



11th meeting of the EUROPEAN INTEGRATION FORUM
"Ten years with the Common Basic Principles on integration – what next?"
Brussels, EESC building, 3 April 2014

SUMMARY REPORT

The goal of the 11th European Integration Forum was to assess to what extent the Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the European Union (CBPs)¹ have been a useful framework for the development of European integration policies, so as to feed the policy dialogue for their future development. A lot has changed since the CBPs were adopted by the Council in 2004, so it is time to look back and reflect on achievements in their spirit and on prevailing integration challenges. The Forum structured the discussion around three dimensions of the CBPs: legal-political, socio-economic and cultural-religious.

The opening speeches were given by **Cecilia Malmström**, European Commissioner for Home Affairs, **Evangelos Syrigos**, Secretary-General for Population Affairs and Social Cohesion of the Greek Ministry of the Interior and **Lotta Håkansson-Harju** (SE/PES), Member of the Committee of the Regions. The session was chaired by **Irini Pari**, president of the EESC's Permanent Study Group on Immigration and Integration.

In her speech, **Cecilia Malmström** emphasised the achievements in recent years in the fields of migration and integration, and acknowledged the role played by the European Integration Forum. The Commissioner announced the adoption of the guidelines for the Family Reunification Directive² (subject of the seventh Forum), and the new Directive on Seasonal Employment³ adopted in February 2014, which should ensure that seasonal workers are treated in the same way as nationals as regards employment and working conditions. Both directives were important as a means of opening up legal migration channels to the EU, but also – as regards family reunification - in order to promote migrants' integration into European society. The Commissioner also announced the launch of the fifth language (Portuguese) version of the EU Immigration Portal⁴. The Commissioner reminded those present that civil society and regional and local authorities need to be involved in the discussion on the CBPs for integration because this is the level where integration occurs and where the migrants' views can be brought into the picture.

¹ Council doc 14615/04, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/jha/82745.pdf.

² COM(2014) 210 final, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/documents/policies/immigration/family-reunification/docs/guidance_for_application_of_directive_on_the_right_to_family_reunification_en.pdf.

³ OJ L 94/375, 28.3.2014, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32014L0036&from=EN>.

⁴ <http://ec.europa.eu/immigration/>

Evangelos Syrigos declared that migration was one of the priorities of the Greek presidency, which also aimed to give a new impetus to integration policies in the EU. Mr Syrigos emphasised that irregular migration was not a Greek problem, but a European problem. The Mediterranean countries of the EU were in the frontline of migratory flows to the EU, yet most of the immigrants were trying to reach the richer northern European Member States. The Greek government, while placing the emphasis on fighting illegal immigration, trafficking in human beings and smuggling, does not underestimate the importance of policies aiming at the integration of migrants. Despite the deep economic crisis, integration programmes based on EU funding are still operating. In times of economic crisis, when social cohesion is at risk, these programmes are needed more than ever.

The Greek presidency believes that, in order to achieve social cohesion in the EU, a new impetus to integration policies is needed. The first step, ten years after the adoption of the CBPs, is to look at how to make them work better for migrants through concrete measures. It is particularly important at this time to counter the rise of xenophobia and racism and to find a better balance in promoting diversity while ensuring respect for EU values. The Greek presidency identified five questions that could help in feeding the debate:

1. Is there a link between migration and integration policies? What is the impact of over-selective migration policies on the integration of migrants and their families?
2. How could one prevent the presence of immigrants in the EU countries leading to rising xenophobia and racism? What kind of approach to diversity is needed to safeguard European values and at the same time fight against racism and xenophobia?
3. How can stereotypes be reversed and mentalities changed in order to address misperceptions and facilitate migrants' integration, so as to enhance social cohesion?
4. Is there a need for a more genuine cooperation with source countries in order to inform their citizens about the dangers of irregular migration and the advantages of legal migration, as well as to support their integration at pre-departure level?
5. What is the role that the private sector can play in assisting governments in planning and implementing integration policies?

