

IMMIGRANTS' INTEGRATION MODELS

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Abstract

In the context of the European population aging trend, and while the birth rate is still at a low level, the immigrants may contribute to the support of the EU economy and to finance the national social protection systems. But this would be possible only if they have been fully integrated in the host countries, the integration policies being a task of the national governments. The European Union may still offer support and stimulation through financing, policies coordination and good practices exchange facilitation. The new measures should encourage local level actions, including cooperation between local authorities, employers, migrants' organizations, service providers and local population. Within the EU, there live 20.1 million immigrants (approximately 4% of the entire population) coming from outside European area. An important element of the common EU policy on immigration is the one regarding the development of a policy on immigrants' integration, which should provide a fair treatment within the member states, and guarantee rights and obligations comparable with the ones of the Union citizens.

Keywords: *immigrants, refugees, social exclusion, immigrants' integration policies and models, the European Social Model.*

Introduction

Integration problems have always been a priority on the political agenda of Europe, during the year 2010. On one hand, the European leaders accept more and more the importance of coherence between immigration policies and the integration ones and the efforts that have to be made by the migrants that have a legal residence and the host societies in order to ensure their economic, social, cultural and political participation. On the other hand, some Europeans' attitude about immigration and integration may lead to discrimination and racism, even if the anti-migration feelings do not have, often, links to the realities upon migration and its impact on economy.

Despite all the efforts, migrants are still facing some obstacles on their way to integrate in the European societies. In order to respond to these problems, the responsible ministries with integration met in 2010 in Zaragoza and re-stated their commitment on "*the integration as an essential fact of the social development and cohesion*"¹. The Commission has launched a pilot project to identify the monitoring indicators of the integration policies results. Also, the Commission started to develop the so called "*European modules*", in order to support the national and local policies and practices in the integration matter.

At the national level, most of the member states have elaborated integration national plans and/or have set up consultative organisms, which may be questioned about integration issues. Some member states have modified their legal framework, in order to introduce tests for the third countries nationals, designed to evaluate the integration process. Legalizing the rights and obligations of the new comer migrants with the aid of an "*admission and integration contract*" went on in some member states. In many of them, a special attention have been paid to the necessity of learning the

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¹ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/115346.pdf.

host society language and to counter the growing unemployment rates among the migrants, measures being taken in order to improve the access to a job. The trend to elaborate global strategies and monitoring systems to watch their results, have gone on as well in the most member states.

Supplementary efforts are needed in order to grow the integration efficiency. EU has to admit and to support the contribution of the migrants to the economic development, ensuring, in the same time, the social cohesion. Only through a progressive provision of an efficient social and economic integration of the third countries nationals that legally reside in EU, may lead to an acceptance of the migration idea on a larger scale, promoting the same time the fundamental European values. A synergy should be encouraged between the followed political initiatives in the context of the migration policy and the series of horizontal political initiatives for the provision of a proper and global political answer. For the Commission, an approach “from down to up”, based on a well organized governance at the local/regional level, should be the best way to accomplish this goal.

Paper content

Migration is a global phenomenon, and the European continent is not an exception: all the European states are source, transit and destination countries, in different proportions. Recent estimations on migrants' population that live within the European economic area show more than 20 million foreigners, without the already naturalized or the illegal ones. An important element of the EU common policy on migration is the one regarding the development of a policy targeting the migrants' integration, and the right treatment of them on the member states' territories, as well as the guarantee of rights and obligations comparable with the ones of the EU citizens. From a macro perspective, the concept of integration regards a characteristic of the social system, of the society as a whole, and that is the intensity of the relationship between the parts (groups and individuals). During the last few years, the concept of social cohesion has been very used as an equivalent for integration.

The term of integration has a variety of dimensions, and the most important one regards the incidence, which includes, at its turn, two separate characteristics: frequency and intensity. For a proper understanding of the phenomenon, it is very important to know how these dimensions interact.

There are more theories about the migrants' integration process. One of them states that the migrants are assimilated by the new society, during two, even three generations, and, at the end of the process there are no more visible differences between the new comers and their children, on one hand, and the host society, on the other hand, only the names and appearance (skin color, etc.), maybe. The main obstacle in validating this theory has been the obvious fact that, even after a few generations, cultural differences may be observed between the migrants and their children and the host society. It is obvious, as well, that those communities, developed as a result of the immigration phenomenon wish to strengthen their own cultural identity, sometimes despite the fact that the members of these communities might have an active and full participation within the host society. Otherwise speaking, this active and full participation does not inflict necessarily, the abandon of the specific cultural identity. Thereby, what have been initially labeled as assimilation is proved to have two dimensions that do not necessarily concur, a structural dimension and a cultural one. The first shows the growth of the social participation of persons and groups within the wide society, especially at an institutional level (labor market, education, health system, etc.), while the second one represents the processes of values change and cultural identification of the migrants.

