

**Conference on Immigration, Integration and Identity: Managing Diverse Societies in Europe and the USA**

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**Speaking Note**

**Subject: Immigration and Identity: do current patterns of immigration challenge existing notions of national identity?**



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**Immigration policy in Europe**

- At a meeting in Tampere in Finland in 1999, EU leaders set themselves the task of creating a common immigration policy for the Union. They decided that to manage migration flows more effectively it was necessary to harmonise key areas of legislation, particularly on the admission of immigrants, and coordinate national immigration policies better, especially to prevent illegal migration, smuggling and trafficking. A new phase in this process began in November 2004 when the European Council adopted The Hague Programme, which sets out the agenda for the development of the common EU immigration policy up to 2009/10.
- There are some new emphases in The Hague Programme. It has a strong focus on **operational delivery** on the ground. *Firstly* by making the policies and legislation already in place work to their full potential by closely monitoring and evaluating them. *Secondly* by improving practical co-operation in a wide range of areas. *Thirdly* by increasing the exchange of information, experience and good practice between Member States on migration issues.
- New priorities have emerged. Firstly the development of a more pro-active approach to ensure there is better selection of the labour migrants the EU needs as its population ages and declines. We are looking at a number of ideas for harmonising admission procedures for certain categories of worker (high skilled, intra-corporate transferees, trainees and seasonal workers in the first instance). At the same time we also plan to establish EU legislation covering the basic rights of immigrant workers.

- The second priority concerns working more closely with third countries to manage migration better. The EU strongly believes that migration can be beneficial to sending and receiving countries and to the migrants themselves - provided there is a dialogue and cooperation on all matters of concern: legal migration, better use of migrant remittances, connecting diaspora to the country of origin and addressing the negative sides like brain drain, illegal migration, trafficking and smuggling of human beings. Closing frontiers will not keep people out. We have to admit that such simple answers do not exist in an increasingly globalised world and where more and more people will move, out of choice or because they are forced to.
- In December 2005 the European Council identified a series of priority actions for the EU on how to engage both with its neighbouring countries and with important countries of origin in Africa. Again, partnership is at the heart of our policy and the Commission will work closely with Member States to implement these measures including cooperating on the recruitment of labour migrants.
- The third priority is to develop a European approach to integration. Although it's the Member States who are primarily responsible for integration policy, EU leaders have repeatedly called for greater coordination of integration policies. The programme they adopted at the end of 2004 calls for more effective cooperation based on common basic principles and the development of a coherent European framework.
- These principles provide a first definition of what we mean by integration in the EU (notably that *it is a two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States*), they set some initial objectives and identify some key actions. The Commission set out in its Communication on a common agenda for integration last year its proposals for the European framework and suggestions for implementing the principles in a number of areas: employment, education, access to services, ways of ensuring the practice of diversity in traditions and cultures and in religion, ways of ensuring interaction between immigrants and others and of participation in the democratic process. What these principles do is set out a European way to achieve a cohesive society based on acceptance of diversity, both cultural and religious, but within clear boundaries which must be understood and respected by all. These are set by national law and European basic values such as equality, democracy and respect for human rights.

- Other elements of the European framework focus on the exchange of information and good practice via the further development of National Contact Points on integration in Member State administrations, a handbook of good practice, an integration website and a European Integration Forum to give a wide range of stakeholders a voice.
- I know that seen from this side of the Atlantic, many Americans have the impression that the European approach to integration has been a failure. They point to the London and Madrid bombings, the murder in Amsterdam of Theo van Gogh the filmmaker and of the riots of young people in the suburbs of Paris last autumn. It is clear that we have some big challenges and issues to address in Europe – many of which you are also facing over here. We have seen in the last 20 years a very rapid increase in immigration and growing diversity in the countries of origin and the cultural and religious traditions which new immigrants have brought with them. We have also seen that some of our policies in the past have failed to meet the needs of second and third generations.
- I believe, however, that we have learned the lessons of the events of recent years. The establishment of the European approach I have just outlined, backed up by the implementation of strong European anti-discrimination legislation has provided us with the principles and the tools to take us forward into the future.

### **The role of nationality in the integration process**

- In this context what is the role of nationality in the integration process? This has always been one of the major differences between the European and the US approach to immigration. In Europe immigration has been seen as utilitarian and designed to be temporary, not as permanent and as a crucial element in nation-building.
- A number of countries in the EU have been re-evaluating the role of citizenship as a means of promoting integration. Citizenship ceremonies are being introduced for the first time in some Member States preceded in most cases by citizenship tests. These have been features of Canadian and US policies for many years of course. Some Member States have relaxed citizenship requirements in recent years. The importance to integration of the award of citizenship is increasingly being recognised.
- Some of the EU institutions (European Economic and Social Committee and the European Parliament) have raised the notion of EU citizenship as a means of promoting the integration of third country nationals. At the moment only nationals of

EU Member States are considered as EU citizens. However, extending the categories is a non-starter at present since it would, of course, involve amending the EC Treaty.

- However, the Commission has for a long time emphasised the importance of involving immigrants more closely in the political and democratic life of the countries in which they live and of aligning their rights with those of nationals. EU legislation on admission is based on these principles, in particular once they have obtained the status of long term residents. The EU directive on long term residents, together with the Charter of fundamental rights, could be the basis for re-visiting the concept of civic citizenship in the future – a suggestion first put forward in the Commission's Communication on the development of the common immigration policy in 2000.
- How important is national identity in the EU today? There are after all very strong regional identities in the EU – (e.g. Catalans in Spain, Welsh and Scots in the UK, Bretons and people from Alsace in France). This local affiliation, which can express itself not only in specific traditions and cultural activities but also through the widespread use of a regional language, is encompassed within the national identity and without contradiction.
- The problem arises more often with respect to third country nationals. Interestingly, some recent research on dual citizenship came to the conclusion that in the long run, and especially taking into account the changing demographic profile of the EU, "dual citizenship can be seen as a basic integrative mechanism for managing the increasing trans-national mobility of people".
- Here I think the key words are "increasing trans-national mobility". This is a phenomenon which characterises us in Europe today – as it does you in the USA. Globalisation means that we will all see more of it. People movements will grow and become more diverse. In Europe we would like to encourage this trend. Labour market needs fluctuate – we need a workforce that is flexible. We are concerned about issues of brain drain and its impact on developing countries in particular. We are exploring ways to turn brain drain into brain circulation and to encourage repetitive or intermittent migration.
- In Europe, immigration has never been seen as an important element in nation building as it has in the US and Canada. Many immigrants came as temporary workers who were expected to leave at the end of their contract. Many did not do so but instead brought in their families under family reunification arrangements, put

down roots and eventually acquired citizenship. Nationality, however, was not their original goal. Now the pendulum has swung again and we are likely to see new forms of temporary migration in Europe. This challenges the role of nationality as an important element in the integration process. Nationality becomes just one element in a more complex pattern of self expression, participation in society and personal and cultural identification.

- Can a process which does not have nationality as its objective be successful in ensuring social cohesion? In the EU our approach is based on ensuring equality of basic rights and responsibilities for legal residents of all nationalities, promoting active participation in society for all, while at the same time preventing racism and discrimination. This is not multiculturalism run riot but acceptance of diversity within a framework of legislation and respect for basic European values (democracy, equality, the rule of law).
- This is indeed a challenge and we are far from success – particularly in the light of the more recent migration patterns which have created greater religious and cultural diversity than ever before in the history of Europe. However I believe that the inbuilt diversity of the EU – 25 countries - so far – soon to be 27, with 20 (22) different languages, histories and traditions – is a sound basis on which to build.