

QUALITY EUROPE (HTTP://EUROPESWORLD.ORG/SECTION/QUALITY-EUROPE/),

REFUGEE CRISIS (HTTP://EUROPESWORLD.ORG/SECTION/REFUGEE-CRISIS-2/)

Integrating newcomers in a disintegrating European Union

Published on April 14 2016, Web exclusive

WRITTEN BY

(<http://europesworld.org/author/marcomartiniello>)

Marco Martiniello

(<http://europesworld.org/author/marcomartiniello>)

Director of the Centre for Ethnic and Migration Studies (CEDEM) at the University of Liège

Other articles by [Marco Martiniello](#)

(<http://europesworld.org/author/marcomartiniello>)



The European Union was, is and will continue to be a region of immigration. Newcomers come from all over the world following constantly renewed patterns of migration, which no walls or fences can put to an end. Most settle and adapt to their new environment while simultaneously enriching the local culture and economy. Others also maintain transnational links and activities. Many of them settle forever in Europe, while for others the end of the journey is uncertain.

Developing a common European immigration policy without a corresponding European integration policy is problematic. Issues such as economic and labour-market integration, ethnic and cultural diversity, social and political participation should be discussed in terms of multilevel public policy goals – local, regional, national and European. A holistic approach is clearly needed in order to grapple with the complexity of migration and post-migration situations in the European Union.

“Excellent labour-market integration can coexist with very bad social and political integration”

Integration is a disputed concept; I propose it is best understood in terms of the fair participation of target individuals and groups in the economic, political, cultural and social spheres of their host European societies. In this interpretation, a satisfactory level of newcomers' integration is achieved when they have

similar participation patterns than non-immigrant citizens. This means similar labour-market participation (economic dimension), similar electoral turnout patterns (political), similar attitudes towards fundamental democratic values (cultural) and similar access to social goods (social).

In policy terms, it would be useful to make at least a distinction between the initial phase of integration and the following steps. I see the first step in the integration process as 'adaptation', which refers to the physical arrival of newcomers into a new society and their settlement in the first five years. During that period, they learn the language of the new country, how society works in practice, and how to access housing, schools, healthcare, the labour market and so on. After this initial settlement, the newcomer continues his or her path and encounters various difficulties and obstacles in the process of participation.

Integration does not take place at the same speed across the economic, political, cultural and societal spheres. Excellent labour-market integration, for instance, can coexist with very bad social and political integration. The case of Japanese expatriate communities in major European cities is a good illustration of this differentiation. Usually, they enjoy a privileged position in terms of employment and wages, but they do not take part in local social and political life, and do not participate in the local culture. To a lesser extent, the same could be said of many European civil servants and experts living in Brussels.

“Newcomers do not wait for government policies to start the process of integration”

The role of culture, ethnicity, race and religion in the process of integration is another difficult, though unavoidable, issue. On the one hand, 'culturalist' schools of thought explain deficiencies in newcomers' integration by referring to their cultural background; when individuals are economically, socially or politically disadvantaged, their cultural difference is often presented as the major explanation. On the other hand, 'structural' thinking explains the lack of integration by macroeconomic and political factors such as globalisation or ethnic and racial discrimination.

It seems undisputable to me that social connections rooted in culture, ethnicity, race and religion also play a positive role both in the first step, adaptation, and the following steps of the integration process. For the Senegalese Mourides arriving in Europe, Mouride religious confraternities play an important role in helping newcomers find accommodation, find a job and find their way around their new surroundings. This work by a religious organisation is critical to helping the economic and social adaptation of newcomers. It also shows that newcomers do not wait for government policies to start the process of integration, especially in the economic and social spheres. Historically, this has always been the case. Italians arriving in New York at the turn of the 20th century knew that by going to Mulberry Street they would find help with accommodation and work among the *paesani* already settled.

The integration and participation of newcomers in Europe is undoubtedly a question of multilevel governance that needs a common European approach to accommodate differentiated local policies. Incoherence between the local, national and European approaches would increase the disintegrating trends at work today in the European Union.

“Any idea of a one-size-fits-all integration policy is absurd”

The content of the national integration programmes varies from one country to another. So to avoid incoherence and contradictions, and to reaffirm European democratic principles, there are several steps that should be taken. First, integration programmes should be renamed 'adaptation programmes' and should be offered to any newcomer entering the EU legally or as an asylum-seeker. Any idea of a one-size-fits-all integration policy, though, is absurd. Integration policies should vary according to the newcomer. The content of these adaptation programmes should vary with the type of migrant entering the EU; for example, immigrants entering for family reunification and short-term circular migrants need different levels of adaptation into European society and therefore different programmes. Immigrants whose aim is to become European citizens should be helped to get as close as possible to fair participation in economics, culture, politics and social relations. Those who come and go with no intention of becoming European citizens

should be required to understand and obey the law, but not necessarily to develop a sense of identification with local society. It would be beneficial, too, to inform the newcomers about the European integration process, the functioning of the European Institutions and the rights of immigrants under EU law. In the long term, this European dimension could also stimulate the attachment of the immigrant to European society culturally.

Integration also depends on policies for the natives, whom it would also be useful to directly involve in newcomers' integration process. Fighting far-right politics is a good way to work for the integration of newcomers, and good information campaigns can help avoid the backlash effect when integration policies are implemented. Better integration of newcomers can in part be the result of successful social and economic policies. Job creation, urban regeneration, European competitiveness and good healthcare policies can all help with immigrant integration, which can in turn help Europe to further achieve these very policy goals.

