



**“EU-Asia Dialogue –  
Shaping a Common Future for Europe and Asia”**

**Conference Report**

# **“Policy Dialogue on Migration and Integration”**

The Hague / The Netherlands, November 29-30, 2012





**EU-ASIA DIALOGUE**  
*Shaping a Common Future for Europe and Asia –  
Sharing Policy Innovation and Best Practices in Addressing Common Challenges*

The Hague, 29<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> of November 2012

## Report

### EU-Asia Dialogue: “Policy Dialogue on Migration and Integration”

On 29 and 30 November 2012, a “Policy Dialogue on Migration and Integration” of the EU-Asia Dialogue took place in The Hague, The Netherlands. The event was co-organized by the Ministry of Security and Justice of the Netherlands. The two-day event, which gathered experts, academics and policy-makers from Europe and Asia, focussed on policy innovations to tackle migration and integration. The aim of the policy dialogue was to discuss legal frameworks and best practices from Europe and Asia on governing migration. The integration of migrants into the receiving societies and the respective role of state authorities, migrants and civil society was a particular focus. More broadly, participants were asked to identify opportunities for closer cooperation between the European Union and its Member States and Asia with respect to migration and integration policies.

Altogether, 18 policymakers and researchers from Europe and Asia participated in the event.

#### **1. Day: November 29, 2012**

The “Policy Dialogue on Migration and Integration” began with a key note speech by Mr. **Peter Díez**, Deputy Director Migration Policy at the Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice. In his speech Mr. Díez highlighted that members of more than 100 ethnic groups live in the Netherlands, making it a complex multicultural country. The two biggest groups are Indonesians and Hindustanis coming from the former colonies. The number of Chinese and Japanese residents has been growing recently. He pointed out that most of those immigrants are well-integrated into the Dutch society. The integration of new immigrants from Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq, who mostly arrived as refugees, is far more challenging. Mr. Díez pointed out that migration has always been of high concern to Europe and Asia; for instance, the 11<sup>th</sup> ASEM Conference of the Directors-General of Immigration and Management of Migratory Flows took place in Nicosia, Cyprus, in late



October 2012. Also the ASEAN Member States have recently signed a Declaration on Human Rights which will have an impact on migration as well.

### **Session I: Labour Migration Policies in EU Member States and at EU-level**

The two sessions on the first day were devoted to the issue of migration. Dr. **Yves Pascouau**, Senior Policy Analyst at the European Policy Centre (EPC), opened the first session with the presentation "*Overview of the situation in selected EU Member States*" which was based on a paper contributed to the EU-Asia Dialogue by Dr. Ferruccio Pastore and Dr. Ester Salis.

Dr. Pascouau emphasized how differences between Member States make progress at the EU level difficult – also due to the negative impact of the crisis in Europe. He showed that migration policies mostly focus on admission and less on the protection of rights and non-economic migrants. In the current crisis the implemented policies and debates in Member States differ strongly. This is due to three reasons: economic outlook (less affected countries are more in favour of migration), domestic entrepreneurial structures (countries with transnational companies are more in favour of migration) and orientation of public opinion (less affected countries show a lower level of anxiety). During the crisis, some strongly affected countries which followed a demand-driven approach and were open to migration became more restrictive, while other countries like Germany developed more open policies and showed clear policy dynamism. Dr. Pascouau concluded by highlighting the weakness as well as the controversy of current ideas at EU level and by pointing at the gap between public opinion and political thinking of elites, which is characterised by sizable minorities in favour of regularisation and substantial majorities giving preference to permanent migration.

Mr. **Alex Lazarowicz**, Junior Policy Analyst at the European Policy Centre (EPC), addressed the issue of "*State of play at EU level: what did we achieve and what are the perspectives?*" by providing an examination of EU regulations of legal migration from the 1997 Treaty of Lisbon to the Single Permit Directive in 2010-2011. He stressed the need for more cooperation between Member States in ensuring proper follow-up and implementation of EU legislations in this area. Mr. Lazarowicz pointed out that many initiatives had little success since domestic policies were not amended in Member States.

