

# **INTEGRATION OF THE IMMIGRANT POPULATION IN EUROPEAN CAPITALS**

**Report for the XLIII General Assembly of the UCEU**

## **SUMMARY**

November 2003

## **I - INTRODUCTION**

This document gathers significant information on the policy for integrating the foreign immigrant population in European capitals, gathered via a questionnaire that was completed and returned by the capitals (sent out in July, 2003), aimed at achieving an awareness of the characteristics, difficulties and problems within each city, along with the series of initiatives developed by each city in response to the challenge of integrating the immigrant population.

The approach of the programs hoping to respond to the new requirements arising from the arrival or presence of a foreign population at local level, reaches the obvious boundary of the respective national legislations. However, the cities also need to find formulae for local management, not only to deal with the difficulties of integrating immigrants, but also to face new urban problems, especially those linked to the social and territorial dualisation of our cities at the beginning of the third millennium.

This report has been produced on the basis of information received from the following 20 capital cities: Amsterdam, Athens, Berlin, Brussels, Budapest, Copenhagen, Dublin, Stockholm, Helsinki, Lisbon, London, Luxembourg, Ljubljana, Madrid, Paris, Riga, Rome, \* Tallin, Warsaw and Vienna.

This document presents a summary of the analysis of the migratory situation in the aforementioned European cities, along with the difficulties and changes observed in recent years, on the basis of the information received and grouped according to the sections in the questionnaire.

## **II - SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ON THE IMMIGRANT POPULATION.**

According to the information gathered, we can assert, that as a result of globalisation and the economic and industrial development of the European Union, in conjunction with social phenomena such as the need for labour, the pressure of migration is increasing in all European capitals, and this phenomena is intensified, above all, in the southern European capitals.

Thus the high percentages of foreign citizens is maintained in cities with a history of migration, such as **Luxembourg** (59.15%), **Amsterdam** (47%) and **London** with 27%, and the number of immigrants in capitals such as **Madrid** (12.75%), **Dublin** (8.4%), **Rome** (6.6%) or **Lisbon** (6.27%) increases.

With regards to age, we can highlight data from cities with a long tradition of migration, where the percentage of minors is high, as is the case in **Amsterdam** (20%), **Luxembourg** (23.7%) or **Berlin** (18%). In other European

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\* As this was received outside the deadline, it has been impossible to include the analysis of this data in this report

capitals, where the migratory tradition is more recent, this percentage is lower, as is the case in **Madrid** (14.4%), **Rome** (between 13.5% and 11.8%) or **Riga** (between 1 and 2%).

The presence of foreign children in some capitals, such as Madrid, Lisbon or Rome, will increase in the near future and will have a considerable impact on areas such as education and health.

In general, the composition of the immigrant population according to **nationality** varies in each destination country, and is dependent upon the migratory tradition within the country, the nature, scope and coverage of the networks established by previously established foreign communities, the employment opportunities offered at the destination, the geographical proximity between the country of origin and the destination country, and certain determining factors such as historical and cultural links with former colonies and protectorates. Thus, **Lisbon** reports the main countries of origin as being: Cape Verde (27.3%), Angola (12.9%), Guinea (10.3%) and Brazil (8.2%); **Amsterdam** underlines: Surinam (21%), and the Former Dutch West Indies (6%); Madrid highlights, as the most common countries of origin: Ecuador (34%), Colombia (11%) and Peru (5.6%).

The economic and political developments over the last decade, and most notably the movements in central and eastern Europe, have given rise to new migratory waves, thereby increasing the diversity of the countries of origin. Thus, the city of **Berlin** cites, as countries of origin of its immigrant population, the countries that formerly constituted Yugoslavia (13.7%), Poland (6.7%) and countries that were part of the former Soviet Union (5.7%). **Stockholm** points to the importance of immigrants from Poland (4%), whilst **Vienna** underlines the immigration from the countries that formerly constituted Yugoslavia (15%) and eastern European countries (11%).

