



Policy Paper on Youth & Migration

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Executive summary

Through this Policy Paper, the European Youth Forum is proposing an approach to migration which is based on rights and the integration of migrants into European societies. It includes the issues that pertain specially to young people, proposes actions for governments, and outlines the important role youth organisations play in the process of supporting integration.

The European Youth Forum believes that a fundamental requirement to welcome and integrate young migrants, is to ensure the same access to social services, political rights, autonomy and well being to all, as well as the same respect and guaranteed human rights, while acknowledging the benefit of a transcultural society. It is therefore crucial for the European Union and European countries to develop and implement migration policies, be it on asylum, labour or irregular migration, which fully respect fundamental human rights and international conventions, which prohibit discrimination and which are gender sensitive. In particular, European governments should ensure that the rights of children, as outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, are respected, regardless of the migration status. European States who have not yet done so should also ratify all the Conventions protecting the rights of migrants, such as the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

Moreover, the European Youth Forum believes that migration should be a choice and that no one should be driven into migration by force, discrimination, political, religious or economic circumstances in their countries of origin. Co-development policies should be promoted as a tool to limit the effects of brain drain, while development policies and development aid must remain a priority.

Empowerment is crucial for young people's integration, and should go along with anti-discrimination regulations to ensure equal opportunities. Governments should specifically address the needs of second and third generation migrants. To achieve integration, the European Youth Forum believes that the governments should grant migrants the rights to fully participate in their receiving societies and ease the access to nationality, provide migrants with the opportunity to master the language of their new countries, help tackle the pejorative perception of migrants, for instance through monitoring discrimination in the media, and ease access of young migrants to the labour market. Besides, education plays a big part and, in that respect, the limitations of schools should be addressed, and the role of non-formal education in developing skills, values and competences, and in educating on diversity, especially through youth organisations, should be recognised.

As the main representative body of young people in Europe, the European Youth Forum urges its institutional partners at all levels to recognise, support and engage youth organisations as key players in the integration of migrants and thus in making a more equitable society which embraces diversity.

Introduction

Migration is changing Europe and lies at the core of many debates in the context of globalisation, EU enlargement, and the demographic and economic changes which the continent is facing. In the last few years, the European Youth Forum (YFJ) has developed a global youth cooperation policy and has been looking at youth and development issues, sustainable development, social inclusion, equality and anti-

discrimination. In today's Europe, there are an increasingly large percentage of young people with migrant backgrounds. As a platform close to the different realities and needs of young people in Europe, and one which represents them regardless of their background, the European Youth Forum needs therefore, to develop further its work on migration.

Migration encompasses many aspects of the lives of young people in Europe - for both those who migrate and those who cohabitate with migrants. There are a large variety of migrants, of reasons for migration, and of places from which migrants come, all of which will affect the way they will be accepted and will integrate into receiving countries. There are migrants for settlement and others who see their stay as temporary - to work or study. There is labour migration, family reunification, refugees, asylum seekers, emigration for retirement, most of which are now defined in EU and European countries' legislation. When working on migration policy, the European Youth Forum believes focus should be placed not on control but rather on integration. This is a particularly crucial point for youth, and the YFJ appreciates the fact that this was acknowledged by the European Commission¹, and then by the European Parliament in 2004, which supported a holistic approach to integration and also stressed the importance of a gender perspective².

Moreover, mobility (meaning the free movement of people) is one of the core freedoms of the European Union, and the European Youth Forum believes this is a right from which every person in Europe should benefit³. This right to mobility should be implemented beyond the borders of the EU and every European should be entitled to it. Mobility in youth work⁴ is a fundamental precondition for ensuring that young people will benefit from international opportunities: people and countries develop through migration and visa barriers and other obstacles should be dismantled. In today's Europe, migrants with resident permits are not entitled to free movement within the Schengen area, which considerably restricts their freedom and their possibilities of developing their life projects in Europe.

Through this Policy Paper, the European Youth Forum is proposing an approach to migration which is based on rights and the integration of migrants into European societies. The only way to welcome and integrate migrants, that is to allow and encourage them to fully participate in the political, social and economic life of the receiving societies, is to ensure that young migrants have the same access to social services, political rights, autonomy and well being as any other citizen in Europe, and are treated with the same respect, and guaranteed human rights, while acknowledging the benefit of a transcultural society. As the main representative body of young people in Europe, the European Youth Forum urges its institutional partners at all levels to recognise, support and engage youth organisations as key players in the integration of migrants and thus in making a more equitable society which embraces diversity.

Young people are a particularly vulnerable and over-represented group among migrants; however, youth organisations have only had a limited involvement in this area, despite the fact that both youth organisations and young migrants can play a

¹ "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". COM/2003/0336 final.

