Conference Report

“Promoting Integration of Immigrants in Europe and Asia”

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Report

Policy Panel on Integration
“Promoting Integration of Immigrants in Europe and Asia”

On 13 May 2013, the EU-Asia Dialogue organized a policy panel on “Promoting Integration of Immigrants in Europe and Asia” in Stockholm, Sweden. The full-day event was held in cooperation with the Ministry of Employment of the Kingdom of Sweden. It brought together 31 experts, academics and policy-maker from Europe and Asia. The focus of the discussion was on civic education and language courses, whole-of-government approaches as well as tools for successful integration.

At the beginning of the meeting, Henry Martenson, Ministry of Employment of Sweden, welcomed the attendees and praised the relevance of the EU-Asia Dialogue project and its ‘Migration and Integration’ cluster. Wilhelm Hofmeister, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Singapore, described the main features of the EU-Asia Dialogue project and stressed that integration has the potential to become an increasingly relevant subject for EU-Asia relations. He also explained the choice of Stockholm as a venue of the Policy Panel in the light of Sweden’s widely recognised success story in managing integration of foreign migrants, despite some recent developments reshaping the traditionally open attitudes in some Scandinavian countries.

The key note speech was delivered by Jasenko Selimovic, State Secretary in the Ministry of Employment, Sweden, who identified four areas integration policies have to deal with: education of human capital, skills recognition, labour market (e.g. open market for low-skilled migrants), and attitude of society towards multiculturalism. All four areas are equally important and interdependent. If a country does well in all four of them, this will decrease the time needed for integration. A key problem is that many European countries send a signal that migrants are only temporary and will not stay for long. This results in a loss or non-establishment of connection to the receiving country while the sending one remains the home country which hinders integration. It is, thus, important that countries develop a welcoming culture while showing immigrants their responsibilities / duties to contribute to the receiving country. At the same time, many locals have the perception that only low skilled people migrate, which results in
discrimination.
He emphasized that Sweden is among the most migrant-welcoming countries in the world, but he also acknowledged that integration policies could be enhanced, especially in the labour market. He observed that the improvement and training of the foreign-born population is essential, especially when it comes to language and other skills, and more public efforts in this area should be made accordingly. Selimovic also noted that the success of Sweden’s integration policies will be especially important to set standards for others, both within and outside the EU. He warned that pro-integration policies in the labour market should not come at the expense of the level of wages in the country. Finally, he stressed that official integration policies should be coupled with the acceptance of multiculturalism in receiving societies. Selimovic concluded by stating that the on-going integration reform in Sweden should help the country strengthening its ‘openness policy’ in this area.

During a first exchange of opinions with participants, Mr Selimovic recognised diploma recognition for immigrants as a challenging issue and pointed out that developing a sense of common belonging and civic responsibility among immigrants is crucial to put in place a sustainable integration policy. He finally acknowledged that the impact of the integration reform on Sweden’s labour market is to be analysed and properly assessed with a medium term perspective.

Session I: Language Course and Civic Knowledge as a Tool for Integration

The first session started with a presentation by Saskia Bonjour, University of Leiden, The Netherlands, on ‘Language Requirements in the EU as a Basis for Integration’. She introduced her remarks by stating that language requirements present a rather ambiguous impact on integration, oscillating between being a tool of emancipation or a factor of exclusion, depending on a number of local circumstances. It enables people to participate on the labour market and interact. But language excludes if it is, for example, a condition for admission. She first put the issue in context, mentioning the start of standardised requirements for integration in Europe in 1990s and the increasing stress on integration as the individual responsibility of the immigrant. Besides language course, civic education is crucial to create a minimum level of homogeneity. She then examined the role of the EU by saying that the EU has no direct competences in this field and analysing some key pieces of legislation such as the ‘Long-Term Residence Directive’ and the ‘Family Reunification Directive’, but also some other policy instruments such as the ‘Common Basic Principles’, the ‘European Integration Fund’ and the ‘European Website on Integration’. She stressed the importance of Common Basic Principle number 4, stating that knowledge of the host society’s language is indispensable to integration, and
highlighting that enabling immigrants to acquire this basic knowledge is essential to successful integration. She carried out a mapping exercise of EU Member States showing that most European countries require a B1 (or higher) level of knowledge of the local language as a condition for the naturalisation of migrants, while an A1 (or lower) knowledge, notably through free-of-charge courses, is a widespread requirement for obtaining a long-term residence status in Europe. She also noted that lack of pre-departure language requirements is generally the rule in many European countries. Bonjour acknowledged that the impacts of language requirements on integration in the EU remain rather difficult to be assessed: while policy evaluations both in the Netherlands and Germany tend to show that these influence immigrants’ language proficiency positively, the impact on employment is rather mixed while the consequences on migration controls are still generally unknown. She also emphasised the results of a number of interviews with migrants in the framework of the ‘INTEC’ research project. While interviewees considered pre-departure language training of little use, they acknowledged the validity of post-departure language training. However, feelings towards obligatory courses are mixed, being considered by immigrants as either stimulating or an additional source of stress.

