



Beyond the Common Basic Principles on integration: The next steps

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Introduction

Together with its strategic partner, the King Baudouin Foundation (KBF), the European Policy Centre (EPC) has launched a major initiative to address key developments in the field of migration and integration policies within its Multicultural Europe Work Programme. In this programme, the EPC/KBF explore the evolution of migration policies at EU level as well as the economic, social, cultural and political implications of improving the integration of migrants into European society. The EPC/KBF partnership has decided to focus its attention on integration policy in 2005, and it is in this context that this paper has been produced.

The issue of how best to integrate migrants is a central policy challenge throughout Europe and is one of the priority concerns of the EU. The increasing focus of governments on the importance of economic migration, linked directly to labour shortages and demographic trends in Europe, has been accompanied by increasing evidence of xenophobia and racism in our societies. Rising anti-semitism and Islamophobia are both causing widespread concern. There is also public concern about the situation of migrants in society when measured against the key indices of integration, especially health, education and unemployment.

In November 2004, at the initiative of the Dutch Presidency, the EU Council adopted a set of Common Basic Principles on Integration (CBP). The purpose of this paper is to discuss how the positive features of the Council text can be used to build a set of constructive follow-up policies and practices both within Member States and at EU level. It makes the case for the development of a joint EU inter-institutional declaration to make progress on the realisation of the CBP and thus build a constructive agenda of action and support at the European level. It signals the catalytic role which should be played by the European Parliament in this perspective.

The fact that the CBP were developed by governments alone in the Council, with little participation from other EU institutions and few opportunities for contributions from other stakeholders in their elaboration, makes the idea of an inter-institutional declaration an important joint commitment, as the basis for securing much broader public support for an EU policy framework which would promote the integration of migrants and its application in the different Member States.

The results of the EPC/KBF Dialogue have been taken into account in finalising these recommendations for presentation to the EU institutions. This paper is also presented to the Commission prior to its forthcoming communication on the next steps with regards to integration policy in the summer.

1. EU Migration and Integration Policies: The Context

Migration is here to stay in Europe. But successful integration of migrants cannot be taken for granted. Indeed, public policy has to be organised to manage both immigration and integration effectively. If we fail to make a success of it, we will suffer a double blow:

- a severe blow to our economic prospects, since the skills and labour of migrants are essential to our prosperity; and
- a blow to the preservation of our distinctive social model in Europe, and our efforts toward achieving an open, inclusive society.

To develop a European immigration policy without simultaneously framing a European integration policy would be counter-productive. A holistic approach is needed to deal with the complexity of the migration and post-migration situations in the European Union. Both traditional assimilationist and multicultural “models” have often been debated. They have both proven their limitations. As a consequence, it is crucial to explore new policy approaches which combine ethnic and cultural diversity, social and political cohesion and equal opportunities in a very diverse Europe to take into account the different traditions and needs within the enlarged Union.

EU Member States have acknowledged the economic and demographic challenges faced by the European Union (ageing population, skill and labour shortages, transformations of migratory flows, global competition for the highly-skilled) and the necessity to design a common immigration, as well as a European integration policy framework. At the same time, recent months have seen a flare-up of racist and xenophobic violence, and the open expression of social tensions through violence against migrants, increased electoral support for right-wing parties and rising social tensions in certain areas. A mainly negative media coverage of immigration, which often confuses the integration of legal migrants and issues associated with asylum, has exacerbated the situation.

The European Council in Tampere in 1999 explicitly requested a stronger integration policy in order to grant legally resident third-country nationals “*rights and obligations comparable to those of European Union citizens.*” This has de facto been anchored in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, as most of its provisions apply to all persons irrespective of their nationality. The legal basis and application of the Charter, as foreseen by the new Constitutional Treaty, is an important step in the definition of the future European legal framework.

The Hague Programme, adopted in November 2004, endorses the need for a new integration agenda. The new Constitutional Treaty, in its Article III 267.4, will give a legal basis to integration policies:

“European laws or framework laws 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. The Common Basic Principles on Integration

The CBP were designed to promote a common European approach toward a framework for immigrant integration and to serve as a reference for the implementation and evaluation of current and future integration policies. For convenience, the main points of the eleven CBP are summarised below (see full text in annex):

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 by every resident.*
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 essential in 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 an equal basis to national citizens and in a non-discriminatory way is an indispensable foundation for better integration.*
7. *Frequent interaction between immigrants and citizens of the Member States is a fundamental prerequisite for integration.*
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 and regional levels, is a key to effective 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. The principle of engaging civil society is also endorsed.*
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, so as to transfer good experience.*