² Report from the European Parliament, Rapporteur: Claude Moraes, A5-0445/2003.

³ "Guidelines for the removal of legal obstacles to Mobility in Youth Work", YFJ, 2004.

⁴ Youth work includes youth programmes, exchanges and other types of youth activities.

tremendous role in empowering, integrating and changing the perception of migrants.

I. Current situation assessment - Issues at stake

1. Refugees and Asylum seekers

a. Respect of International Conventions

In their fight against irregular immigration, European countries do not always respect their international commitments towards refugees. The latter are tending to represent a diminishing proportion of total migrants⁵; however, wars and new threats such as climate change, may increase the amount of displaced people who wish to migrate to European countries⁶. The European Youth Forum believes that it is therefore crucial for states to fully respect fundamental human rights and international conventions, especially the 1951 Geneva Convention and the UNHCR guidelines on Policies and Procedures in Dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum (1997). European States should equally ensure that the rights of children, as outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, are respected.

b. EU legislations

One of the central aims of the ‘common asylum policy’, as developed in the Tampere Agenda and followed by The Hague Programme in 2004, is to achieve a more balanced distribution between EU Member States, of the costs of receiving and protecting refugees and asylum-seekers. In addition to the process of internal harmonisation, EU countries have also been exporting European practice to associated states and candidates for accession. While the policies may have aimed at halting the decline of standards, so far they have mostly resulted in pushing towards more restriction: EU countries, and mainly those receiving the highest number of refugees and asylum seekers, have also developed the idea of ‘burden-sharing’ to cope with the differences in migration flux between EU Member States.

In May 2007, the European Parliament adopted the “Communication from the Commission on strengthened practical cooperation: new structures, new approaches: improving the quality of decision making in the Common European Asylum System”⁷. European States should duly aim at protecting refugees and allowing for quicker decision-making mechanisms with regards to asylum. In this regard, the European Youth Forum calls all the Member States to set appropriate policy frameworks allowing the enhancement of the implementation of asylum seekers’ rights.

The European Youth Forum strongly believes that EU legislation in the field needs specifically to ensure gender sensitivity, as without this, legislation can in many ways be harmful to female asylum-seekers originating from diverse cultures and with experiences of sexual violence, rape, female genital mutilation etc. The evaluation of the progress of asylum seeking in different countries should be

⁵ « Global trend 2006. Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons”. IOM, 16 July 2007.

⁶ The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has suggested that 150 million environmental refugees would exist by 2050. “Working Group II Report “Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability”, IPCC, April 2007.

⁷ COM (2007) 67.

closely monitored and data should be used to observe tendencies in claims and the outcomes for women. Data should also be used to improve conditions, access to asylum for women, educational development support for those working on refugee status determination, or to provide general support in the integration of gender mainstreaming in the process.

c. Detention of Minors

A few thousand minors are detained every year in Europe due to their irregular migration status⁸, and human rights organisations have highlighted the risks for refugee, displaced and migrant children in some European countries⁹. These minors are among the world's most vulnerable populations and are at particular risk of abuse when separated from their parents and other caregivers: they are also frequently placed in detention, despite the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which states that detention shall only be used as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period of time¹⁰, and the Council of Europe recommendations on the 'Protection and assistance for separated children seeking asylum'¹¹. Separated children and youth are therefore entitled to international protection under a broad range of international and regional instruments, and states must ensure that these instruments are implemented and respected.

2. Impact of the conditions of access to territory and residence on young people

a. Family Reunification

While family reunification is still of one of the main reasons to migrate to Europe and the *main* reason in most EU countries¹², the emphasis is now on economic migration and managing migration flows towards attracting skilled workers from more varied third countries. Family reunification now therefore remains as one of the only migration channels for people from developing countries with no specific skills. In 2003, the European Commission adopted the *Directive on Family Reunification of Third-Country Nationals*¹³, which hints at a toughening of the conditions for reunification and leaves a significant part of sovereignty to the Member States. Some countries have begun to fear abuse of family reunification procedures and have passed bills which have been highly controversial, if not even discriminatory and in contravention of the Geneva Convention¹⁴: such moves could then result in an increase in the amount of separated children and youth¹⁵. In addition, migrants entering the EU via family reunification are not, in the majority of cases, allowed to work, making it difficult for them to develop their life projects in Europe and hence limiting their integration.

⁸ 2000 in the UK only, according to the Separated Children in Europe Programme of Save the Children.

http://www.separated-children-europe-programme.org/separated_children/index.html

⁹ <http://hrw.org/children/refugee.htm>

¹⁰ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 37.

¹¹ "Recommendation 1703 (2005)", CoE, Assembly debate on 28 April 2005 (15th Sitting)

¹² For instance, in 2004, family reunification constituted 64.3% of the immigration to France. OECD 2006, *International Migration Outlook*.