Peter Tseng, Immigration Agency, Republic of China/Taiwan, provided a presentation on ‘Taiwan’s Immigration Trends and Responsive Integration Policy’. In recent years, Taiwan has become a receiving country of migration after it has been a sending society before. Current immigration trends in the country show that marriage immigrants are the biggest category of foreign residents in Taiwan, followed by ‘white-collar’ workers. He then illustrated the public policies in the field of integration which are implemented in cooperation between central governmental agencies, NGOs as well as city and county governments, under the coordination of the National Immigration Agency. These policies are based on an ‘immigration counselling’ system which aims at constructing a multicultural society through orientation counselling, medical health care, protection of employment rights, educational and cultural enhancement, child-nurturing assistance, personal safety protection, improvement of the legal system and concept promotion. In addition, a ‘Foreign Spouse Caring and Counseling Fund’ was established in 2005. It includes 25 service centres of the National Immigration Agency which provide a coordination platform for all related government agencies and NGOs in order to promote immigrants’ integration. Tseng finally presented a number of comprehensive services for the integration of immigrants provided by the National Immigration Agency. These include subsidized medical care, social relief and legal assistance plans, subsidized courses for foreign spouses and promotion of nursery schools and multiculturalism projects, the establishment of family service centres and launch of civic organizations, as well as counselling service, human resource training and community service programs.
Every five years the country conducts a survey to find out what immigrants need and then adapts its policies to these needs. In addition to pre-departure course on laws, rights and culture, the government provides language courses for Mandarin but also mother tongue of the migrants. This shall enable the migrants to keep their heritage and motivate locals to learn other languages and be pioneers abroad.

**Carola Cichos**, Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Germany, presented the German experience of ‘Language Courses and Civic Knowledge as Tools for Integration’, focussing first on the integration courses available for foreigners legally residing in Germany on a permanent basis. She explained how the extent of immigration (20% of the population have an immigration background) and the necessity for integration had been underestimated for a long time before the entry into force of the current system in 2005. This time was characterised by an unstructured system of language courses, a poor quality of the education provided, and the strict dependence of type and duration of public support on the legal status of each immigrant concerned. Cichos then illustrated the system of language promotion for repatriated ethnic Germans and explained the set-up of the ‘New Residence Act’ in 2005, introducing new standards for the German integration policy and the unification of language courses for all adult migrants with a legal residence perspective. The Act provides the legal basis for the integration courses for immigrants, since it considers possession of adequate language skills as a requirement for immigrants to interact independently in all aspects of their daily life in Germany. The adequateness of such language fluency is considered by the ‘Ordinance of the Integration Courses’ as the B1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference to Languages. She stressed that the organisation and design of the integration courses are aimed at providing the same standards for the whole country in terms of learning objectives, tests, teaching materials, teacher qualifications and funding. The first steps of the course include the formation of the ‘target group’ receiving the integration course - which is generally composed of immigrants having a variety of different legal status’ and heterogeneous pre-conditions for learning - and the identification of the basic communication needs and language levels of the group. Language requirements focus on three main areas of action, i.e. dealing with the migration situation, dealing with social contacts and dealing with disagreements and conflicts. The target of the B1 level concerns listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Cichos then explained the structure of the course and described the general features of the final language test and the ‘civic orientation’ exam, which also represents a *conditio sine qua non* for naturalisation. She described the quality assurance system in place, notably concerning standard-checking for teachers and learning materials, and highlighted that 56% of the course attendees reached the targeted level in 2012. She showed the results of the evaluation of the integration panel from 2007 to 2011, noting that course participants
obtain better results in all language skills, end up having more contacts with locals and tend to keep improving their language skills after the end of the course. Cichos concluded her presentation by pointing out a number of challenges to the German integration system in general and institutionalised language courses. These include increasing labour immigration, higher numbers of migrants from other EU Member States, the need to promote more intensive language courses as well as integration courses for parents.

