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# INTEGRATION POLICY AS A CHALLENGE FOR EUROPEAN COHESION

**Monika Banaś\***

## ABSTRACT

The article analyses European cohesion from the perspective of integration policies employed by selected European states. The cases of the United Kingdom, Denmark, and Finland constituting the core of the analysis have been chosen due to Brexit (UK), rigidifying of integration practices after 2015 (Denmark) and an ad hoc approach in integration policy planning (Finland). Existing social, cultural, and political differences and similarities in Europe constitute both opportunities and challenges for European cohesion at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This may considerably affect the future role of Europe in the international context as regards agency, competitiveness and innovation. The methodology applied in the study included qualitative in-depth analysis of official government documents, NGOs' publication, reports from EU institutions and statistical data provided by Eurostat. Major findings from the analysis comprise recommendation to increase integration policy effectiveness by enhanced participation of migrants (including refugees) in the labour market, altered education of civil society, and intensified supra-regional cooperation. This may strengthen European capacity as an international actor and reduce the risk of "the fate of Roman Empire" for the European Union.

**Key words:** migrants, migration, integration policy, European cohesion

## Introduction

The dynamics of changes taking place in Europe at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century results from many factors, among which international migration is one of the leading ones. The migration crisis of 2015 forced most European countries to modify existing integration policies designed to meet the internal needs of the receiving societies. Rapid increase in refugee numbers at the international level caused a change in the conceptualization of integration policy, perceived as a key tool for building social cohesion. National, ethnic, linguistic, religious, and racial

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diversities in Europe display great potential, but if not managed properly, they can pose significant challenges for European cohesion, cooperation, and community. The examples of integration policies presented in this article (UK, Danish, and Finnish) show both the strengths and weaknesses of the mechanisms influencing social, and in a broader context, European cohesion, thus conditioning the present and future role of Europe on the international stage. Attenuation of the European Union caused by the exit of one of its strongest members, the United Kingdom, affects and will considerably affect the internal and external relations of the European Union, including European and non-EU countries. Also, the different approaches to integration (idea, concept, policy, and practice), discussed on the examples of Denmark and Finland, raise the question of whether European cohesion is in fact viable. The cases of two Nordic countries of cultural, religious, political, and economic proximity are examples of, on the one hand, rigidifying of integration practices (Denmark), on the other hand, applying an ad hoc approach in integration policy planning (Finland). The state of the matter invites a series of further research questions, inter alia on the durability of the European Union as known in 2022, the real potential of the European countries in terms of their international/global agency, competitiveness and innovation, and the political, economic, and cultural future of Europe.

The methodology applied in the study included qualitative in-depth analysis of official government documents, publication by NGOs, reports from EU institutions, and statistical data provided by Eurostat. The results of the analysis were then confronted with the opinions of experts available in the public media of the respective countries, also with the author's own experience while conducting research on migration and integration practices in the Nordic countries in 2015 – 2020.<sup>1</sup>

## **1. European diversity**

Europe's national, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or religious diversity is nothing new. Having risen from the foundations based on the achievements of ancient Greece, ancient Rome, and finally Christianity, the nations of Europe constructed the framework of modern states, some of which are regarded today as major

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<sup>1</sup> Part of the findings, related to Sweden, has been published in Banaś, M. (2021). Swedish Migrant Integration Policy after 2015. A Revised Approach in the Shadow of the Migration Crisis, *Fuori Luogo Rivista di Sociologia del Territorio, Turismo, Tecnologia*. Volume 9 –Issue 1/2021, pp. 69 - 85. DOI: 10.6093/2723-9608/7916.

actors at the international level. In the view of Manuel Castells, already in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century, their dominant role had started to give way to countries and societies grouped together in networks, more precisely network entities, comprised of government institutions, non-governmental organisations, firms and companies whose scale of operations covers the entire globe, or vast areas of it (Castells, 1996, 1997, 1998). The processes of globalisation have accelerated the exchange of goods, services, capital, labour, technologies, lifestyles, etc. However, it does not concern all regions and entities to the same degree.

The Global Diversity Report from 2011 provides data on 50 societies analysed from a comparative perspective, including factors such as: gender, age, nationality/ethnicity, race, place of birth, education, and area of employment (Oxford Economics, 2011). Diversity is here broadly understood, allowing to use it as a criterion to assess the possibilities and potential obstacles in the socio-economic and cultural development of a country or region. From this perspective countries and regions characterised by a high level of diversity tend to build strong economies like Norway, Iceland, Switzerland, the Netherlands or Canada (Oxford, 2011: 3 - 23).

The relationship between diversity and economic prosperity has been indicated by **Alberto Alesina**, **Johann Harnoss**, and **Hillel Rapoport** (Alesina et al., 2013). The authors stressed the link between the degree of ethnic diversity, as a reflection of the place/country of birth, the labour market, political, economic, legal, institutional order, and values governing a society or a community. Similar observations have been made by **Thomas Andersen** and **Carl-Johann Dalgaard** (2011), who directed their attention on the degree of mobility of individuals, conducive to the exchange of ideas, life and professional experiences, and models of consumption or production. Mobility can inspire individuals to seek out new solutions and promote innovation. The authors analyse international travel (considering work-related travel), as well as its impact on the economic condition of given countries. **Andersen** and **Dalgaard** point to a correlation between two factors: travel and economic growth. Even in cases in which travelling abroad is not a dominant factor for most of the society, but where the intensity of individual mobility is high, the region may experience an economic revival.