¹³ 2003/86/EC

¹⁴ In France for example, the Parliament and the Senate adopted a new immigration bill allowing DNA tests to prove kinship.

¹⁵ "Separated children" are children under 18 years of age who are outside their country of origin and separated from both parents, or their previous legal/customary primary caregiver.

b. Labour Migration

The latest EC proposals, made in 2007, regarded residence and work permits for third country nationals, and their rights; “sanctions against employers of illegally staying third-country nationals” (which does not apply to students legally residing but with no working visa); and “the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of highly qualified employment”¹⁶: the latest proposal, which sets the framework for the creation of a “blue card” permit system, was announced on 23 October 2007 by the European Commission. The blue card scheme would be similar to the American green card system¹⁷, but would only be valid for two years although it would be renewable: the applicant should have a one-year EU job contract with a salary of at least three times the minimum wage. Blue Card holders would be treated equally in relation to national workers, limited only in their access to education grants, housing, and social assistance. The “blue card” aims at attracting highly skilled workers by allowing them to follow fast track procedures and eventually increase the mobility within the EU. In addition, measures have been built in for young professionals under 30 years of age, to face lower hurdles in qualifying for Blue Card status, therefore recognising the need to attract young talent to Europe while avoiding brain drain in the countries of origin.

European Social NGOs have welcomed the initiative towards a more holistic approach to migration but the YFJ has flagged the **danger of a categorisation of migrants**.

Some researchers¹⁸ also argue that a “Blue Diploma” could be introduced, with any graduate from a Masters programme (or equivalent) from a participating university being made eligible for a Blue Card by virtue of their degree. Such a scheme could help attract foreign talent to European universities and then on to the European labour market, but could also be beneficial from a development perspective, as it could encourage circular migration. This would be particularly important for young people who may not have the financial support but have an education that would allow them to find work in the EU; nevertheless, this would obviously only apply to highly educated youth and must therefore not be the only proposal pursued.

c. Students

On 13 December 2004, the Council adopted a directive¹⁹ on the conditions of admission of third-country nationals for the purposes of education, school student exchange, unremunerated training, or voluntary service. It distinguishes four categories of third-country nationals: students, school students, unpaid trainees and volunteers. This directive does not provide students with the possibility of being granted a work permit after completion of their studies; moreover, the monitoring of the implementation of this directive shows that third country

¹⁶ COM(2007) 638 final; COM (2007)249; COM(2007) 637 final

¹⁷ A 10-year residence and work permit which allows the holder to live and work in the United States while being entitled to enter and leave the country at any time.

¹⁸ “A European Blue Card proposal”, Jakob von Weizsäcker, in *Horizons Stratégiques*, July 2006.

¹⁹ 2004/114/EC

students who have been accepted in EU universities still have problems obtaining visas²⁰.

The first *Erasmus Mundus* programme was launched in 2001 and aimed at being a EU co-operation and mobility programme in the field of higher education which promotes the European Union as a centre of excellence in learning around the world: the second phase of the programme, for the period 2009-2013, is now being developed. The programme is well designed and serves as a good opportunity for graduate students from non-European countries - however, it is only aimed at the so-called elite. The EU should ensure provisions for all students from third countries to take part in *Erasmus Mundus* by setting a target number of young people with fewer opportunities.

3. Equal rights

a. Human Rights

The European Youth Forum believes that in order to achieve full integration, a society should not apply double standards to Human Rights, and should, as far as possible, allow migrants to benefit from the same social and political rights as those enjoyed by existing citizens of the country. Moreover, and for the same reasons, double sentences should be abolished. The international framework should be applied to all. This is a basic condition for the proper integration of migrants into receiving societies. Migrant children are similarly entitled to the same treatment and rights as national or resident children, and should be treated as children first and foremost: all considerations of their immigration status should be secondary.

All European states should ratify the protocols to the European Convention on Human Rights, and in particular, protocol 12, which prohibits discrimination; furthermore, these states should respect the international commitments they have made with regards to human rights, fundamental freedoms, social rights and discrimination.

b. Access to basic services

Migrants do not always have access to basic social services such as health, housing and education. The right to health for all should be prioritised²¹; particularly given that poverty and poor housing conditions can undermine general health. Furthermore, many migrant children have a background of very difficult or traumatic experiences which may require psychological support.

²⁰ "Proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an action programme for the enhancement of quality in higher education and the promotion of intercultural understanding through co-operation with third countries (*Erasmus Mundus* (2009-2013)", p.5, European Commission, 2007/0145 (COD), July 2007.
http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/mundus/doc/com395_en.pdf

²¹ Article 12 of the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) recognises the right to health.