3.1 The added value of the CBP

The CBP as formulated by the Council of the European Union in Document 14615/04 of 19 November 2004, express a number of positive features:

1. Investing in integration. The CBP indicate that Member State governments acknowledge the value of successful integration strategies. They make the case for investing in integration. However, such investment is framed in terms of adapting the

institutions, the host society and legislation to diversity, but not clearly in terms of contributing financially to supporting measures. Furthermore, the CBP state that equal rights and anti-discrimination policies are at the core of a proactive integration policy, in particular in the light of previous integration policy failures in different EU Member States. Previous failures to formulate such holistic frameworks are evidenced by the failure to adequately integrate particularly second-generation migrants into the social and economic fabric of Member States.

2. The benefits of migration. There is clear acknowledgement that immigration brings benefits for the overall development of the European Union in economic, social, political and cultural terms. The holistic approach adopted in the text describes integration and immigration as creating “benefits” (Preamble 1), as being an “enrichment” (Preamble 2), and praises “the contributions immigrants make to the host society” (principle 3). This positive approach should be welcomed and should be reflected in communications with the media.

3. Integration as a two-way process. Integration is considered as a “two-way process” engaging both migrants and their descendants, and the host societies in terms of their rights and responsibilities. References to the actors of integration are threefold: private sector, public sector and civil society. The Preamble to the text, for instance, cites:

- *“social partners, NGOs, women’s and migrants organisations, businesses, and other private institutions”* (Preamble, aim b),
- *“stakeholders at the EU-level”* (Preamble, aim c), whereas the Eleven Principles insist upon *“immigrant and national citizens”* (principle 1),
- *“Numerous non-governmental actors [...] trade unions, businesses, employer organizations, political parties, the media, sports club and cultural, social and religious organizations”* (principle 10).
- Similarly, principle 7 is the most explicit: *“Frequent interaction between immigrants and Member States citizens if a fundamental mechanism for integration.”*

This approach opens up new scope for promising policy development and the recognition that integration should not be a ‘top-down’ process, as all stakeholders at different levels have a key role to play.

4. A holistic approach to integration. The fields of intervention appear reasonably comprehensive. The CBP focus on employment and labour integration (principle 3), linguistic and educational skills (principles 4 and 5), non-discriminatory access to public goods (principle 6), urban and social environment (principle 7), cultural and religious diversity (principle 8), citizenship and political participation (principle 9).

5. Acknowledging the importance of political participation. Principle 9 allows for a progressive interpretation on migrants' political participation. It is clearly stated that "*immigrants could even be involved in elections, the right to vote and joining political parties.*" This should be welcomed.

6. Mainstreaming integration in other policy areas. There are proposals for mainstreaming integration policies (principle 10) and for an evaluation of Member States' present integration policies (principle 11). These two principles offer a broad range of opportunities to include integration in various public policies, and to evaluate and adapt new mechanisms of integration.

7. Opportunity for a constructive public debate. More importantly, and beyond the substance and content of the principles, the text of the CBP offers the opportunity to widely communicate the vital significance of investing in integration and the need for all levels of governance to be actively engaged. The text states that the European Union is a continent of immigration in which integration has to be dealt with for the well-being of our societies.

Furthermore, the CBP encourage the engagement of immigrants and of civil society, which would have a number of positive outcomes, one of which is changing public perceptions of migrants. The CBP has not recognised the need for leadership of a constructive public debate. The fact that CBP lack an explicit commitment by Member States to lead and engage in such a debate is regretful.

3.2 Further development of the CBP

The CBP may thus be considered as a first step in a process. They are certainly not the final point in terms of European integration policy. The text has limitations, illustrated below. Nevertheless, we suggest that implementation would take us forward, if we bear in mind the following areas which need further careful exploration:

1. Better definition of target groups. A clear definition of the targeted groups is not provided in the text. “*Flows of immigrants*” (Preamble 1), “*legally residing immigrants and their descendants*” (Preamble 2), “*newcomers,*” “*all residents - new and old*” (bearing in mind that integration is a two-way process, requiring adaptation also by members of the host society) (Preamble 3), “*from temporary workers to permanent residents and to the children of immigrants; from immigrants who have acquired citizenship to long-established third-country nationals; and from highly skilled refugees to individuals who have yet to acquire the most elementary skills*” (Preamble 6) are cited in the text. There is an extension of the definition from first-generation migrants to the population of second and third generation migrants. This extensive definition should be more clearly formulated, because integration policies, as well as rights and obligations, differ according to legal status and nationality. This clearer definition is necessary so as to avoid confusion particularly for the media and civil society, which tend to amalgamate all categories. Additionally, a clearer definition would be useful for EU nationals moving within the Union, as these also need support to integrate e.g. access to language tuition.

