

Integration of Immigrants: National or European level?

by

Lucia Piteřová

[\(luciapitelova@yahoo.co.uk\)](mailto:luciapitelova@yahoo.co.uk)

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1. Introduction

“Legal migration and integration of third - country nationals are part of an important debate today across the enlarged European Union. Most Member States are now experiencing migratory phenomena and are confronted with integration challenges. Some countries, including the new Member States, have only recently been faced with immigration. Others have dealt with immigration and integration challenges for decades but not always with satisfactory results, and they are consequently revising their policies. Reflecting the different histories, traditions and institutional arrangements, there are a wide variety of approaches being taken to find solutions from policies carried out so far.” This is the way the Common Agenda for Integration Framework for integration of Third - Country Nationals in the European Union starts with and it includes all the challenges the enlarged European Union is facing nowadays.

Immigration and mainly integration of immigrants is one of the biggest challenges the EU Member Member are facing. Time has proved that they have not been successful with developing and implementing integration policy that would really work. That was the main reason why they started step by step putting the issue of integration of immigrants on the agenda of the EU. Is it possible to create a Common European Integration policy? What would be the advantages? Can shifting the issue of integration to the European level solve the problem of integration? These are the question I will try to find answers to.

2. What is integration of immigrants?

Migration to the country causes that both sides, the newcomers as well as the indigenous population must adapt to each other. This is very simplified definition of the process that is, lets say, side product of migration. For this process there are many different terms that can be used. For example absorption, adaptation, race relation cycle, assimilation, acculturation, inclusion, incorporation and the last term used for this process is integration. (Biezeveld and Entzinger 2003)

Integration is very often used as a process as well as a particular concept. Integration as a concept *“may be defined as the stability of relations among parts within a system – like whole, the borders of which clearly separate it from its environment; in such a state, the system is said to be integrated.”* (Entzinger and Biezeveld 2003) The following meanings refer to integration as a particular process. Integration is *“the process of relating single elements to one another and, out of these, forming a new structure”* or *“adding a single element or partial structures to an existing structure, to form an interconnected whole”* or *“maintaining or improving relations within a system or structure.”* (Entzinger and Biezeveld 2003: 2) These are definitions that can be used for any area of studies. When we look closer to the concept of integration of immigrants we have to take into consideration more attributes and factors that shape the concept in the case of immigrants.

According to Esser integration of immigrants into a host society should be understood as a special case of social integration, to which the concepts of placement, acculturation, interaction and identification can be applied. According to the other authors such as Heckman and Schnapper the integration of immigrants is conceptualised as a structural integration, cultural integration, interactive integration and identificational integration. These concepts are basic dimensions of integration and can be used as the main indicators. (Bosswick and Heckman 2006)

Very often integration is confused with the term acculturation. Sometimes these two terms are used as synonyms but using them this way is not very correct. Integration refers to institutional participation of immigrants, for example their direct involvement in labour market or health system or education and acculturation is used for adjusting to the culture of host society meaning that they start to take some elements from the host culture but what is important to stress that they do not abandon their own culture. (Biezeveld and Entzinger 2003) In the connection with

the way the immigrants cope with the culture of host society and vice versa there have been created some concepts explaining a possible scenario. One of them is called “melting pot” that says that all cultures interact together and influence each other what causes creation of a new culture that is sort of mixture of all cultures in the society. The second concept is more like the acculturation I have already described. According to Entzinger and Biezeveld assimilation and acculturation are two terms for the same phenomenon just with the difference that acculturation is more politically correct. (Biezeveld and Entzinger 2003: 9)

3. Integration policies in Europe: different models

By analysing the integration policies in Europe we can find some specific models some countries follow. The models that exist in the present, it means named and described, were formed inductively rather than deductively by comparing different approaches of countries. The models of integration in Europe can be found in the works by Hammer (1985), Brubaker (1992), Schnapper (1992), Todd (1994), Kastoryano (1996), Entzinger (2000), Brubaker (2003). (Biezeveld and Entzinger 2003: 9)