Access to free and compulsory primary schooling is also guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child²²: as these services are recognised as rights, states should ensure that migrant children and youth benefit from them, in the same way as any other resident. Moreover, it is the view of the European Youth Forum that states have to ensure that access to education beyond primary level is ensured, and specific measures targeted at migrant youth are created, in order to monitor and support this process.

c. Labour Rights

Another area in which migrants are particularly vulnerable, is employment. Articles 6 and 7 of the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) recognise the right to work for everyone, which grants everyone “the opportunity to gain his[/her] living by work which [s/]he freely chooses or accepts”, as well as the right of everyone “to the enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work”. The lack or partial recognition of foreign degrees and professions causes difficulties for migrants and clearer conditions of recognition should be in place. Migrants, whether in regular or irregular situations, are less likely to be organised in unions and face discrimination, low wages, exploitation and frequently dangerous environments and precarious work conditions. The European Youth Forum believes that migrants should thus benefit from the right to decent work and should be encouraged to join a union and defend their rights. Undocumented migrants should be able to access information about their rights, alongside stricter controls on employers of undocumented migrants. As such, the European Parliament and the Council should adopt and closely monitor the implementation of the European Commission proposal on a Directive “providing for sanctions against employers of illegally staying third-country nationals”²³. Moreover, there should be stricter law enforcement against illicit work in general. The aim of such policies, from the migration perspective, should be to integrate undocumented migrants as quickly as possible into the legal labour market. It is of major importance that all European Countries ratify and implement the “International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families” and the Convention concerning “Migrations in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Migrant Workers”, as Western European countries, in particular, are among those countries receiving the largest number of migrant workers.

4. Co-development

The YFJ believes that migration should be a choice and nobody should be driven into migration by force, discrimination, political, religious or economic circumstance in their country of origin. Information should duly be available in emigration countries, on the conditions of life and work in countries of the North for example, in order to inform potential migrants.

a. Co-Development Policies

Co-development is a concept which considers migrants to be a developing factor not only for their receiving countries but also for their countries of origin. Traditionally, immigrants have always, collectively or individually, supported their

²² United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 28.

²³ COM (2007) 249.

communities of origin.²⁴ Remittances are often perceived as a way of counterbalancing the ‘brain drain’ for the countries of origins, but the procedures for money transfer can be difficult and are not always well monitored and funds correctly distributed. The European Youth Forum believes that the procedures for money transfers should be simplified. Recent co-development policies are seeking to address the issue and make a more efficient use of remittances. For countries receiving immigrants, co-development has been implemented by institutions in a different way: at the European Union level, co-development was first mentioned during the Tampere Summit, and followed by the Hague Programme. However, both programmes are rather limited and the budget allocated to development aid is much less significant than those for visas and border control.

b. A Tool to limit the effects of brain drain

Emigration can often result in a ‘brain drain’, as the most skilled workers and most highly educated people leave a country, hindering its development. Co-development is therefore an important tool since it can limit the effects of brain drain and encourage circularity. The decisions made by migrants and diaspora communities regarding the use of their resources lie at the heart of efforts to harness the benefits of migration for development in countries of origin: this relates not only to remittances but also to helping enhance training facilities and sharing their expertise, for example. Co-development policies are therefore an alternative to security-focused approaches to migration.

The risk, however, is of using co-development simply as a tool to limit migration; and European States, especially those within the EU - which represents the world’s biggest donor - should guarantee that development policies and development aid remain a priority and are designed, implemented and assessed in a way that truly enhances the ability of a country to develop, for instance through education programmes which not only focus on primary education but also higher education.

5. Undocumented Migrants & Managing Migration Flows

a. Protecting the rights of Undocumented Migrants

European countries are putting the emphasis of their migration policies on fighting “illegal immigration”. As the channels for regular immigration are narrowing and the conditions in developing countries are worsening, especially in Africa, more and more people risk their lives in order to come to Europe seeking better standards of living, or political, religious and sexual freedom, for example. The International Centre on Migration Policy Development estimates that around 2000 migrants die every year trying to cross the Mediterranean from Africa to Europe²⁵. What they face in Europe as undocumented migrants can be horrendous: they are exposed to human trafficking and other threats such as degrading work conditions, poor housing, and low or no access to healthcare. The European Youth Forum believes that institutions should take into account the vulnerability of these migrants, and ensure their fundamental rights and their dignity is respected. All European Countries should ratify and implement the Convention on Action against Trafficking

²⁴ According to the World Bank, money sent by Malian people living in France has contributed to the building of 60% of the country’s infrastructure. “Workers’ remittances: a boon to development”, Gumisai Mutume, Africa Renewal, Vol.19 #3 (October 2005), page 10

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 34.

in Human Beings, to prevent this form of modern slavery from taking place and from expanding, and which applies to all forms of trafficking, to all types of victims and the varied forms of exploitation.