In the specific literature, when references are made to the institutional participation growth, the term of *integration* is used, and when we refer to cultural changes, *acculturation* is used to define it, a complex term which reflects the fact that total assimilation in the main culture is not the only option and, as well, it is not an absolute requirement for the success of the integration process. Social policies on migrants' integration regard mostly the institutional dimension, the ways to promote the migrants' participation within the major institutional systems of the society, and less the cultural dimension.

Integration should be understood as a process of active participation of the migrants in all the European society dimensions, process watched from two directions: both from the legal resident migrants in the EU point of view, and the host society one. This fact inflicts, on one hand, the responsibility of the host society to provide a legal framework with rights and obligations which may offer the possibility of migrants' participation in the economic, social, cultural and civil life, and on the other hand, the foreigners should respect and follow the fundamental rules and values of the European society and, in the same time, to actively participate at the integration process, without still losing their own identity (the main difference from the assimilation concept). Also, the European Commission indicates the main categories of immigrants which should benefit of the integration programs:

- Economic immigrants;
- Family re-unification immigrants;
- Refugees and persons that are granted with international protection

Because of the fact that the term "*immigrants' integration*" is a complex one, with multiple meanings, the differences between the states concerning its interpretation lead to different visions upon the social policies in the matter. However, even if the interpretations would be the same in each state, the social policies would still be different, because of the political and social circumstances, and also of the different histories relating the migration.

So, it is said that a distinction is useful between three major dimensions of the integration process: social and economic dimension, legal and political dimension and cultural dimension. Any policy related to the promotion of immigrants' integration must take into consideration these three dimensions. The ability to offer a broad explanation is limited for each dimension separately taken. That is why some authors have built models, in order to cover this complex process, models which attend to all the three dimensions.

In Europe, three models of policies can be distinguished, related to integration:

- a. The model of the seasonal worker, for which Germany is the prototype. Migration process is mainly determined by the needs of the labor market, and the presence of the immigrants is only temporary. As a consequence, a legal status is not a necessity and nor a reflection on the possibility to facilitate the cultural diversity.
- b. Assimilation model, for which France is representative. Immigration is considered to be permanent; migrants are welcome and get a legal status, under the condition of assimilating the behavioral models of the dominant culture. Immigrants are considered, first of all, as individuals, the concept of *immigrants' community* not being acceptable within this model.
- c. Ethnic minorities model, for which Great Britain is the prototype. Immigration is regarded as permanent, but the immigrants are defined depending on their ethnic and cultural origin. They build their own communities, different from the existing ones, but the real challenge is to make these communities to live in harmony, within a multicultural society.

Castles developed another typology that tries to reconcile the different dimensions:

- a. The model of exclusion based on differences, gathering Germany and the South Europe states;
- b. The assimilation model, in Great Britain, France and the Netherlands;
- c. The pluralist model, which can be found only in countries outside Europe, classic countries, which encourage immigration.

Despite the big differences from political and ideological point of view between the states, in all countries, within the social policies regarding migrants' integration, a point of interest is that, after granting the right of legal residence, access is facilitated, in equal conditions, to the labor market, establishments, education, health care, etc. Also, similarities can be found about the policies of citizenship granting, as well as about the efforts of countering discrimination, racism and xenophobia.

During the last few years discussions about the *European Social Model* are more often. All the European countries share common characteristics which, together, give birth to this *Model*. First of all, it is about a common commitment for social security and justice, full occupation of the labor market, universal access to the health care services, education, adequate social protection for special cases of disease, motherhood, aged people, unemployment and social assistance services in order to prevent poverty and social exclusion. These aspects are fully accepted by all European states and are included as basic elements of the legal and institutional framework and as objectives of the social policies as well. The European Social Model is based on the acknowledgement of the fact that social security and justice may contribute both to the economic efficiency and to the social progress. European governments usually embrace the idea that there is no opposition between the economic efficiency and social cohesion, but, actually, they are strongly related. In case of economic recession, the state might balance some social risks, as the unemployment, disease or disabilities risk, which the free market cannot cover at a satisfying level for all the citizens. Social policy measures have the role to reduce uncertainties created by a market economy, to strengthen the capacity of the individuals to adapt to the economic, technological and social changes, to provide the possibility to acquire new specializations and an equal framework of opportunities. Secondly, the *European Social Model* is characterized by a high degree of organization around some common interests, following the negotiation between governments, social partners and civil society regarding the aspects of social and economic policies. Fight against social exclusion is a primary objective on the EU agenda. The concept of exclusion has multiple dimensions and the measures that try to counter the social exclusion must cover a very wide area of directions, as: education, occupation, professional training, establishments, health care, social protection, etc. These measures are dedicated to the underprivileged groups, and immigrants and refugees are, in EU opinion, groups with high risk of social exclusion. Measures regarding labor force occupation and access to the social protection and assistance are considered to be the main ways to the social integration. From this point of view, the immigrants and the refugees are a target-group, as well.