Lotta Håkansson-Harju (SE/PES), rapporteur for the CoR opinion on "Future EU Policy in Justice and Home Affairs", underlined that integration policy and the CBPs needed to incorporate the European Charter of Fundamental Rights. These fundamental rights must underpin all European policies. In addition, she underlined that towns and regions needed to be included in the formulation and not only the implementation of integration policies, since integration essentially takes place at local level. In recent years, the economic but also humanitarian crises in our surroundings and the arrival of asylum seekers had put extra pressure on local, regional and EU resources. To meet those challenges, policies have to be developed at various levels by bringing together the different stakeholders involved and fostering the exchange of knowledge and good practices among them. In relation to that, Ms Håkansson-Harju declared that the CoR was prepared to take a more active role in organising the Forum.

The next session introduced the discussion on the CBPs around three dimensions of integration (legal-political, socio-economic and cultural-religious), following a theoretical framework drawn up by Professor Rinus Penninx⁵ and other researchers from the KING project⁶, coordinated by the ISMU Foundation and funded by the European Integration Fund. The discussion was chaired by **Giulia Amaducci**, Policy Officer in the Unit for Immigration and Integration in the Directorate-General for Home Affairs at the European Commission, and presentations were given by **Walter Kindermann**, General Director for Integration Affairs at the State of Hessen's Ministry for Justice, Integration and Europe and member of the KING project, **Lara Natale**, coordinator of the European Network of Migrant Women, and **Luca Visentini**, Confederal Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC).

Walter Kindermann underlined the need to look for a long-term strategy when developing the CBPs further for the future. As the EU is an attractive destination, we need to prepare ourselves for receiving more and more migrants and for a much larger population of migrant origin. Much has changed in the last ten years, so we have to adapt the CBPs accordingly. For example, CBP 2 requires immigrants to respect EU values, but this requirement should be extended to every European citizen as well. Also, with regard to CBP 6, Mr Kindermann proposed that, instead of addressing broad target groups with our policies, we should focus on immigrants' specific needs and their potential. We should recognise the potential that migrants possess and do our best to give them opportunities to develop it. One very important principle is that of CBP 1, which lays down that integration is a two-way process of mutual accommodation by immigrants and nationals, something that also includes the interrelation between these two groups (CBP 7). Mr Kindermann proposed considering integration as involving more than two parties, since there is diversity on both sides and nowadays we could speak of super-diverse societies. Considering integration as a process between immigrants and native populations is too simplistic as a lot of people who were migrants in the past are now part of the receiving society.

CBP 10, which established the importance of mainstreaming integration policies into all relevant policy fields and levels of government, is also crucial because we need to make it clear that integration is not a specific or separate task. This is related to the importance of bottom-up measures and the emphasis given to participation (CBP 9), as everybody working in civil society has to be engaged in integration. However, the experience from Hessen teaches us that these principles need to be finely tuned and complemented by a top-down approach. Only by doing this can we have an effective bottom-up approach. In conclusion, Mr Kindermann called for an integration approach that facilitates the creation of a broader collective identity, a big "We" which first requires people to see diversity as essentially positive.

⁵ Penninx R. (2001) "Immigrants and the dynamics of social exclusion – Lesson for anti-discrimination policies" in F. Lindo & M. Van Niekert, *Dedication and Detachment, Essay in Honour of Hans Vermeulen*. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis 193-211

⁶ For an overview of integration in the three dimensions using the lens of the CBPs see the project "Knowledge for Integration Governance (KING)", currently funded by the EIF and coordinated by ISMU Foundation, Milano: www.king.ismu.org/research-outputs/#midtermexecutivesummary

Lara Natale reminded those present how, in 2004, the NGOs had welcomed the adoption of the CBPs because they provided civil society with a common definition of integration to work with. Although the CBPs remain a point of reference, overall NGOs perceive the CBPs as too abstract and it remains unclear for integration actors how such abstract engagements can be implemented. Good practice in this area is often project-based and difficult to translate at EU level. CBP 2 is short on specifics concerning European values. Any NGO working with migrants and for migrants would keep equality, fundamental rights and participation as central tenets, but while participation is singled out (CBP 3) the former two values are not explicitly mentioned in CBP2. Consequently, Ms Natale welcomed Ms Håkansson-Harju's idea of strengthening the CBPs through the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, to ensure that the implementation of integration policies does uphold such values.

