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Integration of migrants in Europe: the need for a proactive, long-term and global policy

Report¹

Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons

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Summary

The Parliamentary Assembly notes that overall levels of integration of migrants remain unsatisfactory. Migrants continue to suffer economic and social inequality that leads to isolation and the growth of migrant ghettos.

Against this background and in order to ensure better integration of migrants, the Assembly underlines the need to return to comprehensive policies, to facilitate vocational training and recognition of diplomas and, if possible, to grant long-term residence permits.

1. Reference to Committee: [Doc. 12498](#), Reference 3748 of 11 March 2011.



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A. Draft resolution²

1. The Parliamentary Assembly refers to its [Resolution 1972 \(2014\)](#) on ensuring that migrants are a benefit for European host societies, and recalls that many European countries need legal immigration, in particular due to ageing of the population and declining birth rates. Moreover, migrants are a source of cultural enrichment for host societies.
2. However, in order to fully benefit from all the opportunities provided by legal immigrants, host countries must ensure their successful integration into society.
3. The Assembly considers the integration of legal immigrants as a two-way process of inclusion in the institutions and relationships of the host society, involving rights and responsibilities on both sides. The main areas of integration include the labour market and social services, education and political participation.
4. Regrettably, it has to be acknowledged that the overall levels of integration remain unsatisfactory and the situation of legal immigrants, and, even more worryingly, of their offspring, raises justified concern in many Council of Europe member States.
5. As a rule, unemployment rates are higher for immigrants and their offspring than for nationals. Similarly, both groups are more frequently employed on a temporary basis, which results in insecurity and limited access to social benefits. The poor match of occupational qualifications and skills to the labour market, often due to the non-recognition between States of some qualifications and diplomas, results in a waste of human resources. The low employment rate in the public sector, as compared to nationals, is another clear indication of insufficient integration, in particular for the offspring of immigrants. Such economic and social disadvantages often lead to isolation and the gradual expansion of “ghettos” for migrants.
6. While the percentage of immigrants and their offspring in higher education is comparable to nationals in most Council of Europe member States, the former are heavily overrepresented among those who achieve the lowest level of education. They also encounter problems linked to insufficient language skills.
7. The political participation of immigrants and their offspring remains much lower than average citizen participation in the majority of the European countries. Discrimination on the basis of ethnicity and religion remains a grave concern and provides a breeding ground for hate crimes and violence.
8. Moreover, the economic recession in European countries – with the overall rise of unemployment and the growth of xenophobic and neo-racist manifestations – has seen an upsurge of tension in that respect.
9. The Assembly emphasises in particular the vulnerability of elderly migrants remaining in the host countries and more specifically that of elderly migrant women, who are at risk of severe poverty.
10. Relying on quantitative and qualitative indicators, the Assembly concludes that in many Council of Europe member States the existing State policies relevant to various areas of the integration of migrants are insufficient and should be strengthened with a view to more effectively promoting the integration of migrants.
11. In this context, the Assembly welcomes the initiatives taken in some countries to create common facilities enabling migrants and nationals to meet and discuss issues of common interest and concern.
12. The Assembly therefore recommends that member States:
 - 12.1. review their current integration policies with a view to exploring solutions for better integration of migrants;
 - 12.2. increase co-operation between governments, local authorities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to promote social cohesion and diversity;
 - 12.3. return to comprehensive policies which ensure a better redistribution of wealth towards those with few (economic, cultural and political) resources, including all migrant populations, both recent and less recent. The positive effects of all such policies would be to the advantage of those experiencing the most difficulties without having a stigmatising effect on them and without producing a feeling of reverse exclusion for the others;
 - 12.4. in particular, with regard to the labour market:
 - 12.4.1. facilitate access to vocational training for legal migrants and their children;

2. Draft resolution adopted unanimously by the committee on 3 June 2014.

- 12.4.2. facilitate recognition of diplomas and qualifications acquired outside the host country;
- 12.4.3. introduce effective measures aimed at combating discrimination on the labour market;
- 12.5. concerning education:
 - 12.5.1. foster proficiency in the language of the host country;
 - 12.5.2. promote educational practices placing an emphasis on social mix;
 - 12.5.3. train teachers and school staff in intercultural practices;
 - 12.5.4. avoid the practice of grouping and classifying pupils according to their origin;
- 12.6. concerning democratic participation:
 - 12.6.1. facilitate access to the nationality of the host country and grant long-term residence permits;
 - 12.6.2. encourage migrants to exercise their freedom of expression and association, particularly in political parties, trade unions or civil society organisations;
 - 12.6.3. ensure that migrants have a say in the democratic process by granting them, in particular, the right to vote at local level;
 - 12.6.4. reconsider, if it is not already the case, the introduction of the right to dual nationality;
 - 12.6.5. facilitate the preservation of ties between migrants and their countries of origin;
- 12.7. concerning non-discrimination:
 - 12.7.1. take measures to counter attempts to make scapegoats of migrants in the economic and social context and initiate, where appropriate, a calm debate on immigration and its benefits;
 - 12.7.2. encourage intercultural and interfaith dialogue;
- 12.8. concerning support to families:
 - 12.8.1. use family reunification more effectively as an instrument of integration;
 - 12.8.2. take specific measures to assist elderly migrants, especially women, with access to social protection and health services.

