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EUROPE'S MIGRATION CHALLENGE

FROM INTEGRATION TO INCLUSION

DISCUSSION PAPER



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This publication is part of Friends of Europe's Migration and Integration programme. In this discussion paper, we aim to kick-start a different but constructive and transformational conversation on migrants and inclusion.

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FOREWORD

"The immigrant has become a contemporary passion in Europe, the vacant point around which ideals clash... He is an example of the undead, who will invade, colonise and contaminate, a figure we can never quite digest or vomit. He is both a familiar, insidious figure, and a new edition of an old idea expressed with refreshed and forceful rhetoric."

British author Hanif Kureishi.ⁱ

As Europe prepares for the arrival of new Members of the European Parliament, a new European Commission and a new President of the European Council, it's time to take a fresh look at Europe's conventional thinking on migration.

Through many of our publications, opinion pieces and events, Friends of Europe has repeatedly spotlighted that Europe needs migrants. We insist that migration must be managed, with the European Union opening up legal pathways for migrants to live and work in Europe. The toxic 'us and them' narratives around migration must be replaced by the true story – successes and failures – of migration to Europe.

Our intention in this publication is therefore not to repeat what we have already said. Instead, we switch our focus to the challenge of integration. And in doing so, we make three suggestions.

First, having participated in debates on migrant integration for many years and listened attentively to what migrants themselves are saying about the question, we believe it is time to centre the conversation around inclusion and citizenship rather than the traditional concept of integration which puts the onus on migrants to 'integrate' into local society.

Second, we argue that many well-intentioned programmes aimed at giving special preferences to migrants and refugees ignore the needs of local communities, thereby exacerbating rather than facilitating inclusion.

Third, instead of denouncing migrant 'ghettos' as an impediment to inclusion, we spotlight the role played by existing migrant communities in welcoming and easing the integration of newcomers.

Our main message is simple: it's time for new approaches, new ideas and new thinking. With this publication, Friends of Europe is hoping to kick-start a different but constructive and transformational conversation on migrants and inclusion.

In the coming months, our migration programme will be looking further into the realities and complexities of creating an inclusive environment for everyone, including migrants.

Shada Islam

Director for Europe & Geopolitics at Friends of Europe

MIGRATION ‘CRISIS’ TOPS EUROPE’S POLITICAL AGENDA

The arrival in 2015 of an estimated one million refugees fleeing war and violence in the Middle East catapulted migration to the top of the European Union agenda. The so-called migration ‘crisis’ has remained in the headlines ever since.

Europe’s focus on migrants¹ and migration is not new, however.

Migration and integration have dominated political and social discourse across Europe for decades, with governments, politicians and experts engaged in heated debates on the pros and cons of Europe’s increasingly diverse population.

From warnings in 1968 by Enoch Powell, the British Conservative member of Parliament, that clashes between locals and immigrants would lead to “rivers of blood” flowing through Britain, to Brexit, migration has been a major British preoccupation, especially for the Conservative Party.

In France, Jean Marie Le Pen’s National Front, set up in 1972, made controls on immigration, anti-Semitism and xenophobia central planks of its political agenda. The Front’s successor, the National Rally, set up in 2018 and headed by Marine Le Pen, espouses an equally populist and Far Right agenda – although references to anti-Semitism are now replaced by Islamophobic comments.

Once restricted to the margins of Europe’s political landscape, Far Right populist politicians are now in government or in national parliaments across Europe. Eurosceptic parties have won 171 seats in recent elections to the European Parliament. Once installed in the EU assembly, they are likely to reassert the pre-eminence of national identity, call for stronger migrant controls and try to halt the European project from within.

Damagingly, many of Europe’s mainstream centre-right politicians have embraced the Far Right narratives on migration and migrants while the Left has largely abandoned the issue. The conversation has become ever-more strident, with politicians being egged on by anti-migrant campaigns based on disinformation and fake news. Uncritical reporting by mainstream media has injected even more hysteria into the debate.

Negative attitudes towards migrants have leaked into the official and institutional domain. Migration dominates the EU’s relationship with Africa. Increased resources are being earmarked for border controls and repatriation schemes. A halt has been put on Search and Rescue operations in the Mediterranean – a decision which has sparked a call for the EU to be prosecuted at the International Criminal Court over migrant deaths.

These and other policies have made the journey to Europe more dangerous and expensive for those fleeing violence, conflict and climate change – or others who are just seeking a better life in Europe.