**Francesco Ortega** and **Giovanni Peri** (2014) discuss migration and mobility as crucial factors determining the economies of regions and countries, especially those in which the immigration of a specialised labour force is significant. The authors indicate the key role of systemic conditions, allowing the settlement of

immigrants and their incorporation into a labour market devoid of anti-discriminatory practices. Openness to immigrants, as the example of 146 researched countries, may bring social and economic development. The case of Ireland and Uganda, according to Ortega and Peri, demonstrates extreme attitudes regarding pro- and anti-immigration policies. In their view, if Uganda accepted similar solutions to Ireland, this would significantly accelerate its economic progress (Ortega and Peri, 2014: 248).

The acceptance of various regulations, including those concerning economic and political order, is a consequence of the conceptualisation of values formatting the human universe. In the classic work *How to Do Things With Words*, **John Langshaw Austin** points out the performative power of language giving human action forms and meaning (Austin, 1975). The power of language to influence human perception, as well as the cognitive skills of an individual, turns out to be significant in light of conducted scientific experiments confirming what has been noticed for many years but was difficult to define (Abutalebi and Green, 2007; Lupyra and Ward, 2013; Athanasopoulos et al., 2015). Indeed, **Athanasopoulos** and **Bylund** present the results of research which unambiguously conclude that language influences the manner of human perception of phenomena, meaning that language conditions the perceived reality (Athanasopoulos, Bylund et al. 2015: 7-8). However, language as one element of culture is itself shaped by that culture. There is a feedback loop in which it is not a question of what comes first – language or culture (as well as in their rudimentary stages) – but in what way culture determines human actions when language is one of the instruments of this process. Therefore, language as a medium of communication does not only shape and direct human actions, but also becomes an instrument for transferring experience, skills, invention, innovation, and enterprise (Bennett, 1998; Bielenia-Grajewska et al., 2017). In the economic dimension, this has special significance, particularly in the context of highly competitive markets in which businesses and companies are forced to seek out new and mastered products and services on a continuous basis. Creativity, invention, innovation, and enterprise are co-stimulated by the language used in communicating with employees, business partners, stakeholders, and customers (Bielenia-Grajewska et al., 2017).

Alongside the linguistic diversity of Europe – although on a smaller scale – the religious diversity is recognisable. The Eurobarometer Survey of 2019 indicates that Christians still constitute the most numerous (64%), albeit continuously decreasing group among those declaring a belief in God, divided into: Roman Catholics (41%), Eastern Orthodox (10%), Protestants (9%), and

other Christians (4%). Followers of the Islamic faith, as well as other religions constituted 2% and 4% respectively, while the figures for agnostics and atheists were 17% and 10% respectively (European Commission, 2019). Individuals declaring in 2010 their affiliation with the Jewish diaspora constituted a community of 1.4 million (Lipka, 2015). The number of Buddhists in Europe in 2011 was estimated to be between one and three million, living mainly in Germany, France, Italy, and the United Kingdom (EBU, 2011). In turn, the number of European followers of Hinduism amounted to slightly over 2 million in 2010, which constitutes 0.3% of the total population of Europe (Qvortrup and Fibiger, 2018). Regarding other groups from the category of 'visible minorities', the population of Sikhs in Europe has been determined to be around 500,000 people, mainly in the United Kingdom (Jacobsen and Myrvold, 2011: 2-3).

In the context of the religiosity of Europeans, as well as so-called new religious movements, a revived neo-pagan trend should be stressed, especially visible in the Nordic countries, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Although the number of followers is not high, it has a growing tendency, a fact shown by statistics covering the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Banaś, 2017). This development is worth noting, similar to the case of other religions gaining followers during a simultaneous decline in those adhering to the dominant Christian faith (Pollack and Rosta, 2017).

The aspect of religious diversity in Europe should be analysed in correlation with the economy of particular states. Religion, as a medium of strict rules and values indicating the manner in which groups and individuals operate, provides guidelines for economic and organisational performance. However, there is no uniform approach visible in this regard when comparing Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, Islam or Hinduism. An example of different attitudes to business is demonstrated by the number of days regarded as "holy days" (non-working days) in particular religious denominations. Another exemplification may be the way of perceiving the process of enrichment as either the effort of many generations systematically working individual business acumen or as a sign of divine grace. As the works of **Harry Van Buren**, **Binita Topno**, and **Ricky Syngkon** show the influence of religious beliefs on entrepreneurial behaviour and business strategies, despite the increasing secularisation of contemporary society, is still visible (Van Buren et al., 2020; Topno and Syngkon, 2019).

