

Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'Integration and the social agenda'

(own-initiative opinion)

(2010/C 347/03)

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On 16 July 2009 the European Economic and Social Committee, acting under Rule 29(2) of its Rules of Procedure, decided to draw up an own-initiative opinion on

Integration and the Social Agenda

The Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 26 January 2010.

At its 460th plenary session, held on 17 and 18 February 2010 (meeting of 17 February), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 158 votes to three with three abstentions.

1. Conclusions and proposals

1.1 As an institution that is strongly committed to promoting and developing the Social Policy Agenda and fostering the integration of migrants and ethnic minorities, the European Economic and Social Committee has decided to draw up this own-initiative opinion in order that **the EU may strengthen the links between its integration policies and the Social Policy Agenda**.

1.2 2010 will be a very important year for social policy in the EU: it will be the European Year of Combating Exclusion and Poverty, the EU 2020 Strategy will be drawn up, and a new Social Agenda will be adopted.

1.3 The EESC believes that the 2010 review of the Social Agenda should take greater account of the social effects of immigration.

1.4 As immigration/integration and the social agenda fall within the remit of different Commissioners and different Directorates-General, the EESC proposes that political and administrative cooperation within the European Commission be improved.

1.5 Integration policies must be linked to the main objectives of EU social policy; thus, all people – including third-country nationals, EU citizens from immigrant backgrounds and minorities – will be able to benefit from them. Moreover, the fight against social exclusion should be geared towards all people, including immigrants, whether they be EU citizens or third-country nationals.

1.6 The EESC considers it a priority to strengthen integration at European level, taking account of the economic crisis, the

situation of immigrants and minorities in terms of employment, social inclusion, gender equality, poverty, education and training, healthcare, social protection and the fight against discrimination.

1.7 The approach of diversity through immigration should be included across the board when specific policies and measures are drawn up and implemented, in tandem with the development of specific policies and initiatives for the integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities.

1.8 Consequently, taking into account the experience gained from other policies, the **Committee proposes that a process of mainstreaming integration** be provided for in the EU's different political, legislative and financial instruments, in order to promote integration, equal treatment and non-discrimination.

2. Presentation

2.1 The European Union is taking on a common immigration policy, to which the Committee is contributing through its opinions, highlighting the importance of integration as 'the key to successful immigration'. It recognises the need for European societies to improve their ability to manage the diversity inherent in immigration in order to increase social cohesion.

2.2 In the last ten years, immigrants have made a significant contribution to Europe's economic and social development ⁽¹⁾. Many men and women from countries outside the EU have entered European labour markets, helping to boost the economy, employment, social security contributions and tax revenues.

⁽¹⁾ COM(2008) 758 final.

2.3 The EESC has proposed the concept of 'civic integration' which is based on 'bringing immigrants' rights and duties, as well as access to goods, services and means of civic participation progressively into line with those of the rest of the population, under conditions of equal opportunities and treatment' ⁽²⁾.

2.4 2010 will see the renewal of the Lisbon Strategy with the EU 2020 Strategy, and the Social Agenda, and the review of the Integration Fund; the EU also has the Lisbon Treaty and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, a new Commission ⁽³⁾ will have been convened, and the Parliament will be in the first half of its new term.

2.5 2010 will also be the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion, which will provide an opportunity to renew our commitment to solidarity, social justice and greater inclusion.

2.6 Integration policies must be linked to the main EU social policy objectives. The EESC therefore proposes that political and administrative cooperation within the European Commission be improved.

2.7 With the economic crisis, many immigrants are finding themselves among the most vulnerable social groups, and are becoming the first victims: they are the first to be laid off, have greater difficulties rejoining the labour market, and run the risk of falling below the poverty line, particularly if they are female ⁽⁴⁾.

2.8 Often, the children of immigrants are also more likely to drop out of school.

2.9 The EESC believes that efforts to combat discrimination must be stepped up by implementing existing legislative instruments and strengthening public policies and social commitments to integration.