Children and young migrants are particularly concerned and are more vulnerable than others: they are therefore an important part of migration policies, as the impacts of irregular migration are rather negative, both for the lives of undocumented migrants and for the perception of migration and migration policies as they are very visible. Legalisation schemes and amnesties for regularising their status are therefore urgently needed.

Some European countries still use age tests to determine the age of young asylum seekers: these tests often result in significant errors, and the Council of Europe has flagged the risks and abuse caused by the conditions in which age tests are applied. For separated children seeking asylum, age is a matter of life and death. The European Youth Forum can not accept that national governments maintain these hazardous practices which affect young migrants' lives, and urges governments to abolish these random methods for age determination.

b. Tackling Irregular Migration

The other objective of the EU common immigration policy, apart from competitiveness, is in fact tackling irregular immigration. The core policy priorities include cooperation with third countries; the fight against human trafficking; tackling illegal employment; the regularisation of illegal immigrants; return policies; and further strengthening the external borders, partly through the agency for Operational Cooperation at the External Borders (FRONTEX)²⁶. A more effective border control and cooperation with third countries is meant to help combat and prevent trafficking in human beings, fight terrorism, organised crime and smuggling. The EU should develop policies which do not portray and perceive migration as a crime *per se*. It is of vital importance to avoid the existing periods of detention at borders, during which those detained may not be given answers on their applications for excessively long periods. Similarly, illegal deportations of asylum seekers or refugees should be ceased immediately.

The EU should ensure that in tackling irregular migration it respects the rights of any human being under existing international frameworks, and does not contribute to the pejorative portrayal of migrants. European states should end the detention of minors and tackle illegal migration without demonising migration in general, as well as attempt to quickly regularise migrants in irregular situations.

II. Integration

“Integration is the key to beneficial immigration,” according to the Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA)²⁷.

In basic terms and in the context of migration, integration is the process of opening a society, a country or a region, to all, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion,

²⁶http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/fsj/immigration/illegal/fsj_immigration_illegal_en.htm

²⁷“Migration and Public Perception”, BEPA, Marcel Canoy, Ricklef Beutin, Anna Horvath, Agnes Hubert, Frédéric Lerais, Peter Smith, Myriam Sochacki. October 2006.

gender, or social class. According to the Council of Europe, integration “aims at ensuring social cohesion through accommodation of diversity understood as a two-way process. Immigrants have to accept the laws and basic values of European societies and, on the other hand, receiving societies have to respect immigrants’ dignity and distinct identity and to take them into account when elaborating domestic policies.”²⁸

Generally speaking, in order to make migrants feel part of a nation, empowerment is crucial, and can be achieved through various factors.

It is very important that states ease migrants’ access to services and support by providing multilingual staff, by developing information packages with migrants, by decentralising services to ensure a broader outreach, and by providing intercultural training for staff.

In this context, the European Youth Forum asks national governments to focus on the specific needs of second and third generation migrants, who often face a different reality than the first generation. Having reached equal levels of education as their non-migrant counterparts, second and third generations see themselves confronted by discriminatory decisions due to their origin; leading to a feeling of exclusion within the host society.

Anti-discrimination regulations, in addition, are important to ensure equal opportunities. In the EU-25, Switzerland and Norway, policies are only half way towards best practice, according to the Migration Integration Policy Index (MIPEX)²⁹, and in some Central and European Countries, MIPEX shows that anti-discrimination policies are still far from best practice³⁰.

The EU is setting the ground for common integration and anti-discrimination policy, which it is attempting to extend to associate and candidate states; however, such policies are still at an early stage and room for improvement remains.

1. Participation and Full Citizenship

Being a full citizen of a country can be understood as holding the nationality of the country in which you are living. More broadly, it implies active participation in the life of the community in which you are living - which is what citizenship and integration approaches should aim at achieving. This mirrors the tension felt by most migrants when trying to integrate in their new country. According to MIPEX, the areas in which integration policies fall behind the most in the EU-25 are political participation and access to nationality³¹.

In many European countries, a key to being able to be an active citizen, to be able to voice one’s concerns, to engage in choosing decision-makers, and to enjoy full civic participation, is access to nationality. Some countries deny to migrants the right to associate or be recognized as active in their community if they do not hold

²⁸ “Migration and integration: a challenge and an opportunity for Europe”, Resolution 1437 (2005), Parliamentary Assembly, The Council of Europe.

²⁹ *Migration Integration Policy Index*, pp 20-21, J. Niessen, T. Huddleston and L. Citron, British Council and Migration Policy Group, September 2007.

³⁰ Estonia for instance has the least favourable anti-discrimination laws for promoting integration of the EU-25. Even in the fields where anti-discrimination regulations apply, they are far from being enforced. *Ibidem*, p.60.