Ethnic, national, religious, linguistic, and cultural diversity reflected in economic activities and specialised enterprise seems to be the engine of innovation and creativity. The diversity of thought, attitudes, values, and

interpretations leads, according to **Richard Florida**, to increased productivity based on three components: technology, talent, and tolerance (Florida, 2002). An example of such an economy based on the 3T principle is the Californian economy. Being one of the strongest in the USA, California in 2018 generated an income exceeding most European countries, as the fifth largest economy in global terms (Forbes, 2019). The institutional, legal and cultural conditions of this region attract talented individuals, along with capital, both in a financial and social sense.

Although Florida's concept of 3Ts has been developed based on the case of California, it does not necessarily mean it has to work in other regions. By pointing to the examples of European mega-agglomerations, such as London, Paris, and Berlin, the universality of Florida's theory could be questioned (Nathan, 2012). However, the 3T notion should not be completely discredited. It sheds light on a downplayed – as it is regarded as an obvious – issue for the effective management of diversity.

## **2. Cohesion – general concept and aims for post-2020 Europe**

Similar to the case of diversity, attempts to define cohesion have led to many descriptive and explanatory options (Medeiros, 2016; Daly and González, 2013). In the context of Europe and the European Union, the most frequently discussed dimensions of cohesion are economic, social, and spatial. The concept of the harmonious joining together of European economies has been launched with the establishment of the European Community, starting initially as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951. It was aimed at eliminating the factors causing conflict and emphasising the durable framework of cooperation of mutually dependent countries, albeit in partnership relations (European Union Law, 2017). The joining of domestically strategic sectors (mining, the iron and steel industry, energy, transport, agriculture) and handing these over to a supranational authority was meant to draw the western European economy closer together, as well as gradually eliminate the differences between the parties of the agreement. Economic links were, in turn, aimed at strengthening member states also in a political sense, with Europe forming a strong and cohesive whole. The European Economic Community (EEC), established in 1957 with this purpose in mind, comprised six founding members: Belgium, West Germany, France, the Netherlands, Italy and Luxembourg.

The Treaty of Rome, the founding document of the EEC, outlined three basic concepts of this venture: 1) creation of conducive conditions to peaceful cooperation between European nations; 2) eliminating trade barriers to minimise the risk of military conflict between European nations; 3) combining efforts leading to the prosperity of all members of the community (Treaty, 1957). Such formulated aims allowed establishing of a common market with the free flow of people, goods, services, and capital. The same year, 1957, another important organisation came into existence – European Atomic Energy Community – Euratom, which aims were outlined in four general postulates: 1) cooperation as regards development of nuclear technology; 2) safe development of the nuclear industry and research; 3) free flow of experts and knowledge; 4) establishing of uniform standards for safety norms and radiological protection (European Union Law, 2007).

The three communities (ECSC, EEC, Euratom) on the basis of the Maastricht Treaty, were finally incorporated into one single organisation – the European Union constituting a legal entity in the international sphere since 2009 (European Union Law, 2010).

The concept of the EU is the de facto continuation of ideas concerning the merging of European economies into one economic body able to compete with other actors present in the global arena. To meet this challenge, a broad-based cooperation of the member states is essential, making the EU internal policy relying on strengthening economic, social, and spatial cohesion a strategic issue.

In the above-mentioned aspect, the economic cohesion has been assigned a high priority. It is measured by gross domestic product per capita (GDP) relative to purchasing power parity, by employment rates, activities aiming to shrink regional economic disparities, initiatives combating poverty and securing equal distribution of wealth (European Commission, 2017). In this regard, the national economies of Germany and the Netherlands would be considered as pacesetters for other EU member states.

The social cohesion relevant for economic performance is defined as the degree of solidarity and interconnectedness among individuals and groups in society (Manca, 2014). It is relevant to foster a sense of belonging, consolidate human resources, and strengthen empathy and responsibility for less privileged communities. Thus, an increase in social cohesion aims not only to satisfy individual and collective psychological needs but also cope with the economic challenges posed by the highly competitive global market.

The third dimension of cohesion, territorial (or spatial) is measured by factors



like the time and cost of travelling, the form of public or private transport, as well as its quality and multi-modality. A low or high degree of territorial cohesion is also indicated by the number of individuals travelling to a destination within a determined time. Solutions aimed at eliminating access barriers to peripheral regions of the EU increase spatial cohesion and thereby internal cooperation (European Commission, 2017).

Table below exemplifies one of the crucial aspects affecting economic, social and spatial cohesion as regards European countries and regions.

**Table 1:** Employment rate, population 20-64 years of age, 2018.

Country / region	Highest		Lowest	gap in %
Sweden	85.6%	Stockholm län	78.7% Sydsverige	6.9
Finland	85.1%	Åland	73.0% Pohjois – ja Itä - Suomi	12.1
Germany	84.1%	Oberbayern	75.5% Bremen	8.6
United Kingdom	83.5%	Berkshire, Buckinghamshire	73.4% Northern Ireland	10.1
		Oxfordshire		
Poland	82.5%	Warsaw	66.7% Warmińsko-Mazurskie	15.8
Norway	80.9%	Oslo og Akershus	76.5% Sør – Østlandet	4.4
Slovakia	79.9%	Bratislavský kraj	68.1% Východné Slovensko	11.8
Italy	79.0%	Provinza Autonoma di Bolzano	44.1% Sicilia	34.9
Romania	78.1%	Sud-Est	64.0% Sud-West	14.1
Hungary	77.9%	Nyugat-Dunántúl	69.4% Dél-Dunántúl	8.5
France	75.0%	Rhône-Alpes	40.8% Mayotte	34.2
Greece	65%	Peloponnisos	53.7% Dytiki Ellada	11.3

Source: Eurostat, NUTS 2. 2020.

