

EUROPEAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON INTEGRATION (MILAN, 5 and 6 NOVEMBER 2014)

DRAFT OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

On 5 and 6 of November 2014 the Italian Presidency organized a Ministerial Conference on Integration, with the aim to further develop the Strategic Guidelines concerning the area of Freedom, Security and Justice adopted by the European Council in June 2014. The discussion built upon the Common Basic Principles adopted on 19 November 2004, the informal meeting of EU Integration Ministers of Zaragoza of 15-16 April 2010, the following Council Conclusions on Integration adopted on 3-4 June 2010, and the Council Conclusions adopted on 5 and 6 June 2014.

In this context delegations agreed on the need to explore the key aspects of integration, focusing on the different levels of governance at which the integration process unfolds and on the interconnections that exist between integration and related policy fields. In particular, the following aspects should be taken into consideration:

I. Addressing integration through a comprehensive approach

The Council Conclusions on the integration of third-country nationals legally residing in the EU of 5 and 6 June 2014 recognized the importance of a comprehensive approach to integration and of mainstreaming policies and practices in all relevant policy sectors and levels of government. The Conclusions further specified that such an approach to integration presupposes *inter alia* effective reception policies and measures responding to the specific needs of both individuals and different groups of migrants, which are more likely to be exposed to social exclusion, including beneficiaries of international protection.

Additionally, the European Agenda for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals issued by the Commission on 20 July 2011, stressed that integration is linked to a framework of legislation and policy defined and coordinated at EU level, and underscored the importance that integration priorities are fully taken into account in all relevant areas, so as to contribute in a coherent way towards meeting integration challenges as well as other political priorities.

The interconnections between migration and integration policies are manifold. In

particular, reception conditions of beneficiaries of international protection strongly impact on their future prospects of integration in the receiving societies. In light of the previous, and as stated by the European Council in its Conclusion of 26/27 June 2014, the Union's commitment to international protection requires a strong European asylum policy based on solidarity and responsibility, principles which are enshrined in Article 80 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

II. Non-discrimination

Non-discrimination is a central dimension of EU integration policy and has been at the centre of initiatives launched at the EU level since the Conclusions of the European Council at Tampere in 1999, which stated that the EU integration policy should aim at granting third country nationals' rights and obligations comparable to those of EU citizens and should also enhance non-discrimination in economic, social and cultural life and develop measures against racism and xenophobia.

Almost every Common Basic Principle refers in some way to non-discrimination, due to the fundamental role such principle plays in facilitating integration and promoting social cohesion. In particular, the common basic principle number 2, which is devoted to respect for the basic values of the European Union, explicitly points to non-discrimination as one of the concepts enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

Reaffirming such commitment to non-discrimination, the Council Conclusions of 5 and 6 June 2014 on the integration of third-country nationals legally residing in the EU recognized that further efforts should be made to find a more balanced approach to safeguard basic values underpinning European societies, to counter prejudices and to respect diversity with a view to enhancing tolerance and non-discrimination in the European societies, in close collaboration with social partners and civil society.

In this respect, it is crucial that non-discrimination policies are developed with regard to employment. The common basic principle number 3 states that 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.

The 2005 Common Agenda for Integration indicated several measures to favour migrants' access to the labour market, including innovative approaches to prevent labour market discrimination, training courses, exploring additional ways of recognising newcomers' qualifications and facilitated conditions for accessing the labour market for women. Efforts in this field should continue to be a priority for European States not only because non-discrimination is a fundamental principle of EU law but also because, as recognized by the EU 2020 strategy, increasing migrants'

access to the labour market is crucial to achieve sustainable economic growth in Europe.

Non-discrimination plays a central role also regarding migrants' access to education. The common basic principle number 5 states that efforts in education are critical to preparing immigrants, and particularly their descendants, to be more successful and more active participants in society. To this regard, the Council Conclusions of November 2009 on the education of children with a migrant background invited Member States to set up or strengthen anti-discrimination mechanisms, increasing the permeability of pathways within school systems and removing barriers to individual progression through the system, in order to combat segregation and contribute to higher achievement levels for migrant learners. Children with a migrant background should be provided with targeted support in order to fill the gap in education results that still exists between them and children belonging to the native population.

Another central priority to face discrimination is reducing and overcoming the practical barriers that prevent migrants from accessing social services, a priority that is included in the common basic principle number 6. Evidence shows that such barriers could be linked either to migrants' linguistic or cultural differences or to their more disadvantages socio-economic conditions. In order to tackle such barriers, several measures should be adopted in cooperation between different levels of government. Diffusion of new technologies, in particular access to the internet, holds a great potential for addressing the needs of a diverse community, favoring integration and mutual exchange. It is thus important to adopt measures in order to overcome the existing gap in the use of new technologies in some segments of the population, including migrants.