³¹ *Ibidem*, pp 14-18.

nationality. The European Youth Forum believes that being a full citizen should be a principle linked to residence, not to nationality. Being able to volunteer, and be recognized as such, or being able to run or vote in local elections, are primary acts of integration in the community in which one lives. Civil society and its organisations are essential vectors of integration for any migrant received in a country as they provide them with the support and the framework through which to participate actively in the community in which s/he is living: youth organisations, in turn, must play an active role in empowering young migrants.

The lack of participation and the fact of not being granted the same rights as other citizens, constitute two factors that can hinder integration - as they contribute to the creation of a two-tier society, and prevent migrants from fully participating to the political life of their receiving countries.

Parallel to better and strengthened anti discrimination policies, states should adapt legal frameworks to encourage the full participation of migrants - such as easing access to citizenship for first, and more importantly second and third generation migrants. For the first generation, this means widening the conditions for eligibility and lowering the number of years of residence necessary to be eligible³². For the second and third generation, this involves easing the procedures to apply for nationality whether the State applies the *ius soli* principle which grants the citizenship to children born in the country of residence of their parents or not. The possibility of getting dual citizenship also facilitates integration. Another important measure is to widen the possibility for political participation by granting voting rights for local elections.

2. Language

Mastering the language of the recipient country, or at least gaining a basic knowledge, obviously has a significant part to play in the integration of migrants. There are considerable differences in approaches among European countries - varying from obligatory to voluntary, subsidised or not. States should ensure that new-comers are able to attend language courses regardless of their financial situations or cultural beliefs, in order to facilitate their integration. A worrying trend is observed in several countries where only full language proficiency allows migrants full access to human rights. Human rights must be universal and indivisible and must not depend on any prerequisites of language proficiency. Youth-friendly programmes should also be developed to adapt to the specific needs of young migrants.

Articles 8 and 29 of the Convention for the Rights of the Child recognise the importance of a child's identity and especially her/his cultural identity: states should therefore also attempt to provide opportunities for children to learn their language of origin and to not be alienated from their parents' culture, as this constitute an important component of their identity. Additionally, the proficiency in one's first language is an important precondition for the capability to become fluent in further languages.

3. Media & the Perception of Migrants

The role of the media is also crucial when discussing migration, and recently there has been a striking increase in public attention on the issue: the BEPA report

³² In Italy, the requirement is 18 years while in Sweden it is 5 years.

concludes that despite some notable differences, “*public perception of migration tends to be increasingly negative throughout Europe*”³³. Many people feel insecure and this is partly due to the way immigrants and immigration are portrayed by the media and by politicians, which is often in a biased or negative way and often linking migrants almost exclusively to crime and security issues.

According to the UN³⁴, and contrary to an often expressed prejudice, migrants do not have a predominantly negative impact on the labour market, particularly over the medium term, as they increase not only the labour supply but also the demand for goods and services: in addition, some also establish businesses, and as a result, migrants may increase the demand for labour, offsetting the potential loss of jobs they are perceived to cause. As a result of such effects, migration inflows have been identified as a factor that increases economic growth to the benefit of the destination country and all its citizens. Migration is also a way for some European countries to cope with shortages in important sectors of the labour market, in which domestic residents can not, or do not want to, work.

Studies also show that migrants tend to contribute to social systems by increasing fiscal revenue: migrants contribute more in taxation than they receive in social welfare, which is often due to unfair inaccessibility to social services.

Consequently, the main issue to be tackled is the perception held of migrants by the population of the receiving countries, which itself, rather than the migrants’ actual impact on the labour market or the social systems, constitutes a problem.

Polls show that a majority of Europeans are against immigration but in favour of integration³⁵, which is significant to the way immigrants are portrayed: states should duly develop regulations and implement measures to monitor discrimination in the media.

4. Education

Education, both formal education in schools and non-formal education, is one of the key fields in which the challenges of migration must be tackled. Through education, a society passes on its values and norms to younger generations and new members of society. Therefore it can play a tremendous part in breaking down stereotypical or prejudiced perceptions towards migrants if it enables the interaction and socialisation of all young people regardless of their background. It can also play an important part in the enhancement and recognition of the cultural diversity upon which society lies, if such cultural values are part of the school culture and are therefore included in the curriculum, the teaching methods and the social spaces in schools. Youth organisations, in this respect, are crucial actors in the integration of young migrants.

a. Limitations of Formal Education

Formal education is currently not succeeding in reaching this aim - neither on the level of society nor on the level of the individual immigrant. Schools can often be an unpleasant experience in the life of a young migrant, as a result of insensitivities around personal identity; of the limited understanding or vision of

³³ “Migration and Public Perception”. BEPA. P.2

³⁴ “World Economic and Social Survey - International Migration 2004”. United Nations.