In the discussion that followed, it was stressed that, while directives exist for special groups, there is no regional common migration policy at EU level. Also, a demand-driven approach where the employer would look for suitable employees abroad would not work in the EU. On the other hand, a supply-driven approach where migrants are allowed to enter and seek for a job is hindered by language restrictions and the fact that some



European economies do not offer jobs for some sectors. It can also be recognized that Member States still show reluctance to give up sovereignty when it comes to migration policies. While they do so for illegal migration, they are less cooperative with regard to asylum seekers and to an even lesser degree for admission policies. This explains why the EU was able to achieve a lot on illegal migration while success stories in admission policies are rather poor. On the other hand, integration policies belong to the third pillar and are thus much more nationally focussed with no direct EU policy.

## Session II: Labour Migration in Asia

Ms **Anna Platonova**, Regional Thematic Specialist Labour Migration at the International Organization for Migration (IOM), gave a presentation on "*The movement beyond borders in Asia*". She first described the socio-economic context in Asia. Many countries face a decreasing fertility rate, increasing education level, economic growth and developments of their labour market. The growing diversity among Asian countries and the polarization of labour market results in more intraregional migration to the more prosperous countries. At the same time, Asia in general remains a huge exporter of labour.

A big problem in Asia is illegal migration of low skilled workers since restrictions for them are very tight. While illegal migration in Europe results of overstaying, Asian illegal migration results from the difficulties to enter the country on a legal basis. On the other hand, high skilled workers are attracted by almost each Asian country and face fewer restrictions. Current achievements with regard to regional cooperation are rather limited as most cooperation follows a bilateral approach. Notwithstanding, some regional consultative processes and the development of frameworks can be observed.

Ms Platonova concluded her presentation by highlighting future challenges for Asia. Among others, these include protection of migrants in the receiving countries, establishment of effective regional cooperation frameworks, growing migration flows as a result of increasing education level, recognition of skills, engagement of the diaspora, balance with other policies and integration of immigrants.

Dr. **Jorge Tigno**, Professor at the University of Philippines Diliman and Expert of the Philippines Migration Research Network, delivered a speech on "*The Philippines: experiences from a sending country of migration*". He started his presentation by providing an overview of the migration flows from the Philippines. With the exception of 2003, the annual flow of new migrant workers has been increasing since the mid 1990s. Although the number of male migrants has increased strongly, women still represent the majority of emigrants from this country. Migration and remittances are a clear economic factor for the country as the Philippines receive on average two billion US-Dollars per month as remittances. Therefore, the government offers the Flagship Programme which



provides a pre-departure orientation and is mandatory for first time emigrants and emigrants with a new contract. Participants learn more about the receiving country, government services for workers, get travel tips and receive basic language courses. In addition, various re-integration and return programmes are in place. Multiple actors are involved in this Core Reintegration Strategy as re-integration is a multidimensional process.

Dr. Tigno also pointed out that the Philippines face many challenges. A problem is the Regime of Care as many agencies are involved in the management of migration, but no overall coordination takes place. Pre-departure courses do not involve families and have only a limited impact. The reintegration process is a top-down approach and the implementation on the ground is rather weak. At the same time, a lack of data can be recognized. These actions focus on unplanned returns and are thus rather a tool of crisis management than proactive solutions. The repayment rate for the credits is also very low. He concluded by saying that the government `capitalizes` overseas employment as the supply of human resources is too big in the country.

An interesting aspect in the discussion was the problem of migrant protection. It became clear that bilateral protection agreements do exist in some cases, but they are not implemented in reality. Especially local embassies in the country of destination have to be active in the protection of their fellow countrymen. For instance, labour inspections could be conducted or agencies which do not stick to the rules can be punished. In order to protect migrants, they also have to feel secure and be motivated to denounce abuses. The problem is a lack of interest in the receiving countries which do not attend multilateral events such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development and refuse to sign the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families of the United Nations.

### **Session III: Wrap-up: how to promote in-depth cooperation between the EU and Asia on labour migration?**

Finally, discussions were wrapped up by Dr. **Ágnes Töttös**, Legal Expert at the Ministry of the Interior of Hungary, who described recent trends and analysed similarities and differences between migration policies in Asia and Europe. Both regions face the problem of reaching binding regional agreements. If such agreements are signed, domestic policies are often not amended which creates confusion and inefficiency. Most of these agreements focus on labour migrants, but ignore illegal migrants, refugees and trafficked people. The EU has certain achievements in these fields and could help Asia in developing such frameworks, for instance on illegal migration. Additionally, both regions face a lack of cooperation between sending and receiving countries.



