# Integration of Immigrant Communities in Europe: A Euro-Mediterranean Challenge?



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The map of the Mediterranean has become permanently impressed upon European demography through various migratory flows, ranging from migrations from Southern Europe transformed into 'EU citizen' mobility as the EU progressively integrates and expands (will we one day speak of Turkish or Balkan migrants in the same manner?) to post-colonial migrations after colonial adventures and empires had come to an end.
Public debate on integration saw the light in Europe beginning in the 1980s with regard to the latter influx. With the closing of borders to labour immigration in 1973-4, migrant workers were joined by their families and these populations have settled and become sedentary. They progressively gained access to the citizenship of their host country by virtue of the different nationality rights in effect in EU countries, which evolved in the 1980s towards greater birthright citizenship and a major liberalisation of legislation on dual nationality, despite some exceptions. Having become the 'new' citizens of EU countries, these populations often have dual nationality because the nationality laws in their countries of origin, in particular Maghreb countries, establish perpetual allegiance.
Today, of the slightly over 15 million non-EU nationals living in the EU, the Turkish community (numbering 3 million) constitutes the largest population, followed by citizens of the former Yugoslavia. The Maghreb is another significant reservoir of migration to Europe, with 2.3 million nationals, principally Moroccans and Algerians, not including those with dual nationality. These populations have long been settling in certain countries according to historical ties and social networks established by migrants (people from Turkey in Germany, Maghrebis in France, New Commonwealth nationals in the United Kingdom). Nonetheless, for some years now, there has been a trend towards diversification of these migratory routes, with the arrival of migrants from francophone countries of Western Africa in London, for instance, and the transformation of such countries of emigration as Spain, Italy, Portugal, Greece and Ireland into countries of immigration beginning in the 1990s. This socially and culturally diversified population, regardless of whether or not its members have acquired the nationality of their country of residence, is now rooted in European societies and constitutes an important source of ethnocultural and religious diversity, which is not foreign to Europe.
Nonetheless, does this diversity of European societies constitute a resource for the construction of a Euro-Mediterranean region? Are the members of these immigrant or second-generation communities social, political, economic or cultural actors in the Euro-Mediterranean space under construction?

## Immigrant Communities: Europe's Strengths and Weaknesses

Migrants are actors within social spheres that overlap, lying somewhere between their country of origin and destination country or country of passage. They are recognised as playing an important role in the development of their countries of origin through massive money transfers, but also through the circulation and spread of 'human,' cultural and political capital contributing to the transformation of 'underdeveloped' societies. Yet for migrants to be social actors on 'both shores' (i.e. Northern and Southern) of the

Mediterranean, they must be fully integrated – socially, economically, culturally and politically – in their host EU countries. Nonetheless, the progress made by Europe in this sphere, in particular under the impulse of the European Institutions, which, beginning in the late 1980s, worked to formulate a project of citizenship dissociated from nationality and based on cultural and religious diversity (fostering the struggle against discrimination in particular) has reached an impasse. Since the year 2000, the onset of a crisis in national discourse in Europe has been aggravated by a perceived crisis in models of national integration accompanied by a return to xenophobe, racist and Islamophobe discourse and discrimination against members of ethnic and religious minorities in EU countries.

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This gives rise to a problem shared by many migrants: no longer belonging to their country of origin yet not feeling 'recognised' in their country of residence. Rather than serving as actors capable of forging a Euro-Mediterranean 'civil society,' they find themselves powerless in both Northern and Southern Mediterranean countries, trapped between the democratic deficit of southern countries and the deficits in citizenship and participation in the northern countries. With the exception of an elite of bi-national entrepreneurs who actively invest in business, service, health or training projects, the absence of real freedom of circulation in the Mediterranean region aggravated by a dearth of socio-economic opportunities in EU countries that would allow the majority to consolidate themselves in a situation of ascending social mobility prevents the creation of an authentic bridge across the Mediterranean.

