

Brussels, 20 April 2009

## **Two new tools in the area of integration: The 'European Integration Forum' and the 'European Web Site on Integration'**

### **Completing the European framework for integration**

Today the Commission launched two new tools for stakeholders in the area of integration: the European Integration Forum organised in cooperation with the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Website on Integration. These two tools are the last of the mechanisms which the Commission announced in its Communication 'A Common Agenda for Integration: Framework for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the European Union' of September 2005 (COM (2005) 389) to put in place in order to set up a Common European Framework on Integration. The other tools which together form this common framework are in particular regular meetings of the National Contact Points on Integration, the elaboration of Handbooks on Integration for Practitioners, annual reports on integration and a European Integration Fund providing financial support for integration measures in Member States.

In its 2005 communication, the Commission reaffirmed that a comprehensive approach, involving stakeholders at all levels, is essential for the success of integration policies. It further stated that it would bring together a range of stakeholders active in the area of integration at EU level, setting up, a European Integration Forum and a European Web Site on Integration. The importance of sharing expertise at EU level among a broad range of stakeholders was then recalled by the Council in the Conclusions on the Common Agenda of December 2005, and more recently in the Conclusions summarising the outcome of the Third Ministerial Conference on Integration, held in Vichy on 3 and 4 November 2008. The two new instruments launched today will significantly improve the cooperation and exchange of information at the EU level in the field of integration. Both tools are concrete steps the Commission is taking in order to put into practice the Common Basic Principles on Integration, making integration a dynamic two-way process and helping mainstream and evaluate integration policies in Europe.

### **The European Integration Forum**

The objective of the European Integration Forum, developed by the Commission in co-operation with the European Economic and Social Committee, tacking stock of a successful preparatory meeting held in April 2008, is to provide a voice for representatives of civil society on integration issues, in particular relating to the EU agenda on integration, and for the Commission to take a pro-active role in such discussions. This will allow the European institutions to promote a comprehensive approach to integration, involving stakeholders at all levels. The forum's represents an occasion for civil society organisations and European institutions to exchange views on the EU activities in the field of integration and to discuss together current challenges and future priorities.

Participants will be EU umbrella organisations dealing with integration issues, including social partners with representation at the EU level. Representatives of national consultative bodies and platforms will be present in the Forum, sharing experience gained at national and local level. The EU institutions, Commission, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions will also be part of the forum, together with representatives of the network of National Contact Points on Integration.

The Common Basic Principles on Integration agreed by the Council in 2004 will serve as reference for the activities of the Forum. In the inaugural meeting, the role of the Forum in contributing to the development of the future EU agenda for Integration, as well as relevant topical issues, such as the consequences of the current economic crisis on the integration of immigrants, will be addressed.

Exchanges and outputs of the meeting will be reflected also on the European Web Site on Integration [www.integration.eu](http://www.integration.eu).

### **The European Integration Web Site: Integration at your fingertips**

The European Web Site on Integration ([www.integration.eu](http://www.integration.eu)) is an essential part of the EU approach to integration and a key tool particularly in order to ensure cooperation and exchange of information. Integration policies and practices will be fostered by sharing successful strategies and supporting cooperation among stakeholders and civil society organisations across the EU. Furthermore building an online community of integration practitioners will help overcoming vertical and horizontal fragmentation between actors operating at different levels of governance or in different fields or countries. The European Website on Integration enables visitors to browse through examples of good practices, to discover funding opportunities and to look for project partners, to stay updated on the latest developments at EU, national and local level and to stay in touch with members of the EU integration community.

All dimensions of integration are covered – from active citizenship to economic participation, from social cohesion to anti-discrimination - and available information has been gathered from a wide variety of stakeholders. The available information includes:

- A vast documentation library containing reports, policy papers, legislation and impact assessments regarding both European and national levels;
- A collection of good practices on integration, presented in a clear and comparable way for easy extraction and import;
- Country information sheets, with the latest information concerning legislation and policy programmes;
- A repository of links to external websites;
- Community tools such as the 'find-a-project-partner-tool', which supports networking between stakeholders and the development of common projects;
- Information on funding opportunities such as grants and public tenders;
- Regularly updated news and events;
- Forums for discussion.