Among the countries listed above, there are four whose internal disproportions are relatively small (Norway, Sweden, Hungary, Germany) and those where the differences are significantly greater (Italy, France, Finland, Slovakia). The large levels of disproportion in the degree of employment do not have to correspond to a weak economy (e.g., Finland); on the contrary, the relatively small difference regarding participation in the labour market does not mean the strongest economy (e.g., Hungary). Thus, describing European cohesion requires taking also other aspects into account like poverty risk, risk of social exclusion, or degree of urbanisation. Data from twelve countries with relatively high indicators for potential poverty and social exclusion are shown in the table below.

**Table 2:** Individuals at risk of poverty or social exclusion (in %) by degree of urbanization, 2019.

Country	Cities	Towns and suburbs	Rural areas
Greece	27.3	28.7	34.4
Austria	25.9	14.8	11.3
Bulgaria	23.4	29.0	47.9
Spain	23.3	25.6	28.8
Latvia	23.1	27.3	32.3
Estonia	22.9	18.7	28.5
Denmark	20.5	13.1	14.3
Portugal	20.4	19.9	25.5
Malta	20.3	18.4	n.d.
Lithuania	20.0	26.4	31.2
Netherlands	19.7	12.8	10.7
Sweden	18.1	17.2	20.6

Source: Eurostat 2020.

The high indicators for potential exclusion of individuals settled in rural areas, especially in Bulgaria, Greece, Latvia, and Lithuania, show that social cohesion, both internal and external, is a real challenge. Despite significant funding (a total of €63.4 b during the period 2014-2020) from the Cohesion Fund, there still exists a risk of socio-economic division, which may lead to the erosion and decomposition of basic regional and supra-regional EU structures.

In perceiving the challenges indicated above, the European Commission in the framework programme for 2021-2027 has proposed setting aside another €42.6 b, supporting cohesive processes in EU countries (European Parliament, 2020).

The legal basis for such a defined policy of cohesion was contained in articles 174 and 178 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). As its main investment policy, the EU aims to ensure all regions of the union equal opportunities of development, considering their central or peripheral location, demographic, and climatic challenges. This means activating the entire potential of the union, including the potential of those areas far from urban centres.

In the post-2020 budget programme, the European Commission has identified five objectives where two of them should be stressed while discussing cohesion: a closer integrated Europe with easy access for citizens living in remote areas and a more connected Europe with a high-speed broadband network and high mobility of its citizens (European Parliament, 2020). These objectives in turn are structured around three categories: social protection and inclusion, equal

opportunities and open access to the labour market, and fair working conditions enhancing the European unity.

As regards social integration programmes addressing childcare, health care, help for the elderly, social welfare, and housing are central. Programmes aimed at equalising opportunities and facilitating access to the labour market are supplemented with activities supporting education, vocational training, life-long learning (LLL), promoting gender equality and combating any kind of discrimination (European Commission, 2020).

The broad range of programmes enhancing various aspects of community life should make the integration processes rather smooth and fully effective. In some areas this is indeed the case (the free flow of goods, services and capital). A similar situation can be observed in terms of telecommunication, which, during the first decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, has significantly 'drawn closer' the borderland regions of Europe, rural or poorly populated areas.

A significantly greater challenge remains, however, related to migration, particularly from outside Europe. The migration crisis of 2015 exposed the weaknesses in European cooperation concerning the reception of migrants, their accommodation and integration. The lack of an effective migration policy accepted and implemented by the EU and non-EU countries remains an urgent issue awaiting effective solutions.

### **3. Integration policies at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

The multicultural and multi-ethnic societies of Europe, whose formative process accelerated during the second half of the previous century, provide an exemplification of differently understood and shaped integration practices. A variety of approaches and policies could be observed, particularly since 2015 when the so-called migration crisis started. While analysing examples from the European countries, one may observe not only similarities but actually differences as regards the practice of social cohesion management. The problem has been discussed in three case studies of highly developed countries, with strong competitive economies and knowledge-based societies. Despite these features and sufficient financial resources even for such countries, integration policies and practices pose a serious challenge.

#### **3.1 The United Kingdom**

The migrant integration policy in the United Kingdom is a legacy of the

country's colonial past. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the former British Empire was in possession of 60% of all world's colonies. Since that time the regular transfer of immigrants to Britain has occurred. The core of these groups was made up of low qualified labour force. After the Second World War immigrants from other regions came to the UK primarily from southern and central-eastern Europe. In 1962, a quota system was introduced placing an annual limit on residency (and work) permits for foreigners from particular regions of the world. Immigrants could, however, avoid these restrictions by claiming refugee status or the right to family unification. The influx of foreigners lasting several decades resulted in the significant growth of immigrant groups who, with time, consolidated their position in British society.