## 2. Day: November 30, 2012

### Session IV: EU integration policy

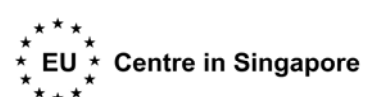
The second day focussed on integration policies. Dr. **Yves Pascouau** gave a presentation on "*EU integration policy: state of play*". The first time integration was directly handled at EU level was in Article 79 of the Lisbon Treaty. But the EU still has only a coordinating function as Member States remain responsible for integration policies. The EU cannot yet be a harmonising actor in this policy field. But the EU is not a neutral actor with regard to integration, as this is the area with the most extensive coordination. Direct integration policies are given by directives on family reunification and long-term residence which address integration issues. On the other hand, access to the labour market and other migration policies are indirect integration policies as they enhance and secure integration. Since most migration policies are legally binding agreements, Member States are obliged to adapt their national policies.

Three areas can be identified when discussing EU's role in integration. The first one is political orientation. The EU has a set of 'common basic principles' to guide the orientation of Member States on integration. However, these are not binding. The 'ministerial conferences on migration' are a second tool where ministers agree on orientations which are then adapted by the Council of Ministers. Secondly, implementing documents such as the European Fund for the Integration of non-EU immigrants are a way to influence integration. The third area is forums which discuss integration topics and build a platform for exchange.

Dr. Pascouau emphasised the ultimately non-neutral role of the EU in the coordination of integration policies in Member States through a migration-focussed legislation. According to him, this leads to a growing, de facto harmonisation of national legal provisions in this area, for example in the field of compulsory language courses for immigrants.

Contradictory to the EU's effort to shape integration policies through migration policies, Member States use integration initiatives to shape migration policies. Some countries make integration efforts and language skills a condition for the provision of legal status to immigrants. In France, Germany or the Netherlands a change from a secure status as the basis for integration to integration as the basis to receive legal status can be observed. Thus, integration is no longer a reaction to migration policies, but becomes the condition for obtaining the legal status.

Mr. **Palm** from the Ministry of Security and Justice of the Netherlands gave a presentation on "*Dutch integration policy*". The integration policies in the Netherlands started in 1982. These policies aimed to enable minorities to participate equally in education and get access to the labour market. In the 1980s the Netherlands were hit by



a crisis and minorities were the first to be unemployed, which is why the government initiated a dialogue with them. In the 1990s a number of laws were implemented to integrate minorities. These initiatives were very successful and the government wanted to stop them in the 2000s as minorities were by then well-integrated in the Dutch society. However, the events of 09/11 resulted in a societal change as many Dutch citizens developed an anxiety over foreigners. Tensions did exist before, but the fear exploded after the attacks as people realized that they actually did not know much about immigrants and especially Islam received a negative connotation. Various politicians, such as Pim Fortuyn, exploited this fear to gain votes. This was also the time when violent outbreaks took place. Two developments could be observed as part of an overall re-shaping during the 2000s in order to tackle the much more dynamic and politically sensitive socio-economic and demographic domestic outlook. Firstly, socio-cultural factors such as the *burqa* or praying had a stronger impact on policies while socio-economic aspects lost importance. Secondly, a shift in policies could be recognized as the welfare system turned into a system of own responsibility. For instance, language courses used to be provided by the government, but now have to be paid by immigrants themselves. In 2004 the government started campaigns to show good examples of integration and fostered contacts to enhance tolerance and understanding.

### Session V: Integration policies in Asia

Prof. **Yasushi Iguchi**, Professor at Kwansai Gakuin University, explored the issue of "*The need for integration policies in Asia*", highlighting the importance of regional integration in Asia as a driver for more bilateral and multilateral cooperation in this field. At the same time, national legislations have to be amended to meet the problems. Prof. Iguchi pointed out that especially the local level and initiatives from the ground are needed to foster the integration of immigrants.

The problem in Asia is that many countries are already multi-ethnic, although they have not been receiving countries of migration for a long time, which makes integration even more difficult to achieve. This is a result of colonial times and rural-urban economic gaps. After gaining independence, most countries were faced with a divided society and took efforts to achieve multicultural coexistence while promoting nationalism.