³⁵ Eurobarometer 59.2 (2003) and “Special Eurobarometer survey on discrimination in the EU” 65.4 (2006)

the school's potential in the upbringing of a young migrant; or even as a result of direct bullying and harassment. Consequently, the period of formal education can often lead to the direct or indirect discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation of first and second generation youth from minority backgrounds. This invariably results in their mental well-being being affected, as well as their academic performance - underachievement and early school leaving are among the most visible results, both of which tremendously affect further life-opportunities and perspectives: first and second generation migrant children, for example, are more likely to leave school early and tend to have poorer results at school³⁶. In many European countries the number of second and third generation migrants enrolling in higher education is dramatically lower than that of students from non-migrant backgrounds.

Governments need to ensure that young people from migrant background receive the support needed within educational systems, in terms of language, curriculum assistance, and financial support etc. All school students should have the right to language lessons in their mother tongue. Moreover, governments should ensure that schools are welcoming and inclusive environments for all young people and that young people are protected from any kind of discrimination. Cooperation with parents should also be increased in order to allow them to better understand the school system and to be more able to support their children.

b. The Role of Non Formal Education

Non-formal education (NFE) gives young people the possibility to develop values, skills and competencies distinct from those developed in the framework of formal education - particularly interpersonal skills, self-confidence and responsibility. Through non-formal education, young people are actively involved in the education/learning process. Non-formal education can provide unique learning opportunities that are not provided by formal education, or possible through informal learning. NFE providers can more quickly adapt to the specific needs of the learner and thus, serious investment could make a real difference for the integration of young migrants: the possibility to interact and socialise with other young people can play a significant role in enhancing language skills.

As the main providers of non-formal education, youth organisations have taken the lead in its recognition: recognition by wider society, of the skills and competences acquired outside school, can be a boost to the esteem of young migrants not fitting well into existing formal education systems and could contribute to their better integration into the labour market.

5. Employment

Studies have shown how migration can be a major cause of poverty³⁷ and this is in big part due to the hurdles faced with regards to employment. According to the European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia³⁸, in a majority of European

³⁶ "Where Immigrant Students Succeed - A Comparative Review of Performance and Engagement in PISA 2003", OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

³⁷ "Migration, a Journey into Poverty", Caritas Europa, 2006.

³⁸ Now the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights since March 2007.

countries, migrants face higher unemployment rates³⁹. Migrants are also more likely to receive lower wages and work longer hours: this is caused by a multiplicity of factors ranging from work permits, differing educational cultures and schemes, and language barriers, to racism - especially for non-European migrants; young migrants are, furthermore, directly affected by multiple discrimination. A strategy to avoid such barriers is self employment; in fact the percentage of entrepreneurs within the migrant population is higher than that of the non-migrant population; unfortunately, however, this also means that migrants face a greater lack of job security and social protection.

These difficulties in accessing the labour market under favourable conditions restrict the universe of possibilities open to young migrants and perpetuate a vicious circle of exclusion.

The EU and its Member States, as well as other European countries, should put an emphasis on reinforcing their anti-discrimination legislation; develop a coherent approach to integration and anti-discrimination policies; satisfy the specific educational needs of migrants; and develop better assessment of the skills and qualifications of migrants, in order to facilitate their integration into the labour market - the latter being an important access point to their integration into wider society. Governments should also encourage and support migrants to occupy and hold public posts - such as teachers or police officers - and hence increase the representation of migrants in these important professions.

6. Migrant women

Migrant women represent a diverse group, and in any attempt to describe their experience, the European Youth Forum focuses upon the common difficulties they face across Europe. Their diversity makes migrant women a particularly disadvantaged group, as they often face double or multiple discrimination - with their immigration status and their sex as starting grounds for discrimination.

Migrant women often find themselves at the core around which negative stereotypes are developed and anti-immigration discourse is practiced, and women choosing to wear visible religious or cultural symbols are especially vulnerable in this regard. This has been noted in several EU countries and the European Youth Forum believes it significantly impacts the success of any integration efforts.

In that sense, the YFJ is strongly concerned with the fact that the human rights of migrant women are often represented through extreme views, or cultural relativism, ignoring the possibility for women to make their own choices regarding their identity. The YFJ believes that human rights are universal and indivisible, and that women's choices, sexual and reproductive health, and economic and social well-being, need to be safeguarded and ensured wherever possible.

Although there are often provisions in legislation against racial discrimination on the one hand, and on the other, against discrimination based on gender, there are seldom policies or programs targeting migrant women in terms of access to information on those provisions and or to direct legal support - with the exception of only a few countries⁴⁰. States must develop and implement measures to

³⁹ "Migrants, Minorities and Employment", European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia, 2003.