Due to these factors, two main assumptions lay at the basis of the UK's integration policy at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Firstly, the necessity of reducing the social distance between the dominant and minority groups by equalising opportunities for the latter (enhanced access to education, professional work in line with the qualifications and skills, suitable remuneration, elimination of spatial segregation). Secondly, the promotion of ethnic diversity both among members of the dominant as well as minority groups. In the British approach to integration, there is a clear tendency to invest in education and raise the qualifications of minority groups while simultaneously conducting comprehensive intercultural education.

Among the legal guarantees enforcing racial and ethnic diversity the anti-discriminatory Race Relations Act of 2000 is of great importance, prohibiting acts which could discriminate against, negatively judge or display prejudice against those belonging to minority groups. This law, along with similar laws (e.g., the Disability Discrimination Act of 1995), was replaced in 2010 by the Equality Act of 2010, expanding protection to people regarding their ethnic background, national identity, religious belief, political convictions, sexual orientation, age or disability status (Equality Act, 2010). The drawing together of laws and the continual development of new legal bills is aimed to accelerate the introduction of effective solutions serving social cohesion. This is especially important in the context of migration as the degree of integration differs among particular ethnic or national groups (e.g., voluntary spatial separation by some minorities).

The impediment in joining newcomers to the mainstream of British society frequently led to the appearance of tension taking on the form of verbal or physical aggression. The negative attitude towards immigrants is aroused by populist rhetoric in which arguments about immigrants 'stealing jobs' of locals, or their

abuse of the social welfare system may be heard (BBC, 2016).

In analysing the integration policy of the last three decades, it is difficult to judge unequivocally the effectiveness of integration programs proposed by particular British governments. Observing the situation allows one, however, to suggest several optimistic hypotheses, which will only be able to be verified after some time has passed following Britain's exit from the European Union.

The statistical data of the period 2010-2018 concerning the naturalisation of foreigners coming from outside the EU applying for British citizenship after at least 10 years of legal residence, indicate an increase of positively assessed applications. Thus, while in 2010, 50% of application got approved, by 2018 - 70% (The Migration Observatory, 2020). This fact is crucial insofar as securing citizenship may speed up the process of integration and the creation of a particular kind of bond – one of the mutual obligations of the state and the individual/citizen (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019: 18).

British integration policy of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is based on three main assumptions: fair access to material and symbolic resources, equal opportunities for personal and professional development, and social interactions based on mutual obligations. The general notions, however, are accompanied by a quite flexible approach when compared with other European countries as Brexit had shown. It is concentrated around a basic set of requirements addressed both to newcomers and the host society. From this basic level, initiatives arise aiming to accelerate integration through educational programmes, language- and vocational courses. At this stage of the integration process, it is important that the person being integrated has a genuine sense of stability and security, which speeds up the incorporation of essential skills for functioning independently in society. In this regard, relations with one's immediate environment (nuclear or extended family) – both their quantity and quality – play a crucial role, as do social relations and those with one's neighbours. The building of good-quality social bonds is the building of connections between groups which value cooperation, avoiding living parallel lives alongside each other.

In the British context main areas speeding up integration have been recognized as the labour market, education, housing, healthcare, and sport (Phillimore, 2012; Williams, 2013). The active participation of the individual in the labour market is a route to complete or partial financial independence. Those with low skills or no qualifications have the possibility to undertake voluntary work, which may become a bridge to a regular job. Financial independence allows the individual to join the mainstream society more quickly while reducing the risk of

marginalisation or separation. Moreover, it gives the individual a sense of agency and deciding about their own personal and professional development. The entities, often NGOs, support this area of integration identifying on the grassroots level most effective solutions.

Access to education at all levels, also including continuing education, comprises another element of Britain's integration policy. It should be emphasised that this concerns education which is aimed at satisfying the needs of both the individual and society. Of high relevance is the acceleration of the verification process attesting documentation issued abroad. This serves to efficiently incorporate foreign specialists (engineers, medical personnel, teachers, etc.) into the labour market.

Regarding children and young people, programmes are offered to promote further education. For pupils with educational problems special 'catch-up' classes are offered, as well as support of an educational assistant to help with homework or application projects.

While discussing individual progress in education or work a very important factor should be considered - standard of housing. In the British integration model, special attention is directed on endeavours stimulating local supply of private and communal rental accommodation, good infrastructure (schools, shops, medical clinics, public institutions), legal guarantees ensuring the stability of rental agreements (short-term and long-term), as well as access to rental benefits. The case of housing if neglected may lead to ghettoization and marginalisation of disadvantaged groups, including low skilled migrants. The quality of residence, its location, and living standards have a fundamental influence on the physical and mental condition of the individual, ultimately having an impact on their integration with the host society. According to the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) in 2019 the United Kingdom scored 56 on the 100-point scale. It means that the immigrants face slightly more opportunities than obstacles while being a part of the British society. They enjoy equal access to basic rights but not to the long-term security and permanent residence which in turn negatively affects their integration process identified as rather temporary (MIPEX, 2020).

