



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
High Commissioner on National Minorities**

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Integration Policies:

Cover note by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities

At its annual session in Edinburgh 2004 the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly called on the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities to "*initiate a comparative study of the integration policies of established democracies and analyse the effect on the position of new minorities*". I informed the Parliamentary Assembly at its session in February this year that I had decided to respond to its call by commissioning such a paper. I now have the pleasure of circulating the report, which is attached to this note, to the Assembly. The paper was produced by the Migration Policy Group, a research institution based in Brussels with extensive experience in this field, headed by Dr. Jan Niessen. My own comments and conclusions are set out below and will be further elaborated in my presentation of the report to the Parliamentary Assembly's annual session in Brussels 3-7 July.

Scope of the Report

The terms of the Assembly's request raised two questions about the scope of the report: what are established democracies and what are "new minorities"?

As regards established democracies the study adopts a pragmatic approach by focusing on seven States selected on the basis that they all have substantial experience of implementing integration policies, and all have policies which are well documented and accessible to researchers. At this stage, it would not have been feasible for the purposes of the report to tackle a larger group of countries and would probably not have added greatly to the value of the paper, which already covers a wide range of different aspects of integration policies.

As regards "new minorities", this term lacks legal status or an agreed definition and it was not understood as the purpose of this paper to engage in a controversial discussion about establishing such a definition. Instead, the study has taken the term to refer broadly to those persons and groups, settled in the country, whose presence is a result of more recent immigration. As the study demonstrates, there are many different ways of defining those to whom integration policies can be applied, ranging from persons belonging to national

minorities to recently arrived migrants. Therefore the study uses a generic term "immigrants and minorities" in order to encompass a wide range of persons or groups to whom integration policies in specific States apply. Given the variety and complexity of definitions used, it is more valuable for the study to focus on the "how" of integration rather than the "who", and not restrict it to a narrowly defined group. At the same time the paper seeks to steer clear of the controversies surrounding immigration policy, despite the interrelationship of immigration and integration, which it duly notes.

Comparison with HCNM Policies

The HCNM's mandate requires the High Commissioner to make recommendations to States that serve to avoid or reduce tensions related to national minority issues which could develop into conflict. The fundament on which the HCNM recommendations rest is the broad approach based on the concept of integration respecting diversity. In addition to individual recommendations to governments, this concept has been elaborated upon by experts in a series of thematic recommendations and guidelines on key issues including education, language, participation in public life, use of minority languages in the broadcasting media and, most recently, policing in multi-ethnic societies. The concept of integration respecting diversity and the need to seek to find the right balance between the two elements therein has been set out in a series of speeches and documents, most recently in the debate organized by the Slovenian OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office 2005 concerning migration and integration. At the heart of this approach lies the idea that States need to encourage minority participation in the political, social, economic and cultural life of mainstream society with a view to developing a sense of belonging to and having a stake in society at large, while at the same time protecting the rights of minorities to maintain their own identity including their culture, language and religion. The HCNM has always considered that this balanced approach, and in particular the need to focus on participation and the development of inclusive societies, is relevant for all diverse societies regardless of whether this diversity stems from more or less recent immigration or from the long historical multi-ethnic character of a state. This is not to say that there are simple "one size fits all" solutions or that there are no relevant differences between recent migrants and members of long-established minorities or that their treatment should in all respects be identical.

As expected, the study indicates parallels between the HCNM's aim and approach and the aims and approaches followed by the countries which are the subject of the study. At the same time, it shows a wide variety of policies for conducting different aspects of integration policies, underlining the scope for exchanging experiences.

The first chapter of the study deals with the changing composition of the population of the

seven countries. These countries have diverse populations, and continuing immigration is adding to that diversity. There is a close relationship between integration policy and immigration and immigration policy, and the opening chapter tackles this relationship and its implications. It also looks at the terminology used and demonstrates that the precise definitions of immigrants and minorities vary across the countries studied. The chapter details this and traces potential links between these definitions and "new minorities". Variations in data collection are also outlined.

The second chapter outlines the role of governments in integration. It describes the function of governments as regulators, facilitators and role models in integration. It goes on to describe the integration infrastructure that exists in the different countries, detailing the agencies responsible for integration policies. This chapter also explains "mainstreaming" which has emerged as a key concept in implementing integration policy.

The third chapter elaborates on equality and anti-discrimination as key principles. It deals with anti-discrimination law as a major instrument to promote equality and with openness and accessibility as instruments to promote inclusion. How anti-discrimination actually works in practice is further dealt with in the chapters on labour market inclusion and access to services.

The fourth chapter addresses political participation. It provides information on the political participation rates of immigrant and minority groups in elections and analyses the representation of these groups in politics. Taking the definition of political participation more widely, this chapter goes on to discuss participation in associations and civil society more broadly.

The fifth chapter looks at economic integration. Governmental and non-governmental actors consistently identify labour market integration as being key to the integration of immigrants and minorities and the chapter describes measures that are taken to bring this about.

The sixth chapter deals with access to services focusing on education, health care and housing. Detailing immigrant and minority disadvantage across these services, the chapter focuses on the policies implemented to try to combat these inequities.

The seventh and final chapter turns to diversity and describes policies that deal with some of the many aspects of cultural and linguistic diversity. This includes measures to support the maintenance of culture and language, of which broadcasting is one example. It also describes policies concerning the maintenance of minority language and culture and programmes promoting intercultural awareness across the population as a whole.

Conclusions

As High Commissioner, I am grateful to the Parliamentary Assembly for its request for a comparative study on integration policies. I believe that this is an important and topical issue for our societies, and that the experience that the HCNM has gathered over the years and the broad approach of finding the right balance between integration and respect for diversity is relevant to the discussion and that there are important lessons to be learnt by drawing on this approach and experience.

I hope that Parliamentary Assembly's debate on this issue will be followed by further discussion among the OSCE participating States. Objective discussion and exchange of experience and good practices on a subject of such importance across the OSCE area can, I believe, be beneficial to all. I hope the Parliamentary Assembly will encourage the pursuit of such a discussion within the OSCE.