Dae-Gun Choe, Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Korea, talked about ‘Integration Classes for Immigrants in Asia: Experiences from South Korea’. He first described the country’s political and economic features, highlighting how the Korean Peninsula can be seen as a homogeneous, yet divided nation with a remarkable economic growth but an increasingly ageing population. For a long time, South Korea was a sending country of migration, but with the economic growth it turned into a receiving country which also made its society more heterogeneous. Mr. Choe analysed Korea’s immigration policy, describing past policies as being control-oriented with a focus on national security and lacking timely policy responses as well as long-term and comprehensive perspectives. In that respect, he presented the main features of what he described as the ‘changing environment’ for Korea’s immigration policy. It is a result of the increase in the global movement of the people, conflicts on how to cope with the influx of immigrants, the increasing number of foreigners living in Korea (about 1.5 million) and their diversification. He then briefly described the complexities of Korea’s visa system, being made up of not less than 31 different categories of residence permits, against the background of a vast majority of immigrants coming to the country for non-professional employment, working visits or residential purposes. All this leads to considerable transformations in the Korean society, turning it into a multi-cultural one. Choe then outlined the basic directions of the current Korean immigration policy, emphasising that this should enhance national competitiveness through a policy of openness and help developing the country into a more mature and multi-cultural society where all human rights are duly respected. In that view, he pointed out that the main tasks of the new Korean immigration policy should be ‘to open the door wider’, secure growth engines by attracting outstanding talents, introduce labour force for a balanced economic development, construct a living environment convenient for foreigners, as well as pursue harmonious integration. The latter, in particular, should entail promoting understanding of multiculturalism and ensuring stable settlement of ‘immigrants by marriage’. Based on this, Korea is carrying out the ‘Korea Immigration Integration Program’ aimed at fostering social integration of participants, most of whom are ‘marriage migrants’ or foreigners visiting or joining their families in Korea. He then presented the special issue of ‘defectors’ from North Korea, whose accumulated numbers kept growing in the past few years, often reaching the South after a long and perilous journey through the
neighbouring countries. Choe concluded by highlighting the need to encourage an integration policy tackling the varying composition of foreign residents in Korea, but also improving their welfare and increasing the overall efficiency of the immigration system, while being underpinned by more systematic research on these issues.

**Session II: Opportunities and Challenges for a ‘whole-of-government’ Approach**

At the beginning of the second session, **Christian Ardhe**, European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), Belgium, addressed the issue of ‘Cooperation between Government and Grassroots Organizations: The Example of The Forum at EU level’. He started by saying that employment is a key aspect of integration and that migration is beneficial for the EU if it is well managed. This means provision of courses on language, civic education, to enable frequent interaction and allow for practice of different religions as well as political participation. After giving a synthetic overview of the EESC, he presented the ‘European Integration Forum’, which – based on a decision by the Justice and Home Affairs Council in 2005 – serves with an advisory role, especially for the elaboration of reports. It aims at exchanging know-how and best practices among national and local authorities, encourages stakeholders’ involvement in the elaboration of integration policies and the launch of ideas as well as propositions in the policy arena. This shall also help the creation of European level organisations beyond an ‘immigrant representation’ logic. The Forum currently includes 100 participants at European and national level, holds two meetings per year, elaborates reports either on its own initiative or after being consulted by EU institutions, and sets its agenda on the basis of its ‘Common Basic Principles’. Topics of past meetings include European Integration Funds, active participation of migrants and strong commitment by the host society, family reunification and young migrants. Ardhe also highlighted a number of achievements and perspectives of the Forum, including wider and better use of the ‘European Web Portal on Integration’ to gather, disseminate and share information, having preparatory debates, structuring and stabilising the Forum, having the output of the Forum circulating among EU institutions, as well as increasing contacts with existing national fora.