### **3.2 Denmark**

The demographic changes in Danish society have been unregularly registered since 1735. The first official population census dated from 1769 indicated the number of Danes to be approximately 810,000. After 1840, various kinds of census were conducted on a regular basis – every five or ten years,

depending on the subject (population, trade, industry, agriculture etc). Changes concerning the geographical area of the Kingdom of Denmark had an influence on the size of the population. This can be exemplified by the Danes living in Schleswig-Holstein and counted as Prussian citizens following Denmark's defeat to Prussia in 1864 (Glenthøj, 2019; Lassen, 1966: 157). The citing of population data concerning the long distant past is relevant in the context of understanding the concept of integration being implemented in contemporary Denmark.

Due to its geographical location between Scandinavia and continental Europe, Denmark has for centuries constituted a natural transfer route, firstly for trade and subsequently for people. Dynamically developing agricultural and processing sectors made the country an attractive destination for foreign workers seeking temporal or permanent employment. Thus, the experience of migration has for a long time influenced the general understanding of mobility and its relevance for the Danish economy and welfare.

Initially, the immigrants came from neighbouring regions (Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, the British Isles) pulled not only by work opportunities but also cultural similarities facilitating accommodation. Inward and outward population movements balanced each other out, thereby maintaining Denmark's number of inhabitants at more or less at the same level.

Significant changes in terms of the direction of population flows and the number of immigrants had been noticed in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The amount of new incoming groups comprised of Turks, citizens of former Yugoslavia, Pakistanis, Somalians, or Eritreans made immigration not emigration dominant.

In 2007, immigrants constituted 8.7% of the population of Denmark. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century has brought another change in this proportion. In 2020, 14% of Danish society was made up of immigrants or those born to immigrant parents (814,000) (Det Nationale Integrationsbarometer 2021).

With the passing of the Integration Act in 1999, Denmark became the first country in Europe which had approached the fundamental issue of immigration and its consequences in a regulated and complex manner. The intention of Danish legislators was to create optimal conditions for newcomers to become part of the mainstream society quickly and efficiently. This is why immigrants, just as native-born Danes, have the same rights and responsibilities towards the state, guaranteed access to education, and opportunities for personal and professional development. In accordance with the law passed, the very first step in the process of integrating an immigrant is ensuring conditions for the quick and

proper language acquisition. Danish language classes, supplemented with basic knowledge about Danish society and history are financed by the state. The same applies to the verification of working skills of an immigrant, which is aimed to secure individually tailored vocational training. This is joined together with professional work experience whose organisation falls under the remit of the local authorities. The law from 1999 was supplemented and modified by an integration plan, entitled *A New Chance for Everyone*. Passed in 2005 by a majority of parliamentary votes, it opened up a new chapter in Danish integration policy. The main issues in the programme concerned increasing employment among immigrants (by 25,000 within five years), improving immigrants' qualifications through education and training, as well as increasing the involvement of the government and local authorities in the integration process. The development of these guidelines was a concrete action oriented towards the particular categories of newcomers: women, children, young people, refugees, and individuals with physical and mental dysfunctions.

The next stage in the evolution of the integration policy was provided by a state document from 2007 defining the goals for the Danish society for the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The plan *A Society of Possibilities. New Goals* concentrated on strengthening integration on the basis of far-reaching cooperation at all levels: local, regional and national, involving governmental bodies and private entities. The main emphasis was placed on activating immigrants in the area of ethnic business and promoting youth's and women's participation in community life. An exemplification of this practice was the *All Young People are Needed* campaign addressed to youth of non-Danish origin with the proposal of co-creating local cultural and educational centres in neighbourhoods primarily inhabited by minorities.

After five years (1999-2004) of implementation of the integration programmes improvements had been noticed as regards employment (an increase in the number of employed immigrants by 15,000, including those employed by private employers), satisfaction of native-born business owners with the work provided by immigrants (76% of private employers and 79% of state employers), decreasing number of youths of non-Danish origin dropping the secondary education.

Survey conducted by Catinét Research in 2001 and 2005 indicated positive changes in societal integration. In 2001, 39% of immigrants had Danish colleagues and friends, while four years later over half declared that native-born Danes were to be found among their close friends (Mikkelsen 2006). However,



positive conclusions are interwoven with a fairly bitter reflection stemming from a series of in-depth interviews, **Flemming Mikkelsen** contacted among immigrants. Mikkelsen argued that most of them had experienced socio-economic marginalisation to some extent. Nevertheless, the respondents were satisfied with the quality of life in Denmark (Mikkelsen 2001). It may suggest that immigrants' expectations are rather modest than commonly believed. The migration crisis of 2015, however, resulted in an increase in scepticism towards integration generating additional concerns and challenges (Klatt, 2020). The growing ghettoization of immigrant communities, rising crime, high unemployment rates of immigrant women, resulted in a tightening up of a policy not so much based on integration but assimilation. The solution proposed by the Prime Minister **Lars Løkke Rasmussen** (Left, Denmark's Liberal Party) was supported by the opposition stressing the necessity of introducing new solutions to strengthen the social and economic cohesion of the country. Some controversies arose around the compulsory participation of immigrant children – beginning after their first birthday – in classes conducted in Danish and providing knowledge on the Danish culture (minimum 25 hours per week). Such planning was meant to ensure parents, especially mothers, the possibility of taking up work. Not fulfilling this duty would result in a reduction of child benefits. Critics stressed the discriminatory character of the law even more so since Danish children start pre-school from the age of three. In the case of immigrant families, such radical solutions may lead to family disintegration (Ganev, 2020). Thus, social integration and acculturation of immigrants would happen *de facto*, thought their assimilation additionally accompanied by the threat of financial sanctions when failing to comply with the regulations.