NGOs feel that the CBPs overwhelmingly place the effort on migrants for integration to be successful, despite the very first principle delineating integration as a two-way process of mutual accommodation. This risks entrenching a de facto assimilation-based approach and feeding discrimination. A 2011 CEPS study suggested how the European Integration Fund had often not been allocated with a full regard to the two-way process principle, because integration actors were not always sufficiently consulted.

A priority for civil society organisations is to make the CBPs actionable. For example, in spite of the great emphasis on economic integration in principle, CBP 3, it cannot be applied in practice due to the many institutional barriers in the labour market. A legal focus on CBPs would also help advance efforts to face the challenges not addressed by the CBPs, as it would mean also having legal and political instruments to compel Member States to implement common EU integration objectives. Ms Natale proposed as a starting point to work with those principles that are already action-oriented at EU level and make the other principles operational. The CBPs remain relevant as a reference point but they need to address new challenges such as the rise of xenophobia and the increasing securitisation of societies.

Luca Visentini declared that integration and full equal treatment for migrants are top priorities for trade unions because it is the best way to boost the economy and social cohesion in Europe. In his presentation, Mr Visentini focused on the concrete and specific integration problems that three groups of migrants in the EU still face. The first group are migrant workers and their families, people who came to the EU to find and retain a job. For this group integration means long-term residence and family reunification, hence, the shorter their stay in Europe, the lower their chances of being successfully integrated. A second group who deserve special attention are asylum seekers, for whom integration means obtaining refugee status and being entitled to work and fully participate in the host society. The third group mentioned are irregular or undocumented migrants for whom integration means the possibility of regularisation, formal work and a normal life in Europe. For the trade unions, there are several obstacles preventing the European economy and labour market from making full use of migrants' potential, among them current policies promoting circular migration and selectivity but also the existence of discrimination. Since quotas had clearly failed, Mr Visentini proposed instead to focus on the real needs of the market, to improve legal frameworks designed to ensure equal treatment and labour participation, and to remove discriminatory practices.

The CBPs provide a comprehensive list of values but they have remained for the most part and in most countries only principles. Mr Visentini acknowledged the major efforts made by the European Commission, the European Parliament, the EESC and the CoR in order to set a new narrative on integration and migration in Europe, but reminded those present that we still need to bridge several gaps in the CBPs in order to achieve the effective integration of migrants in the EU. The major criticism that the unions had in relation to the Commission's recently adopted Communication "An open and secure Europe: making it happen"⁷, which proposed the next steps to take after the Stockholm Programme, was that it did not touch on the issue of irregular migration in the best way. Trade unions are ready to engage in the upcoming discussion on the future strategic guidelines for the area of home affairs, as well as in their future implementation and monitoring.

Round Table A on the Legal/Political Dimension of CBPs was chaired by Samuel Azzopardi, Member of the CoR, and the rapporteur was Nicos Trimikliniotis, Symfiliosi NGO/University of Nicosia (Cyprus). The participants agreed that migration policies that restricted legal status could have negative consequences for the integration of migrants, affecting both migrants' economic and social rights and their political rights; one reason why migrants' voices are not heard enough is that they are not considered potential voters. Over the years, integration policies have become considered less as a tool for promoting social inclusion and more as a means of enabling migrants to obtain residence permits. Such a view is severely hampering the prospects of integration. Examples were given about how migrants' legal status affects directly or indirectly their feelings of belonging and motivation to participate in society. For instance, temporary residence permits undermine people's desire to integrate, and policies which consider the term "migrants" to include people from a migrant background (or migrants established for many years in the receiving country) hinder the development of feelings of belonging. In addition, detention practices used as part of a return policy have a long-lasting impact on migrants, as even many years after being released, people still feel criminalised and have difficulties in participating in society, going to the doctor, or trusting the authorities.