2.10 Alongside the economic crisis, in the political and social debate in some Member States, increasingly vehement verbal attacks are being made on the rights of immigrants, which is leading to tougher legislation and heightened xenophobia.

2.11 Some governments are also cutting the public resources earmarked for integration policies even though, in times of crisis, investment in social policy should be increased rather than decreased.

2.12 The EESC believes that an adequate integration policy is a factor for economic efficiency and social cohesion, as part of an appropriate common immigration policy.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 125, 27.5.2002.

⁽³⁾ Issues relating to integration and those relating to the Social Agenda fall within the remit of different Commissioners and different Directorates-General.

⁽⁴⁾ Eurostat.

2.13 Integration policies vary greatly throughout Europe, owing to the differences between social and political norms and legal systems. However, the objectives of integration are linked to social policies in every Member State.

2.14 In the EU, immigrants join the population at different rates. At present, migration processes are lower in the new Member States in central and eastern Europe, and greater in southern and western Member States. Experience shows, however, that in the future all European countries will experience high levels of immigration.

2.15 The Committee wishes to stress that the links between immigration and development must be strengthened within the framework of a comprehensive European immigration policy. The EESC has drawn up two opinions based on this approach ⁽⁵⁾.

3. Integration

3.1 The social integration process takes place in various areas of people's lives: family, neighbourhood and city, workplace, trade union, business organisation, school, training centre, association, place of worship, sports club, the armed forces, etc.

3.2 As integration is a social process that occurs within social structures, good governance is required to ensure that this social process is accompanied by appropriate policies on the part of the public authorities. In keeping with the powers they have in the various Member States, local and regional authorities possess political, legislative and budgetary instruments that they must put to good use in integration policies.

3.3 Common Basic Principle 10 (Appendix 1) proposes that integration form part of all policy portfolios at all levels of government (mainstreaming).

3.4 The EESC has drawn up a number of own-initiative opinions ⁽⁶⁾ calling for proactive integration policies in the EU, with a two-way focus, targeting both the host societies and immigrants, the purpose being to achieve a society in which all citizens, regardless of where they come from, have the same rights and obligations, and share the values of a democratic, open and pluralist society.

⁽⁵⁾ See the following EESC opinions:
OJ C 44, 16.2.2008, p. 91.
OJ C 120, 16.5.2008, p. 82.

⁽⁶⁾ See the following EESC opinions:
OJ C 27, 3.2.2009, p. 95.
OJ C 125, 27.5.2002, p. 112.
OJ C 80, 30.3.2004, p. 92.
OJ C 318, 23.12.2006, p. 128.

3.5 The EESC believes that civil society organisations can play a crucial role in integration. Both immigrants and host societies must show that they are willing to embrace integration. The social partners and civil society organisations must be committed to the implementation of integration policies and anti-discrimination measures.

3.6 Integration is a social process which involves immigrants and the host society alike. All the different public administrations and social players must demonstrate commitment to this process. European, national, regional and local authorities should draw up programmes reflecting the scope of their respective powers. In order to guarantee the efficacy and overall consistency of the programmes and actions, they must be properly supported and coordinated.

3.7 In another opinion, ⁽⁷⁾ the EESC proposed that the local authorities demonstrate greater commitment, because integration presents a challenge primarily at the local and regional level. These policies will enjoy greater success if they involve local and regional authorities and if civil society organisations are actively engaged in them.

3.8 Integration is a two-way process founded on the rights and obligations of third-country nationals and the host society, enabling immigrants to participate fully. In another opinion, the EESC defined integration as *'bringing immigrants' rights and duties, as well as access to goods, services and means of civic participation progressively into line with those of the rest of the population, under conditions of equal opportunities and treatment'* ⁽⁸⁾.

3.9 The Committee considers that immigrants should adopt a positive attitude towards integration and that the two-way approach demonstrates that integration affects not only immigrants but also the host society.