Yet, migration into Europe is set to continue. Europe’s population is becoming increasingly diverse. Today, around 7% of the EU population was born outside the EUⁱⁱ, representing less than 0.2% of the total European population. Many European citizens of foreign descent – or whose parents migrated to Europe in the last century – are still viewed as ‘migrants’, however, further complicating the debate on integration.

¹ We use the term “migrant” to include people, including refugees, who have recently arrived in Europe as well as people of non-European descent who are already settled in Europe, often have European nationality but are still viewed as foreign.

MIGRANT NUMBERS ARE DOWN, HYSTERIA IS UP

This much we know: Europe needs migrants for a host of well-known reasons including their economic contribution to EU coffers and pension systems, creaking under the pressure of ageing populations. Migrants and refugees are also needed for their skills and talents – and their hard labour in sectors which are no longer viewed as attractive by many Europeans.

The number of migrants arriving in Europe is down from the peak reached in 2015. Many refugees who fled violence in the Middle East are returning to their homes. Increased border controls and EU deals with Turkey and Libya have succeeded in keeping out many migrants – but have also led to many being stranded in camps outside Europe.

Yet, the hysteria over the ‘migration crisis’ is very much alive across Europe. It targets not only the newcomers but also settled migrants – who came to Europe in the last century – their children and grandchildren. Fuelled by Far Right populists, deliberate disinformation and misleading reporting, ‘us and them’ stories dominate Europe’s political and social landscape, with the implicit understanding that ‘they’ – the outsiders, intruders, foreigners – are aliens who do not belong and can never belong in a ‘white and Christian Europe’.

ASSIMILATION AND MULTICULTURALISM HAVEN’T CREATED ‘TRUE EUROPEANS’

As the focus rightly turns to the future, similar false claims and erroneous arguments cloud the discussion over ways in which migrants and refugees – new and old – can become full-fledged members of their new communities, assuming the rights but also the obligations of being ‘true European’ citizens.

There is no magic bullet for transforming migrants into ‘true Europeans’. Governments in Europe have tried both assimilation and multiculturalism policies. As Giles Merritt, President of Friends of Europe, notes in an upcoming book, neither approaches have worked. “So far there are few convincing models” for ensuring the social and economic integration of newcomers, Merritt correctly argues. “There must be a far more determined effort and a greater financial commitment if present and future newcomers are to be absorbed into European society.”

'INTEGRATION HANDBOOKS' AREN'T THE MAGIC BULLET

With assimilation and multiculturalism equally discredited, the focus has switched to 'integration'. No one doubts that – as underlined by the European Commission – the integration of third country nationals is "a precondition for an inclusive, cohesive and prosperous society".

But how do you get there?

The Commission Action Plan for the Integration of Third Country Nationalsⁱⁱⁱ published in June 2016 includes actions across a number of policy areas considered "crucial for integration". They include:

- Pre-departure and pre-arrival measures, including actions to prepare migrants and the local communities for the integration process
- Education, including actions to promote language training, participation of migrant children to Early Childhood Education and Care, teacher training and civic education
- Employment and vocational training, including actions to promote early integration into the labour market and migrant entrepreneurship
- Access to basic services such as housing and healthcare
- Active participation and social inclusion, including actions to support exchanges with the receiving society, migrants' participation to cultural life and fighting discrimination

The Plan also includes tools to "strengthen coordination between the different actors working on integration at national, regional and local level and encourages mutual learning between EU member states".

A 'Handbook on Integration' published in 2010 contains useful lessons learned and good practices for "successful integration policies."^{iv}

The International Organization for Migration, meanwhile, defines integration as "the process of mutual adaptation between the host society and the migrants, both as individuals and as groups".^v Integration implies a sense of obligation and respect for a core set of values that bind migrants and their host communities in a common purpose, it says, underlining also the need to ensure the "full engagement" of migrants in society, economy, culture and politics. Also highlighted is the importance of noting the positive contributions of migrants and the promotion of inter-cultural dialogues, handbooks and toolboxes for cultural awareness.

"THE DUTY TO INTEGRATE"

This is all good, solid advice. Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, however, has gone a step further. In a report published by his Institute for Global Change^{vi}, Blair insists that migrant communities must be compelled to do more to integrate to help combat the rise of "Far Right bigotry".

"There is a duty to integrate, to accept the rules, laws and norms of our society that all British people hold in common and share," says Blair, adding: "Integration is not a choice, it

is a necessity.” Governments should be enforcers of the “duty to integrate” through, among other things, so-called “civic integration contracts”.