When the CBPs were adopted there was a recognition of the link between legal status and the success of integration, and accordingly the CBPs very much focused on TCNs legally residing in the EU. In order to respond to new developments, CBPs need to target migrants more broadly, since the negative implications of migration policy on integration become most severe for irregular immigrants or asylum seekers. Examples were given of integration practices counteracting the negative implication of migration policies, particularly in times of economic crisis, such as those in Catalonia and other Spanish regions that offer immigrants access to public services regardless of their legal status.

Another point of discussion concerned the extent to which migrants' views are taken into account in policymaking. Different countries in the EU follow different approaches, but with the exception of Greece (who has recently abolished migrants' rights to vote in local elections), the tendency was towards a greater inclusion of migrants in formal channels of participation. Consultation bodies are a widespread practice in many countries. There was agreement on the importance of supporting genuine bottom-up consultation initiatives and on not imposing top-down consultation methods. Among the successful experiments in consulting migrants were a bottom-up process of representation-building

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COM(2014) 154 final, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/e-library/documents/basic-documents/docs/an_open_and_secure_europe_-_making_it_happen_en.pdf.

for advisory committees in Ireland and a consultation about the building of a mosque in Milan. In the recently published European Modules on Migrant Integration⁸ there are also some good examples of consultation practices, which pay particular attention to the factors behind the success achieved in different cases. The example of Slovakia showed that migrants were more focused on cultural or religious participation than on civic involvement. Several participants mentioned the need to grab such an opportunity, and try to use cultural participation to foster civic involvement in the political process. Some concerns were voiced about the risks of consultation methods, particularly as regards ensuring the representativeness of councils and the danger of creating a backlash if the people consulted feel that their opinions does not matter in the policy-making process. The use of participation bodies as symbols has negative consequences, as it can lead to citizens' de-motivation. Greece institutionalised the idea of integration councils in 2010 but less than a third of all municipalities have actually set up such councils.

As far as evaluation is concerned, it was clear that the development of indicators in the legal/political sphere remains a big challenge, because we do not have quantitative data that could be compared across the EU. We need specific indicators for specific categories of migrants, and specific indicators for different regions – particularly in federal states - as effective indicators have to focus on measuring the resources available for integration at local and regional level. Finally, we need to see how widely policy measures are used and accepted by the population.

Round Table B on the Socio-Economic Dimension of CBPs was hosted by **Irini Pari**, president of the EESC's Permanent Study Group on Immigration and Integration. Mirosław Bieniecki from the Migration Study Institute in Poland was the rapporteur. In the discussion, participants agreed that a holistic approach to socio-economic issues is necessary, with a slight accent on employment as a key to integration. Two kinds of actions need to be implemented in practically every country: 1. Assistance (or training or coaching or mentoring) for migrants while they look for jobs, house, education, health services. 2. Training in anti-discrimination for the employees of public services together with training for the host population was also stressed. A good example of such a holistic approach was that of Scotland which helped migrants to use mainstream health services, employment services and translation services.

Another topic of discussion was how far discrimination and prejudices influence social provisions. In general, legal provisions regulating the access to social services of migrants in Member States are quite fine, but at local level and in some cases at national level, they are not so well implemented. There remains much to be done in improving the legal framework and in changing people's mentality through information and education campaigns. The role of the social partners in fostering integration, but also in the management of migration, was highlighted, and examples were given of practices of social dialogue or involving actors dealing with immigrants in everyday situations, especially employers, trade unions, etc.

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European Modules on Migrant Integration, http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/resources/detail.cfm?ID_ITEMS=40802.