It seems clear that a coherent and shared European approach to the adaptation and fair participation of newcomers would be an efficient way to move forward with the wider EU integration process. But it is also clear that the current absence of such an approach reveals the deep crisis of the European project.

IMAGE CREDIT: CC / FLICKR – Gustave Deghilage

(<https://www.flickr.com/photos/degust/21490485626/in/photolist-yK3mEf-yHtcam-zP5Dfs-zP6ZRo-A5wXVd-xJMVjt-A6G9QD-vr5yMQ-yp4rgb-xJN1kv-ypwE4b-ypwFYy-yG9meF-xK7Tqm-yrPWQG-yLohGt-yrQb2b-xKgaGn-yJrU2x-yrRgVb-yHU8Av-yJ4C3d-yDQ6Cf-A7Dgxc-ytMCaL-yG8neE-ypCzFR-yrRkVW-xMqcnY-ytLkV5-tnvZ9t-v8vL3W-vq4KXU-uu2oYz-uu2sDk-tBCPZW-tDYzKk-tnoy2Q-tBCPgW-tE5kCg-tE5kmK-tnw3LD-tnnBWY-tnw3jg-tnnBqJ-tE5iTV-tDYx74-tDEqRS-sH8TWa-sH8THz>)

EU ([HTTP://EUROPESWORLD.ORG/TAG/EU/](http://EUROPESWORLD.ORG/TAG/EU/)) INTEGRATION POLICY
([HTTP://EUROPESWORLD.ORG/TAG/INTEGRATION-POLICY/](http://EUROPESWORLD.ORG/TAG/INTEGRATION-POLICY/)) MIGRATION
([HTTP://EUROPESWORLD.ORG/TAG/MIGRATION/](http://EUROPESWORLD.ORG/TAG/MIGRATION/))

Suggested articles

QUALITY EUROPE

The case for opening Europe's borders wide to migrant workers

by **Philippe Legrain**,

It's time Europe's politicians came clear about immigration with voters and with themselves. Governments cannot stop people moving across borders, and even if Europe became a police state its borders would still be permeable. Over a million foreigners illegally swell Europe's population every year; some enter covertly but most just overstay their visas and then... [Read article >](http://europesworld.org/2007/06/01/the-case-for-opening-europes-borders-wide-to-migrant-)

(<http://europesworld.org/2007/06/01/the-case-for-opening-europes-borders-wide-to-migrant->

FUTURE EUROPE, REFUGEE CRISIS

The missing link in the EU's migration evolution

by **Michael Bolle and Oliver Flaeschner**, Web exclusive

For centuries, demand for solutions to migration and asylum questions has created its own supply in the realm of politics and, comparatively lately, in the social sciences. Today, the push-and-pull factors that have been theoretically identified as causes for migration have become an instalment of "the European Crisis", a recurring drama with a plot in... [Read article >](http://europesworld.org/2016/01/24/missing-)

(<http://europesworld.org/2016/01/24/missing->

QUALITY EUROPE, REFUGEE CRISIS

Successful refugee integration begins with community outreach

by **Syed Kamall**, Web exclusive

At the height of last summer's refugee crisis, people across Europe took many personal actions to help. They donated food, blankets and sanitary products to those in need on our doorsteps. Uber drivers, for instance, offered to pick up items for free through UberGiving. Such was the goodwill that aid charities in Brussels even asked... [Read article >](http://europesworld.org/2016/03/10/successful-refugee-integration-begins-community-outreach/)
(<http://europesworld.org/2016/03/10/successful-refugee-integration-begins-community-outreach/>)

MAYORS AND MIGRATION,
QUALITY EUROPE

Helsinki's unity makes its welfare state

by **Ritva Viljanen**, Web exclusive

As with many other European cities, the flood of asylum-seekers late last summer caught Helsinki by surprise. In 2015, a total of 32,476 asylum-seekers came to Finland – ten-times more than in the previous year. In proportion to the population of Finland, that number is among the highest in Europe: 591 asylum-seekers per 100,000 inhabitants.... [Read article >](http://europesworld.org/2016/03/30/helsinki-unity-makes-welfare-state/)
(<http://europesworld.org/2016/03/30/helsinki-unity-makes-welfare-state/>)

HOME (/)

SECTIONS

Future Europe

(<http://europesworld.org/section/future-europe/>)

Smarter Europe

(<http://europesworld.org/section/smarter-europe/>)

Greener Europe

(<http://europesworld.org/section/greener-europe/>)

Quality Europe

(<http://europesworld.org/section/quality-europe/>)

Global Europe

(<http://europesworld.org/section/global-europe/>)

Security Europe

(<http://europesworld.org/section/security/>)

THE JOURNAL | #31



With Europe divided over refugees, Europe's World Editor-in-Chief Gile declares that Europe needs more not fewer. Jan Egeland, likewise, argues for tearing down Fortress Europe. A refugee crisis hanging over all Eurozone comprehensive view is taken with this issue's Factsheet: 'The arguments raging over Europe's refugee drama: various national agendas covered in our unique edition of the regular 'Views from the Capitals' section. There are new insights on the UK's EU referendum. Richard Rose, who argues that the only way to prolong the uncertainties, an eurozone reform suggestions each Jacek Rostowski and Clemens Fuest. EU's green leadership is in danger, according to Ida Auken, and Kevin O'Leary says it's time for Asia's own EU, but based on the European model. The issue culminates in 'The Europe We Want' a special section collecting the broad cross-section of hopes and fears from the troubled European continent.

View issue

(<http://europesworld.org/issue/2015/>)

The only Europe-wide policy journal

[About Europe's World](http://europesworld.org/about)

(<http://europesworld.org/about>)