3.10 Integration and social inclusion policies should focus on various areas: initial arrival, language teaching, laws and customs, combating discrimination, employment and training policies, gender equality, education for minors, family policy, youth policy, housing, healthcare, addressing poverty, extending social services, and making it easier for people from immigrant backgrounds to become active citizens.

3.11 These policies should help people of an immigrant background to live harmoniously in European host societies, which are becoming increasingly diverse in ethnic and cultural terms.

3.12 In 2002, at a conference ⁽⁹⁾ organised in conjunction with the Commission, the EESC proposed that the EU institutions draw up a European programme for integration and set up a Community fund. The Commission launched a pilot programme in the field of integration (INTI), and in 2006 proposed setting up the Integration Fund, which was approved by the Council and is now included in the 2007-2013 budget.

3.13 In November 2004, the Council drew up a number of Common Basic Principles for immigrant integration policy in the European Union ⁽¹⁰⁾. These principles complement the legislative frameworks on human rights, non-discrimination and equal opportunities, and social inclusion.

3.14 The EESC wishes to stress the importance of a **common European approach**, as it brings substantial added value to integration policies and processes by ensuring a cross-cutting relationship with other EU policies such as the EU 2020 Strategy, the Social Agenda and cohesion policy. Such an approach will also strengthen the links between integration and the values and principles of the EU as set down in the European Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Convention of Human Rights.

3.15 The Integration Fund is a financial instrument intended to boost the development of integration policies with European focus and added value, reflecting the common basic principles. Integration policies are based on Article 63 of the Treaty, and are aimed at third-country nationals, while the ESF is aimed at the entire EU population, including immigrants. The Integration Fund thus complements the ESF.

3.16 The EESC supports the six political objectives of the Integration Fund, and hopes to be privy to the mid-term review of the fund in 2010, in order to propose certain changes.

3.17 The **European Integration Forum** has recently been set up to enable civil society and immigrants' organisations to participate in EU integration policies. The Committee is very much involved in the forum's activities.

3.18 In its conclusions on integration of June 2007, the European Council felt that it was necessary to move forward with the 2005 Common Integration Agenda, and developed the common basic principles.

3.19 The EESC wishes to build on this approach, and considers it a priority to strengthen integration at European level, taking account of the situation of immigrants and minorities in terms of employment, social inclusion, gender equality, poverty, education and training, healthcare, social protection and the fight against discrimination.

⁽⁷⁾ OJ C 318, 23.12.2006, p. 128.

⁽⁸⁾ OJ C 125, 27.5.2002, point 1.4 (rapporteur: Mr Pariza Castaños).

⁽⁹⁾ Conference on *The role of civil society in promoting integration*, Brussels, 9 and 10 September 2002.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Document 14615/04 of 19 November 2004.

4. The Social Policy Agenda

4.1 The international financial situation has led to a serious economic crisis in the EU, which is causing the social situation to deteriorate significantly. The crisis is having a highly detrimental effect on integration.

4.2 Due to the time at which it was drawn up, the Renewed Social Agenda ⁽¹¹⁾ (2008) does not take into account the negative effects of the economic crisis, increased unemployment and the decline in public finances and the social situation.

4.3 The European Commission predicts that economic recovery will be slow and that it will take longer for new jobs to be created.

4.4 The EESC considers that social recovery will, in any event, take much longer than economic recovery. In this context, the role of the European social policy will be key.

4.5 2010 will be a very important year for social policy in the EU: it will be the European Year of Combating Exclusion and Poverty, the EU 2020 Strategy will be drawn up, and a new Social Agenda will be adopted, with the necessary measures and instruments.

4.6 The Renewed Social Agenda (2008), which acknowledges the important contribution of immigration to employment in Europe, proposes that integration be improved and social policies be implemented in the fields of education, healthcare and housing.

4.7 In its January 2009 opinion ⁽¹²⁾ on the Renewed Social Agenda, the EESC recognised the success of this new approach and considered the problems caused by the increase in migratory flows and the inadequacy of social policies, highlighting the need to analyse these further.