⁴⁰ For instance, the annual Czech Republic program on immigrant integration pays special attention to immigrant women and their children, as one of the areas for project financing.

empower female migrants, by providing them with specific education and training, and by developing their financial independence through targeted programs such as micro-credit initiatives, for example⁴¹. States also need to continue their work on the empowerment of migrant women, and the deconstruction of cultural perceptions, and on the understanding of gender roles and patterns in a variety of contexts.

A further element that is important to mention in relation to women and migration is the rapid development of trafficking and sexual exploitation in Europe - to which women are the most immediate victims. This remains one of the most humiliating and degrading forms of gender-based violence, and one that is generally and specifically borne by young people and especially young women. While the EU has been “good” in setting more restrictive policies for the migration of women, it has failed to address the problem fundamentally in terms of those demanding sexual services and those operating the sex-businesses responsible for the trafficking. The YFJ believes that trafficking and sexual exploitation should be combated urgently, and that the victims of trafficking and exploitation should be provided the necessary support in terms of legal protection, counseling and personal assistance.

III. Role of youth organisations

1. State of affairs

The YFJ believes that youth organisations must play an important part in the integration of migrants, social cohesion and the building of a trans-cultural society. Youth organisations, and civil society in general, are also supporting the representation of migrant concerns among other issues regarding youth; moreover, these organisations can empower young people and get them to learn about their rights and opportunities.

2. Participation of migrants in youth organisations

Young migrants often have the perception that formal education, i.e. school, is their main means of integration and social advancement. The structure of democratic youth organisations gives young people the possibility to experience and learn about the principles of participative democracy and active citizenship. Furthermore, non-formal education and youth organisations could play a significant role in integrating young migrants and second or third generation migrants through the role they play in empowering young people; by developing their personal skills; through the feeling of belonging they provide; and through encouraging young migrants to participate in the social and political life of the societies in which they live. Youth organisations constitute a safe arena for young people to fully be themselves.

The European Youth Forum thus believes that youth organisations should engage themselves further, to develop internal plans to reach out to young migrants and second generation migrants, and should increase the level of representation of young migrants and second or third generation migrants within their structures.

3. Education on diversity

⁴¹ As recognised by the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Mohammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank in 2006.

Youth organisations are at the forefront of education on diversity, and student unions in particular can play a strong role: these organisations can contribute to the acceptance of a diverse society by enabling youth from various backgrounds to interact, given that the range of their activities are cross cultural, and by emphasising the social benefits to be gained from multiculturalism.

Youth organisations can also organise activities such as anti-discrimination workshops for both migrants and non-migrants, in order to make youth understand the multiple dimensions of discrimination: in this regard, one can note the importance of counterbalancing the media portrayal of migrants.

4. Support for migrant youth organisations

Youth organisations can play a role in building and strengthening the capacities of migrant organisations and youth organisations, by sharing best practice and experience. The inclusion of migrant organisations in existing youth organisation networks, and the exchange of both experience and resources, can benefit the development and empowerment of migrant organisations - subsequently empowering individual migrant youth: similarly, it will be important to exchange experience and best practice on the growing diversity of cities, especially in the context of social inclusion strategies and cohesion policies.

Furthermore, in the view of the European Youth Forum, youth NGOs can assist migrant organisations by lobbying and advocating for their common objectives, and by sharing their existing contacts within and influence on national or local authorities. The engagement of youth organisations can spread greatly in the sphere of training and capacity building on lobby/advocacy skills, organisational development, sustainability, and funding (especially information on the use of European Community funding or other international funding to promote integration).

Conclusions

Migration has been shaping Europe for millennia and the scope of this phenomenon will only increase in the coming decades with increased globalisation, and new threats such as climate change. As Europe is becoming more mobile within its borders, it should be wary of creating a “Fortress Europe” - an EU which closes its borders to goods, services and nationals of third countries; more legal ways of entry should be provided, along with a better control of borders, and strict respect to human rights and international conventions on refugees and asylum seekers - in order to tackle the issue of irregular migration and its impact.

Asylum and immigration policies are important determinants of the possibilities for integration, but the prospects for human rights based policies in these areas seems currently to be out of favour politically for many governments. New programme seem heavily oriented towards security-based policies neglecting human rights aspects, however, the YFJ is convinced that admission and integration policies are inseparable and should mutually reinforce each other.

Youth organisations commit to taking their role in the integration of migrants seriously, by including more young migrants and empowering them, and by advocating their rights towards institutions and governments. However, the responsibility does not lie primarily with them, and institutions and governments

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must ensure young migrants benefit from decent entry, living and working conditions and therefore, favourable conditions for integration.