Most commonly are distinguished three models of integration of immigrants in Europe. Hollifield (1997) distinguishes the following models. The first model is the guestworker model. The prototype of this model is represented by Germany. This model is based on the expectations of temporary immigration and so this model does not reinforce legal status of immigrants. This is closely connected with the rule *ius sanguinis* that is still valid in Germany. At the same time this model does not pay much attention to acculturation and possible cultural diversity that can be a consequence of the failure of acculturation. (Biezeveld and Entzinger 2003)

Other model is called the assimilation model and its followed in France. This model sees immigration as permanent and is ready to give a legal status to immigrants if they are willing to assimilate to the dominant culture. This model does not count with the minority communities because it expects that the immigrants will assimilate and take elements from the dominant culture. (Biezeveld and Entzinger 2003)

The third model is called the ethnic minority model. Great Britain can be used as an example for this model. Similarly to the previous model this model considers the immigration to be permanent. The difference is that this model defines immigrants in terms of their origin (national, ethnic). The immigrants are not forced to assimilate and they create communities that are culturally different. (Biezeveld and Entzinger 2003)

Despite the existence of different models in the EU Member States we can say that there are no big differences among the integration policies of EU Member States. This conclusion is also supported by Niessen for the Council of Europe that stated that there are similarities in the integration policies of the EU Member States. The similarities lie in the naturalisation and citizenship policies, as well as in the efforts by

EU Member States to fight against discrimination, racism and xenophobia. (Biezeveld and Entzinger 2003)

The other similarity that can be noticed when analysing the policies of EU Member States is that all of them put the biggest emphasis on integration into the labour force and on education of immigrants. They consider these two to be key ones for successful integration in general. (Biezeveld and Entzinger 2003)

4. Why is integration a current issue?

Immigration has always been a current feature of European society.¹ Immigration is considered to be a solution to some of the problems we are facing nowadays. Generally said society can benefit from the immigration in the case if it is able to integrate the immigrants successfully. If a state has a good integration policy and the immigrants become active members of the society the country can benefit in variety of ways. The benefits can include strengthening of economy, greater social cohesion, increased feeling of security and cultural diversity. (Conclusion of the Council and the representatives of the governments of the member states on the establishment of common basic principles for immigrant integration policy in the European Union 2004)

In the present its believed that immigration can solve the problems such as demographic ageing of European society², also it could be a solution to a labour shortage and its considered to have a positive effect on employment. These are the key points that make the countries feel prone to immigration. All these benefits mentioned above can be achieved under a condition that the state has developed effective integration policy. The immigration and integration starts to be more and more related what is a quite big shift in an approach in comparison to the past when the integration policy was quite underestimated and more attention was paid to immigration policy. In the present it is stated that successful immigration policy is dependent on successful integration policy and vice versa. This was also concluded in The Third Annual report on the Migration and Integration³ in which was stated that *“the link between legal migration policies and integration strategies needs to be continually reinforced.”* (The Third Annual Report on Migration 2007: 4)

Most member states of EU have been dealing with the problem of successful integration of immigrants for a long time. They have already developed and conducted wide range of different policies⁴ but many of the EU countries consider

¹ Throughout the history there were some changes in patterns of immigration but generally said immigration has always been a feature of Europe.

² There are some theories and opinions contradicting this statement. According to them immigration can not definitely solve the problem of ageing of our society because the immigrant population is ageing as well. Also they emphasise that an increase in immigration can cause some problems in social cohesion. So we should not rely on immigration too much in this perspective. (Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on immigration, integration and employment 2003)

³ The Third Annual report is from the year 2007.

⁴ Some of the integration policies are described in the previous Chapter.

their policies not to be effective in dealing with the issue of integration. „*This has led to growing recognition of the need to act collectively at EU level.*“ (Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on immigration, integration and employment 2003)

There were several reasons for the EU member countries to try to solve the issue of integration at European level. The first basic reason I have already mentioned is their inability to develop and conduct effective integration policies. They believe that coordination at European level can help to develop such a policy that will be able to integrate immigrants successfully and so allow them to benefit from the immigration.