B. Explanatory memorandum by Ms Karamanli, rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. Strong statements by leading European politicians have led to a resurgence in the debate over whether integration in Europe is failing.
2. The economic crisis, concerns over the control of regular and irregular migration, fears of terrorism and extremism and concerns about communities living apart were all factors leading to the question of whether or not the integration of migrants was a failure in Europe. With migrants representing 8.7% of Europe's total population, and with the number of migrants climbing every year, it is not surprising that the issue of integration has reached the top of the political agenda in most, if not all, European countries. From Russia in the East, with over 12 million foreign citizens, to Portugal in the West, with over 440 000 foreign citizens, the challenges are enormous, in terms of both numbers and also the complexity of the issue.
3. Europe cannot afford to ignore this diversity and the challenges and opportunities it brings, as recognised by the Group of Eminent Persons of the Council of Europe in its report "Living together: Combining diversity and freedom in 21st-Century Europe". Europe needs to embrace diversity and accept that we may no longer have a single identity, with more and more of us becoming "hyphenated-Europeans": Anglo-Irish, Moroccan-French, German-Turkish, etc. In reality, these hyphenated identities can actually help facilitate integration: being able to navigate among plural identities should be viewed as an advantage in our globalised societies.
4. Concerns about integration are also mounting because Europe is becoming increasingly schizophrenic in its view of migrants. On the one hand, politicians and the media continue to ratchet up the fear of being swamped by migrants, but, on the other, they realise that Europe's population is in long term decline and ageing. The European Commission has estimated that in the next 50 years the total labour force in the European Union will drop by 100 million, even if the total population increases.
5. One can ask the question: without migration, how will countries be able to pay back the debts they have incurred? Who will pay for the social security systems in Europe? The gap which already exists between what Europe needs and what it accepts, in terms of migration, is likely to increase unless new migration management strategies are put in place and effective integration measures are taken. This will be important not only for the long-term prosperity of Europe, but also for the economic well-being of countries of origin of migrants.
6. For migrants, the situation is becoming increasingly more difficult and sensitive, raising the stakes even higher in the integration debate. Migrants are feeling the heat of anti-immigrant discourse, ultra-nationalist political groups and increasingly violent attacks. They are experiencing the impact of restrictions on immigration and stricter requirements for entry, including restrictions on family reunification, residence and citizenship. Their economic situation is becoming more precarious. Asylum seekers and refugees are in a similar situation. In this context, integration becomes more, not less difficult, and notwithstanding the fact that integration is a two-way process, involving both the host and migrant communities, migrants are facing the brunt of the challenge.
7. The title of the motion for a resolution asks: "Integration of migrants: is Europe failing?". In its simplest terms, the answer to this question depends on the definition of integration and the benchmark given for success or failure. In view of the criteria measuring the progress and the work still to be accomplished and also the time needed, I suggest we highlight the need for a proactive, long-term and global policy. This is why I suggested the title "Integration of migrants in Europe: the need for a proactive, long-term and global policy" for the present report.
8. I took over the work from Ms Pelin Gündeş Bakir (Turkey, EDG), who in the course of gathering information for this report, visited Brussels and Nuremberg, where she had meetings with the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF). For my part, I wished to gather additional information and take stock of the positive initiatives taken to accommodate migrants so as to be able to supplement this report. I would like to thank all of those who provided information and assisted me in my work.

2. The approach adopted

2.1. Understanding integration, multiculturalism and assimilation

9. In order to respond to the question of whether integration is failing, it is necessary firstly to be clear on what integration is, and what it is not.

10. Integration has been defined as a process of inclusion of immigrants in the institutions and relationships of the host society.

11. Multiculturalism has been defined as a fusion in which a culture borrows parts of others and creatively transforms both it and them.

12. Assimilation can be understood as a one-sided process, in which immigrants and their descendants give up their culture and adapt totally to the society they have migrated to.

13. Integration is a two-way process involving migrants and their host societies, with implications for both rights and responsibilities, and those who affirm that integration has failed have assimilationist aims in mind.

14. The debate has all too often centred on the issue of multiculturalism and whether this has failed. Multiculturalism is a difficult concept to define since there is little consensus on the definition of the concept. As noted in the "Living Together" report, it confuses more than clarifies. It is however important not to mix our understanding of multiculturalism with our understanding of multicultural societies. We increasingly live in multicultural societies, enjoying this diversity, but this does not equate to creating a policy where cultures develop distinctly, side by side.³

15. Before considering the question of how the failure or success of integration is to be gauged, I should like to emphasise that it is difficult to obtain accurate statistics about migratory movements.

2.2. What is the measurement of failure or success of integration?

16. The failure or success of integration depends on the benchmarks used. If the benchmark used is equality of outcomes with the whole population in terms of major areas of life (economic, social and political), then the answer is clear. No country has succeeded, and indeed it is unrealistic to expect 100% success.

17. It is generally found that small countries proportionately take in the most migrants. It is nevertheless the case that the United States and France are the oldest countries of immigration, and have been since the second half of the 19th century, whereas Spain has become a new country of immigration.

18. To look at this question, I have based myself on three main indicators, while confining my examination to five areas of integration: the labour market, education, political participation, discrimination and family reunification. The first is statistical information to show how close the outcomes for migrants match those of the host community. The second is to look at the views of migrants and the third is to examine legislation and practice, using the Migration Policy Index (MIPEX), which examines 148 policy indicators in the area of migration and measures them across 31 countries.

3. Areas of integration

3.1. The right to work

Indicator ⁴	Statistics	Situation of women	Further comments
Employment rate for offspring of immigrants	73% for offspring of immigrants, which is 10% lower than that for nationals	For women this falls further to 69%	In some countries such as Spain and Belgium, employment rates can be 27% lower than that of offspring of nationals

3. See also the report of the Committee on Culture, Education, Science and Media, "Identities and diversity within intercultural societies" (Doc. 13522).