4.8 The French presidency of the EU asked the Committee to draw up an exploratory opinion ⁽¹³⁾ on A new European Social Action Programme, which was adopted in July 2008. The EESC believes that the new social action programme should be useful in tackling the difficult economic and social situation. The Committee has proposed that the new programme take into account integration policies, equal treatment, the development of the open method of coordination, and the increase of resources earmarked for the Integration Fund.

4.9 On 6 May 2009, the Parliament adopted a resolution ⁽¹⁴⁾ on the Social Agenda, in which it stated that immigration policy should be based on human rights, strengthen anti-discrimination laws and promote a strategy for integration and equal opportunities.

4.10 Individuals who do not have the right papers ('illegal immigrants') are extremely vulnerable, are open to abuse by exploitative labour networks, to poverty and extreme social exclusion. The Committee therefore proposed, that under the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum, these individuals could be given legal papers, for the sake of social harmony and employment. The EESC also considers that the EU's social policies should not exclude 'illegal immigrants' from the goals and programmes for social inclusion and from the ESF.

4.11 The coming years will see an increase in the internal mobility of European citizens and immigration to Europe by many third-country nationals. These processes will increase the EU's national, ethnic, religious and cultural diversity.

4.12 Nevertheless the current Renewed Social Agenda only takes into account to a limited degree the diversity of European societies, the integration of immigrants and minorities, equal treatment and the fight against discrimination. The EESC believes that the review of the Social Agenda in 2010 should take greater account of the social effects of immigration on both immigrants and the host society.

4.13 Consequently, the links between the Social Agenda and integration should be strengthened, and the EESC therefore proposes that integration should be promoted by mainstreaming it into the EU's different political, legislative and financial instruments.

5. Political scope

5.1 *Children and young people*

5.1.1 Youth policies should consider the needs and circumstances of young immigrants in their transition to adult life and their social integration.

5.1.2 Many young people – sons and daughters of immigrants, achieve professional success and become very active members of their community, but many, even second and third generation immigrant children – are also at a high risk of or are experiencing social exclusion, with high levels of academic failure and thus a higher risk of unemployment.

5.1.3 **Support for families** is fundamental; as proposed by the Committee ⁽¹⁵⁾, the EU should have a more active family policy.

5.1.4 The open method of coordination in matters relating to young people should include indicators for diversity, immigration and non-discrimination.

⁽¹¹⁾ COM(2008) 412 final.

⁽¹²⁾ OJ C 182, 4.8.2009, p. 65.

⁽¹³⁾ OJ C 27, 3.2.2009, p. 99.

⁽¹⁴⁾ 2008/2330 (INI).

⁽¹⁵⁾ OJ C 161, 13.7.2007, p. 66 and OJ C 120, 16.5.2008, p. 66.

5.1.5 It is important to make the most of the opportunities offered by the European programmes for lifelong learning, mobility, entrepreneurship and citizenship among young people, in order to overcome the specific obstacles that young immigrants face, and foster the exchange of experiences.

5.2 Education and training

5.2.1 Member States' integration policies include education and training as key elements in the process. However, young immigrants and minorities face specific obstacles and challenges which require particular attention.

5.2.2 Schools are often overwhelmed by problems and challenges they are ill-equipped to deal with. Schools should be given additional resources, the spirit of openness should be further developed and support in intercultural training and managing diversity given to teachers.

5.2.3 Education quality indicators should be developed, and should be flexible enough to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student body.

5.2.4 The framework provided by the open method of coordination for education should serve to identify good practices in response to academic failure among young people of an immigrant background.

5.2.5 This will mean defining **indicators** such as: socio-economic status; completion of studies (compulsory schooling) by young people; the diversity and intercultural skills of teaching staff; the education system's capacity to allow social mobility; the concentration of pupils from an immigrant background; the promotion of multilingualism in the education system; and how open education systems are for all children and young people, etc.