**Integration in the Face of Discrimination, Participation and Public Opinion**

The members of immigrant communities in Europe share a common fate on the road to integration into European society. First of all that of discrimination, including in gaining access to the labour market. Often difficult to measure effectively, in particular due to a dearth of appropriate statistical tools that would allow a precise comparison on a European level, discrimination characterises access to the labour market as well as the social mobility of immigrant communities in Europe. Foreigners as well as members of ethnic minorities are confronted with racism in access to the labour market, finding employment only in jobs below their qualifications, this leading to a brain

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waste that has a significant cost for European societies. Immigrant unemployment, in particular among youth and women, is two to three times higher than that of nationals in certain EU countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark or France. The gap is not so wide in Southern European countries, which are dealing with a more recent immigration phenomenon, where immigrants are attracted by the informal labour market and underground economy. But discrimination is not limited to job opportunities. It also concerns the spheres of housing, education and recreation, and combines with and reinforces urban segregation and social marginalisation. The riots in French suburbs in late 2005 are an illustrative example. These riots also brought up an equally important issue for Europe: populations of immigrant origin have not been effectively integrated into the institutional society of the EU countries. Probably less severe in Great Britain than elsewhere in Europe (due to the multicultural integration policies launched there in the 1970s), this break between communities of immigrant origin and the institutions of the 'dominant' societies makes integration even more fragile, an integration already undermined by the discrimination

experienced. The media, high administrative levels, State security institutions such as the police or the armed forces and the local and national political spheres are all involved. This often gives rise to conflictive relations between second-generation immigrants and such institutions as the police, these conflicts being the primary cause of urban rioting in Europe. Citizens by right, they often do not enjoy real citizen status: in addition to the deficit in access to social and economic rights, they have a low level of political participation and nearly inexistent representation. It was not until the parliamentary elections of 2004 that three women senators of Maghrebi immigrant origin were elected in France, despite the republican model of integration claimed. Despite a nationality law based exclusively on jus sanguinis until the reform in the year 2000, two Members of the German Bundestag (out of 605) were born in Turkey. In Belgium, there are seven Representatives and eight Senators in parliament of immigrant origin and twelve in Great Britain. On the local level, on the other hand, an increase in elected officials of immigrant origin can be observed where the right to vote is not associated with nationality, as in the Netherlands, or in Belgium since the municipal elections of 2006. Elsewhere, the issue of universal suffrage is not progressing.

Public opinion is not irrelevant in this impasse. In France, giving local suffrage rights to foreign nationals was proposed by Mitterrand in his campaign for the 1981 presidential elections but was never adopted (despite a vote in the National Assembly in 2000 that was never confirmed by a vote in the Senate). Over time, opinions are progressing against this right for foreign nationals. In 2003, 38% of French people were against it. This number rose to 57% in 2006. The latter figures contrast with the favourable opinions in countries experiencing immigration only recently, such as Spain (62%) and Italy (54%), according to a poll taken in 2004. Negative attitudes can be ascribed to the fear that immigrant votes would be associated with religious confession or ethnicity and would not support the values of the majority citizenship or democracy, associated with the fear of a dissolution of national identity. Nevertheless, research shows that ethnicity and religion do not serve as grounds for election choices but remain primarily associated with social class. Populations of immigrant origin traditionally support social-democratic parties, and attempts to constitute 'identitary' party lists have failed, as for instance, the 'Euro-Palestinian' list in France for the European elections of 2004.

## Europe's Identity Boundaries

The discourse transmitted by the media and by political leaders identifies Islam as an obstacle to the socio-economic and political integration of these 'new citizens' of immigrant origin into European countries. This diagnosis would also explain their refusal to integrate. Whereas in the 1990s, populations targeted by integration policies were identified according to their post-colonial or national origin (the Maghreb community in France) or their ethnic or racial background (*Asians* and *Blacks* in Great Britain), they are now identified everywhere as 'Muslims' - without moreover explaining whether Islam in this sense should be understood as a religious, cultural or political identity, or a combination of all three.

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The September 11th attacks simultaneously broke the distinction between Islam, Muslims, Islamism and terrorism. All of a sudden, global fear of Islam ("war on terror") transformed the Islamic religion into a global identity, which in the eyes of European opinion-makers, places terrorist violence against the values of liberal democracy on the same qualitative level as the hijab, considered as moral violence against the principles of Western citizenship. Hence the fact that Muslims are now considered by EU countries as 'unintegratable.' This type of discourse on Islam is deeply rooted in the ambiguities inherited from the colonial period, where "Islam is not only a link among Muslims, but a barrier between us and them" and "renders Islamic society nearly wholly impermeable to our Christian and rationalist society." These quotes are not taken from speeches on wearing the veil in France, Germany or, more recently, Great Britain, where the issue of its use in schools was raised in 2006, nor on the possible entry of Turkey into the European Union. They are excerpts from a description of 'Muslims' in Algeria in *L'histoire universelle des pays et des peuples* (Universal History of Countries and Peoples) published by Éditions Quillet in 1923.