4. OECD: Settling in: indicators of immigrant integration 2012, pp. 96 and 98.

Unemployment of immigrants	On average 1.5 times higher, and recently has risen more for immigrants than natives (2.7% versus 1%)	Overall few gender differences	Young immigrants face particular problems: 23% unemployed versus 18% of native-born young people unemployed
Unemployment of native-born offspring of immigrants	Average unemployment runs at 13.8%, about 7% higher than nationals	Overall little gender disparity	40% are long-term unemployed (as opposed to 26% for offspring of natives)

3.1.1. What are the indicators telling us?

19. On the basis of the established principle that without the right to work, other rights become unobtainable, it is essential that migrants enjoy the same opportunities in the labour market, whether this is in the private or public sector, or as self-employed persons.

20. It has to be emphasised that the nature of migration has changed. In practice, until the 1980s, migrants were mainly intellectuals fleeing countries where they were unable to make use of their knowledge. Subsequently, the nature of migration has changed, since most migrants are now fleeing their countries in search of work or to escape from a situation in their home countries which has become unbearable.

21. Policies and practice are clearly letting down migrants. On average, in countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), immigrants are 50% more likely to be unemployed than nationals, and offspring of immigrants are almost twice as likely as nationals to be unemployed. This should be a warning bell, which rings even louder when taking into account that 40% of native-born offspring to immigrants are long-term unemployed. This represents a clear danger for society. If, however, we start looking at national statistics, some of the disparities become even more marked. In France the overall unemployment rate is 9.6%, whereas for immigrants it is 16.4% and for Turkish immigrants it is 25.3%. In Austria, young people from an immigrant background between the ages of 20 to 30 have found it twice as difficult as native Austrians to find jobs. In France, according to an INSEE study published in 2012, the country of origin, the age of arrival, the parents' educational levels and the family structure are all variables having an impact on academic failure and difficulties in accessing the labour market.⁵

22. A range of other statistics point in the same direction. Immigrants are more likely to be in temporary employment (15% as opposed to 10% for native born persons)⁶ and the same is true for their offspring. Immigrants are also more likely to be in low-skilled jobs (16% as compared with 7% of nationals). In some countries, such as Greece and Switzerland, the percentage of immigrants in low-skilled jobs is as high as 50%.⁷

23. Germany, for its part, long regarded as temporary the presence of foreign workers on its territory ("Gastarbeiter", meaning "guest workers"). That approach was dropped in the 70s and 80s. It is currently the case that 20% of the German population is of foreign origin, and there are more and more citizens of the European Union – to whom the German Government is increasingly granting naturalisation – (Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Italy, Hungary, Spain and Greece) and the Balkan States who wish to move there.

24. It is the same in Sweden, where the foreign-born generally have lower employment and higher unemployment than the native-born. The reason for this is that it takes time to learn a new language or that current work experience is not always relevant to the Swedish labour market. It may also be due to the fact that the foreign-born lack the informal networks that often lead to employment.

25. Public sector employment is also a good way to measure how well offspring of immigrants are doing. While 17% of them are in public employment this is nowhere near as high as the 24% rate for those born of native parents. States can certainly do more in this area and follow countries like the United Kingdom, which has one of the highest levels of employment of offspring of immigrants in public employment, standing at one in four, or France which has a 22% employment rate.⁸

5. File "Les enfants d'immigrés ont des parcours scolaires différenciés selon leur origine migratoire", Yaël Brinbaum, Laure Mogueuou and Jean-Luc Primon, October 2012, France, Insee References.

6. Settling in, OECD, p. 78.

7. Ibid., p. 118.

8. Ibid., p. 126.

26. It is also noted that overqualified migrants hold lowly posts, mainly because of the non-recognition between States of certain qualifications. Host societies thus waste valuable human resources and capacities for their own development by deskilling migrants and by not recognising their qualifications. In OECD countries, 28.3% of highly-educated immigrants are formally overqualified, compared with 17.6% for the native-born. This percentage drops when looking at native-born offspring of immigrants but it does not reach the level of the offspring of natives.⁹ There have been attempts to legislate for mutual qualification recognition programmes through bilateral agreements with some source countries. I believe this is a practice that could help tap an underutilised skill resource, which already exists in Europe.

27. Another indicator is the success rate of Europe in attracting highly skilled workers. Unfortunately, Europe has not been as successful in competing with the United States and Canada to attract these migrants. For example, 50% of all skilled migrants from Maghreb States go to the United States and Canada and only 5.5% of them choose a European Union member State. While there are many reasons for this, one is certainly their perception of integration outcomes for themselves and their families.

28. Finally, the gradual expansion of what have become “ghettos” for migrants or for poor population groups has without doubt become a major challenge to both access to work and safety, and also a serious impediment to their integration. The concentration of immigrants in the outskirts of many European cities creates an environment in which disadvantage is transmitted between generations, isolating these groups from the general population. For instance, the localisation of sub-Saharan Africans in the Paris region, coupled with lack of access to a car, makes them the group with the lowest time spent at work and the highest commute time. Furthermore, in many instances, the migrants who live in these areas do not feel safe for reasons linked to urban deprivation. Likewise, others from outside the area do not feel safe visiting these areas. These “ghettos” become breeding grounds for fear and resentment, affecting not just immigrant communities but also the host communities. The recent riots in 2013 in Sweden attest to this. Even a country such as Sweden which, on paper, has one of the most tolerant societies in Europe, ticking most of the right boxes on integration measures, cannot escape the consequences of allowing “urban ghettos” to exist.