National programs aimed towards the immigrants' integration are dominant in those countries where the majority of immigrants are accepted, based on the procedure of family reunification or because of humanitarian reasons (based on the procedure of asylum), immigrants who usually do not have a work offer before entering the country and who rarely speak the host country language.

In its majority, the immigrant population feels almost the same necessities and needs services which should address them. There are, though, certain groups that need a special attention. We refer here to the refugees and to the persons that are granted with international protection, women and immigrants part of the second or third generation.

Although from many points of view refugees and persons granted with international protection are confronted with the same situation as other immigrants, issues related to the forced nature of the immigration and the special necessity of protection need a special approach of this group within the social policies for integration. It is important to remind that these persons did not choose to leave their countries for economic reasons, but for reasons of persecution they have been confronted with, and they need a supplementary support and special services in order to facilitate their integration. Integration programs addressed to refugees should be complementary to the usual social services and should be focused on the vulnerable groups within the refugees' communities. Certain specific requirements of the integration measures, limitations or obligations, which may be generally imposed to the immigrants, cannot be applied the same way to the refugees.

Local integration is one of the durable solutions to the refugees' problems and refers to their setting down, on long term, in the host country. Local integration, together with the volunteered repatriation and establishing into another country are considered to be one of the traditional durable solutions for the refugees and are based on the assumption that persons who have been granted with a refugee status would permanently remain in the asylum country. Integration is a process of dynamic

change, which must be regarded from two perspectives: from refugees point of view, integration request a preparation in order to adapt to the host society's life style, without losing the cultural identity, and from the host society's point of view, a will is requested to adapt public institutions to the population's profile changes, to accept refugees as a part of the national community and to act for facilitating their access to resources.

Also, the integration is a long term process, which starts with the moment of arrival in the host country and ends when the refugee becomes an active member of the society, from legal, social, economic, educational and cultural perspective. In the countries with great experience in the refugees area, it often happens that the integration process to extend beyond the first generation.

Conditions related to the integration

EU member states have jumped to the conclusion that, for a successful migration policy, improving the integration process is compulsory. From this point of view, many countries provide integration programs for legal migrants who have been accepted within the national territory, sometimes on a period of few years. However, it must be noticed that the request in some legislations regarding migrants' "integration potential" has significantly increased recently. On the other hand, there are more situations nowadays when the "integration potential" has to be proved before immigrating, for example by passing a test of knowledge about language and society in the destination country.

The great majority of the EU member states do not impose integration conditions as general conditions (for all the immigrants or for the not-permanent residence request). Only three states have this provision in the legislation: Netherlands, France and Austria.

There is a trend to give the integration conditions a general character in the national legal framework, especially during the past two years. Starting with March 15th, 2006, with a few exceptions, each persons aged between 16 and 65 who wants to get a longer term residence in Netherlands and has to ask for a temporary residence permit (MVV - Machtiging tot Voorlopig Verblijf), has to pass a civic integration exam, abroad. This test is an oral exam about language knowledge and with questions about the Dutch society. Questions about life style in the Netherlands, geography, history, Constitution, democracy, legislation, language and need to know it, family life, education, health, work and income may be posed. The test would be held at the Dutch embassy or consulate abroad, and successfully passing it is a former condition to obtain the temporary permit. Examination tax is 350 EUR.

On July 24th, 2006, based on the *Law regarding immigration and integration*, an integration condition has become compulsory in France, as well. A "reception and integration contract" is requested to the new comer adults and foreigners between 16 and 18 years of age, who frequently enter French territory and who requested a residence permit. Only foreigners who do not want to settle in France, as students and seasonal workers, as well as people who have studied there for at least three years of secondary school, are not object of this condition. According to the contract, the foreigner would have to attend civic formation courses and, if necessary, language courses. Respecting the conditions of the contract is taken into consideration when a temporary residence permit should be renewed or when a long term residence permit is granted.