Another reason is that the failure of development and implementation of integration policy that would work in practice does not threaten just the state that fail in its goal to do so, but at the same time it has direct implications for the other European Union Member States and European Union as a whole. It can have a direct effect on the economy of the country, social cohesion and can lead to tensions within societies in whole Europe. (Draft Conclusion of the Council and the representatives of the governments of the member states on the establishment of common basic principles for immigrant integration policy in the European Union 2004)

Developing a common integration policy or the framework for integration policy could eliminate this risk because there would be a guideline helping the states to cope with the integration of immigrants. This would help the countries to develop and implement a successful integration policy.

These opinions brought European Union Member States together and to think about developing a European Common integration policy. More about the way the integration policy is being coped with is written in the following Chapter.

5. Dealing with the issue of integration of immigrants at the European level

The first real call for dealing the issue of integration at the European level came in 1999. The Tampere European Council⁵ called for a “*vigorous integration policy*” that should come up with successful integration policy “*granting fair treatment of third country nationals who reside legally on the territory of its member State*” (Presidency Conclusions, Tampere European Council 1999: point 18) and “*granting them rights and obligations similar to those of EU citizens.*” (Presidency Conclusions, Tampere European Council 1999: point 18) After the Tampere European Council EU adopted wide range of instruments for facilitating integration.⁶

Based on the conclusions of Tampere European Council, Commission according to its political mandate, presented a Communication⁷ called Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on immigration, integration and employment.⁸ This Communication focuses on the importance of immigration for the EU member states. Communication suggests developing an integration policy based on multidisciplinary approach which should involve integration of immigrants in cultural and also social life because just the integration in both can lead to their active participation in labour market. (Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on immigration, integration and employment 2003: points 26 - 31).

The Communication emphasised the need to develop a common European framework for integration that should help the countries to develop their own policies that would be more effective and help them to integrate the immigrants better. In the

⁵ 15th and 16th of October 1999 (Presidency Conclusions, Tampere European Council 1999, point 18)

⁶ Example of some of the instruments are: The right to family reunification, the conditions of entry and residence of third country national for the purpose of paid employment or self employed activities, combating discrimination, granting the third country nationals the same protection as the workers in the field of social security when moving in the EU. See more Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on immigration, integration and employment 2003: point 2.

⁷ Some principles and issues related to the question of integration policies had already been mentioned in Commission Communications of 2000 and 2001 on Community immigration policies. (Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on immigration, integration and employment 2003)

⁸ COM(2003) 336

Communications there were already introduced some strategies and principles the common coherent framework for integration should be based on. In the point 13 Commission emphasises the necessity of holistic approach and more closely defines the meaning of multidisciplinary approach to integration. It states the importance of integration not just in economic and social sphere but also integration policy should deal with the questions of religious and cultural diversity, citizenship and political integration.

In the Communication there is proposed that immigrants should be given basic rights and also obligations. (Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on immigration, integration and employment 2003) This should lead to a more successful and easier integration thanks to the feeling of civic responsibility and also immigrants would feel more like a part of the host society.

This principal was further broaden and approved in Thessaloniki European Council.⁹ It emphasised the need to create *“a comprehensive and multidimensional policy on the integration of legally residing third – country nationals who, according to and in order to implement the conclusions of European Council of Tampere, should be granted rights and obligations comparable to those of EU citizens.”* (Thessaloniki European Council, Conclusions of Presidency 2003: point 28)

The fact that the rights granted to the immigrants should be comparable to those of EU citizens and not the citizens of the host country suggest that the issue should be dealt at the European level. Importance of the Thessaloniki European Council was also in the point that it strictly stated that the responsibility for developing an integration policy remains with the member countries. It concluded that at the level of EU just a common coherent framework should be developed.

The importance of creating a common framework for the integration policy was emphasised also in the Hague Program¹⁰ which related the issue of freedom, security and justice to the issue of integration policy. According to its conclusions the integration of immigrants from the third countries is important for consolidating the freedom in the EU.