3.1.2. What are immigrants telling us?

29. It is not surprising that in the key findings of a study of how immigrants experience integration in 15 European cities, the main problems highlighted by immigrants relate to lack of job security, over-qualification, lack of recognition of their qualifications, the need for additional training and problems of balancing training, work and family life.

3.1.3. Concerns and steps to take

30. Among the range of steps that need to be taken, I would like to highlight as a priority the removal of restrictions, in the form of regulations or legislation, on access to the labour market for immigrants in the private or public sector and self-employment. As the public sector is a large employer, steps need to be taken to provide further support to immigrants and their offspring to help them have access to public employment. Finally, education and vocational training should be provided and the recognition of certificates and qualifications obtained outside the European Union should be facilitated. While there are many other steps I could mention, I would like to highlight the need to tackle discrimination in the labour market, including by ensuring that curricula vitae are looked at without reference to the ethnic origin of the applicant. These are measures that the MIPEX (Migrant Integration Policy Index) has examined, country by country, and it is interesting to note that Sweden and Portugal are ranked highly, and that some of the countries with the greatest experience of migration fare less well, with the United Kingdom, Belgium and Switzerland being below the European Union average. Part of the reason for this may be concerns over antagonising public opinion by opening up labour opportunities for migrants and fears that immigrants may take the jobs of nationals. Those fears, albeit largely unfounded, and a failure to clarify that “foreigners are not a danger for jobs” creates a barrier to labour market mobility and to providing equal opportunities for migrants. As a sub-set of migrants, refugees are often in a difficult situation in finding work because of the traumas that they have faced before reaching their country of asylum. They may also have faced detention during the asylum process, or restrictions on their right to work. These will have slowed down and hindered their integration. Refugees have particular needs and these have to be taken into account.

9. Ibid., pp. 120-123.

3.2. Education

Indicator ¹⁰ of educational level	Total population	Immigrants	Comments
Tertiary education	24%	24%	For non-EU-born people the figure falls to 22%
Secondary education	49%	40%	For non-EU-born people the figure falls to 38%
Primary or less than primary education	27%	36%	For non-EU-born people the figure climbs to 40%

31. If immigrants and their offspring are to be on the same footing as the total population, they will need to have the same or similar education opportunities. The above table shows that participation rates of immigrants are similar in higher (tertiary) education, but that immigrants are heavily over-represented among those who only achieve lower levels of education (primary or less than primary education).

32. According to the OECD the children of immigrants reach higher levels of education, but they do not do as well as the children of native-born persons,¹¹ this despite the fact that the language hurdle should have been overcome if they have been living since their earliest years in the host country.

33. What is interesting to note in the statistics is the importance of pre-primary education, where the attendance rate of children of immigrants is below that of the main population.¹² For children of immigrants this early level of education appears essential, especially for those who do not speak the language of the host community at home.¹³

34. In Sweden, the government submitted a report of the results for all indicators (Government Communication 2009/10:233) which noted that concerning results in education and equality, a school that offers the same quality of education for all students is of paramount importance to prevent that exclusion from being transferred to the next generation. Teaching that supports newly arrived students in achieving the school's learning goals was considered a challenge in this context. Finally, it was stated that there are reasons to continue to follow up the effects of segregation and to develop knowledge about factors that influence the risk of foreign-born people getting stuck in lifelong exclusion.

3.2.1. What are immigrants telling us?

35. A recurrent theme is the issue of language and support for language learning. This applies not only at school but also for those who have recently arrived. One of the key findings of a study on how immigrants experience integration was the high value they place on language learning courses, but that the main obstacles for completing these include the lack of time and lack of information about learning opportunities. On the subject of integration courses (including language courses), immigrants clearly felt that these helped them learn the basic language, although they considered that they could be better linked to training and employment services.¹⁴

3.2.2. Concerns and steps to take

36. It is clear that we need to be promoting access to education from the earliest age possible, and that the special needs of immigrants and their children have to be taken into account. Children may require additional learning support, in particular language support, and any entitlements in this respect have to be accessible and known. Furthermore, an intercultural approach to education is needed, not only in relation to the children but also in the way the school interacts with the parents. Teachers with migrant backgrounds have to be recruited in greater numbers, bearing in mind their useful role as mediators with the families, staff and children. Furthermore, all teachers and staff need to be trained to deal with intercultural environments, and steps have to be taken to avoid segregation.

10. Eurostat, Indicators of Immigrant Integration. 2011 edition, Table 11.

11. Settling in, OECD, pp. 82-85

12. Ibid., p. 78.

13. Ibid., p. 80, and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) referred to therein.

14. How immigrants experience integration, pp. 38 and 39.

37. The above are only a number of examples of steps required. Many of these are examined in relation to country practices in the MIPEX and one can reach the conclusion that there are few education systems in Europe that have adapted to immigration realities. The countries that have done the most to meet the challenges are the Nordic countries, and among the more traditional countries of immigration, the United Kingdom is listed as the strongest. Unfortunately, according to MIPEX's ranking, many countries remain critically poor in terms of measures taken. These include France, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia and Lithuania.

38. There are three educational issues I would like to develop further. The first is the lack of recognition given to migrant children who master several languages. In many instances, the language of the migrant may not be recognised in the official curriculum and he or she receives no credit for his or her achievements in this.

39. The second issue is linked to the problem of school segregation, which comes about largely as a result of housing segregation, particularly in inner cities. Research shows that a gap in success rates of 15% between native and immigrant pupils in Denmark can be put down to school segregation.¹⁵ Immigrant parents living in these inner city areas often have great difficulty providing their children with adequate support for their homework as they are working long hours and they cannot provide a quiet space at home for studying.

