

THE CIVIL SOCIETY INPUT TO THE NEW AGENDA FOR INTEGRATION

The European Integration Agenda is a paramount instrument to strengthen and improve EU integration policies that should rely on a multi-dimensional process. We welcome the efforts of the European Union (EU) and the Member States to further develop and consolidate the EU common agenda for the integration of third country nationals.

Being aware that the European and International context has changed since the first Common agenda on Integration was conceived, we consider that it is now the moment for the European Union to reaffirm its position and its support to integration policies in line with the Common Basic Principles.

We consider that :

- Integration policies will only be successful if fundamental rights for all and equal treatment are safeguarded
- Integration as a two-way process means a multi-dimensional and multi-actor-network process of active participation, interaction and understanding encompassing societies as a whole.
- Integration cannot thus rely on TCNs' duty to assimilate, but it requires actions both at EU and national level to improve social cohesion of and between all groups in our societies.
- Integration policies should aim at promoting and strengthening social cohesion and should not be seen or used as tools to control migration flows.
- In order to achieve stability and social cohesion within our societies, it is fundamental for civil society to access funds for the implementation of integration activities targeting the broadest set of concerned groups.

Negative discourses about immigrants jeopardise integration policies

Challenging the underlying perceptions and assumptions surrounding migration which are enhanced through the mass media we recommend

- An approach framed by the respect for human rights and recognition of the positive nature of diversity in Europe. For this purpose, the positive nature of diversity should be promoted through the promotion of positive values, conceptions and principles, including positive language.

Integration is a more complex path for vulnerable groups

Taking into account specific needs of migrants in vulnerable situations we recommend:

- Providing for specific measures which would prevent vulnerable groups of migrants (refugees, asylum seekers, women, persons with disabilities, etc.) from becoming more vulnerable and ensure them fair treatment in accessing labour market, housing, education and health care, while still being part of mainstream integration policies.

The exclusion of certain groups damages the stability of the society as a whole

Taking into account the realistic composition of EU migrant population and the need to address it through a realistic approach and proactive measures we recommend:

- Safeguarding access to fundamental rights, such as education, health care, housing and fair working conditions, in a non-discriminatory way, namely by acknowledging also irregular migrants.

A cross-sectoral approach and monitoring mechanisms need to be implemented to make integration effective

Guaranteeing appropriate cooperation and coordination across governance levels, civil society and public administration involved in integration policies, both at EU and local level we recommend:

- Ensuring coherence between the EU tools for integration and related policies in fields such as anti-discrimination, social inclusion, education and culture.
- Measuring the outcomes and the effectiveness of integration policies in order to establish a rational basis for political discussions and contribute to policy development. For this purpose, the further development of indicators, including qualitative policy evaluation, should be treated as a priority in order to monitor and assess Member States' policies and practice.
- Enhancing partnerships principle, strengthening the consultation of local authorities and civil society organisations, including migrants' associations, at all stages.

The European Integration Fund is vital to enhance integration activities

We recommend:

- Identifying and removing practical and procedural obstacles to accessing the European Integration Fund's national programmes. Particular attention should be paid to the obstacles encountered mainly in accessing funds by organisations providing information and assistance to all immigrants regardless of their legal or administrative status but to which it is asked to solely address regularly-staying immigrants.
- Setting up guidelines for national actions under the European Integration Fund to identify dedicated funding priorities or a minimum threshold for spending that would be allocated to projects having an impact at the local level
- Considering, under the new Multi annual Financial Framework, a higher share of EIF funds for transnational projects with an EU dimension

This summary is based on the contributions made by the following organisations:

- Caritas Europa
- Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME)
- Eurocities
- European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)
- European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA)
- European Foundation Centre (EFC)
- European Network Against Racism (ENAR)
- International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC)
- Jesuits in Europe
- Platform for Intercultural Europe
- Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM)

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