Undocumented Migrants

The CBP state that undocumented migrants are not included as a target of integration policies. Although these migrants may have no right of residence, they cannot be entirely ignored when different approaches to integration are considered. Even undocumented migrants have basic human rights which the state is required to protect. It is also arguable that it is in society’s interest, as well as that of the migrant, that their access to some essential services is protected, such as emergency medical care and education for children. The integration strategy should thus be explicit on the minimum rights of undocumented migrants, including their access to essential services. It is, moreover, acknowledged that many undocumented migrants are engaged in employment for which legal workers will not apply. Their removal would thus put some services and firms at risk. For this reason, we suggest that it would be appropriate to initiate a dialogue on how states might establish some pathways back to legal status, at least for migrants who entered the EU legally but whose status has since become irregular.

2. Clarify the interplay between “rights,” “responsibilities” and “values.” The text defines integration as “*a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States*” (principle 1) and “*implies respect for the basic values of the European Union*” (principle 2). The Annex to the text

states “*The integration process involves adaptation by immigrants, both men and women, who all have rights and responsibilities in relation to their new country of residence*” (principle 1).

The use of different terminology is a source of possible confusion. In this context it is important that terms such as “adaptation,” “values” and “responsibilities” are not interpreted in an “assimilationist” way, but are interpreted in line with the open definition of integration as a “two-way process.” Where possible, it is preferable to refer to clearly defined rights and responsibilities rather than only to general values. This would add clarity and defuse unnecessary tensions and misunderstandings.

The CBP need further development to make explicit recognition that integration policies should be based on ensuring that all migrants are able to access their fundamental rights whether in terms of housing, health care, education, etc. The access of migrants to justice and to basic rights should be seen as integral part of EU policy to promote social inclusion for all.

3. Support of the transnational dimension of integration. The implicit conception of integration in the CBP relates more to old patterns of migration and does not take into account the importance of new transnational patterns of mobility and the formation of transnational communities. It is vital that migrants are not asked to sacrifice their transnational links and relationships in order to facilitate their integration, since migrants are also other crucial actors in the development of their country of origin. Indeed, there is no reason to fear that the transnational links of migrants act as a barrier to integration. The transnational dimension of migration and integration is key. Stronger coordination between integration and development policies should be further developed.

The countries of origin should be considered as key actors in the development of integration policies. In particular, they should ensure that immigrants are not cut off from their countries of origin and should facilitate contacts between migrants and their families. Integration policies may also include support for those migrants wishing to return to their countries of origin, for example, by acquiring qualifications that could be useful for the development of those countries.

4. Provide adequate financial backing. The further development of EU integration policies needs to be backed by an EU financial instrument to give incentives to the pursuit of better policies and practices and to the systematic transfer of experience at European

level. This should be designed to complement and add value to the measures taken in Member States. The newly proposed Integration Fund is a step in that direction.

5. Enhance the role of civil society and the media. To encourage a much broader public involvement in the debate on integration policies civil society, broadly defined, must be urgently engaged in the process. But the debate must be led by governments, at the national and local level, ensuring that accurate information provided to the public and that the rationale for immigration and integration policies are explained. Crucially, the public should not only be informed but given an opportunity to express their views and to inform policy, ending their sense of exclusion from decisions on this issue. It is also essential to encourage the media to highlight good practice, and to promote greater public awareness of successful models and policies at all levels. Special attention should be given to the role of local and regional media.

3. Taking the Agenda Forward: From Principles to Practice

The Common Basic Principles offer a basis for the development of a common EU framework on integration. The main question now is to discuss and agree what the future of these principles will be and how they will be developed in practice. The forthcoming communication from the Commission should make a significant contribution in clarifying the next practical steps of implementation, since at present it is not at all clear how or when they will be applied and further developed by Member States and the Commission.

The stakes are high at every level - local, national and European. The global dimension can also not be ignored – especially with regards to the vital link with development policy. All these levels matter as the one affects the other.