In Austria, the obligation to fulfill integration conditions has been introduced in 2002. Foreigners who ask for a residence permit are requested at their turn to respect an "integration agreement". This agreement consists of two modules: one concentrated on "acquiring the ability to read and write" and the other one on "acquiring knowledge about German language and the ability to participate at the social, economic and cultural life in Austria". A final exam, evaluated with "admitted", is required in order to respect the agreement. It must be noticed that this is a legal condition. Consequences for not respecting this obligation may be administrative punishment, financial disadvantages or, as a last method, expulsion.

It may be seen from the above mentioned, that the states pay the greatest attention to the language knowledge. More than that, Netherlands requires civic knowledge and France civic education courses.

The biggest difference between states is the way they apply the requests and the related legal consequences. Austria and France impose an obligation that almost all the immigrants (even if there are some exceptions) to attend an integration program. Moreover, the Austrian law says that immigrants have to pass a final exam; not respecting this provision is an offence and, the worst case, the immigrant might be expelled. In France, intentionally not respecting the contract might lead to the refuse of renewing a temporary residence permit or to grant a long term one.

On the other hand, Netherlands requests that the possible immigrant to learn the language and to acquire civic knowledge, during the period he is still abroad; oppositely, the permit would not be granted. We must say again that this condition is a general one, and, consequently, it is applicable to all immigrants. Fulfilling this condition by the immigrant means in the most cases, that he would invest some money, time and efforts in order to gain the requested knowledge. It must be noticed that opportunities to learn German and Dutch language abroad are more limited than to learn English, for example. Moreover, if a possible immigrant is coming from a rural area and/or an emergent country, this condition is even more pressing. In Netherlands, the integration monitoring system in 2006 showed an decrease of the MIVs, as a possible result of the abroad imposed test (TK 2006/07, No. 39; see also Country Report for Netherlands). Without being a surprise, the general immigration conditions related to integration are object for sharp discussions, both in public and in academic areas.²

The Justice and Home Affairs Council adopted on November 19th, 2004 in Brussels, the European framework on integration, stipulating, *inter alia*: “Basic knowledge about host society language, history and institutions is compulsory for integration; allowing the migrants to acquire these basic knowledge is essential for a successful integration”. (JHAC 2004)

While the JHA Council speaks about “allowing the migrants”, it may be noticed, looking the present legal provisions on integration that an alienation of the integration perception has happened, from a positive social measure toward its perception as a measure to limit the immigration (Besselink 2006), specifically, *integration condition*. Moreover, these conditions’ efficiency is in doubt. For example, reading and learning a language abroad, where there is no possibility to practice it daily, would need a bigger investment than learning it in the host country, and consequently, it is not the best method to ensure the acknowledgement (Groenendijk, 2007). The language level required in fact by the national legislation, in order to pass the tests, is, however, much too low to allow the access on the usual labor market. Also, it is reasoned that these imposed integration conditions are not the solution for the integration related issues, as urban intendance and planning or for social and cultural isolation (Besselink, 2006).

Conclusions

Integration of the third country nationals which are legal residents remains a key issue, sometime polemic. Successful integration is essential because of humanitarian and cultural reasons. It is, as well, necessary in order to maximize economic and social benefits of the immigration, both for individuals and for the society. There is not only one mean to provide a successful integration, but it is obvious that more efforts have to be made both at the EU and at national and local level, for better results. Each migrant should feel at home in Europe, respecting its laws and values, and should be able to contribute to Europe’s future.

Integration needs efforts both for the migrant, and for the society which accept him. Migrants should be offered the possibility to participate at the new communities’ lives, especially

² For examples, see: *Spiegel Online*, July 11th, 2007; *Radio Netherlands*, August 22nd, 2007; *Irish Independent*, August 26th, 2007

with the goal of learning the host country language; they need access to the labor market and to the education and health systems and have the social and economic capacity to keep up. They must be aware about the fundamental values of the EU and of the member states, in order to understand the culture and traditions of the country they live in. Migrants' integration means a balance between their rights and the respect they owe to the laws and culture of the host countries.

Increasing the efforts for the migrants' integration improvement in the destination countries is a key part of the global approach of the migration, being linked to the commercial exchanges, as well as to the investment competencies and flows. Understanding this phenomenon must be improved and actions should be intensified from the point of view of social integration and social policies adaptation (especially in the health and education matters), economic and labor force integration and fight against xenophobia and social exclusion.

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