The participants agreed on the importance of mainstreaming integration in all relevant policies (CBP 10) in combination with a targeted approach in some cases. Mainstreaming was not considered contradictory with also having specific policies for vulnerable groups with specific needs. However, mainstreaming has to remain the general spirit, and when using specific policies it is important to treat migrants as part of the community and not as a separate and problematic category. For example, targeted policies are applied for a limited period to empower migrants in their access to mainstream services, such as in Catalonia's reception classes in schools where as soon as immigrant students can speak the Catalan language they are put back into mainstream classes. Participants identified problems with the implementation of CBP 10, in particular with regard to the lack of adequate monitoring and the lack of funds due to the cutbacks applied in many Member States as a response to the economic crisis.

One example of an innovative way of combining mainstreaming and targeted policies can be found in a project from the UK that seeks to engage the whole community in helping migrants to learn the language. In this example the community is considered as the unit of integration, and not particular groups of immigrants or individuals, in line with CBP 1. Another important good practice is the training for office workers who deal with immigrants in Berlin. Some negative examples that can be mentioned are those in some cities in the Netherlands where targeted groups are used for repression rather than integration purposes, as when policemen focus exclusively on Caribbean youngsters.

For monitoring and evaluation, the importance of a broad, long-term perspective was stressed, to see how various measures involving immigrants work and to involve different actors and immigrants themselves. Finland's comprehensive monitoring of integration offers a good example here.

The discussion of **Round Table C on the Cultural/Religious dimension of CBPs** focused to a large extent on the balance between cultural diversity and national values when implementing the "two-way process" approach to integration (CBPs 1, 2 and 4). Representatives of migrant associations felt that sometimes national values were used in a restrictive way to refuse to make room for diversity; by contrast, European values based on the Charter of Fundamental Rights were taken as non-negotiable (CBP 2). The consensus was that interculturalism and "living together" is only possible if the receiving society renounces homogeneity and commits itself to building a common space. In this endeavour, participants saw the need for measures to educate and prevent conflict: intercultural mediators in public administration and schools in Vienna and Lisbon were put forward as examples. Civic society organisations agreed on the need to provide a public and visible space for expressing and celebrating diversity (CBP 7).

Equitable outcomes for cultures and religions can only be guaranteed if authorities officially recognise diversity (CBP 8), particularly national authorities (constitutions and national laws). Participants also highlighted the role of education in reflecting the diversity of cultures and religions, with examples given of good practices from Sweden (every minority can have a special language class if it so requests) and Germany (where Islam was incorporated into moral and ethics classes at school). The "two way process" is an unequal and unbalanced one. Migrants alone cannot have full responsibility for integration; instead, the bulk of responsibility lies on the shoulders of the authorities (local, regional, national), who are able to protect, empower and enable.

Political rights (CBP 9) were seen as having an effect on recognition and equitable outcomes: official representation of migrants and people of migrant origin forces the political system to take their needs into consideration. Examples of good practices were consultative bodies in Strasbourg, Nantes and Oslo. Legal status (family reunification, long-term residence permits) was also seen as a precondition for effective integration. Socio-economic conditions might have a negative effect on the outcomes for religions and cultures, as religious or cultural minorities could be used as scapegoats when socio-economic conditions deteriorate. The importance of mediation/recognition was emphasised again: while the public perception of migration has deteriorated in most EU Member States (as shown by Eurostat polls), this has not been the case in large cities where such diversity has been promoted for years. Positive initiatives at local level, however, can be undermined by negative narrative at national level.

Regarding monitoring (CPB 11), some excellent practices exist but they are often local or regional and are not followed up sufficiently at national level. The real question is how to pull together existing data and trends and use them to formulate policies. Local authorities and civil society organisations feel that national politicians and civil servants do not listen and the same mistakes are made time and time again. They expect more coordination at EU level.

As for refugees, the participants concluded that much remained to be done to improve their integration. Two measures proposed were preparations prior to departure for the realities of life in the receiving country, so as to avoid migrants' demotivation, and specific care and integration pathways post-arrival. In addition, pre-departure measures should also be improved for those being resettled. Although the issue of preparation in the countries of origin was not deemed relevant for refugees and beneficiaries of international protection, preparation in the countries of transit was desirable (often already provided by the UNHCR/ICMC).