Blair’s comments have triggered a strong response including from respected British writer and Guardian columnist Aditya Chakrabortty: “If integration is your sole metric of success, we will always, at some level, fail. I can’t make myself white, my mother can’t forget her Bengali, and neither of us can be you.”^{vii}

Attempts at forced integration, through special courses for migrants and a focus on rules and laws have, in fact, long been considered the “institutional backbone” of integration policy. They may be useful for newcomers as they try to learn a new language or find jobs. But there is scant evidence that they instil a true sense of belonging or the kind of complete integration desired by Blair and others.

They can in fact have the reverse effect by underlining the migrant’s ‘otherness’. In Friends of Europe’s discussion paper *Real people, true stories: refugees for more inclusive societies*, contributor Tamim Nashed says being obliged to attend ‘integration’ programmes in Austria made him feel excluded from his new friends and community, reminding him that he was an outsider^{viii}. Others in the publication point out that instead of focusing on classrooms, authorities should encourage integration through everyday life and contact with the majority population.

SO HOW ABOUT SWITCHING THE CONVERSATION TO INCLUSION?

With the conversation around integration becoming increasingly complicated and confusing, along with the focus shifting to compulsory integration and more prescriptive top-down approaches, it’s time to try a different approach.

Despite all the talk of how societies have to accept, adjust and adapt to new arrivals – or to those who have been here for some time but still look and act ‘foreign’ – European and national policies have traditionally put the onus on the newcomers to integrate into communities.

Integration may in theory be described as being a ‘two-way street’, with all members of society making compromises and finding common ground, but the burden is most often solely placed on migrants. The explicit and implicit narrative is simple: start thinking, behaving and dressing like ‘true Europeans’.

The illusion that there is ‘one’ over-arching European identity is hammered home in schools, at work and at play. The message is reinforced by the lack of diversity in European and national institutions. Disinformation campaigns further widen the rift.

Putting inclusion at the centre of the migration debate means shifting this one-dimensional focus on migrants as perennial ‘others’ to a recognition of the dynamic, multi-faceted and multi-layered interaction between people as they live and work together.

Inclusive societies provide ALL members of society with the opportunity to participate equally in political, economic, social and cultural life. They do not cling to out-dated ideas or uni-dimensional definitions of ‘European identity’, preferring instead to recognise that there are many ways of being European – and that ‘hyphenated Europeans’ with fluid, changing and multiple identities are full members of society.

In other words, inclusive policies encourage a sense of togetherness and instil a sense of belonging rather than exclusion and non-belonging or otherness.

Shifting the conversation – and crafting policies – which focus on inclusion isn't going to be easy, however. We suggest three ways of making a start:

1. Words matter

"Amid misinformation, untruths and fake news it is sometimes hard to know what is actually going on when it comes to migration in Europe."

European Commissioner for Migration Dimitris Avramopoulos

The migration debate – and the lives of many migrants – is certainly poisoned by fake news, deliberate lies and misleading information. But misinformation is only part of the story. Toxicity in the migration debate is also fuelled by a host of dehumanising words which are used by the media – both traditional and online – by politicians and which have slowly but surely entered everyday conversations.

Maintaining the ability to think clearly and independently about migration requires being wary of some of the vocabulary now being bandied about, warns writer David Shariatmadari^x. Talking about a “swarm of people coming across the Mediterranean” as former British Prime Minister David Cameron did in 2015 or references to a “migrant flood”, “tidal wave” or “invasion” has an impact on public perceptions of migrants and migration.

“This is not about some attempt to limit free speech or ‘ban’ certain words,” says Shariatmadari. “It’s about challenging subtle patterns of thinking that do not reflect reality.” Many journalists and press organisations, including the Ethical Journalism Network, are certainly trying to do just that by ensuring more balanced reporting on migration. Listen, don’t dictate. Make sure younger people are involved.

2. A ‘no favours approach’ to deal with inequality

Traditional integration programmes are well-intentioned in their efforts to provide migrants with preferential access to jobs, education, housing and health. But such ‘special treatment’ can build resentment and frustration among others in society who feel passed over or left behind.

As such, conventionally-designed integration programmes may have the unintended effect of fuelling exclusion, deepening societal inequalities and reinforcing acrimony between locals and newcomers. They can also worsen the feeling of ‘otherness’ experienced by many migrants.