5.2.6 In its opinion on *Migration, mobility and integration* ⁽¹⁶⁾, the EESC stressed that the disadvantages facing people from a migrant background carry over into adult education too: they participate less in continuous training and the courses they are offered usually concentrate on the acquisition of language skills. To improve integration, the scope of continuous training should be extended to the entire population, with particular focus on equal access for people from immigrant backgrounds.

5.2.7 Education and training programmes in Europe should include schemes that teach the customs, history, values and principles of European democracies, as well as knowledge of the culture and values of the societies of origin of the immigrant population (where numbers allow).

5.3 Employment

5.3.1 The EESC is currently drawing up an exploratory opinion ⁽¹⁷⁾ at the request of the Spanish presidency on the '**Integration of immigrant workers**', which also contains proposals for the European Social Agenda.

5.3.2 **Access to the labour market** is key, and is an essential part of the integration process, because decent jobs are vital to immigrants' self-sufficiency, and they facilitate social relations and mutual understanding between the host society and immigrants.

5.3.3 However, immigrant workers often find themselves at a disadvantage and suffer direct or indirect discrimination. They also face legal difficulties in getting their qualifications recognised, while some immigration laws restrict career development and changes of activity.

5.3.4 As a result, immigrant workers often have poor-quality jobs, with lower pay and under precarious conditions. Women, in particular, find themselves in this difficult situation.

5.3.5 Those without identification papers, whose situation is not legally recognised, face the most precarious conditions: they work in the informal economy and may find themselves exploited.

5.3.6 The new generation of employment policies, along with the initiatives of the European Social Fund and the Progress programme, should include specific criteria and indicators for improving immigrants' access to socio-occupational pathways to integration, including self-employment. These pathways could include (in addition to learning the language and culture) measures to boost immigrants' training in new technologies and the prevention of occupational risks.

5.3.7 The EESC believes that legislation and public policies must complement one another through cooperation with the **social partners**, because integration into the labour market is also an issue of society's attitudes and of commitment on the part of unions and employers.

5.3.8 Immigrant workers are more willing to **relocate**, but national legislation prevents and restricts such mobility. The Directive on the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents ⁽¹⁸⁾ (which has been poorly transposed in some national legislation) could facilitate mobility. The **EURES** network could also be used more effectively to boost the mobility of immigrant workers in the EU.

⁽¹⁶⁾ OJ C 218, 11.9.2009, p. 85.

⁽¹⁷⁾ EESC exploratory opinion on the *Integration of immigrant workers*.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Directive 2003/109/EC.

5.4 *Entrepreneurship among immigrants*

5.4.1 Many migrants decide to be self-employed or start up their own business. The number of businesses started up by people of immigrant background is constantly increasing.

5.4.2 The EESC considers that the EU should support migrants' entrepreneurship and ESF instruments to promote entrepreneurship should consequently take the immigrant population into account.

5.4.3 Employers' organisations and chambers of commerce should also open their doors to entrepreneurs from immigrant backgrounds and actively promote their access to management positions.

5.4.4 Many business initiatives by immigrants are furthermore developed within the **social economy**, and so the Committee considers that they should be supported by the ESF instruments and the national authorities.

5.5 *Social protection*

5.5.1 A number of different national pension systems operate in Europe. It must be ensured that immigrant workers pay into pension systems and are entitled to receive the corresponding benefits without discrimination.

5.5.2 The portability of pensions should be guaranteed, in order to improve mobility, and to ensure that in returns procedures, the corresponding pension rights are respected.

5.5.3 The open method of coordination should include indicators to assess whether immigrant workers are covered by pension systems without exclusions or discrimination.

5.6 *Housing*

5.6.1 The economic crisis has in many cities led to an increase in the number of homeless people, many of whom are of an immigrant background.

5.6.2 Many people, especially young people, are now finding it hard to access housing.

5.6.3 Immigrants and minorities also have many specific difficulties in accessing decent housing. As a result, the EESC considers that Member States' *housing policy* should form a part of policies on integration, combating poverty and social exclusion.