This results in a broad gap between the way European Muslims see themselves, primarily as full members of the national communities of which they are citizens, and the manner in which public opinion perceives them. A study carried out by the Gallup World Poll shows that 'Muslims' living in the capitals of Great Britain, France and Germany strongly identify with these respective countries, while considering that religion is an important dimension in their lives. They demonstrate strong allegiance towards Great Britain, France and Germany (74%, 73% and 72%, respectively). In this regard, only 35-45% percent of a sample of the (non-Muslim) general population of Great Britain, France and Germany answered that they perceived their fellow (Muslim) citizens as loyal.

By mirror effect, the more these 'new citizens' are identified as 'Muslim,' the more the Europeans have appealed to a new, so-called 'Judeo-Christian' identity, a term becoming particularly widespread after 2002 and the debate on the European Constitution. This constitutes a rupture in Europe's identitary grammar as it developed up until the 1990s. The idea of a European citizenship, finally instituted despite its limitations by the Treaty of Maastricht, consisted in finding an alternative to the single criteria of nationality based on citizens' rights and duties in a yet homogenous conception of national identity. Since 2004, however, the project has taken on a new direction. In converting the construction of the European Union from a simple market into a political and civil structure, the integration of the enlarged EU has become a matter of identity. And it is precisely this problematic identity issue that led the constitutionalisation of the EU to fail, namely after the French and Dutch referendums in 2005.

All of this has created a paradoxal situation currently characterising integration and identity policies in Europe. In the first place, Europe is experiencing a strong crisis of the concept of 'nation' as a simultaneous space for 'peaceful coexistence,' distribution of Welfare State resources, access to equal rights, mediation between institutions and citizens, structuring of public challenges into public policy and configuration of power within the context of European integration and globalisation (including the internationalisation of migrations). At the same time, it is also experiencing a surge of nationalist discourse to make sense of solidarity in globalised, plural societies. In the second place, there is a crisis of 'integration models' (British multiculturalism, French republicanism, Dutch liberalism), yet the demands of immigrant minorities for full access to substantial, first class citizenship and against racial and ethnic discrimination are emerging at the same time.

Finally, the crisis of 'peaceful coexistence' as perceived by public opinion is accompanied by the instrumentalisation of immigration and Islam to give a sense of a more global crisis for which the only political response 'that pays' would be a return to national identity. This has led to the creation of a new ministry in France officially in charge of "immigration, integration and national identity."

Clearly, the issue is shifting. It is no longer a question of ascertaining how immigrant communities in Europe can be or become actors in the Euro-Mediterranean area but how to build the Euro-Mediterranean area without acknowledging that Europe is now a multi-cultural society. Though being the leading destination for international migration in the world (surpassing the United States since 2004), the Europe of diversity remains in a political impasse, despite the fact that 2007 has been designated the Year of Equal Opportunities for All.

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The fact that this issue is put forth within the framework of broader reflection on the future of the Euro-Mediterranean region is not innocuous. Ethnic discrimination as well as the reinforcement of attitudes and discourses hostile to Islam in EU Member States have now gone beyond national or even European borders to reach the regional Mediterranean level. Public opinion and the media in countries of migrant origin of the are particularly sensitive to the fate of *émigrés* living in Europe. In the Arab countries, the media coverage of the French riots in late 2005 or the scandal of the Prophet Mohammed caricatures published in *Jylland Posten* in September of the same year are a good example. By the same token, the attacks of 11th September 2001 in New York and Washington, 11th March 2004 in Madrid and 7th July

2005 in London have had far-reaching repercussions, both on the security approach to ethnic and religious diversity in Europe as well as on European public opinion. This projects in Europe a perceived divide between Europe and the Southern Mediterranean countries.

### Reforming European Citizenship

How can this trend be reversed? A Euro-Mediterranean civil society cannot emerge without a reform of European citizenship symmetrical to the political and economic reforms necessary in the Southern Mediterranean countries. Three different lines of action for this reform can be identified in order to adapt European national societies to their ethno-cultural and religious diversity and Europe to its new regional environment.