The choice of level to apply the CBP immediately raises the question of subsidiarity - the importance of distinguishing the different levels at which actions could be pursued. This is essential as responsibility for integration policy is shared between local, national, European, and indeed, global levels.

The CBP need to be applied and further developed at all levels through a variety of policy instruments to the combined effect in support of these Principles. A multidimensional approach to

migration and integration that recognises the full range of complexities of this issue and involves all the key stakeholders in this process is essential to the common search for good integration policies. In particular, special efforts need to be made to engage local and regional bodies – public, private and voluntary, recognising that it is at the local level that integration takes place in practice.

While the governments of Member States have recognised that migration brings economic, social and cultural benefits and is here to stay, the significant task in communicating this message to European citizens remains to be tackled. A much broader public debate is required, including the active participation of civil society and local and regional authorities. The role of the EU as a catalyst to stimulate and support such public discussion is crucial. In support of this, the EPC/KBF partnership recommends that the EU institutions take the CBP forward by means of an inter-institutional Declaration, which could give a new visibility and impetus to these questions.

The Commission

The Commission must present a cross-cutting policy agenda, which demonstrates a holistic approach to integration policy. In particular, it must reflect an appropriate balance between the priorities relating to security and those relating to employment and social affairs. And it must set out clearly the different levers needed to apply the CBP policy, legal, financial and instrumental. We need clarity of vision on the Why? What? How? We need courageous leadership to mobilise the different partners involved in civil society to make the strategy work and for the principles to be applied in practice.

To play its part in this process, the Commission should establish a special inter-DG working party (Freedom, Security and Justice, Social Affairs and Employment, Development, Enterprise, Education and Youth, Public Health, Regional Policy etc.) under the coordination of DG Freedom, Security and Justice, to build a more coherent synergy in its policy-making and thus ensure stronger contributions from all these sectors, and a greater balance in respective priorities, than is currently the case. Such a mechanism would strengthen the Commission's capacity to present proposals which cut across all sectors and to act as a more effective catalyst for improvements in this field. A Commission-wide approach is essential in this regard to avoid the fragmentation of efforts and overlapping financial coverage.

The President of the Commission is urged to publicly announce the creation of such a mechanism, which should report to the Commission on a six-month basis for Commission-wide assessment of progress.

The Commission should now be urged to examine again, as a high priority, the need to locate and adapt integration policies within the framework of its monitoring of the social inclusion and employment policies of Member States. This will be much more productive than to put the spotlight on integration in isolation from the objective of working for social cohesion and inclusion. A mainstreaming approach is surely the way forward, and the Commission should deliberately seek a real breakthrough by linking integration policy with the Lisbon Strategy. The power of introducing the changes needed is so much greater if these issues are mainstreamed than if these are isolated in separate initiatives.

Vigorous pursuit of the EU Lisbon Agenda is of crucial importance to the EU as a whole, and to the urgent objective of enhanced growth and competitiveness into which the recent meeting of the European Council held on 22 and 23 March in Brussels has tried to breathe new life. But the Strategy has still to demonstrate that it can work. The overall record to date is disappointing. The Summit has rightly emphasised competitiveness and growth as means to achieve prosperity and cohesion - not solely as ends in themselves. National Reform Plans are now to be introduced in all Member States to deliver the Lisbon policy commitments, which include the fight against social exclusion and the active pursuit of social cohesion within its three-pillar economic, social and environmental strategy. The integration of migrants must be mainstreamed into this revitalised Lisbon Agenda. It is noted that in the Commission joint report on social inclusion at the end of 2003, integration was highlighted as one of the six priority areas in the strategy which need to be strengthened. A special engagement into housing issues should be initiated by the Commission (see also page 15).

The present Commission proposal to set up a distinctive Integration Fund during the next budget period 2007-2013 is welcomed. The criteria and perspectives for the allocation and use of these new funds should be further clarified in the Commission's forthcoming communication, and dedicated to the application of the CBP throughout the Union. Where funding is allocated to specific initiatives to promote integration, we suggest that funding should also be allocated to evaluation so that a body of evidence can be developed from which others can learn.

The Commission should also set out its proposed action plans to revitalise the fight against racism and xenophobia in the context of its obligations under the Treaty to promote equal treatment and equal opportunities. The Commission's initiatives in the integration and anti-discriminatory field need to be intertwined with the broader equality agenda, and with the evolving debate about European civic citizenship and the importance of the multicultural character of Europe. The idea is that civic citizenship guarantees a number of core rights and obligations to immigrants, which they will acquire gradually over a period of years, so that eventually they are treated in the same way as nationals of their host state, without being forced into naturalisation.