40. The third issue I would like to mention is the practice of labelling, grouping and classifying students on the basis of "higher" or "lower" ability. Research shows that children with immigrant, minority or lower socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to be put on a lower ability track than children of native parents from middle or higher socio-economic classes with similar grades. This may be due to prejudices when references are made about the ability of children, streaming of the children at an early age, wrongful diagnosis of immigrant and ethnic minority students as cases of "special needs", or for a variety of other reasons.¹⁶ It is vital to eliminate the rapid selections made in schools so that migrant children are considered and treated on the same footing as nationals.

41. In conclusion, it is clear that in all too many instances member States have not been equipped to take on the challenges of integrating large numbers of immigrant children. Systems have been reactive rather than proactive in terms of dealing with the challenges. Another, perhaps even more worrying problem is that education in Europe, for the most part, is based on a curriculum that was devised in the early part of the 20th century, over 100 years ago. The Council of Europe has been doing some innovative and important work to update member States' approach to education.

3.3. Democratic participation

42. In [Resolution 1618 \(2008\)](#) on the state of democracy in Europe: measures to improve the democratic participation of migrants, the Assembly emphasises the need to make sure that migrants are given a "fair share" in the democratic process in Europe. Democratic participation across Europe remains low however, particularly for migrants. The Assembly also points out that integration and participation are a catalyst for one another: integration is the key to the democratic participation of migrants and such participation in turn promotes integration.

43. Democratic participation is, however, difficult to measure, in part because the concept is difficult to define. Two measures which can nonetheless be used are the acquisition of nationality and also participation in voting.

44. In 2010, the number of people naturalised in the European Union reached the figure of 756 000, up from 700 000 the previous year. The overall number of nationals among the foreign-born population, however, stands at just under 50% in OECD countries, with countries like the Netherlands and Sweden being in the highest bracket of 60%-70%, and Portugal and France in the next bracket 50% to 60%.¹⁷ It is perhaps not surprising that some of the newer host countries of immigration are under 30% (Greece and Spain). Among the traditional host countries, the United Kingdom and Denmark hover around the 40% mark. In Germany, the immigrant vote has become a new issue for the political parties, almost 10% of German citizens in 2013 being of immigrant origin. So democratic representation is now more in line with the diversity of the German population.

15. Handbook on integration for policy makers and practitioners, third edition, 2009, Directorate-General Justice, Freedom and Security, p. 133, http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/UDRW/images/items/docl_12892_168517401.pdf.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

17. Settling in, OECD, 2012, p. 142. These statistics however date back to 2005-2006.

45. These statistics clearly show that there remains considerable scope for further including immigrants in the democratic process by allowing them to become citizens and vote and participate more fully in democratic life.

46. For those who have become nationals and have the right to vote there is evidence to show that more could be done to encourage them to participate, particularly in southern European countries. The overall participation rate in OECD countries for nationals is slightly below 80%, while for immigrants it is around 60%.¹⁸

47. I would like to highlight however that democratic participation can take many different forms and include not just voting but standing for election, exercising freedom of expression and freedom of association, including membership of political parties, trade unions and civil society organisations, taking part in demonstrations and participating actively in the social and cultural life of the place where they live. Voting can also take place at local and other levels, not just national level.

48. The democratic participation of migrants is clearly an important aspect of integration and it is not surprising that two key conventions of the Council of Europe have a bearing on this, namely the Convention on Nationality (ETS No. 166) and the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level (ETS No. 144). It is disappointing that member States have been reluctant to sign up to these conventions and in this way promote further integration.¹⁹

3.3.1. *What are immigrants telling us?*

49. Most immigrants want to vote, want more diversity in politics and would be ready to vote to back this up. They consider that parliamentarians with an immigrant background would better understand and represent them. It is however interesting to note that a large part of the general public do not see this as an issue and only 40% to 45% of them consider there should be more parliamentarians of different ethnic origins.²⁰ It is interesting to note that the situation from one city to another varies substantially, which is another indication that integration takes place at the local level and is guided by local policies and practices. This is one of the reasons why the Council of Europe has given importance to its work on Intercultural Cities.²¹ While it is important to me that immigrant communities are able to express their concerns through the political process, I think it is also important that we remain vigilant against the threat of clientelism in local voting.

3.3.2. *Concerns and steps to take*

50. The Assembly already made a clear statement of what needs to be done in [Resolution 1618 \(2008\)](#), namely facilitating access to nationality and granting long-term residence status. It has also highlighted the need to regularise the situation of irregular migrants so that they are not returned, to grant voting rights to migrants, at least at a local level, to lift restrictions on migrants' rights to join political parties or form political associations, and to make sure that women and men of migrant backgrounds are represented at all political levels. These are some of the key steps that need to be taken, and the five years that have passed since the Assembly's resolution have not changed what is required.

51. In my view, democratic participation is closely linked to social participation and one of the keys to both of these is making a space where both migrants and the native populations can come together. This may be at a political level (national or local), but it may also be at a social level in sports clubs, social clubs, in schools, debates or conferences. The Council of Europe recently contributed to this discussion in a policy document on key recommendations on building migrants' sense of belonging through positive interactions.²²

52. The issue of dual citizenship merits greater attention. The practice in certain countries of forcing people to give up their birth citizenship before taking on another citizenship, in my view, holds back immigrants from integrating and belonging. Within the European Union, this has been recognised as beneficial and is allowed

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 138 and 139.

19. In the case of the Convention on Nationality there are 20 Parties and nine additional signatures. For the Convention on the participation of foreigners there are currently eight States Parties and five signatures outstanding.