5.6.4 Most Europeans, including immigrants and minorities, live in urban environments. In another opinion⁽¹⁹⁾, the EESC highlighted the role of local and regional authorities in integration policies. A good *urban policy* can encourage integration and prevent the rundown urban ghettos which form in some cities.

5.6.5 Housing policies should therefore include criteria, measures and indicators to remove existing obstacles. A proactive approach is required, involving all layers of society together with the public authorities and social partners.

5.7 *Healthcare and other services*

5.7.1 In some Member States, national legislation leaves many immigrants without access to healthcare systems and thus severely unprotected.

5.7.2 The system of coordination in the field of healthcare and European legislation on immigration must guarantee the immigrant population access to public health services and high-quality healthcare under equal conditions. Healthcare systems must therefore be brought into line with social diversity.

5.7.3 The Committee wishes to emphasise that in some Member States, many healthcare professionals and carers are immigrants.

5.7.4 Efforts should also be stepped up in the field of occupational health, because immigrant workers are often exposed to greater risks and are not familiar with laws and prevention programmes.

5.7.5 In some Member States, people from immigrant backgrounds do not have full access to **social services**, and these services are not set up to deal with the diversity of populations. The Committee proposes that the Commission assess the quality of public services from the viewpoint of integration, diversity and non-discrimination.

5.7.6 In the EESC's view, immigrants should not be discriminated against in healthcare and social policies, because they pay taxes and social security contributions, just as the rest of the population does. Given the current economic crisis and budgetary problems, it must be ensured that everyone pays their taxes and social security contributions, to guarantee sustainable public services.

5.8 *Poverty and social exclusion*

5.8.1 Many people from an immigrant background live in poverty or are at risk of falling into poverty. The current economic crisis, growing unemployment and under-employment are exacerbating these situations. People from an immigrant background and minorities must be able to access retraining programmes, unemployment protection, housing and other public social services.

5.8.2 In 2010, the EU will celebrate the European Year of Combating Exclusion and Poverty. The Committee believes that **active inclusion** targeting immigrants and minorities should be improved, in order to guarantee the minimum wage, boost access to public services and resources, and to the labour market.

⁽¹⁹⁾ OJ C 318, 23.12.2006, p. 128.

5.8.3 The EESC calls attention to the actions of some criminal networks that exploit illegal immigrants, (particularly in the areas of trafficking and prostitution of women and minors). Along with the legal and policing measures to fight these gangs, there should be policies to assist and protect victims.

5.9 Combating discrimination

5.9.1 The European Parliament ⁽²⁰⁾ recently adopted a resolution on the new Directive against discrimination, which complements the three directives ⁽²¹⁾ already in place. The EESC also delivered an opinion ⁽²²⁾ endorsing the Commission proposal and recommending that multiple discrimination be taken into account.

5.9.2 The new directive implementing Article 19 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union will, once adopted, extend the principle of non-discrimination to areas such as education, health, social protection and housing. The EESC calls on the Council to adopt this directive, taking account of the Committee opinion.

5.9.3 People from an immigrant background, whether women, men, old or young, often face situations of discrimination, which are made worse by the fact that these individuals' legal status as third-country nationals offers them less legal protection. Many people suffer multiple discrimination.

5.9.4 The EESC proposes that the European Commission draw up an action plan to combat multiple discrimination and offers its services to assist with this task.

5.9.5 The European Union Agency of Fundamental Rights ⁽²³⁾ should continue to draw up reports on the direct or indirect discrimination suffered by many immigrants.

5.10 Gender equality

5.10.1 Women of immigrant background face specific problems due to the fact that they are women, and integration policies therefore need to adopt the appropriate gender perspective.

5.10.2 The EESC considers that the Common Basic Principles for integration and the Social Agenda must reinforce the gender-based approach, to ensure that migrant women and women from ethnic minorities enjoy equal opportunities and do not face discrimination.