In northern European cities, immigration from neighbouring countries has decreased whilst immigrants of other nationalities have increased: Pakistanis, Vietnamese, Iranians, Iraqis and Turks.

Finally, the increase in the number of asylum seekers is worth mentioning. This is backed up by the data presented by **Berlin, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Vienna and Luxembourg**.

### **III - MAIN DIFFICULTIES IN THE PROCESS OF INTEGRATING THE IMMIGRANT POPULATION.**

The vast majority of cities have no responsibilities when it comes to determining the criteria that regulate immigration waves at national level or granting residence or work permits. In spite of this, they bear witness to the

constant arrival of foreigners who will form a part of the city and who need to coexist, in equality, with the indigenous citizens.

Some of the northern European cities have pointed out that difficulties exist, above all, with the **reception** of asylum seekers, as a result of the long waiting period before the admission of the request. The majority of capitals point to the newly arrived immigrant's lack of understanding of the language in the destination country as an initial obstacle in accessing any public service.

With regards to **education**, the basic issue and the main difficulty pointed out by the majority of cities involves managing, within the school setting, the great diversity present in the existing pupil population, and at the same time, responding to the special educational needs of many pupils and promoting their academic success. Many cities highlight that in some centres, there is an excessive concentration of foreign pupils, and their tendency to become "ghettos" is observed. Ignorance of the language in general is pointed out as an obstacle to equal education by the majority of the cities.

With regards to health, cities where the national health system automatically integrates immigrant citizens do not report any especially difficult situations in this area. Some cities report that the educational level and understanding of the language influence the level of health of the foreign population and have a bearing on the adoption of preventative measures and care, and access to and use of public services.

With regards to **employment**, a significant number of capitals affirm that the immigrant workers are employed in specific areas, which, in general, are characterised by poorer working conditions. These employment "niches" are normally rejected by indigenous workers. In general, immigrants in unlawful situation are subject to abuse and exploitation, and suffer precarious employment, economic and personal conditions. It is reported that ignorance of the language, membership of a different culture and lower levels of professional qualification contribute to making the foreign population's integration in the job market more difficult.

With regards to **housing**, the concentration of immigrants in certain areas accentuates the visibility of the immigrant in the city, as a result of both the numerical growth and the places symbolically associated with this growth.

All of the cities that were consulted coincide in affirming that immigrants encounter the greatest difficulties when it comes to finding decent accommodation. The accelerated growth of the foreign population, along with the limited number of dwellings available to a large proportion of this population, results in excessive occupation that reaches the level of overcrowding. We should also underline owners' distrust as a result of the risk of subletting, and prejudice and fears when it comes to renting to foreigners.

With regards to **leisure**, the majority of municipalities coincide in pointing out that a large proportion of the immigrant population have insufficient

economic means with which to carry out leisure activities, or when they can afford to, they spend this money in other areas.

Finally, **religion** is practiced with complete freedom in European capitals within a climate of tolerance in the respective areas of worship, which, on occasions, are provided by the local administration.

#### **IV – MAIN ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY THE CITIES/CITY HALLS IN THE SERVICE OF THE IMMIGRANT POPULATION.**

For more than a decade, European cities have become increasingly convinced that, without adequate integration policies aimed at the immigrant population, in the long term, problems of conflict and public order cannot be avoided.

With regards to **reception**, the majority of European capitals have local mechanisms that benefit initial encounter services: information, guidance and administrative support. Many of these programs include teaching of the local language, the support of translators or interpreters in case of total ignorance of the language, legal guidance and the possibility of providing accommodation and maintenance.

With regards to **education**, all of the cities coincide in pointing out that schools include special support programs for the intensive teaching of the local language to recently arrived foreign minors. Faced with the concern of rising rates of dropping-out and failure at school amongst immigrant minors, the vast majority of cities have created special programs within schooling.

When it comes to **health**, the majority of the cities have no direct responsibilities in this area, but many of them report that, through specific initiatives, they have aided the prevention of illnesses, and improved healthcare within the immigrant population.

