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## **2 Integration Challenges in the Light of Different Approaches to the Inclusion of Migrants**

(Marie Jelínková)

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## **2. Integration Challenges in the Light of Different Approaches to the Inclusion of Migrants**

Marie Jelínková

### **2.1 Integration objectives and general policy setting**

There is a well-established literature analysing the integration of migrants as a process that evolves over time and across generations. However, this process may not be linear or identical for everyone across different areas of integration. On the one hand, migrants are confronted with a new reality in which they need to learn how the host society works and find ways to become part of it. On the other hand, this can only be possible if the receiving communities and governments are genuinely willing to accept the newcomers, which in practice requires that they provide migrants with support, orientation, information and mutual respect (cf. Gallagher 2018). Integration is a long, reciprocal, dialogical process of negotiating attitudes and rules of social coexistence between all involved, not only the migrants themselves. Local institutional conditions, legislation governing migrants' access to citizenship and local residents' attitudes toward migrants all play crucial roles.

The consequences of ignoring the need for integration or of bad practice in integration are devastating. Across the world, we see evidence of failed integration in large refugee camps, ghettos and gated communities and these places are merely the tip of the iceberg. Insufficient integration policies lead to social tensions, prevent migrants from equal participation in society and fail to exploit the potential that migration brings to both host countries and their new inhabitants. Several studies (e.g. Anjum, McVittie, a McKinlay 2018) have also shown that failed integration processes lead to further and deeper marginalization of migrants, which in turn affects their quality of life and their ability to participate in society. Furthermore, there is a wide range of positive arguments to support

migrant integration into host societies. Some of those arguments are anchored in legislation (e.g. non-discrimination), while others are economic in nature. Much of the literature on how integration outcomes improve over time points out that migrants can access greater economic opportunities once they become part of the host society. Moreover, migration contributes to local development. Demographic arguments should also be taken into account: UN studies have shown that populations will decline over the next 50 years in virtually all European countries. Unless they admit vast numbers of migrants, the EU countries will have to significantly reduce their social and pension programmes (UN 2001). Last but not least, safety must also be considered: failure to integrate migrants into society presents risks not only to the host society but also to migrants' livelihoods and social interactions. Therefore, in this monograph we do not ask whether or why integration should be pursued, but how it can best be achieved.

## **2.2 Migrant integration policies at the European level: a brief overview**

Although migration policy is now part and parcel of several European policies, the EU's involvement in the integration of migrants remains relatively weak (Geddes a Scholten 2015). EU integration policies have long remained substantially limited, based on the implicit assumption that as long as migrants hold the same legal status and there are adequate tools to combat discrimination, integration can and should be implemented within social development policy by the individual Member States (Garcés-Masareñas a Penninx 2016). Nevertheless, with the growing coherence and harmonisation of European policies, the integration of migrants has come to the fore at the European level. Although migrant integration policies remain the responsibility of Member States, the EU seeks to harmonise and share certain standards in this area through "softer" non-binding methods of integration management. This includes coordination, research, exchange of good practice and significant financial support (for more see Bertossi 2011) French assimilation, Dutch and British multiculturalism.

These various softer governance mechanisms are not binding for Member States but can provide them with a forum for knowledge exchange and development. Migrant integration is also influenced by anti-discrimination legislation and legislation that affects participation

in society. Furthermore, the European Commission has set up significant funding through programmes such as the European Integration Fund, the European Refugee Fund and subsequently the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund to support the integration of migrants. In addition, a sophisticated infrastructure of organisations has emerged, contributing to the dialogue between EU-supported research and EU-level policy. This includes think tanks, such as the Migration Policy Group (MPG) and the Migration Policy Institute Europe (MPI) as well as state-run intelligence-gathering networks, such as the European Migration Network (EMN) and the EU Urban Agenda: Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees. Despite these successes, the European Union's approach raises a number of major questions, both as regards its common migration policy and persistent gaps between integration policies and their implementation, e.g. many restrictions on migrants' fundamental rights (Carrera a Merlino 2009).

In 2003 the foundations of the framework for the integration of migrants were laid at the European level. The framework highlights the reciprocity of migrants' and host countries' rights and obligations. The Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy, which were adopted in 2004, reflect a change in the direction of European integration policies (Geddes a Scholten 2015). The Principles state that "integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States" (Council of the European Union 2004, 19). However, given the growing emphasis on newly arrived migrants' obligations at the level of Member States, such reciprocity is far from evident in the integration process. The Principles further offer insight into what is expected of migrants: "respect for the basic values of the European Union", which on the other hand comes with "full respect for the immigrants' and their descendants' own language and culture" (Council of the European Union 2004, 20). Thus, the common principles set out a framework within which integration should take place, but they do not specify whether and to what extent Member States should be involved in implementing such integration. The third and fourth basic principles focus on employment, emphasising migrants' individual responsibility for socio-economic integration, as well as for gaining a basic knowledge of the language, history, and institutions of the host society. Over time, a civic integration policy based on these two principles has become a tool for controlling migration, enabling Member States to restrict entry or residence rights for unskilled or less desirable migrants. The fifth principle then targets host countries, emphasizing non-discrim-

inatory access to institutions and services for migrants as a key to better integration (Council of the European Union 2004, 21).

Although these principles still form the basic framework for the integration of migrants in the EU, the EU's more specific approaches to integration have continued to change over time, including a shift in its definition of integration from a bilateral process to a trilateral process (European Commission 2011). This shift has given migrants' countries of origin a key role in the integration process (i.e. as stakeholders who can prepare future migrants for integration in their destination country before their departure or support them once they have migrated). This new emphasis on the third party in the integration process provoked ambiguous reactions. On the one hand, studies have documented cases in which the integration process can truly be seen as tripartite (e.g. Van Ewijk 2013). On the other hand, this tripartite process is hampered by the limited capacities and mandates of institutions in the countries of origin, which make it difficult for them to engage effectively in it.

Another significant shift is also worth noting. In the latest Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (2021–2027), which sets out objectives for the integration of migrants, the European Commission expresses support for the first time not only for the integration of migrants from outside the EU, but also for EU citizens living in other EU countries. This is a long-discussed change that had been called for by a number of Member States and their local authorities.

In conclusion, migrant integration policies remain a national competence. However, since the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007, European institutions have the mandate 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”<sup>1</sup>. The EU's task in migrant integration is thus to establish priorities and goals on a regular basis, which will move its strategies, legislative proposals and funding opportunities forward.<sup>2</sup>

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1 See the content of Articles 79 and 80 of the Treaty of Lisbon, available at: EUR-Lex – 12016E079 – EN – EUR-Lex (europa.eu).

2 For more, see: [https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/cu-grid/eu-strategy\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/cu-grid/eu-strategy_en).

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