Policies which try to remedy this by providing ‘separate but equal’ opportunities – for example through initiatives offering skills and language training or affordable housing opportunities separately to locals in need and to newcomers – can also result in ‘failure’ since they end up reinforcing the idea that locals and newcomers are different.

To foster trust, belonging and cohesion, it’s time to try new and inclusive ‘no special favours’ policies which cover the needs of both locals and newcomers, with no special preferences for either category.

In doing so, governments should look for inspiration to Nobel Prize winning economist Richard Thaler’s ‘nudge theory’, which suggests that small changes in how choices are presented to individuals can make it easier to follow a course of action which is also objectively better for society.^x

When it comes to creating more inclusive societies, such nudges can work to change behaviour of both newcomers and locals through programmes such as language training or discussions on affordable housing which benefit everyone and increase overall social contact and interaction.

Also, by offering pathways to citizenship from the outset – and making clear the steps to achieve it – governments can nudge newcomers to start thinking of themselves as real stakeholders in society, with rights and obligations like others.

The participation of all community members, side by side, in such open projects can result in:

- **Upskilling:** Regardless of origin or legal status, those participating in programmes to scale up their skills can become more productive members of their community.
- **Learning from each other:** Newcomers and locals which are part of the same programmes will have opportunities to engage with each other thereby benefiting from peer-to-peer learning.
- **Overcoming ‘otherisation’:** Societies will begin to move away from ‘otherising’ newcomers and focus on all those they consider to need help and assistance.

Policymakers are starting to recognise the importance of such inclusive policies. The European Migration Forum held in April 2019, for instance, insisted on the need to include host societies in migrant inclusion projects^{xii}. Specifically, the Forum called for a ‘social cohesion clause’ that would make it mandatory for EU and national funds which are designed for migrants to involve host communities in the use of such money.

3. It's not 'ghettoisation', it's another path to integration

Migration experts have traditionally dismissed the power of diasporas and settled migrant communities in facilitating and speeding up the inclusion of newcomers. To exclude such pathways to facilitating inclusion is a mistake, however.

Whether it's a Colombian woman arriving in Queens, New York, or a Congolese man in Matonge, Brussels, newcomers instinctively or through prior knowledge seek the support of existing migrant communities to help them find jobs, homes and to learn the new language.

This so-called ‘ghettoisation’ has often been perceived as running counter to the traditional goals of integration. But from the newcomers’ perspective, living in communities that share the same language, the same nationality or have common experiences enables quicker integration than total reliance on governmental integration architecture.

As such, so-called ‘ghettos’ actually add to the diversity of society and provide newcomers with a sense of belonging.

Similarly, inclusion through professional networks must be given more attention. Doctors, engineers, architects, teachers and others who have been forced to leave their homes can find it easier to interact with their peers when they arrive in Europe.

Finally, inclusion also requires that governments must practice what they preach. In other words, don’t expect migrants to believe in equality when around them they see discrimination on the basis of race, religion and colour.

CONCLUSION

Through our many publications and activities, Friends of Europe takes an active part in the different conversations – international, national, European and local – on migration.

We underline the need for better managed, legal, humane and respectful European migration policies. We talk about the role of governments and the EU but also of local authorities and the private sector.

We highlight the special contribution to the debate made by millennials and the toxic role played by fake news and unethical journalism in reporting on migration. Above all, we insist that policymakers at all levels must listen to the concerns and priorities of migrants.

With the migration debate set to become more heated, complicated and divisive in the years ahead, we believe that the demands for stronger border controls will be accompanied more than ever before with calls for swifter migrant integration.

Our focus in this publication – and in our upcoming activities – is on switching the emphasis from integration to inclusion. We believe that all those involved in the conversation on migration, especially at the policy level, should:

- Start walking the talk on inclusion by treating migrants – and talking about them – as a part of society, not as marginalised outsiders who have a ‘duty to integrate’.
- Craft across-the-board anti-inequality policies which benefit all those who need such help, rather than fuelling resentment by focusing on special programmes for refugees and migrants.
- Seek ways to encourage established migrant communities to welcome newcomers instead of dismissing their efforts as a sign of ‘ghettoisation’.

This publication does not provide a magic silver bullet on how best to transform migrants into ‘true Europeans’. That’s because quite simply there is no single perfect European.

Europeans come in many shapes, sizes and colours. They have different lifestyles, ethnicities and religions. They think and act differently. However, they are all part of Europe. As such, they have equal obligations – and are entitled to equal treatment and equal opportunities.

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