**Paulina Babis**, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Poland, gave a presentation on ‘Cooperation between Governments and Non-State Actors: The Case of Poland’. She started by addressing the role of the European Fund for the Integration (EIF) of Third Country Nationals. She noted that, given the lack of integration efforts financed from other sources, EIF plays a crucial role in integration of third-country nationals. Babis pointed out that the projects implemented in the context of the Fund are responding to the integration needs of immigrants and that EIF is supporting the development of organizations providing assistance to foreigners in various areas. She also highlighted
that it was possible to diagnose many phenomena related to immigration and that – as a consequence - all institutions and organizations involved in integration learned how to deal with it, what is needed and what steps should be taken in order to ensure state-supported integration measures. She then reported on the evaluation of the implementation of the Integration Fund in Poland, conducted by Caritas Poland between 2011 and 2012 via the creation of a special advisory body composed of representatives from non-governmental organizations, regional authorities and government, while the second evaluation is currently being conducted by the Institute of Migration Studies. This exercise aims at identifying best practices to be implemented by the government at the state level, detecting inefficient or ineffective measures, and finding the best way for implementing the future Migration Fund. Babis continued by describing the Polish government’s reaction to the growing need to introduce state-provided integration measures: this started with the implementation of the European Fund for Integration in 2007, continued with the work on the migration strategy in Poland in 2009, and further developed through the Polish ‘Integration Strategy’ in 2011. In 2012, the Council of Ministers adopted a strategic document on ‘The Migration Policy in Poland – Current State of Play and Further Actions’ and additional measures have been taken since then. The above mentioned document covers every aspect of migration, spanning from legal immigration to a monitoring mechanism. A new strategic document on ‘Polish Integration Policy – Principles and Guidelines’ should be adopted next June, building on the reflections of a ‘Working Group on the Integration of Foreigners’ by the Interdepartmental Team for Migration. The sources of inspiration in developing the strategy included, amongst others: a questionnaire sent out to 136 stakeholders, the provisions contained in the 2012 document, the best practices developed during the implementation of the projects, and research about the evaluation of individual integration programs. The document should be adopted by the Council of Ministers by the end of this year, and it will include provisions on the integration of beneficiaries of international protection and other groups of foreigners, activities which target the receiving society and build intercultural dialogue, actions meant to enhance the knowledge about integration as well as to monitor and evaluate all related measures.

Farbod Rezania, Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, Sweden, spoke about ‘The Involvement of the Business Sector in Integration’. He first illustrated the goal of the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise as one aiming at using the formation of public opinion to increase the community’s interest in the value of enterprise. He then emphasised that Sweden succeeded in transforming itself from a poor country into a leading ‘business nation’ in less than one century notably thanks to removed obstacles, opened markets and a liberal attitude towards labour migration inflows. At the same time, Sweden currently faces a number of significant challenges such as globalization (and,
therefore, greater competition worldwide), an ageing population, low levels of entrepreneurship, a high level of unemployment as well as significant regional gaps in the labour market. Rezania added a number of additional problems affecting the Swedish socio-economic model, including low levels of mobility, demographic decline in some regions, housing shortages, a high unemployment rate among local youth as well as among immigrants, a rising demand for skilled labour force and a general mismatch between demand and offer on the national labour market. He pointed out that Sweden needs to attract skilled immigrants in order to maintain a high level of national competitiveness and prosperity, adding that diversity, tolerance and mutual respect are all essential values for creating a favourable business environment. Rezania finally stressed the commitment by the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise to encourage integration of foreign migrants in the national labour market by making public opinion more aware of the risks of xenophobia and racism, carrying out targeted information campaigns on the Swedish labour market, encouraging business start-ups as well as networking with other actors such as ethnic business associations.