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The first of these lines of action concerns the role to be granted to national identity in integration policies and the definition of citizenship in multi-cultural, globalised societies. The second deals with the manner of measuring material inequalities when these occur in societies where racial, ethnic or religious discrimination is a factor. The third should allow adaptation of institutional frameworks regarding citizen involvement in globalisation, including the globalisation of international migrations. Without going into excessive detail, we will focus on the interdependence between each of the lines of action proposed, calling for institutional and political response:

*The role of national identity in integration policies:*

- *Dissociating nationality from citizenship:* At least on the local level, such a dissociation could be based on the stipulations in the Treaty of Maastricht regarding nationals of EU Member States. Once generalised where it has not yet been applied, it could constitute an important vector for recognising members of immigrant communities as equal members of European societies. Political participation on a local level is a highly important aspect for sound integration.

- *Conducting campaigns on multi-culturalism:* Public opinion must be educated on the falsehoods propagated by the media and electoral discourse on immigration, cultural and religious diversity and the integration of populations of immigrant origin. The aim would not be to reproduce the campaigns solely put forth by European institutions, but also to engage in national and local debate on these issues to depoliticise them.

- *Strengthening the capacities of immigrant associations:* Associations constitute an essential relay between public institutions, the State and the labour market. They are a tool for furthering the acquisition of the resources necessary for participation. Moreover, they serve as an intermediary space between the cultures of immigrant origin and the dominant society.

*Combating material inequality within a context of diversity:*

- *Combating direct and indirect discrimination:* Political and participation rights are futile if they are not accompanied by substantial socio-economic rights. By promoting voluntary anti-discriminatory policies, the authorities of EU countries should demonstrate the imperative of not relegating citizenship to a simple petition of principle but of considering the matter of equal rights and opportunities in multi-cultural societies where racism and xenophobia exist, as established in Article 13 of the Treaty of Amsterdam. Combating indirect discrimination is necessary, as is expanding the scope of these policies to public institutions.

- *Guaranteeing the representation of minorities in public institutions:* Struggling against access racism in public institutions is necessary if these institutions, as service providers and schools of citizenship, are to be anchored in the sociological reality of European societies. They should not give the impression of being 'closed' to members of minorities of immigrant origin. The public institutions in question include schools, the media, the highest administrative circles, the State's police, justice and defence

institutions, sub-state-level government, the health-care system and political institutions.

- *Undertaking mainstreaming social programs to combat pauperisation and growing job insecurity:* The 'racial' issue is deeply interrelated with social class, both in the formation of racist attitudes in European societies and in the relegation of immigrant communities to outlying urban areas or inner cities. Unemployment lies at the heart of the matter, along with housing. Focalised integration policies must be prevented from being perceived by the rest of the socially disadvantaged population as an injustice of social distribution. Competition among the different groups benefiting from the Welfare State must be avoided.

*Rooting citizenship in the complexity of globalised societies:*

- *Facilitating dual nationality:* Though European nationality rights have liberalised dual nationality, there are certain exceptions. Above all, we are witnessing a renewed politicisation of the topic at a time of a return to nationalist discourse or discourse considering Islam as a 'problem of allegiance.' In fact, dual nationality practices have changed considerably since the 1980s and no longer involve possible competition among several allegiances. Dual nationality is above all a factor of empowerment fostering the development of social, economic and cultural initiatives in both the Northern and Southern Mediterranean Basin.

- *Facilitating the free circulation of migrants:* Though the issue of opening the borders is a particularly sensitive topic in Europe, especially with the discourse on combating illegal immigration, its channels and the search for 'selective immigration,' the fact of the matter is that the rigidity of Europe's borders vis-à-vis migrants from Southern Mediterranean countries hampers circulation, in particular short-term, back-and-forth travel that would allow an investment benefiting both host societies and those of origin.

These lines of action are interdependent insofar as building a Euro-Mediterranean area where immigrant communities having settled in Europe could become actors. Such an agenda requires the expression of a clear political will to engage in reform of such scope. The credibility of citizenship as an institution of common belonging is at stake, as well as the European project as an alternative to the limitations of national democracy in the context of multi-culturalism and migration. Whereas the EU countries with a long-term migration experience are undergoing a 'crisis of conscience' of their traditional integration models, such a reform would allow overcoming numerous contradictions underlying integration policies. This reform is also necessary at a time when 'new immigration countries' must anticipate the long-term sedentarization of a significant part of their migrants.

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