III. Mainstreaming of integration policies

The common basic principle number 10 states that 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. In the explanation of this principle included in the Council Conclusions on Immigrant Integration Policy in the European Union of 19 November 2004, it is further stated that particular consideration should 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. While recognizing the relevance of mainstreaming integration in policy formulation and implementation, the same Conclusions also underlined the necessity of accompanying it with specifically targeted policies for integrating migrants.

As shown by initiatives undertaken in several countries, mainstreamed policies

present numerous advantages. First of all, they allow responding to the needs of heterogeneous and increasingly diverse societies, pushing towards a diffuse sensibility to diversity that contrasts discrimination and stereotypes. Secondly, they allow better coping with the rising number of second- and third-generation immigrants, who may face structural barriers to succeeding in education or on the labour market. Finally, if properly managed, mainstreaming of integration priorities also allows designing policies that are both cost-effective and capable of improving outcomes for the society as a whole, thus maximizing the impact of public resources.

While recognizing the potential of mainstreaming integration priorities in public policies, some *caveats* should also be reminded. First of all, the risk of so-called “target disappearance”, namely that the specific needs of the migrants’ population – such as language acquisition, credential-recognition support, and access to citizenship – are overlooked by policy responses that address the entire population. In light of the previous, a big effort is required at all levels of government to design policies that can effectively reach every member of the society, in particular by strengthening flexibility in services’ provision and enhancing awareness of the differentiated welfare needs of the population. Beside this, the needs of some groups of migrants such as refugees, women and children should continue to be addressed by means of targeted support and specific measures.

Mainstreaming of policies also passes through increased cooperation between relevant actors at the EU level dealing with different policy portfolios. To this regard, innovations in the organization of the newly appointed European Commission should be welcomed. First of all, the appointment of a Vice-President in charge of the rule of law and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. At the same time, the envisaged cooperation between the Commissioner in charge of Migration and Home Affairs and the Commissioner in charge of Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labor Mobility is expected to deliver results in fields such as access to the labor market and intra-EU mobility.

The establishment of the new European migration Forum is a significant step in furthering cooperation between national stakeholders dealing with migration issues. Building on the experience of the European Integration Forum, the new European Migration Forum will continue to be a platform for civil society, and its participatory approach will be enhanced by ensuring a closer involvement of civil society organisations in the preparation and organisation of its meetings. Therefore, the European Migration Forum represents a new and promising platform of dialogue and exchange of expertise at the EU level that should be welcomed.

IV. Monitoring of integration policies

The common basic principle number 11 states that developing clear goals, indicators and evaluation mechanisms is necessary to adjust policy, evaluate progress on

integration and to make the exchange of information more effective. Following the priorities set by the Potsdam ministerial conference in May 2007 and reaffirmed by the Vichy Ministerial conference in November 2008, the ministerial conference held in Zaragoza in 2010 identified Common European “indicators” in four areas of relevance for integration: employment, education, social inclusion and active citizenship. Stressing the importance of such indicators, the Commission stated in its 2011 European Agenda for Integration the intention to monitor developments in this field and formulate recommendations, in dialogue with the Member States.

Monitoring of the integration process and of policies adopted in the area of integration is crucial to enhance the European learning process. In reason of that, monitoring should be considered as a cross-cutting aspect and developed alongside the policy-making process at all stages and levels. In particular, monitoring is also functional in assessing the effectiveness of policies implemented in those areas such as anti-discrimination and mainstreaming of integration policies.

In order for further progresses to be achieved in this field, efforts should be devoted at assuring that integration indicators are based on high quality statistics and on a homogeneous set of data across Member States, as those provided by EUROSTAT. As the regional and local levels are crucial for the success of the integration process, specific tools and indicators to monitor dynamics occurring at these levels should also be engineered. Lastly, it is important to acknowledge that integration is a multifaceted process that needs to be covered in its entirety: in particular, all the different dimensions of integration - economic, social and cultural - should be adequately monitored by means of appropriate indicators.

To achieve the above objectives, the EU framework on integration represents a privileged platform, in particular for exchanging information and developing best practices. In this context, the National Contact Points on Integration should devote further efforts in improving mutual exchange on issues related to the monitoring of integration, also making use of the European Website on Integration. The European Modules of Integration also constitute an important instrument that has been developed by the Commission to monitor and benchmark integration practices. Building on what has already been accomplished, it is important in the future to extend the use of the European Modules on Integration, improve their current structure and content and increase their operational dimension.