As I have showed in the previous Chapter the member countries have different approaches to the integration policy. As the time passed by the European Council

⁹ 19th – 20th June 2003.

¹⁰ Adopted in November 2004.

started to call for bigger harmonization of the integration policies through bigger coordination between the national integration policies of the member states and EU initiatives. This was the step that moved the discussion about creating the common European framework for integration policy closer to reality. In 2004 the Common Basic Principles were adopted by the Justice and Home Affairs Council of 19 November and were later approved also by the European Commission in its Communication.¹¹ In this Communication the integration policy was stated to be the fifth strategic objective of EU. These basic principles adopted create the framework for the integration of immigrants that again confirms the sole responsibility of Member States in developing and implementation of the policy. Stefano Bertozzi says that by creating the common framework the Commission was put into the role of “service provider” rather than making it the main driver in this complex. (Bertozzi 2007 : 3)

In the point four of the Communication Council stresses the impact of lack of common framework for integration. This is supported by the argument I have already mentioned that the failure of effective integration policy has a major impact on all member countries of the EU as well as on the EU as a whole. This point four says *“this can have an impact on economy and the participation in the labour market, it can undermine the respect for human rights and Europe’s commitment to fulfilling its international obligations to refugees and others in need of international protection, and it can breed alienation and tension within society.”* (The Hague Programme: ten priorities for the next five years 2004: point 4)

Stefano Bertozzi says that the principles of framework are an example of “Cartesian dualism” that is common approach of Member States to many European issues. He stresses that the Member States of the EU on one hand do not want to give up their sovereignty in the development of the integration policy because they consider it to be their internal affair and on the other hand they want to harmonize integration policies of Member States at European level. The reason for this “ambivalent” attitude is that the Member States consider the integration of immigrants to be a sensitive question in their domestic policy. This does not allow them to shift the responsibility for the implication and development of the policy to the European level but on the other hand the countries realize the risk and threatens they

¹¹ Communication was entitled “The Hague Programme: ten priorities for the next five years.”

are exposed to by wrong decisions made by other countries. This makes them prone to finding some solutions also at the European level. (Bertozzi 2007 : 3)

The framework that was adopted in 2004 is sort of compromise because it gives some guidelines to the member countries how to cope with the issue of integration and at the same time it gives a lot of space for member countries in developing their own policies. When discussing the common integration policy and the framework for the integration policy it was agreed on the following principle. *“Integration policies should be developed within a coherent European Framework taking into account the legal, political, economical and cultural diversity among the Member States.”* (Draft Council Conclusions on the development of a common policy on the integration of third country nationals legally residing in the territory of the European Union 2003 : 3)

The aim of the common basic principles is to *“assist Member States in formulating integration policies by offering them a simple not binding but thoughtful guide of basic principles against which they can judge and assess their own efforts. They also can use the basic principles to set priorities and further develop their own measurable goals. It is up to the individual Member States to determine whether these principles assist them in formulation policies for other target groups for integration.”* (Draft Conclusions of the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States on the establishment of common basic principles for immigration integration policy in the European Union 2004: point 8a)

The progress that has been made since the Tampere European Council is significant. This was also the conclusion of European Council in June 2007. It stated that *“The European Council likewise welcomes all the efforts that have been made in order to improve the continued and deepened the cooperation at EU level and between Member States in the area of integration and intercultural dialogue. The European Council welcomes, in particular, the Council Conclusions of 12 June¹² on the strengthening of integration policies in the EU by promoting unity in the diversity. It emphasises the importance of further initiatives to facilitate the exchange of experience on integration policies of the Member States.”* (Revised preliminary draft opinion of the Section of employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship on the Elements for the structure, organisation and functioning of a platform for the greater

¹² It refers to the Council Conclusions of 12 and 13 June 2007 on strengthening integration policies in the EU.

involvement of civil society in the EU- level promotion of policies for the integration of third country nationals 2008: point 2.7)

In the Council Conclusions of 12 and 13 June 2007 on strengthening integration policies in the EU was discussed the possibility of setting up common European model of integration policy.