Another flashpoint in Denmark's modified assimilation-integration policy is housing. Successive Danish governments decided to prevent the building of ethnic ghettos by relocation of newcomers. The policy affected mostly Muslim minorities living in extended communities. It should be stressed, however, that the housing problem (including voluntary ghettoization) affects all Scandinavian countries. The reception of immigrants, together with a pro-family state policy, without securing adequate investment in infrastructure, brought about a growing lack of housing. This neglected aspect resulted in growing ethnic enclaves characterised by high density unusual for the native society. The establishment of large ethnic concentrations in one location gave rise to doubts whether integration policies were effective as assumed. In state-issued documents, the concept of integration itself is rather vague and alludes more to actions aimed at

assimilation serving to incorporate incoming groups into the mainstream society (Jensen et al., 2010:5).

Denmark's integration policy after 2015 underwent significant changes making it more rigorous and stricter by faster inclusion of newcomers into the labour market, reduced financial support, obligatory Danish language acquisition and quick incorporation of cultural skills facilitating becoming an active member of the host society. Three aspects are here emphasised: temporal (a quick process, without delays), economic (professional activities leading to financial independence), and socio-cultural (respecting the values and the rules of the receiving country). These three dimensions outlining Denmark's reformed 'assimilation-integration' policy make immigrants the main actors responsible for their inclusion into the mainstream society. Local district councils assist newcomers by providing the necessary administrative, infrastructural, and financial support. Their effort is supplemented by non-governmental organisations and individuals doing voluntary work.

The shifting of the emphasis of agency from the state and society to the (im)migrants allows to argue that the lack of integrating progress may result in being sent back to the country of origin, if it is safe to do so (UUI 2010). For example, over nine years (2011 – 2020) 3,689 individuals were sent back on the basis of the Danish law on repatriation. The first phase of the repatriation programme mainly covered citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, along with Turkey (2011-2015), while in later phases this primarily concerned citizens of Syria and Somalia (Integrationsbarometer, 2020). In the Danish integration policy after 2015 solutions requiring from the migrants to accept Denmark's cultural, social, economic, and political values, became more pronounced and now-dominant. In the already mentioned MIPEX, Denmark scored 49 points out of maximum 100, which places the country among others with moderate integration practices. In fact, after Denmark's decision to introduce additional restrictions since 2014 the integration process slowed and even in some areas regressed as regards access to nationality, family reunion, permanent residence or labour market mobility (MIPEX 2020). This tendency may have impact on the future general state of European cohesion considering some other European countries' liberal migration and integration policies like in Portugal, Sweden or Finland.

### **3.3 Finland**

Following the Second World War, Finland long remained a country of emigration. A wave of Finnish citizens mainly found their way to neighbouring

Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. A large percentage of emigrants chose to settle in the United States of America. It was only the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century that were characterised by a decrease in emigration. The 1980s, a decade of accelerated development of the Finnish economy, gave members of the Finnish diaspora a reason to return to their homeland. The improving economic situation allowed to build a country of prosperity, engaged in a broader Nordic cooperation.

In parallel to these activities, from the 1990s on, the repatriation of the Ingrian Finns – people of Finnish origin – from regions of the former Soviet Union has commenced. At the same time individuals from outside Europe also came to Finland seeking refugee status (Finnish Immigration Service, 2016). As a result of intensive migration in 1997 the Finnish parliament passed a law identifying the principles of Finland's immigration and integration policy. In accordance with the guidelines outlined in the document, integration was meant as an active participation of migrants in the social, economic, and political life of the host country. The principle of equality was dominant alongside the state's support for the migrants to cultivate their traditions and customs as long as they do not stand in opposition to the Finnish constitution.

In the Finnish concept of integration and social cohesion, foreign nationals are perceived as active partners willingly engaged in the process of building the prosperity of the country. This approach underpins Finland's philosophy of citizenship. One may apply for it after five years of documented legal residence in the country while fulfilling the following requirements: fluent communication skills in Finnish or Swedish, impeccable social record, and permanent job securing stable income. In accordance with the updating of the naturalisation law of 2019, immigrants who have been convicted by court of a serious crime while in possession of Finnish citizenship may have it revoked by a decision of the Finnish Immigration Service (Finlex, 2020).

Finland as a prosperous country and one of the strongest economies in Europe, facilitates every individual, native-born Finns and authorized migrants, access to welfare. For immigrants registered as unemployed, special individually tailored integration programmes are constructed. A person enrolled in such a programme receives the integration benefits which use is monitored by an official from the regional employment office. This is meant to achieve the most effective management of financial resources while activating the potential of the migrants.

The institution supporting and monitoring the integration process is the Ombudsman for Human Rights. Their work is supplemented by the Advisory

Board for Ethnic Relations (ETNO) whose task is to provide advice regarding solutions enhancing intercultural dialogue. The members of the board are selected on the recommendations of minority groups, including migrants, which reflects the idea of an inclusive and multicultural society (Oikeusministerio, 2020).

