Integrating minorities and migrants

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Introduction
In response to a long-standing request by the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE, the High Commissioner on National Minorities commissioned a study of integration policies in a number of selected countries. The study was produced by the Migration Policy Group (MPG), a research institute based in Brussels, and presented to the Parliamentary Assembly at their meeting in July 2006. This paper explains the HCNM’s decision to accede to the Parliamentary Assembly’s request, looks at the relevance of policies on integrating migrants to the integration of minorities (and vice versa), and highlights some of the findings of the study and some of the questions raised by it.

In conclusion it suggests that the integration policy issues identified by the study, which are already the subject of widespread public discussion following incidents such as the London tube bombing and the disturbances in French suburban areas, would benefit from further international debate and that the OSCE is well placed to provide a forum for such a debate.

Integrating diversity and the HCNM
The theme of ‘integrating diversity’ or ‘integration respecting diversity’ has long been central to the HCNM’s approach to the requirement of his mandate to make recommendations to states on how they should address tensions and risks of tensions arising from minority issues. In a speech on integrating diversity in 2000 the then High Commissioner set out the basic approach to integration: ‘By participating in public life, minorities will feel that they have a stake in the system in which they live — and that they are full partners. They will feel that they are stakeholders in, and can benefit from, the common wealth. Indeed, they will contribute to the common wealth. Under these conditions it will be easier for them to realize that they have obligations and not just rights. At the same time, members of the majority will come to see them as fellow citizens sharing fully in the responsibilities and benefits of citizenship’.

In recent years, the High Commissioner has elaborated the theme of integration respecting diversity in numerous speeches and statements in which he has emphasised in particular:

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2 The study examines the integration policies of Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom.
3 The text of the study can be found at www.osce.org/documents/hcnm/2006/07/19961_en.pdf
that integration should be voluntary, as distinct from enforced assimilation and that, while promoting integration, states should respect the rights of persons belonging to minorities to preserve their own identity including their traditions, culture, language and religion;

- the duty of the state to promote integration by encouraging and supporting participation by persons belonging to minorities in the political, economic and social life of the state on the basis of equality and non-discrimination;

- the responsibility of persons belonging to minorities to support and cooperate with the integration policies of the state, for example by learning the state language and obeying the law. In a recent speech he described the balance between integration and diversity as being at the core of his work.\(^4\)

In order to enable him to make specific recommendations for the achievement of the over-arching objective of integration respecting diversity, the HCNM has, with the help of experts, developed a series of thematic guidelines and recommendations for action in fields such as education, language, political participation, broadcasting and (most recently) policing in multi-ethnic societies.\(^5\) These guidelines provide a kind of toolbox of policy instruments which can be drawn on in formulating recommendations to states. They are based partly on an analysis of the implications of agreed international instruments in the field of human and minority rights; and partly on pragmatic considerations of what can be regarded as ‘good practice’, as perceived by acknowledged experts and practitioners in the different fields.

The process of developing such recommendations and guidelines is ongoing. While international law and human and minority rights provide a basic foundation, there are many areas where different options for policies and measures are possible and where experience in different countries provides the best guide for choosing between these options.

**OSCE discussion of migration and integration**

In 2005, the HCNM sought to respond positively to the request of the Slovenian OSCE Chairmanship to contribute to the debate which they had initiated on migration and integration. The HCNM welcomed the debate as an opportunity to deepen the understanding of the integration process. In a series of speeches and papers in the course of 2005 the HCNM’s approach to integration was elaborated

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\(^4\) Speech by the HCNM at the 2005 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting Opening Session, available at www.osce.org/hcnm

\(^5\) The Hague Recommendations regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities, October 1996; The Oslo Recommendations regarding the Linguistic Rights of National Minorities, February 1998; The Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation in Public Life, September 1999; the Guidelines on the use of Minority Languages in the Broadcast Media, October 2003; and the Recommendations on Policing in Multi-Ethnic Societies, February 2006. All Recommendations/Guidelines are available in a number of different languages from the Office of the HCNM or, in electronic form, on the HCNM’s website at http://www.osce.org/hcnm/documents.html