The integration policy is also mentioned in the Lisbon Treaty adopted in Lisbon on 18 October 2007. In the Lisbon Treaty it is stated that the creation of a common integration policy is the key concern of the EU. According to the Title V of the Treaty on Functioning Union *“the European Union will for the first time have a legal base on which to develop common legislative measures to encourage and support the work of the Member States to integrate third country nationals.”* (Revised preliminary draft opinion of the Section of employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship on the Elements for the structure, organisation and functioning of a platform for the greater involvement of civil society in the EU- level promotion of policies for the integration of third country nationals 2008: point 2.13)

Since the Tampere European Council that took part in 1999 a big progress has been made in the case of the integration of immigrants. Since then a large variety of different instruments have been created including the Council Conclusions, Common Agenda for Integration, the European Integration Fund, the National Contact Points on Integration¹³, the Handbook on Integration¹⁴, the Annual reports on Migration and Integration, the websites¹⁵, etc.

Within EU European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) shares the holistic approach and is in favour of including the integration policy within the EU immigration policy. (Revised preliminary draft opinion of the Section of employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship on the Elements for the structure, organisation and

¹³ Includes all Member States. It is a effective mechanism for exchanging information and experience with the integration policy at national and also EU level. (The Third Annual Report on Migration and Integration 2007)

¹⁴ The whole name of the Handbooks is Handbooks on integration for Policy – Makers and Practitioners. Handbook has been published in two editions so far. The third one is planned for 2009. The first was published in 2004 and the second Edition was published in 2007. The Handbooks should be guides for Member States in dealing with the integration of immigrants. The second edition focuses on *“mainstreaming and integration infrastructure, examining the mechanism used for implementing successful integration strategies across all policy fields; housing in an urban environment and economic integration, presenting lessons learned in these areas.”* (The Third Annual Report on migration and integration 2007: 5)

¹⁵ The Commission is developing a website that should make the exchange of experience and information on integration easier. The website will have been operational by the end of the year 2008. (The Third Annual Report on Migration and Integration 2007)

functioning of a platform for the greater involvement of civil society in the EU- level promotion of policies for the integration of third country nationals 2008: point 2.8)

6. Conclusions

According to analysis of the approach of the EU Member States towards the effort to deal with the issue of integration of immigrants at the European level, it is obvious that both EU as well as the EU Member States are willing to cope with this issue at the European level. The main reason for this is the point that the migration and so integration of immigrants start to be a big challenge the Member States are facing but they critically concluded that their policies are not as efficient as they should be in coping with the integration of immigrants. The Member States have made the move to deal with the issue of integration at the European level in hope that the EU level can help to develop better more efficient policies. In the beginning they spoke about Common Integration Policy but later on they developed just a Common Framework for integration that includes the basic principles for integration of immigrants. This was very important move because it established the main principles the countries should follow and at the same time it gave a lot of space for the Member States to develop their own policies. The framework does not threaten their sovereignty that the Member States protect. Despite this significant move the question of developing a Common European Integration policy is still discussed. The move towards the Common Integration policy is not likely to appear though the Member States repeatedly emphasized that the integration policy, its development and implementation, should be with the Member States. This is also supported by the principle of Subsidiarity in EU.

The dealing with the issue of integration of immigrants at the European level brought benefits for the Member States. Not just because the Common basic principles were introduced but also because the cooperation among the Member states in the issue of integration was established and there were many instruments created that should help the Member States in developing and implementing the integration policy.

The shift in dealing with the integration policy from national level to more European level seems to bring benefits for the EU Member Countries. It makes the coping with the integration of immigrants easier thanks to wide range of instruments, for example The handbooks, the Integration fund, etc., that have been created at the EU level.

The question is if the sole shift to the EU level can solve the problem of integration of immigrants though some of the EU Member States have been coping with this issue for years and were not able to find appropriate solutions. The advantage of making the issue of integration the European issue is that it creates cooperation among the EU Member States so that they can exchange useful information and experience.

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