



THE NETWORK  
OF MAJOR  
EUROPEAN  
CITIES

## **Immigration and integration at the local level**

**Political recommendations to  
national governments and  
the EU institutions**

## CONSIDERING

### 1.

- the variation among the cities and countries of Europe in immigration history, in numbers and origin of immigrants, in periods of arrival;
- that the arrival of new immigrants and asylum seekers in Europe is strongly related to wider processes of globalisation, including the economic and political conditions facing their countries and regions of origin;
- the variation in the existence and degree of development of policies for the reception and integration of immigrants and asylum seekers in Europe;
- the variation in political and administrative structures and cultures, and in the degree of local competencies concerning reception and integration issues;
- the variation in welfare systems, social policies and provisions between Member States and between cities;
- and not least, the extreme variation in financial resources available and in possibilities to effectively prioritise the issues concerned.

### 2.

- the general recognition by the public authorities of the cities of Europe of the important opportunities offered by immigration for the enrichment of local society, and indeed the dependence of cities on immigration for their future prosperity;
- the shared concerns of cities regarding immigration and integration issues, including the levels of poverty and exclusion faced by many immigrants and asylum seekers, and the possibilities of inter-group tensions between the “established and the newcomers”, threatening social cohesion;
- the common prioritisation on all local political agendas of the need to develop new responses to the observed challenges, both in cities with a long experience in managing immigration and integration as well as in cities which have only recently experienced increasing immigration.

### 3.

- the introduction in recent years of new policy to order and to curb the influx of large numbers of new immigrants in EU Member-States;
- the fact that the majority of new immigrants and asylum seekers continue to settle in the large cities;
- the fact that the new influx of immigrants differs often considerably from earlier migrations (mainly to northern European countries), including ex-colonial residents and "guest-workers"; the newer forms (affecting both northern and southern European countries) consisting of family reunification, the arrival of asylum seekers and irregular or undocumented immigrants;
- the fact that the public authorities of the large cities are often confronted with the task of adequately providing for the large numbers of new arrivals, a task for which they often do not possess adequate resources to effectively carry out;
- the fact that the most sensitive issue facing cities in this context concerns an increasing number of undocumented residents and refused asylum claimants, a phenomenon that has in some cases been exacerbated by changes in national immigration and asylum policy;
- the fact that this situation endangers the whole system of reception and integration at the local level. Local policies to receive and integrate newcomers in a proper and decent way meet with severe obstacles in this context.

## **WE, THE PUBLIC AUTHORITIES OF THE CITIES OF EUROPE, COMMIT OURSELVES**

1. To invest maximum effort in the implementation of EUROCITIES "Contribution to Good Governance" regarding the reception and integration of immigrants and asylum seekers at the local level.
2. To join forces with all parties concerned in the reception and integration of immigrants and asylum seekers, at the local level as well as the regional and national level, to maintain and improve social cohesion in Europe's cities between all groups of different origin. Innovative action from the ground level is essential in this context.
3. To improve the coherence of local policies in the reception and integration of immigrants and asylum seekers.
4. To safeguard the foundations of an open, tolerant and democratic urban society, in particular by protecting the most vulnerable groups among immigrants, asylum seekers and established minorities.
5. To establish and maintain close relations with partner cities to exchange on a systematic basis experiences, innovations, successes and failures in local reception and integration policies, to collectively monitor progress and effectively support each other.
6. To promote the development and strengthening of relations with local authorities and non-governmental organisations in the countries of origin, within the framework of international cooperation.

## REGARDING THE POLICIES OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS

### We recommend

1. That in order to adequately respond to the challenges of immigration and integration, to benefit from the important opportunities offered by immigration and to maintain and promote social cohesion, immigration, asylum and integration policies be considered a joint venture of all parties concerned, especially of the public authorities at all levels of government.
2. That in the design of policy concerning immigration and asylum, reception and integration, national governments take into account the most essential element: the impact of policy at the local level.

### We therefore request

3. To be consulted in the development of policies in this area. We call on our national governments to recognise that cities play a pivotal role in the implementation of immigration, asylum and integration policies, and that dialogue with cities is essential in order to improve the policy making process and ensure the development of effective policy.
4. That the public authorities of the large cities are provided with an adequate range of competencies to respond to the challenges of receiving and integrating newcomers, especially in situations where the arrival of newcomers is unexpected and large.
5. Regarding the decentralisation of competencies in these matters, that not only "the problems" are decentralised, but also the powers and necessary budgets.
6. We request that our national governments fully implement and adhere to the treaties and conventions relating to immigration, asylum and fundamental rights, to which they are signatories.
7. We strongly advocate that the right to vote and to be elected at the municipal level be extended to all legal residents, whatever their origin, in those Member States where such rights do not exist.
8. We strongly advocate that in the design of immigration and asylum policies, safeguarding the position of the most vulnerable groups is prioritised, including the undocumented, asylum- seeking children and women, not only to satisfy the moral demands of our civilisation but to prevent the danger of exploitation of those groups and eventual threats to social cohesion.

9. We appeal to our national governments to develop and introduce adequate and decent systems for the return of people refused asylum or legal residence to safe places. Those people should be returned with better "life-chances" than those with which they arrived, and to places where their future is secured.
10. In order to secure a safe future for those who have to return to countries of origin that face difficult economic and political conditions, we urge our national governments to seek practical solutions in the framework of international cooperation between public authorities and non-governmental organisations at both ends of the migration chain.

## REGARDING THE POLICIES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

1. We request, in full agreement with the efforts at European level following the Tampere Council to coordinate immigration and asylum policy in the European Union, that existing European policies and those in development continue to adhere to the European and international treaties and conventions regarding the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all, and in particular the rights of immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees, and established minorities. The European Union should encourage its Member States to ensure that national policies comply with these agreements.
2. We plead for a renewed effort to re-define citizenship and residence rights in Europe for immigrants from third countries in agreement with the basic values of the treaties and conventions upon which the European Union has been founded.
3. We strongly advocate not to treat immigration and asylum policies as independent from integration policies: they are sides of the same coin, which can be clearly observed at the local level.
4. We consider it therefore of utmost importance that in coordinating immigration and asylum policies, the European Council and the Commission should recognise the pivotal role of cities in the reception and integration process. We advise the Commission to develop a consultation framework with the large cities and their associations in Europe in order to be adequately informed of all the issues concerned and the impact of European policy at local level.
5. We strongly support the application of the Open Method of Coordination in this area of policy, but on the basis of the adequate involvement of all levels of government, including local authorities.
6. Given the significant diversity amongst Member States in the area of immigration, asylum and integration policy, we recommend to establish an EU system and organisation to monitor the progress of each Member State in the realisation of the treaties and conventions concerning human rights and fundamental freedoms, specifically directed at asylum seekers and refugees, immigrants and established minorities, following the example of the European Monitoring Centre of Racism and Xenophobia in Vienna. This new monitoring system should support the Member States in the development and implementation of integration policies in this respect.
7. We appeal to the European Union to promote the intensification of efforts in international cooperation to adequately address the economic and political crises facing many of the countries and regions from which a large number of the new immigrants and asylum seekers in Europe have been forced to leave. It is only by addressing global inequalities and the economic and political root causes of forced migration that real solutions can be found. In the framework of such cooperation at the international level, efforts must be stepped up by the European Union to ensure a secure return for those who have been denied permission to stay in the Union.