Birte Steller, Hamburg Welcome Center, Germany, addressed the issue of ‘The German Experience of Integration at Local Level: The Case of the City of Hamburg’. First she provided an overview on the city’s history and its tradition of openness to world trade and international exchanges. Hamburg always pursued a number of policies of openness, not only with regard to trade and investment but also with respect to migration. The city’s main advantages are those related to its large population (1.8 million inhabitants) as well as its feature of being a hub for foreign trade. She then emphasised a number of additional characteristics making Hamburg fit to address integration of foreign migrants effectively: these relate to the ability of the city to deal with federal and local affairs at the same time, due to the specific competences endowed by the German political and legal system. Steller presented the system of ‘Triple Step Integration’ currently in place in Hamburg, which consist of a pre-integration stage via online contacts, a face-to-face meeting in the Hamburg Welcome Center as well as a third and more in-depth phase based on the migrant’s individual fulfilment of criteria and her/his commitment to be an active part of the German society. She looked into the activities of the Hamburg Welcome Center in more detail. The daily routine consists of a special service – i.e. taking care of the residence permit and registration service for business, artistic, athletic and academic visitors – as well as a general service of advice in Hamburg for all newcomers, information about living and working, personal and individual advisory services, bilingual assistance and offer of leisure activities and cultural events. She noted that the Centre also provides fast and tailored advice, information on special matters and challenges, details about the infrastructure of the city, information on the way of working of the local administration, insights on issues like health insurance and tax registration,
accommodation solutions, language courses and child-care, among others. As for its general background leadership activities, the Centre carries out activities like facilitating immigration regulations, e.g. for high-qualified persons, optimizing the processing of immigrants’ applications, explaining and clarifying the proceedings both bilingually and at distance (via the website). Among the measures taken by the Centre, trying to influence the German legal system with its administrative feedback based on practical interaction with foreign immigrants is a main task. Special efforts are needed with regard to legal barriers such as long and non-transparent visa proceedings as well as the need for optimizing German laws in areas such as job search from abroad, dual careers and mid-career sector changes. Among the special background activities, Steller also stressed the importance of the existing platform for co-operation, strategic alliances and stakeholder-networking named „Welcome to Hamburg“, involving corporations, labour offices, NGOs, consulates, firms, universities, foundations, (international) organisations, communities, other cities and local institutions, with the aim of fostering integration and inter-cultural dialogue.

Session III: Tools for Successful Integration

In this session Kam-Wah Chan, Poly University, Hong Kong, discussed the issue of ‘Policies to Prevent Discrimination against Immigrants’, based on the experience of Hong Kong. He first presented the situation of Hong Kong as one of being a ‘migrant society’ by giving an historic overview of Hong Kong, from its unprecedented inter-ethnic mixing following the establishment of the British rule in 1842, to the in-flow of Chinese and Vietnamese refugees in 1949 and 1975 respectively, to the new arrivals of workers from Mainland China, Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand in the 1980s. Globalisation has significantly marked the social and cultural landscape of Hong Kong, notably due to the arrivals of European, American, Australian, Japanese, Korean and Singaporean workers during the 1990s and 2000s. The transformation of Hong Kong from British colony into the ‘Hong Kong Special Administrative Region’ in 1997 also had an impact on the status of migrants (especially from South-Asia) and returnees. Chan then illustrated the current population composition in Hong Kong, marked by a significant percentage of newly-arrived residents from the People’s Republic of China, Macao and Taiwan (about 28.7% of the total population). He referred to the Government’s policy on race relations as one aimed at eliminating and combating all forms of racial discrimination, promoting racial equality and communal harmony as well as at encouraging ethnic minorities settled in Hong Kong to integrate into the wider society, while retaining their cultural identity. In that view, he noted that the ‘population policy’ in the past decade has been characterised by the encouragement of ‘investment migrants’, the promotion of migrants with special
talents and skills, a tightened control on low-income new immigrants as well as by applying a levy on foreign domestic helpers. He then focussed on the ‘Racial Discrimination Ordinance’ which still lacks legal action and is subject to too many exemptions. He emphasised the existence of an unemployment problem for immigrants, being concentrated in lower-income occupations and further aggravated by lack of recognition of new immigrants’ qualifications, discrimination on the basis of language and the need for professional re-training for ethnic minorities. Education policy also poses relevant problems for lower-income ethnic minorities, especially due to the fact that most mainstream schools do not accept applicants from ethnic minority groups. After 2003, Hong Kong’s integration policy has strived to encourage ethnic groups to study in regular schools, but problems include, for instance, lack of proper syllabus on Chinese as second language for foreign pupils, conflicts on religion or even disputes on the food being served in schools. He raised the issue of passport-release for non-Chinese residents. Before hand over to the Chinese, permanent residents in Hong Kong from Commonwealth countries were entitled to British passport, but nowadays non-Chinese permanent residents are not eligible to a passport of Hong Kong. In his conclusions, he noted that social policy in Hong Kong remains dominated by economy-focussed considerations which over-emphasize economic growth, neglect social cohesion and ultimately go against economic efficiency in the longer term. Negative stereotypes against foreign migrants as well as a widespread neglect of the contributions by migrants to Hong Kong’s economy can both further undermine the integration of foreign workers. He calculated that the contribution by migrants is roughly 270 billion HK-Dollars, while the investment in migrants costs only 100 billion HK-Dollars. When it comes to the way forward, Chan made clear that Hong Kong needs a multi-culturalist policy to deal with problems and challenges of a migrant society, including a clear and consistent policy orientation, adequate resources and support, as well as proper public education to change social discourse and the general conception of migrants in the wider public.