20. How immigrants experience integration, pp. 42-50, with statistics coming from the 2006 Eurobarometer.

21. For further information on this, see the Council of Europe publication, "The intercultural city step by step. Practical guide for applying the urban model of intercultural integration", January 2013.

22. Building Migrant's Belonging Through Positive Interactions, Council of Europe Policy Document, Andrew Orton, November 2012.

for all European Union nationals. This is not, however, often allowed for non-European Union citizens. This creates problems of discrimination and differences of treatment, notwithstanding the multiple identities people increasingly have in Europe, as noted in the “Living Together” report.

53. One issue which always strikes me as a politician is the lack of people of immigrant background in the elite circles of politics. This lacuna is even more marked if one examines the number of persons of Muslim background in higher political circles.

54. As noted earlier, the Council of Europe has established important standards under the Convention on Nationality and the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level. More needs to be done with these two key conventions, not least encouraging further ratifications and their implementation.

3.4. Discrimination

55. Discrimination perhaps more than anything affects the integration experience of migrants and their children. It can take place in all aspects of life, in employment, housing, access to goods and services, education or other domains. It can be direct or indirect and it can be by individuals or it can be institutional and brought about by structures or practices.

56. There are three ways in which this discrimination can be measured. The first is by looking at data and comparing factors such as employment, education results, housing, income, etc. The second is by what is referred to as “correspondence testing” which means taking an issue, controlling the variables and testing whether discrimination takes place. This is done for example with fictitious applications for housing, jobs or social services and seeing what happens when the only variable is ethnicity. The third is by asking migrants themselves about their perceptions of discrimination.

57. I have already looked at work and education, where different forms of prejudice and discrimination may enter into the equation and affect the outcome of immigrants and their children, but there are many other areas in which immigrants and their children fare less well than the main population.

Indicator ²³	Comments
Median disposable income	Remains much lower for immigrants and in Belgium, Greece, France, Italy, Austria and Slovenia it is less than 75% of that of the host population for those in the prime working ages
Risk of poverty	In European Union member States it is 9% higher for immigrants and 13% higher for those born outside the European Union
Property ownership	It is almost three times lower for immigrants in OECD countries

58. Above are just a few additional indicators. One could also look at criminal measures (stop and search, arrests, charges and imprisonment), or sub-sets of migrants and see how the different groups fare. The situation among different groups can be very uneven, but one group which comes out time and time again in the statistics as being discriminated against and disadvantaged more than others are the Roma.

3.4.1. What are immigrants telling us?

59. According to statistics cited by the OECD,²⁴ perceived ethnic discrimination is highest in Greece where 26% of immigrants perceive discrimination. All southern European countries, however, have perceptions above the average OECD average of 14%. By contrast, the perception of discrimination in countries such as Belgium, Norway, Switzerland and Luxembourg is relatively low. There is, however, a much greater perception of discrimination for persons coming from lower-income countries than those from higher-income countries. Furthermore, statistics also indicate that persons who have been naturalised are less likely to feel discriminated against. What is surprising and worrying is that offspring of immigrants have on average, across OECD countries, an even stronger feeling of having been discriminated against, this notwithstanding the fact that they should be better integrated, speak the local language, and understand the local society.

23. OECD Indicators of immigrant integration, pp. 162, 170 and 236.

24. Statistics and information taken from Settling in: OECD indicators of immigrant integration, pp. 148-153.

60. The perception of discrimination among Muslims is particularly acute. According to a report of the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency, one in three Muslims reported that they had been discriminated against and 11% maintained they had been victims of racially motivated crimes (such as assault, threat or serious harassment) at least once in the previous 12-month period.²⁵

3.4.2. Concerns and steps to take

61. A great deal of effort has been made in Europe to tackle discrimination, racism and intolerance, in particular in relation to anti-discrimination legislation and thanks to the work of institutions seeking to combat discrimination. Member States of the European Union, in particular, have had to comply with EU legislation on the matter going back to the year 2000.²⁶ However, much still needs to be done, as noted in the regular country reports of the Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and also the key findings of MIPEX.²⁷

62. In preparing this report, I have come across a number of issues which I consider need to be tackled as a matter of urgency if Europe is to better succeed in its integration policies as a two-way process.

63. The media have an important role to play, but unfortunately, all too often they demonise migrants and their offspring by emphasising real or alleged "scandals" about crime and welfare abuse and portray them as a danger and a burden to the host society. Research and real data however show that migrants are not a burden on the host countries' societies.²⁸ For instance, migrants in similar circumstances to those of nationals are less likely to use unemployment benefits than nationals.²⁹ It is not only the media, but also politicians who often demonise migrants for short term political gain, safe in the knowledge that immigrants do not vote. This is an issue already covered by the Assembly in its Resolution 1889 (2012) on the portrayal of migrants and refugees during election campaigns. Governments also have a mind-set towards migrants. Integration issues are often managed at the level of ministries of the interior, within a security framework rather than a social or other framework.³⁰ But there must surely also be some inter-ministerial approaches!

64. Discrimination can be on the basis of ethnic origin, but it can also be on the basis of religion. Since the terrorist attacks in September 2011, a new security dimension has arisen, and with it a backlash against Islam. This has had an impact on integration, including perceptions of Muslims.

65. There are worrying studies which show just how negative attitudes are towards Muslims. One study indicates that the percentage of persons having a "somewhat unfavourable" or a "very unfavourable" opinion of Muslims has increased, reaching a level sometimes close to 50%.³¹ More studies, however, are needed on the integration of Muslims if a better understanding is to be had of the problems of integration that they face.³² Insufficient understanding of Islam and its cultural roots results in its being confused with phenomena of indoctrination which can affect all religions (see the work of the Assembly on this subject).

