language learning and other educational programmes is proving to be in the grounds of the schools their children attend. This has several salutary side benefits, including allowing parents to better monitor their children's educational progress and providing opportunities to connect with the parents of native children (school-based programmes may also help overcome cultural barriers by allowing women to leave the home).

Citizenship, Civic Participation, and EU Multicultural Citizenship

Migration challenges the allegiance of individuals to a single state, as they acquire additional cross-national cultural identities. Acquiring citizenship (nationality) and the formal rights and responsibilities it entails accelerates integration, in addition to being an end in itself.

The path to the full and mutual adaptation of immigrants and their host societies must eventually lead to naturalisation and citizenship. This is the lesson from decades of studies in the traditional countries of immigration, as well as in newer migration destinations. While legal and administrative obstacles have been reduced in many EU member states in recent years, other member states continue to present immigrants (and their descendants) with time-consuming hurdles before they can become full citizens. For the irregular immigrants residing in the European Union, citizenship might not be a possibility for a generation or longer.

Citizenship can mean more than a set of rights and responsibilities: it includes the legal status of nationality and the right to engage in civil society, but it also involves fundamental issues of identity and belonging. With integration through naturalisation still a distant prospect for millions of immigrants, consideration has been given in several member states to a form of interim pact with immigrants that elaborates on civic engagement and on identity (in France, this takes the form of an "integration contract"). Several EU member states — the Netherlands and Germany among them — have implemented compulsory integration tests as a prerequisite to permanent residency. In 2007, the European Commission is expected to draft a general framework directive defining, among other things, the rights of legally resident economic migrants who are not covered by the existing directive on long-term residents. This will go some way towards realising the notion of civic citizenship, but it will cover only a minority of the Union's immigrants.

A more ambitious agenda for civic and political participation needs to be established in order to accelerate the integration of immigrants. We recommend a series of five measures, presented in order of perceived political viability:

- Ease access to participation in established political structures for all immigrants (political parties, trade unions and civic organisations)

The most obvious of these structures are political parties, which should allow longer-term residents of a country to become members. This is already being done by many parties throughout Europe, which are also investing in establishing offices in predominantly immigrant neighbourhoods. Short of obtaining the franchise, the best means for immigrant voices to be heard is through political parties. Participation in trade unions and civic organisations that leads to more frequent interaction with non-migrants is also essential.

- Invest in training civic leaders from among immigrant ranks

Migrant organisations are the first point of entry to civic engagement for most newcomers. Investments in training immigrants in civic participation, civic leadership and public affairs could play an important role in developing appropriate political and legal policies. Such leaders also can become key interlocutors with local and national governments, and eventually populate government institutions — thus helping the latter more closely resemble society at large.

• Ensure that public institutions mirror society at large

As in so many areas, the public sector can lead by example, not least by maintaining good practice within its ranks. Governments at the national, regional and local levels should ensure that migrants are employed in the mainstream provision of services to the community, particularly when those services have an integration dimension. This may require a reassessment of procurement practices. Governments are also well positioned to encourage good practice and require integration support to all private bodies they engage as sub-contractors through the use of conditional codes of conduct[4].

• Grant local voting rights after two years to all immigrants legally resident and on a long-term visa

There is no substitute for voting to trigger an immigrant's civic engagement or gain the attention for a community's leadership. With full citizenship requiring a decade or longer for most immigrants, they are denied any formal stake in the democratic process. In several EU member states, immigrants are acquiring the right to vote in municipal and other local elections; the conditions for this vary by place. However, the principle of granting local voting rights is perhaps the single most important one to pursue for the civic engagement of immigrants, short of citizenship.

• Reach political agreement on a more ambitious and holistic vision for citizenship in EU member states

EU Multicultural Citizenship should be the ultimate citizenship goal for all member states and individuals living in the EU (Martiniello, 2006). Integration should be seen as two-way adaptation. This shifts the onus of the integration/adaptation burden from immigrants to all residents of the society, including its major institutions. Principal policy directions that will lead to EU multicultural citizenship include:

— liberalising access to citizenship and allowing for dual citizenship, while eventually envisioning direct access to citizenship in EU member states;

— implementing strong anti-racist and anti-discrimination legislation and policies both at the national and at the EU level, as well as vigorous

monitoring (as pursued at the Union level by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, and at national levels by such organisations as the Commission for Racial Equality in Britain and the *Centre pour l'égalité des chances et la lutte contre le racisme* in Belgium);

— ensuring equality of treatment of all religions and non-religious beliefs, via the separation of state and religion;

— opening up public education to diverse cultural perspectives, including by incorporating into school curricula courses on cultural diversity and on the contribution of immigration to nation-building and EU-building;

— providing financial support to immigrant associations that help spread knowledge of cultural diversity in a given society and bridge the gap between cultural groups; and

— developing means of involving natives in the adaptation of immigrants.

Notes

1. For employment and unemployment rates of native and foreign-born populations by level of education in 2003-4, see OECD (2006).

2. Affirmative action legislation for migrants must avoid giving the impression (real or perceived) of discrimination against the native workers; this could defeat the goal of migrants' social integration and thwart social cohesion, particularly if there is high unemployment of native workers.

3. The Institut d'Etudes Politiques in Paris offers a paradigm for how this can be done, through its implementation of Zones d'Education Prioritaires (Priority Education Zones) to recruit students from minority neighbourhoods.

4. An example of this is the Procurement Code of the London Development Authority, which follows the Commission for Racial Equality guide for promoting race equality in public procurement, as well as committing to an increase in the number of minority-owned businesses in its supplier base (see London Development Authority, 2004).

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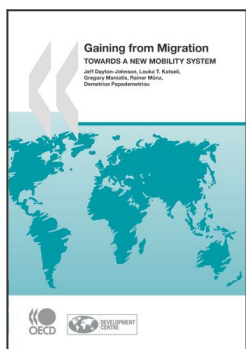
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