Leong Chan-Hoong, Institute of Policy Studies, Singapore, spoke about ‘How to Promote Inter-Religious Harmony’. He first gave an overview of Singapore’s population, stressing that the share of immigrants on the total population has grown significantly in the past twenty years. He illustrated the ‘Four Basic Rules for Religious Harmony’ expressed by the Singaporean political leadership: the imperative for all groups to exercise tolerance and restraint; the need to keep religion separate from politics; the necessity of a secular government; and the importance of maintaining the common space shared by all Singaporeans. This is not a law, but rather guiding principles. Leong presented the ‘Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act’, passed in 1990, which empowers the Home Affairs Ministry to issue restraining orders against preachers engaging in ‘harmful conduct’, who can be fined or jailed. Until today, no restraining order has been
issued. He then recalled the establishment of the ‘Presidential Council for Religious Harmony’. This has been appointed by the President as a consultative body – especially in case of the application of the above mentioned Act – and represents all major religions in Singapore. The ‘Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circles’ serve as local inter-faith platforms aimed at fostering friendship and building trust among religious and community leaders, also relying on the participation and support of 90% of Singapore’s 700 religious organisations. In addition, the ‘Inter-Religious Council’ functions as a dialogue forum among representatives of Hinduism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Taoism, Jainism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, and the Baha’i faith in Singapore. This Council is consulted in public debates and before amendments of laws which might be religious sensitive. Leong then highlighted a number of recent developments affecting the national public debate on inter-religious coexistence and dialogue in Singapore, including the arrests of activists of the Jemaah Islamiah terrorist group, religious proselytism in schools as well as distribution of anti-Muslim and anti-Catholic publications. He concluded by commenting on the issue of mutual respect in segmented communities in Singapore, highlighting that the segmentation does not necessarily mean fragmentation.

**Jan Niessen**, Migration Policy Group, Brussels, talked about ‘Promoting Integration of Immigrants in Europe and Asia’. He started by presenting the Migration Policy Group (MGP). He introduced the Migrant Integration Policy Index III (MIPEX), developed by MPG which serves as a tool to analyse, compare and improve integration policy. It does so by providing transparency and knowledge of policies, changes, trends, standards, benchmarks of policies according to international minimum standards for equal treatment, identifying countries’ strengths and weaknesses as well as by evaluating justifications for more or less favourable treatment behind integration policy. After that, he introduced the concept of integration by defining it as ‘a process by which all residents - irrespective of their background - can contribute to and benefit from well-being on an equal footing’, also noting that national public policies can hinder or facilitate integration. The integration policy areas investigated by the Index are labour market mobility, family reunification, education, political participation, long-term residence, access to nationality, and anti-discrimination. He then examined the ‘enforcement side’, stressing that this consists of the access of victims to judicial, civil, criminal and administrative procedures, alternative dispute resolutions with binding conclusions, short procedures, sharing of burden of proof, situation-testing and statistical data, protection against victimisation, financial support and interpretation services, representation by others, class action, financial compensation, restitution of rights and imposition of negative or positive measures. Equality policies include dissemination of information, ensuring social dialogue, structured cooperation with civil society, promotion of equality in carrying out functions, procurement and positive action measures. He therefore presented the main findings of
MIPEX in 2010 for EU 27 Member States, noting that, while the Union as a whole scored well especially on ‘fields of application’, it shows relatively lower achievements on ‘equality policies’.

