



RACISM COMBAT

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

RACCOMBAT – INTEGRATION OF FOREIGNERS AND PREVENTION OF RACISM, XENOPHOBIA AND INTOLERANCE

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Coop Hotel, Sofia, Bulgaria

Panel 4: Specific actions to support migrant integration

Introduction: Annie Camarioti, International Projects Co-ordinator, Center for European Constitutional Law, Greece

Good evening. My name is Annie Camarioti, I am here today on behalf of the Centre for European Constitutional Law in Greece. We are a public benefit foundation and research institute, we have been working on fundamental rights and institution building for the last 15 years, among others we are the National focal point for the Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union, we have consultative status to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, and we had the pleasure to be partners in the Raccombat project.

This is essentially the last panel of the day, so before opening the floor to our speakers I would like to thank our longtime partners and good friends at the Centre for the Study of Democracy for their always impeccable work and their hospitality and to thank all of you for been here today.

This last panel focuses on specific actions to support migrant integration. So the purpose is to bring together everything we discussed today and underline how this is feasible in practice, to bring together the policy aspect with the practical, hands-on reality of integration.



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There are some 22 million non-EU nationals residing legally in the EU. That is almost 4.5% of the population. From a policy perspective this reality constitutes a big challenge. It burdens the national budgets, disrupts the cohesion of society, provokes our deep seated stereotypical approach of life and raises a number of ethical, cultural, political questions. However, it is real and it is here, and when faced with a reality there is only one road and that is to take action. The only action that can lead to peace and prosperity is practical integration of third-country nationals. Successful integration will turn migration into an opportunity rather than a challenge, an opportunity for both the third-country nationals themselves, as well as for the host societies. If well integrated, migrants can both contribute to the cultural wealth of Europe and also boost GDP and thus financial prosperity.

Thus, investing in integration policies and specific actions is of the utmost importance to ensure a prosperous, cohesive, and inclusive society in the long run.

In recognition of this, the European Commission adopted an Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals in 2016, aiming to present a framework for action and concrete initiatives to support Member States in developing and strengthening their integration policies and actions.

The Plan includes actions across all policy areas that are crucial for integration:

- Pre-departure and pre-arrival measures, including actions to prepare migrants and local communities for the integration process
- Education, including actions to promote language training, participation of migrant children to Early Childhood Education and Care, teacher training and civic education
- Employment and vocational training, including actions to promote early integration into the labour market and migrants entrepreneurship



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- Access to basic services, such as housing and healthcare
- Active participation and social inclusion, including actions to support exchanges with the receiving society, migrants' participation to cultural life and fighting discrimination

It also includes a series of tools to strengthen coordination between the different actors working on integration at national, regional and local level - for example through the European Integration Network promoting mutual learning between Member States.

Throughout the day today we have been presented, and will also in this panel discuss, innovative, practical initiatives to support migrant integration, mainly through language and social orientation programmes. This is of supreme importance. The increase in migratory flows has reinforced the need for effective integration policies for third-country nationals and all actors have a responsibility to this end: national, local and regional authorities; the EU; civil society organisations; employers; migrants and citizens themselves.

From a policy perspective, now is the time to strengthen our actions on integration. And on this note I will pass the floor to Mrs Gabriela Ionescu.

Thank you.