Civic citizenship is potentially powerful as a concept for acceptance by the public as a whole, as it highlights the fact that migrants have responsibilities as well as rights. In this context too, in drafting a Regulation for the future Fundamental Rights Agency, the Commission should ensure that the Agency can play an important role in combating discrimination for migrants, not only for the second and subsequent generations. This is just one example of the way in which the integration of migrants can be mainstreamed into the work of agencies and programmes with a broader remit.

The Commission should take steps to develop the scope of its Annual Report on Migration and Integration to provide information on the progress of national governments in implementing the CBP and to use this report to seek feedback and to promote debate amongst all stakeholders, particularly those with expertise from civil society and local authorities.

The Commission should be invited to review the terms of the 1977 Council Directive which created a balanced set of obligations concerning the education of migrants and their families. In particular, this Directive provided for

- (a) accelerated learning of the language of the host country.
- (b) promotion of the bilingual and bicultural needs of migrants.
- (c) cooperation between the sending and host countries, especially in relation to the training of teachers.

The Commission should be requested to provide the other EU institutions with a considered assessment of the provisions of this Directive, adopted almost 30 years ago, its relevance and

operability in the current context and appreciation for its non-application.

Member States

There is an urgent need for the Member States to assume leadership of the public debate and willingness to engage with public on the kind of immigration and integration policy they want. If the public is not given the facts to let them understand the real choices to be made there will be a continuing tension between governments recognising migration is needed and the public not seeing why, and a growing feeling of betrayal by politicians who fail to listen to their concerns.

Member States should be urged to stimulate co-operation between different government departments and ministries, different levels of governance, and with and between non-governmental organisations, including both private foundations, organised civil society and migrant community organisations. Mainstreaming migration and integration should not imply the imposition of one particular department's values and goals on others. On the contrary, a lead department should play an enabling role to encourage cooperation and enhance the mainstreaming of these policies across the board.

Member States should be encouraged, therefore, to engage their public and private authorities, and civil societies, in the implementation of the CBP and their further application and adaptation. The voices of migrants themselves should be heard. The action programmes implemented in each Member State should be exchanged through the EU system of national contact points, and used as a basis to stimulate the exchange of good practice. The Commission should play a catalytic role in facilitating exchange of experiences to improve both policy and practice as an essential part of this correlation so as give greater European added value.

Special attention should be given to the local level. This is the level at which the pressures of globalisation have to be mastered. It is at this level that communities have to make social inclusion and integration work in practice. It is here, especially in cities, that the reception of migrants takes place. It is here that tensions and xenophobia have to be confronted. Integration as a two-way process has to be realised at the local level. Here, too, is where the commitment to the two-way process - the first of the Principles - can be best judged.

The CBP adopted by the Council in December 2004 have to be embraced, interpreted and fully owned by local communities. The CBP cannot be imposed from above upon them. Local authorities, communities, civil society actors and migrants themselves must be full partners and actors in shaping the society in which they live.

An integration strategy, especially at the local level, has to deal with the very different circumstances and trajectories of the migrant population. The strategy of inclusion must be multi-tiered so as to achieve:

- integration in the labour market – at a level which matches the migrants’ qualifications and experience;
- social inclusion, into the mainstream institutions and activities that meet individual and societal needs in education, health, social care and housing;
- Inclusion in civil life, active participation in the institutions and obligations of civic society, particularly for those remaining in the long term; and
- ‘bridging capital,’ building trust and good relations with neighbours and the wider community

Local bodies are expressing the desire to be involved in issues relating to the management of migratory flows, ranging from programmes designed to attract immigrants to low-population areas, to dispersal programmes for refugees. In cooperation with the Committee of the Regions and other European networks such as EUROCITIES, the European Commission could launch a special enquiry into urban planning, housing and service delivery needs and provisions as a contribution to the overall discussion.

Public authorities at all levels are not only regulators. They also act as employers, service providers and buyers of goods and services. The way governments perform or procure these functions sets powerful examples.

Civil Society

This year offers an important opportunity to influence the European policy agenda and to engage civil society much more actively in the process. The “top-down” principles decided by the Council will not stick or convince on their own.

What is needed now is to initiate complementary action and advocacy in the different Member States and at the European level, so that simultaneous pressure at both levels can produce more

progressive policies in the face of xenophobic pressures against migration. That this can be successful in shaping the final outcome of EU legislation has already been proven in the ad-hoc coalition formed by civil society groups around the Racial Equality Directive. With respect to the wider integration policy framework, action at the European level will not succeed unless it is accompanied by a determined process of engagement of civil society in the broadest sense within the individual Member States.