**Clémentine Hocquette**, Ministry of the Interior, France, gave a presentation on ‘The French Experience of Integration in Schools: ‘Open to Parents’ Schools’. She started by explaining that, in 2008, the French Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Education decided to launch the project ‘Open Schools to Parents for Integration’. She said that many migrant parents face difficulties in following their children during school time. This is due to a lack of sufficient language skills or because they are not familiar with the school system, or, more generally, fail to understand the very functioning of the French society. Therefore, the French government has decided to propose classes of French language reserved to immigrant parents, where they would have the opportunity to learn and discuss about the organisation of the school, basic functioning of the French society as well as official values of the French state, including gender equality and secularism. The trainings are implemented in territories with a significant concentration of migrants, are free of charge and non-compulsory. She then noted that the program provides 120 hours of classes every year and emphasised that the financing of this project is supported by the Ministry of the Interior. The project is currently implemented in 354 schools in 69 departments, with 6250 parents attending these trainings in 2012 and 2.4 million Euros devoted to its financial coverage. She then presented the main results of the project, which can be summarised as facilitation of contacts between parents and school institutions, improvement of the knowledge of French by immigrant parents as well as some ‘restoration’ of their natural role of interface with teachers for the education of their children. She also added that this project has allowed a number of migrant women to escape from their in-house isolation. The feedback by the teachers involved in this project showed that these classes helped to ease tensions in schools and that, following the training, a large part of parents also want to enrol in a professional training program. Hocquette concluded by highlighting some issues needing improvement in the near future, such as coordination with other existing measures implemented in the same territories, and the importance of putting in place an assessment mechanism allowing to estimate the project’s outcomes in the mid-term.

**Session IV: Opportunities for Future Europe-Asia Cooperation on Integration**

**Patrick Rueppel**, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Singapore, addressed ‘Topics for Future Cooperation’ in the final session. He first presented the status quo in Europe, marked by migration and integration being influenced by the current economic and political crisis. European countries strongly hit by the crisis are characterised by decreasing immigration,
more emigration, outflows of former immigrants as well as growing resentments against immigrants. Countries less affected by the recession in Europe have witnessed an increase in the number of immigrants and have become more active on migration and integration policies, following an ‘opening process’ logic. He stressed that no integration policy is currently being developed at EU level. Only coordination with no formal harmonization measures takes place. These measures are being put in place de facto through migration-focused initiatives, among which EU directives and access to the European labour market play a key role. On the other hand, EU Member States tend to use integration policies and requirements to shape migration, meaning that a secure status does not serve as a condition for integration, but rather that integration provides the basis for the legal status of immigrants in Europe. Rueppel then turned to the ‘Asian side’, remarking that former sending countries are being progressively transformed into receiving countries (like in the cases of Thailand and Malaysia), immigrants returning home may face integration issues (like in the Philippines), improvements of life standards in some sending countries might lower the number of Asian migrants and make countries more attractive to others in the future. In spite of these developments, very few countries have started integration initiatives. In addition, many immigrants from other Asian countries are temporary – being either high-skilled workers or low-skilled-workers – and, therefore, may be rather difficult to integrate. He then addressed the issue of bi-directional migration movements between Europe and Asia, noting that in 2010 23% of Asian migrants resided in Europe and 12% of European migrants lived in Asia, while in the same year Asians accounted for 26% of all migrants to Europe and Europeans represented 11% of the total amount of migrants to Asia. It was highlighted that the overall movement has intensified in both directions – notably for high-skilled workers and students –, but he also made clear that the intra-regional dimension of such migration trends remains dominant. When identifying a number of topics for future EU-Asia cooperation in this area, Rueppel pointed at exchange of best-practice policies and experiences, cooperation among civil society organizations, governmental responses in engaging migrant communities, dialogue to create awareness, integration of returnees, integration of students and post-university visas, equality of opportunities and promotion of meritocracy, skill-recognition, anti-discrimination, local-foreigner relations, and pre- and post-migration courses. Among the tools to foster cooperation, he recommended the use of bilateral partnership agreements between sending and receiving countries, multilateral dialogue fora, the empowerment of the promoting role of embassies, the use of a government-to-government and the whole-of-government approaches. Rueppel concluded by pointing out the major challenges for EU-Asia cooperation in this field. These include, among others, the absence of an Asian partner for the EU on these matters, the lack of a single and EU-wide approach to integration as well as to low-skilled-workers, pending obstacles to a full recognition of migrants’ rights in Asia as well
as lack of policy and social cohesion in many European and Asian societies.

The conference highlighted that there is increasing need among European and Asian countries to share experiences on integration policies and tackle the issue jointly. As the number of cross-regional migration is growing, cooperation between sending and receiving countries can ensure a mutually beneficial process. In this regard, the implementation of pre- and post-migration courses which complete each other is crucial. Such training should also exist for returnees to ensure an easy reintegration in their country of origin. In addition, barriers such as skill-recognition and family reunification should be lowered. A matching of demand and supply taking into account the situation in both countries will help to increase the sustainable benefit for the societies and the individual.
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