⁽²⁰⁾ European Parliament Resolution of 2 April 2009 on the Proposal for a Council Directive on Implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

⁽²¹⁾ Directive 2000/43/EC; Directive 2004/113/EC; Directive 2000/78/EC.

⁽²²⁾ OJ C 182, 4.8.2009, p. 19 and OJ C 77, 31.3.2009, p. 102.

⁽²³⁾ The EU-MIDIS ('European Union Minorities and Discrimination') Survey asks 23 000 members of immigrant and ethnic minority groups about their experiences of discrimination, racially-motivated crime and policing in the EU.

5.11 Immigration and development

5.11.1 In other opinions, the EESC has proposed ⁽²⁴⁾ that immigration policy could contribute to the economic and social development of the countries of origin, and that the EU should consequently make immigration legislation more flexible.

5.11.2 In its foreign policy, the EU should, within the United Nations, promote an international legislative framework for migration and sign the convention ⁽²⁵⁾ currently in force.

6. Instruments of the Renewed Social Agenda

6.1 Mainstreaming

6.1.1 Mainstreaming integration will involve (re)organising, developing and assessing political processes, so that integration, equal opportunities and treatment and non-discrimination against immigrants could be included in all the objectives, actions and instruments of the Social Agenda, at all levels and stages, by all those involved in its adoption.

6.1.2 Because cultural models differ across the European Union, mainstreaming should ensure, in a global framework, that people's experiences, skills, interests and needs are included, in an approach based on integration and diversity, in all initiatives of any type and social range, and that actions are assessed.

6.1.3 The first step in the process should be to conduct an impact assessment in order to anticipate requirements and ensure that social diversity is properly taken into account in all the areas concerned. This will mean speeding up the process to define integration indicators, complementing those covered by the open method of coordination for social inclusion. The European Integration Forum could take part in drawing up these indicators.

6.1.4 For this mainstreaming to be successfully implemented, political leadership and the involvement of all public and private stakeholders are key. To this end, a framework for cooperation must be designed, through which decision-making processes can be developed with a view to achieving change.

6.2 Legislation

6.2.1 The Committee considers that the quality of common European legislation on immigration should be improved and that the directives should afford immigrants adequate protection. With this aim in mind, the EESC has drawn up an own-initiative opinion ⁽²⁶⁾, which proposes that EU immigration policies and legislation fully respect human rights.

⁽²⁴⁾ OJ C 44, 16.2.2008, p. 91.

⁽²⁵⁾ UN Convention on the protection of the rights of migrant workers.

⁽²⁶⁾ OJ C 128, 18.5.2010, p. 29

6.2.2 After the adoption of the Stockholm Programme, the EESC believes that it will be easier to progress with harmonising legislation on immigration and asylum.

6.2.3 The new anti-discrimination legislation now being drawn up on the basis of Article 13 of the Treaty should be taken into account when European immigration legislation is drafted.

6.3 Social dialogue

6.3.1 The social partners have a responsibility to promote, through dialogue and negotiation, equal treatment in companies. The EESC and the Dublin Foundation held a hearing as part of the opinion-drafting process ⁽²⁷⁾. The conclusions of that hearing, set out in Appendix 3 below, could prove extremely useful to the social partners and the Commission, so that integration into the labour market takes place on a level playing field, without discrimination between workers from the host country and immigrants.

6.3.2 Social dialogue in different areas can promote the active inclusion of workers from immigrant backgrounds and minorities. Where business is concerned, it is easier to ensure the active participation of workers of an immigrant background.

6.3.3 Europe's social partners should be properly consulted and their opinion should be taken into account when the new Social Agenda is drawn up.

6.3.4 The Spanish presidency of the EU has requested that the EESC draw up an exploratory opinion ⁽²⁸⁾ on the *Integration of immigrant workers*. In it, the EESC proposes a number of initiatives to improve integration in terms of employment.