Civil society (by which we mean a full range of non-state organisations from the social partners, employers and trades unions, to faith groups and sports clubs) plays a direct role in the integration process as service providers (e.g. language tuition, housing), as bridge-builders of social capital and good community relations, and as mentors for individuals. To a large extent, civil society, including migrant-led organisations are an untapped resource for the two-way integration process. Member States should be encouraged to empower them both politically and financially, and thus enhance their capacity for advocacy and input into policy discussions.

At present there are a variety of NGOs operating in Europe, which aim to influence the national and European policies on migration. There is considerable scope to enhance the impact of their work and involvement through networking and joint action, building on their present strengths. Cooperation of this kind could also strengthen links between them, and local and regional authorities (e.g. EUROCITIES), which are especially concerned with the integration of migrants as the host communities. Such initiatives would improve bottom-up advocacy and action. Similarly, cooperation could be established with the social partners (employers and trade unions) who are also concerned with this question, in the context of their role in promoting the Lisbon Agenda of growth, development and social cohesion.

4. Towards an Inter-Institutional Declaration

Structured inter-institutional cooperation at the European level can complement the steps taken within individual Member States. The active involvement of a wide variety of multi-level governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, including migrants, is essential. The adoption of a joint commitment by the different EU institutions to the Common Basic Principles would give direction to and solidify such co-operation. This complementary action by

Member States and the EU can pave the way towards the common policies which the new Treaty will require, once adopted.

A Joint Declaration, adopted by the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions and the Commission would send a strong message that European policy-makers are serious about addressing these issues in a spirit of coherence and co-operation on all levels. This Declaration should also spell out that Europe needs immigrants to be able to achieve its goals of sustainable socio-economic development and international justice and solidarity. From this standpoint, too, the declaration would help to reach out to public opinion in Member States and strengthen the legitimacy of EU measures. It would also provide a longer-term perspective, making policies less vulnerable to changing political moods.

The European Parliament

The role of the European Parliament in launching such an inter-institutional Declaration is of paramount importance. The Parliament should be urged to act as the catalyst in mobilising civil society in the broadest sense across national frontiers. It should also engage in a structured dialogue with national parliaments so as to promote the further development and application of the CBP.

The Parliament should again be urged to take the lead and to build an alliance especially with the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee - the constituent members of both of which play vital roles at local level. The Parliament is in a privileged position to make this happen. By committing themselves to an inter-institutional Declaration, the EU institutions would give a very powerful signal to the public. This in turn could help the different stakeholders to feel a sense of shared ownership of the common principles so that together they can help project them into the public consciousness at different levels.

It has the opportunity and indeed the obligation to react to the Council's CBP, and it has the capacity to do so, with the active support of civil society throughout the Union. In the past, a decade or so ago, the Parliament's decisive intervention to fight growing racism and xenophobia led eventually, through an inter-institutional commitment of the kind now envisaged, to the adoption of the EU's anti-discrimination legislation.

The leadership of the European Parliament is again required to mobilise such a process so as to secure the policy impact required to face the challenges of integration in the decade ahead.

The Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee have a special contribution to make in mobilising their constituencies on such a crucial question. They are both urged to give priority to this mobilising process.

Role of Foundations

The independent foundation sector can and should also play a distinctive role in building alliances between the economic and social actors in this field, and encourage more effective networking between European NGOs, including migrant-led organisations, to promote the transfer of experience with regard to integration policies and practices.

Steps are being taken by the Network of European Foundations (NEF) to develop a special initiative which could provide such a contribution and which would be open to partnership with the stakeholders.

ANNEX

COMMON BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION POLICY IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

1. Integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States.

Integration is a dynamic, long-term, and continuous two-way process of mutual accommodation, not a static outcome. It demands the participation not only of immigrants and their descendants but of every resident. The integration process involves adaptation by immigrants, both men and women, who all have rights and responsibilities in relation to their new country of residence. It also involves the receiving society, which should create the opportunities for the immigrants' full economic, social, cultural, and political participation. Accordingly, Member States are encouraged to consider and involve both immigrants and national citizens in integration policy, and to communicate clearly their mutual rights and responsibilities.

2. Integration implies respect for the basic values of the European Union. Everybody resident in the EU must adapt and adhere closely to the basic values of the European Union as well as to Member State laws.