66. It is clear that there is a fear of Islamic extremism, including not just terrorist plots but also threats of violence and shunning of western values. This fear, which in turn creates prejudices and forms stereotypes, hinders the peaceful living together of all communities and needs to be addressed. The United Nations Alliance of Civilisations (UNAOC) has an important contribution to make in intercultural and interfaith dialogue and can help in tackling this fear and breaking down tensions between different religious communities.³³

25. European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS) – Data Focus Report / Muslims, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2009, cited in the "Living Together Report", p. 15.

26. Note in particular the Racial Equality and Employment Equality Directives.

27. See for MIPEX III, Anti-Discrimination, p. 24.

28. See [Doc. 13367](#) and [Resolution 1972 \(2014\)](#).

29. Living Together, Combining Diversity and Freedom in 21st-century Europe, Report of the Group of Eminent Persons of the Council of Europe, 2012.

30. In the United Kingdom, the Home Office is responsible for integration issues, in Germany, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) is part of the Ministry of the Interior.

31. Pew Global Attitudes Project, September 2008 reported in the "Living Together Report", p. 15.

32. Studies such as the one on Muslim Life in Germany conducted on behalf of the German Conference on Islam and published by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) are to be welcomed. This study for example highlighted the fact that the number of Muslims in Germany had been previously largely underestimated and identified particular problems facing Muslim children notwithstanding general education advancements.

33. See also the Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, "Living Together As Equals in Dignity" and also Assembly [Resolution 1743 \(2010\)](#) on Islam, Islamism and Islamophobia in Europe.

67. Religion and interfaith dialogue also have a role to play in breaking down discrimination and promoting integration. Churches, mosques and other religious institutions can help migrants find jobs (promoting economic integration), learn about the culture (helping cultural integration), and develop links and friendships (facilitating social integration).

68. Discrimination, whether based on religion or ethnicity, can provide a breeding ground for hate crimes, which are not just acts of violence and threats against the individual, but may be aimed at the wider community. Failure by the authorities to fully investigate these and bring the perpetrators to justice has been one of the major causes of tension with migrant communities. Take the example of the killing of Stephen Lawrence in the United Kingdom, 20 years ago; the failures in carrying out the investigation led to an understanding that there was profound institutional racism in the system in the UK. Other countries have had similar incidents, not always with the same soul searching as the Lawrence enquiry engendered.

69. In Germany between 2000 and 2006, a series of killings of shopkeepers took place, regrettably named by the press as the “döner-morde” (doner killings). In these, eight persons of Turkish origin and one of Greek origin were killed. There was much criticism about the police investigations, including the failure to recognise the racial motivation of the crimes, the treatment of the families of the victims as suspects, and the lack of clarity on the information the authorities had on the killers. It is important that countries learn from such tragic events and face up to their responsibilities, as the United Kingdom did in recognising “institutional racism” after the Lawrence investigation. What is, however, important to retain from these examples is the effect that failures to protect migrant communities from these crimes have on the migrants themselves. If they do not feel protected, if they do not feel that the police will follow up as necessary with appropriate investigations, how can they feel safe in society and be fully integrated?

70. In conclusion, there is research which shows that individuals who are stigmatised are more likely to develop hostility and opposition towards the rest of society. We need to allow for a framework of national identity which does not come from the mandate of the State, but rather encompasses the reality of the nation. In attempting to define national identity, the State cannot be objective.

71. The Council of Europe has been extremely active in dealing with issues of non-discrimination, in particular through the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, its various Youth Campaigns, including the most recent one on “No Hate Speech” and the work of the Commissioner for Human Rights and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. This work has to be fully supported by member States and strengthened further.

3.5. Family reunification

72. It has been said that “family reunification is not just a channel for the immigration of families, but also the starting point for integration”. It is difficult to envisage how integration could succeed without family reunification, in particular when one talks of husbands and wives and parents and children.

73. Government policies in relation to family reunification have changed substantially over the last decade and for the most part they have restricted the right to family reunification.³⁴ This has been done through a range of measures and restrictions, including language and other tests, age restrictions and financial requirements, including fees, visas and income requirements.³⁵

74. Two examples can be given of how this has an impact. In Belgium, the Immigration and Asylum Minister announced that the percentage of family reunification acceptances fell from 71% in April 2011 to 35.5% in April 2012. In the United Kingdom, the British Migration Advisory Committee expected a refusal rate of 45% for applications for family reunification as a result of more stringent requirements, in particular the increase in the income levels needed.

75. MIPEX research shows that the procedures in the European Union member States have become more favourable in five but less favourable in 11 countries regarding family reunification. MIPEX goes on to comment that traditional countries of immigration are requiring immigrants to meet conditions that many of their own nationals could not. Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom impose higher

34. For an in-depth discussion on this, see Family Reunification: a barrier or facilitator of integration? A comparative study, Tineke Strik, Betty de Hart, Ellen Nissen.

35. I have not focused on the issue of these integration/language tests and the problems that they may pose for integration, as this issue has been taken up in a separate report by Ms Tineke Strik (Netherlands, SOC) entitled “Integration tests: helping or hindering integration?” [Doc. 13361](#), [Resolution 1973 \(2014\)](#) and [Recommendation 2034 \(2014\)](#).

marriage ages than they ask of their own nationals. Austria, Denmark and the Netherlands impose higher incomes. Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom impose more tests for spouses abroad. Alternatively, in Belgium, Portugal and Sweden, income and housing requirements are equal to those imposed on their own nationals.