In recent years, discussions on Free Trade Agreements among Asian countries can be seen as a tool to achieve greater economic integration in Asia. While there have been some achievements at ASEAN level, there is still no economic integration among East Asian countries. Besides Free Trade Agreements, management of international migration and integration of immigrants are seen as key instruments to foster economic integration. Since some countries are now transformed into receiving countries of migration, tensions may arise from the lack of integration policies in countries with a multi-ethnic society,



foreign permanent residents and temporary migrants. Integration policies in Asia thus have to fulfil certain conditions. They have to ensure political and economic balance within multiracial societies, provide equal access to education, consider temporary migrants, acknowledge resilient migration stocks and the existence of ethnic communities which play a great role as safety-nets to migrants, take into account local developments and rural-urban migration as a consequence of economic gaps. Since regional and multinational attempts to manage migration and integration have been limited in their success, bilateral agreements and Memoranda of Understanding are a possible way forward.

At the end of his presentation, Prof. Iguchi showed how locally developed multicultural coexistence policies in Japan were able to complement national immigration control policies. The Japanese language still remains a huge barrier for integration and thus, institutionalized language courses for migrants might be useful. He concluded by saying that an important aspect to be considered in integration policies is the difference between social benefits from migration and social costs for migration. As soon as the costs exceed the benefits, tensions are more likely. But through investments in institutional infrastructure the increase of social costs can be slowed down.

Mr **Zainudin Nordin**, Member of Parliament of the Republic of Singapore, addressed the issue of "*Integration policies in Asia: the case of Singapore*" by illustrating the core features and recent developments in his country's integration policies. Singapore is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country whose integration model is based on multiculturalism. After being confronted with racial riots in the 1950s and 60s, which were a result of segregated migrant communities and lack of rootedness, and after gaining independence in 1965, the government became active in promoting integration. Today's integration policy is based on meritocracy, secularism and multiracialism. At the same time an integration approach based on 'overlapping circles' was developed. Each ethnic group can maintain its distinctive cultural identity, but the individual circles overlap in the middle where all groups share common norms. Policy measures to foster integration include education, bilingualism, housing and national service. The integration approach and multiracialism are found in legislations and consultations. In addition to national policies, a strong involvement of grassroots organizations and community platforms is seen as a key tool to promote integration.

Due to its low fertility rate and ageing society, immigration will remain necessary to sustain the Singaporean population. As a consequence, the ratio of foreign-born residents will increase. Therefore, the state has to continue to foster integration as locals develop resentments towards foreigners. As a result, the government improved the public infrastructure, ensured priority to its citizens, educated Singaporeans to be competitive and introduced measures to integrate new immigrants. Even new agencies





such as the National Integration Council, which also provides the Community Integration Fund, were founded. Additionally, it was stressed that everybody has to play a part to promote integration, and interaction between locals and non-locals should be fostered. Finally, the Singapore Citizenship Journey shall make applicants for citizenship aware of Singapore's history and cultural norms.

Mr. Zainudin Nordin concluded his speech by identifying some major challenges for national integration policies, such as encouraging newcomers to adapt to local culture and norms, managing intra-ethnic differences between locals and immigrants as well as countering the negative public discourse on foreigners and new immigrants.

### **Session VI: Wrap-up: how to promote in-depth cooperation between the EU and Asia on integration?**

Finally, Ms **Stine Waibel**, Expert at the Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration, summed up the main topics of discussion and stressed the importance of continuing sharing of information, policy inputs and best practices between Europe and Asia on integration policies.

The Policy Conference showed that both regions face similar obstacles – namely management of temporary migration, frictions between regional agreements and domestic policies as well as preference to attract high-skilled workers. At the same time, the EU and its Member States can learn from Asian experiences such as the development of a welcoming culture or the lowering of language barriers through the promotion of English. On the other hand, Asian countries can learn from the EU and European countries how to develop a regional framework to manage illegal migration, the recognition of skills and the most recent approaches to regulate temporary migration. A huge problem for migration between Europe and Asia is clearly the recognition of qualifications and this could be a topic for further bi-regional dialogue.



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