The provisions and values enshrined in European Treaties serve as both baseline and compass, as they are common to the Member States. They include respect for the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law. Furthermore they include respect for the provisions of the Charter of fundamental rights of the Union, which enshrine the concepts of dignity, freedom, equality and non-discrimination, solidarity, citizen's rights, and justice. Member States are responsible for actively assuring that all residents, including immigrants, understand, respect, benefit from, and are protected on an equal basis by the full scope of values, rights, responsibilities, and privileges established by the EU and Member State laws. Views and opinions that are not compatible with such basic values might hinder the successful integration of immigrants into their new host society and might adversely influence the society as a whole. Consequently successful integration policies

and practices preventing isolation of certain groups are a way to enhance the fulfilment of respect for common European and national values.

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.

Employment is an important way for immigrants to make a visible contribution to Member State societies and to participate in the host society. At the workplace integration of immigrants can be promoted by the recognition of qualifications acquired in another country, by training opportunities that provide skills demanded at the workplace and policies and programmes that facilitate access to jobs and the transition to work. It is also important that there are sufficient incentives and opportunities for immigrants, in particular for those with the prospect of remaining, to seek and obtain employment.

The targeting of measures to support immigrants in the European Employment Strategy is an indication of the important influence of employment on the integration process. It is important to make greater use of the European Employment Strategy and the European Social Inclusion Process, backed up by the European Social Fund (ESF), including the lessons learnt from the Equal Community Initiative to reach the Lisbon targets and to promote the combat against all forms of discrimination at the workplace. It is important that Member States, in cooperation with the social partners, pay particular attention to and undertake effective action against discrimination in the recruitment policies of employers on the grounds of ethnic origin of the candidates.

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.

The importance of basic linguistic, historical, and civic knowledge is reflected in the increasing emphasis placed by several Member States on introductory programmes that focus on putting together the most appropriate toolkit to start the integration process. Pursuing such programmes will allow immigrants to quickly find a place in the key domains of work, housing, education, and health, and help start the longer-term process of normative adaptation to the new society. At the same time, such programmes become

strategic investments in the economic and social well-being of society as a whole. Acquiring the language and culture of the host society should be an important focus. Full respect for the immigrants' and their descendants' own language and culture should be also an important element of integration policy.

5. Efforts in education are critical to preparing immigrants, and particularly their descendants, to be more successful and more active participants in society.

Education is an important way to prepare people to participate in society, especially for newcomers. However, lifelong learning and employability are not the only benefits of education. Transferring knowledge about the role and working of societal institutions and regulations and transmitting the norms and values that form the binding element in the functioning of society are also a crucial goal of the educational system. Education prepares people to participate better in all areas of daily life and to interact with others. Consequently, education not only has positive effects for the individual, but also for the society as a whole.

Educational arrears are easily transmitted from one generation to the next. Therefore, it is essential that special attention is given to the educational achievement of those who face difficulties within the school system. Given the critical role played by education in the integration of those who are new in a society – and especially for women and children – scholastic underachievement, early school-leaving and of all forms of migrant youth delinquency should be avoided and made priority areas for policy intervention.

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.

If immigrants are to be allowed to participate fully within the host society, they must be treated equally and fairly and be protected from discrimination. EU law prohibits discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin in employment, education, social security, healthcare, access to goods and services, and housing. Consequently, transparent rules, clearly articulated expectations and predictable benefits for law-abiding immigrants are prerequisites to better immigration and integration policies.

Any legal exceptions to this accessibility must be legitimate and transparent. Access also implies taking active steps to ensure that

public institutions, policies, housing, and services, wherever possible, are open to immigrants. These steps need to be in accordance with the implementation of the Council Directive concerning the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents. It is important to monitor and evaluate the success of public institutions in serving immigrants, and that adjustments are being made on an ongoing basis.

Conversely, uncertainty and unequal treatment breed disrespect for the rules and can marginalise immigrants and their families, socially and economically. The adverse implications of such marginalisation continue to be seen across generations. Restrictions on the rights and privileges of non-nationals should be transparent and be made only after consideration of the integration consequences, particularly on the descendants of immigrants. Finally, the prospect of acquiring Member State citizenship can be an important incentive for integration.

7. Frequent interaction between immigrants and Member State citizens is a fundamental mechanism for integration. Shared forums, inter-cultural dialogue, education about immigrants and immigrant cultures, and stimulating living conditions in urban environments enhance the interactions between immigrants and Member State citizens.