3.5.1. *What are immigrants telling us?*

76. It should not be a surprise that immigrants favour family reunification. In the study on how immigrants experience integration in 15 European cities, successful family reunification applicants highlighted the positive effects of family reunification. Almost all those interviewed considered that it eased family life and in over 80% of cases it enabled immigrants to become more involved. In around 50% of cases it allowed immigrants to feel settled and for 30% of persons it helped them to obtain a better job.

77. In the study, immigrants highlighted the main problems they had in reuniting with their families. Around half the families experienced difficulties, noting problems in obtaining documents, meeting all the different requirements, and dealing with the power and discretion of authorities.

3.5.2. *Concerns and steps to take*

78. Not all immigrants have been affected in the same way. This is in part due to the European Union's Family Reunification Directive. Those from EU member States have benefited while third country nationals have been the ones facing the problems, with the European Union's Family Reunification Directive providing the justification for restrictions on family reunification. Furthermore, it is not just the laws that have created barriers, but practices, including delayed processing times, attitudes of administrative staff and checks on marriage arrangements and family links. While there are certainly examples of abuses by applicants, the emphasis put by the authorities on rooting out these abuses not only sends an unwelcome message to many immigrants but also creates a general perception that the system is being abused and that marriages are being arranged or even forced.

79. Furthermore, the range of different requirements weigh heavily and have a discriminatory effect on those with little education or literacy, the elderly, women with children and those living in remote areas who would like to join their family. It is these people who have the most difficulty studying for exams or tests, obtaining documents, understanding the process, travelling to the places where lessons or tests take place or where documents have to be lodged.

80. There are real concerns that the increasing number of restrictions on family reunification are hindering the integration of migrants. These have been summed up, as follows, in one recent study:³⁶

81. However, we are able to conclude that the restrictive measures on the admission and residence of family members have not furthered integration and in many cases may have actually impeded it. Being excluded means, in any case, that integration is not promoted. Delay in the process means that the family members live separately, and thus, focus on the process and not on the host society. Children are badly affected by the delay, because they miss at least one parent and their language learning and integration process are delayed. These conclusions contrast with the objective of integration, formally used by governments to introduce restrictive admission rules.

82. It is perhaps in the area of family reunification that the clarity of the clash between migration management and integration come into play the most. In a period where many governments are seeking to show their electorates that they are cutting down on immigration, it is in the area of family reunification that they are likely to make the most cuts. These cuts will, in my opinion, have a negative impact on the integration prospects of their families.

83. Particular attention must be focused on the provision of active support lasting several months when family members arrive to help them deal with the formalities, ensure their integration through learning of the language and knowledge of the country, the acquisition of vocational skills and the existence of contacts and support in the local communities.

36. See Family Reunification: a barrier or facilitator of integration?, pp. 107-111.

4. Role and mandate of the European Union in integration

84. Integration is an issue which is devolved to member States and the European Union accordingly has no mandate to harmonise legislation or practice in this area.

85. Having said this, the European Union has developed Common Basic Principles and assists member States in their efforts to integrate immigrants through a range of measures such as the European Integration fund, the work of various departments of the Commission and the European Integration Forum, which has for example recently issued a statement on participation of migrants in the democratic process. In December 2009, the European Council invited the Commission to identify European best practices in order to develop benchmarks for monitoring the outcomes of integration policies. The following year, the EU articulated a growth strategy, Europe 2020, which includes 'Integrated Guidelines'. This document developed several EU-wide targets concerning labour market access, education, and social inclusion.

86. Some of the more specific guidelines concerning integration strategies include the need to "remove barriers to occupational and geographical mobility of workers" and to make higher education "become more open to non-traditional learners".³⁷

5. Concluding remarks

87. The road towards integration is long and complicated. It is therefore important to learn from experience and from what has worked in different countries both in and outside Europe.

88. Throughout the report, I have stressed that integration is a two-way process. It is something that takes time and works across generations. It is something that both the host community and the migrant community must work together on. Successful integration benefits everyone.

89. For me, one of the greatest priorities is to create a common physical space in society where migrants and the host society can meet. It is also important to include a platform around which the integration debate can be based and the Council of Europe has an important role to play in this, taking into account its experience, its instruments and its different human rights bodies. Furthermore, the 17 guiding principles put forward in the "Living Together" report provide a good foundation for policy makers, opinion leaders and civil society to build upon.

90. If we take as our measure of success of integration, the equality of outcome for migrants as compared with the rest of the population, then we still have a long way to go. Many immigrants and their families have successfully integrated in Europe and examples of good practice abound. These need to be built upon.³⁸

91. If we want to progress further, it is important to consolidate what has been learnt and bring together good practice, standards and recommendations, including from international institutions such as the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE),³⁹ the United Nations and the European Union and its Parliament.⁴⁰

92. One of the greatest dangers at the moment is that States, rather than taking more action on integration, take less action due to the economic and political climate. This will be an expensive mistake, and one which will be costly not only for migrants and their integration experience, but also for the host societies. It will also be a costly economic error. Migrants have a lot to contribute to society in economic terms, if they are properly integrated.

93. It would also appear necessary to return to comprehensive policies which ensure a better redistribution of wealth towards those with few (economic, cultural and political) resources, including all migrant populations, both recent and less recent. The positive effects for all of such policies would be to the advantage of those experiencing the most difficulties without having a stigmatising effect on them and without producing a feeling of reverse exclusion for the others.

37. European Commission website.

38. See for example the collection of innovative good practices on integration on the website www.integration.eu and the Handbook on Integration for policy-makers and practitioners (third Edition).

39. See in particular the Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies.

40. See, most recently, European Parliament Resolution of 14 March on the integration of migrants, its effects on the labour market and the external dimension of social security co-ordination (2012/2131 (INI)).