6.4 Civil dialogue

6.4.1 Together with social dialogue, civil dialogue is an excellent governance procedure that forms part of the European social model and, in the EESC's opinion, is an essential instrument for the implementation of the European Social Agenda and for integration.

6.4.2 At the European level, in integration policy and in the Social Agenda, there is a need to further involve civil society organisations specialising in human rights and in assisting immigrants and minorities.

6.4.3 The European Integration Forum should be consulted and should play an active role in drawing up the EU's new Social Agenda.

6.4.4 The European Union should continue to promote intercultural dialogue, which goes hand in hand with integration and the social policy objectives.

⁽²⁷⁾ OJ C 318, 23.12.2006, p. 128.

⁽²⁸⁾ EESC exploratory opinion on the *Integration of immigrant workers*, rapporteur: Mr Pariza Castaños.

6.5 The open method of coordination

6.5.1 As recommended by the European Commission and the EESC, an open method of coordination should be established in the field of immigration policy.

6.5.2 The Council has decided to improve the current form of coordination and give the Commission a more substantial role. The EESC supports this decision, but believes it should be more ambitious.

6.5.3 This method of coordination should provide specific qualitative and quantitative indicators, which could be drawn up in collaboration with the EESC and the European Integration Forum.

6.5.4 The different open methods of coordination that exist in the field of social policy should improve the goals and indicators for integration in policies for employment, social protection, healthcare, combating poverty and social exclusion, etc.

6.6 Funding

6.6.1 In the Committee's view, the synergies and complementarity between the Social Fund and the Integration Fund should be further developed.

6.6.2 The *European Social Fund* is aimed at those facing particular difficulties in finding work, such as women, young people and older workers. It helps businesses and workers to adapt to the changes brought about by new technologies and the ageing of society. The ESF should incorporate the approach of diversity through immigration more fully into its goals and programmes both in the current programming period (2007/2013) and in future.

6.6.3 After 2013, the *Integration Fund's* financial resources will also need to be increased and the Commission given greater management powers.

6.6.4 The *Progress* programme, which aims to provide financial support in order to meet the EU's objectives in the field of employment and social affairs, should also strengthen integration and diversity among its five main areas for action (employment, social protection and integration, working conditions, non-discrimination and diversity and gender equality).

7. More inclusive European citizenship

7.1 Europe's democracies are open, free societies that should be based on the inclusion of all people. Integration policies and immigration legislation should never be used as political excuses for excluding immigrants and minorities from the right to citizenship.

7.2 The EESC believes that the foundation of our democracies should be broadened to include new citizens with equal rights and obligations. National and European citizenship rights should include diversity in all its forms, without discrimination.

7.3 The EESC reiterates the proposal made in another opinion ⁽²⁹⁾ whereby Union citizenship should be granted to third country nationals with long-term resident status. The Committee proposes that the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council take this proposal into account in their objectives for the new term of office.

7.4 The European Commission should adopt a new initiative to promote civic-mindedness amongst third-country nationals and encourage them to participate in social and political life.

8. The new European Commission

8.1 With a view to achieving integration, the EESC believes that, in the new Commission, it is not appropriate for immigration

issues to be covered by the same department as security, when there is a separate portfolio for justice and fundamental rights.

8.2 Linking immigration to security sends a negative message to European society and to immigrants, which is at odds with the first of the basic common principles for integration – its two-way focus. There are too many messages in Europe that make immigration a crime!

8.3 The Committee believes that a more integration-friendly message would be conveyed by placing immigration and asylum under the portfolio of justice and fundamental rights.

8.4 In this context, it is particularly necessary to step up the mainstreaming of integration in the Social Agenda and other Community policies, especially when it comes to defending and protecting immigrants' fundamental rights.

Brussels, 17 February 2010.

*The President
of the European Economic and Social Committee*
Mario SEPI

⁽²⁹⁾ Own-initiative opinion, OJ C 208, 3.9.2003.