The conclusions of the Round Tables were presented by the three rapporteurs, under the chairmanship of **Yves Pascouau**, Head of the Programme for Migration and Diversity at the European Policy Centre. In the Round Tables participants assessed the CBPs, focusing on what the principles meant for their activities, how these principles had been translated into practices/policies and what were the remaining gaps and challenges. The general conclusion was that they still offer a good framework for action, but that there is room for improvement so as to make them easier to implement. The CBPs need to be more action-oriented and backed by legal instruments and funds, and monitoring needs to be sharpened. The CBPs need to be more specific on several issues: the role of the receiving society, equality, etc. Finally, the scope of action should be extended to include irregular migrants and asylum-seekers.

In reply to the questions raised by the Greek presidency, there was still a lot of work to be done in changing people's mentality through information and education campaigns, and in improving the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation. In particular, anti-discrimination training is needed for public servants, employers, and other representatives of the receiving society in key positions. Equitable outcomes for cultures and religions can only be guaranteed if authorities officially recognise diversity, particularly national authorities. Interculturalism is only possible if the receiving society abandons homogeneity and engages in building a common space, and this is supported by education

and intercultural mediation. How to deal with big migration waves of third-country nationals is not just a problem for southern European countries, but a pan-European problem. More cooperation is needed in the management of migration flows both at European level and in society generally by involving the social partners (employers and trade unions) in policy-making. Moreover, as underground economies account for a large proportion of the jobs attracting labour migrants from outside the EU, radical measures are needed to reduce the informal economy, such as more intensive labour regulation and labour inspections in certain sectors. Finally, a serious approach is needed to restructure the economies in southern European countries so as to reduce the weight of low-productivity labour-intensive sectors, such as agriculture, domestic work or construction, and promote the creation of employment in other sectors and ethnic entrepreneurship through financial and taxation incentives and "economic opportunity zones".

In the closing session, chaired by **Ezequiel Iurcovich**, representative of national civil society organisations in the Forum Bureau (2013-2015), participated **Luis Miguel Pariza Castaños**, Member of the European Economic and Social Committee, and Diane Schmitt, Head of the Unit for Immigration and Integration in the Directorate-General for Home Affairs at the European Commission. **Luis Miguel Pariza Castaños** reminded those present that the role of the EESC is to keep defending the integration agenda and keep integration policies away from the influence of the racist, xenophobic and nationalist ideas which are on the rise in European society. The CBPs still constitute a good roadmap for the future of integration in the European Union.

In his speech, Mr Pariza Castaños traced the history of the European Integration Forum since its origins as a platform for the involvement of civil society in the formulation of EU integration policies. We are at a turning point with the elections to the European Parliament on 25 May 2014. In November a new Parliament and a new Commission will take up their duties, and Italy will take over the presidency of the Council in July. But the EESC's term of office lasting until late 2015 guarantees a good transition for the Forum into the future. The Forum has to widen its horizons, focus on the links with migration legislation, include asylum-seekers and refugees in its discussions, and broaden its commitment to the CoR and local and regional authorities. However, the Forum must also preserve its basic identity as a platform for civil society organisations, migrants' associations, and organisations defending human rights, with the aim of contributing to good policy governance at all levels.

Diane Schmitt underlined the intention of the Greek presidency to continue discussions on the CBPs in the Council in order to have Council conclusions reconfirming the validity and value of the CBPs, as well as addressing the areas identified as lacking in the CBPs. What had been discussed in this meeting of the Forum would serve as an input. Over the years the Forum has provided a fruitful contribution to the development of EU integration policies. The consultation on the Family Reunification Directive was one concrete example, which had led to the adoption of the guidelines called for by the Forum. Five years after its creation, the Forum is at a turning point and recent and ongoing events in the EU plead in favour of extending the debate to migration more in general.