Programs relating to **integration in the job market** have also been the object of specific programs in the majority of capitals, which carry out training programs, language learning programs and programs aimed at the acquisition of job-seeking abilities.

Whilst the majority of local bodies do not have direct responsibility when it comes to **housing**, the vast majority of capitals have set up measures and services in relation to the housing offer, aimed at the most vulnerable sections of the population. The immigrant population enjoys the same access to these measures and services as the native population. In the case of the recently arrived foreign population, the City Halls have access to "reception centres" or Hostels that offer maintenance and social services on a temporary level. Some

cities have planned the payment of rental properties for the most underprivileged foreign citizens.

The majority of the activities designed by the capitals to promote **leisure** activities within the immigrant population vary from city to city, but they all are of a marked intercultural character, aimed at aiding positive interaction between native citizens and new arrivals. They focus on the discovery of the richness of other cultures, and on different types of artistic expression, and they also provide spaces for reflection and celebration.

#### **V – PROGRAMS/PROYECTOS DEVELOPED BY THE CITIES WHICH MIGHT BE HIGHLIGHTED AS EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE.**

Projects aimed at guaranteeing the social participation of the immigrant population favour the right to vote of the non-Community population, whilst projects that hope to promote integration in the job market are more common in northern European cities: **Brussels, Luxembourg and Stockholm**. This has led many cities to create “Consultative Councils”.

By contrast, southern cities, such as **Madrid, Rome or Lisbon**, highlight initiatives aimed at favouring aspects linked to interculturality, the fight against discrimination and the resolution of problems of a legal nature and with regards to reception.

#### **VI – INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION PROGRAMS WITH DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

To this end, numerous bilateral agreements between countries of origin and destination countries exist, along with the common policy of the European Union brought to fruition in the European Funds for official development aid, aimed at transferring resources, not merely of a monetary nature, but also technological resources, training and infrastructure resources, to less developed countries.

In addition, the vast majority of cities have budget programs, larger or smaller in size, aimed at financing cooperation programs managed by the different NGO's, and direct cooperation programs with the municipalities in developing countries.

Normally, the aid provided by each city is aimed at the countries of origin of the largest ethnic groups in the capital, or a country with which the city maintains strong cultural and historic bonds due to its status as a former colony or protectorate. The areas that are most commonly dealt with involve education and basic literacy, professional training, city planning, public health, water

treatment, the provision of basic needs, the promotion of women and services for minors.

## **VII – FUTURE PROJECTS**

The vast majority of the European municipalities that were consulted coincide in affirming that the phenomenon of immigration, existing to a greater or lesser degree in all of them, will continue to grow and contribute to the transformation of the demographic and social profiles of the cities.

Projects aimed at the recognition of, and respect for intercultural values will be maintained, along with measures aimed at the cultural enrichment of the cities, the discovery of different artistic expression, bringing old and new residents together and the prevention of conflicts between ethnic groups.

In the near future, local bodies are studying the possibility of maintaining and increasing all those programs that contribute to a reduction of the disadvantages and differences within the immigrant population. These will include measures that respond to the initial needs of new citizens, facilitate access to adequate housing, prevent urban deterioration, guarantee integrated education and promote programs for integration in the job market without discrimination.

A large proportion of the capital cities highlight the full participation of the immigrant population in city life as an important challenge.

Apart from the trends that have been cited, many capitals see participation in European networks as a priority in the immediate future, wherein projects aimed at the foreign population will be drawn up.

## **VIII – SPECIFIC COMMENTS ON THE IMMIGRATION ORIGINATING FROM THE COUNTRIES SOON TO ENLARGE THE EUROPEAN UNION.**

Many European capitals have reported, in recent years, a significant increase in the number of citizens from those countries that will form a part of the European Union in the near future.

It is to be hoped that, in this respect, the greater liberty of movement of these new citizens, guaranteed by European regulations, will increase and accentuate this trend. Whilst this is not an area in which local administration has direct responsibility, some municipalities have planned specific measures to respond to this situation.

Moreover, the majority of European capitals state that they are anxious to participate in the intense exchange with citizens from the new member states.