Integration is a process that takes place primarily at the local level. The frequency and quality of private interactions and exchanges between immigrants and other residents are key elements of greater integration. There are many ways to encourage interaction. An important aspect is a greater focus on promoting the use of common forums, intercultural dialogue, spaces, and activities in which immigrants interact with other people in the host society, and on the sustained education of the host society about immigrants and immigrant cultures. Good cooperation among the different involved actors is necessary in order to stimulate these processes. Furthermore, implementation of active anti-discrimination policies, anti-racism policies, and awareness-raising activities to promote the positive aspects of a diverse society are important in this regard.

The level of economic welfare in neighbourhoods, the feeling of safety, the condition of public spaces, and the existence of stimulating havens for immigrant children and youngsters and other living conditions are all aspects that affect the image of the people who live in these areas. In many Member States, immigrant

population groups are often concentrated in poor urban areas. This does not contribute to a positive integration process.

Positive interaction between immigrants and the host society and the stimulation of this interaction contribute to successful integration and are therefore needed. Therefore, improving the living environment in terms of decent housing, good health care, neighbourhood safety, and the availability of opportunities for education, voluntary work and job training is also necessary.

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.

The cultures and religions that immigrants bring with them can facilitate greater understanding among people, ease the transition of immigrants into the new society and can enrich societies. Furthermore, the freedom to practice one's religion and culture is guaranteed under the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Member States have an obligation to safeguard these rights. Furthermore, EU law prohibits discrimination in employment or occupation on the grounds of religion or belief.

However, Member States also have a responsibility to ensure that cultural and religious practices do not prevent individual migrants from exercising other fundamental rights or from participating in the host society. This is particularly important as it pertains to the rights and equality of women, the rights and interests of children, and the freedom to practice or not to practice a particular religion. Constructive social, inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue, education, thoughtful public discourse, support for cultural and religious expressions that respect national and European values, rights and laws (as opposed to expressions that violate both the letter and spirit of such values and rights), and other non-coercive measures are the preferred way of addressing issues relating to unacceptable cultural and religious practices that clash with fundamental rights. However if necessary according to the law legal coercive measures can also be needed.

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.

Allowing immigrants a voice in the formulation of policies that directly affect them may result in policy that better serves

immigrants and enhances their sense of belonging. Wherever possible, immigrants should become involved in all facets of the democratic process. Ways of stimulating this participation and generating mutual understanding could be reached by structured dialogue between immigrant groups and governments. Wherever possible, immigrants could even be involved in elections, the right to vote and joining political parties. When unequal forms of membership and levels of engagement persist for longer than is either reasonable or necessary, divisions or differences can become deeply rooted. This requires urgent attention by all Member States.

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.

The integration of immigrants is deeply influenced by a broad array of policies that cut across institutional competencies and levels of government. In this context particularly consideration needs to be given to the impact of immigration on public services like education, social services and others, especially at the level of regional and local administrations, in order to avoid a decrease in the quality standards of these services.

Accordingly, not only within Member States but also at the European level, steps are needed to ensure that the focus on integration is a mainstream consideration in policy formulation and implementation, while at the same time specifically targeted policies for integrating migrants are being developed.

Although Governments and public institutions at all levels are important actors, they are not the only ones. Integration occurs in all spheres of public and private life. Numerous non-governmental actors influence the integration process of immigrants and can have an additional value. Examples in this respect are, trade unions, businesses, employer organisations, political parties, the media, sports clubs and cultural, social and religious organisations. Cooperation, coordination and communication between all of these actors are important for effective integration policy. The involvement of both immigrant and the other people in the host society is also necessary.

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.

Irrespective of the level of integration policy efforts, it is important to know whether these efforts are effective and make progress. Although it is a process rather than an outcome, integration can be measured and policies evaluated. Sets of integration indicators, goals, evaluation mechanisms and benchmarking can assist measuring and comparing progress, monitor trends and developments. The purpose of such evaluation is to learn from experience, a way to avoid possible failures of the past, adjust policy accordingly and showing interest for each others efforts.

When Member States share information about their evaluative tools at European level and, where appropriate, develop European criteria (indicators, benchmarks) and gauges for the purposes of comparative learning, the process of knowledge-sharing will be made more effective. The exchange of information has already proven to be useful within the National Contact Points on integration. Exchanging information provides for taking into account the different phases in which Member States find themselves in the development of their own integration policies and strategies."