Finland, similar to other Nordic countries, has become over the last three decades a destination for a special group of migrants, refugees. In the context of the migration crisis, in 2015, the country received almost 32,000 asylum applications which, considering the rate per 1,000 inhabitants, was the highest increase among OECD member states. The consequence of such a sudden surge was a relatively high number of rejected applications. Only 27% of those seeking asylum in Finland received a decision in their favour (OECD, 2018: 13). However, in 2020 the government and the parliament decided to increase the quota of refugees, setting the upper limit at 850 individuals with an extension of 120 cases requiring immediate aid (Statsrådet, 2019).

The country's comparatively short experience of immigration means that solutions serving to integrate culturally and ethnically foreign groups constitute a collection of fairly loosely connected programmes. This poses a serious challenge, not only for the Finnish authorities but also for the receiving society. In this context, the Finnish policy of integration should be rather described as being in progress to transform frequently in an *ad hoc* style prepared programs to a coherent and functional whole. To make it happen, a range of intermediary stages has to be passed where both migrants (including refugees) and the host society are engaged.

The first and most basic of the stages begins with the Finnish language acquisition that indeed constitutes a challenge difficult to overcome for a large number of immigrants. The language is very difficult to master, especially for those coming from Africa and the Middle East. This difficulty results not only from the specific nature of the Finnish itself, but also the fact that these individuals are frequently low educated or illiterate. Integration courses addressed for newcomers offer 1,400 hours of language training and 700 hours of basic job preparation, but only 40% of participants complete this stage with a satisfactory outcome (OECD, 2020:14). This means that only some will be able to continue learning a practical job, requiring more than basic skills. The rest will rely on aid programmes which have their limits. Such a situation affects negatively both sides: it generates high costs for the receiving society while increasing the danger of marginalisation and decreasing the chances of integration for the migrants. This trend is particularly noticeable in the case of female migrants from Africa,

the Middle East, and certain Asian countries. Firstly, women from these countries are usually less educated than men, or have no education at all. Their professional skills are very poor. Their traditional social role is formed by caring for children and running household. The strong attachment to the social roles brought with them from their country of origin, hinder female migrants to start a new, sometimes completely different life. Gaining control over the hierarchical relations within the family, contrasting with the Finnish way of life, constitutes an obstacle for women and their children in gradually and successively integrating with the receiving society.

An additional mechanism obstructing the processes of integrating can be traced in structure of the social welfare system. The Child Home Care Allowance (CHCA) guarantees women to be paid child benefits for children up to the age of three, if they are not attending a crèche. Although the program is not strictly addressed to migrants, they can, however, take advantage of it by working at the same time in jobs which do not require qualifications. This results in 'keeping' women in the trap of low-paid jobs (i.e., as cleaners), unpaid housework as carers who, due to their many chores, do not have time for education and training aimed at broadening their linguistic and professional skills. Unfortunately, also in the case of migrant youth born outside Finland a slower integration pace has been observed. This can be explained by the lack of appropriate achievements allowing graduates to take up further studies or specialist courses. In comparison with native-born Finns, almost half of migrant students have problems in passing basic exams (OECD, 2020: 15). This aspect requires significant reform of the educational system, its theory, and practice where the needs of migrant students are taken more into account.

The desideratum to reorganise and reform education falls within a significantly larger complex of activities in the fields of the economy and labour market. Not only proper language skills but also professional experience gained on a continuous basis in temporary jobs constitute a clue to the Finnish approach to integration. On-the-job learning, as one of the components of a professional model, is based on the simultaneous training of a migrant worker to do a specific job, acquisition of the language necessary to communicate in the work (including typical terminology for the kind of work being done), as well as essential cultural skills.

Efforts to reform the general concept of the Finnish integration policy brought significant positive changes since 2014 resulting in faster introduction of migrants into labour market, family reunion and more effective antidiscrimination

regulations (MIPEX 2020).

## Conclusion

Among many integration policies applied in present Europe some models can be perceived as relatively effective. The three examples discussed in the paper, the UK, Denmark and Finland, show different approach to integration particularly as regards migrants. The collection of integration practices and programs join together elements from the legacy of emigration of these countries (memory of the past) with the pragmatic approach (the labour market). The main areas of integration practice exemplified by the three cases are, apart from the before mentioned labour market, housing, education, including lifelong learning, health care and sport. These domains are followed by other relevant realms like social service, social engagement and political participation.

The dynamics of contemporary migrations and international relations incline to conclude that every country and region has to engage in the continual development of integration practices on an ongoing basis, resulting from the individual needs of the receiving entity (country, region, city) and the incoming subject (migrants, including refugees). In the above-mentioned context, integration *policy* as a concept seems to be useful to a limited degree. It should be replaced with integration *practices* based on individually ‘tailored’ components adapted to the individual needs of both parties, receiving and being received. *Integration practices* should be regarded as a continuous endeavour conditional on the specific internal characteristic of the country/region, the international context and the needs and challenges Europe as a community will face in the near and distant future.

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