



THE AACHEN DECLARATION on Migration and Integration

1. The State of North Rhine-Westphalia and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe organised and hosted, a **European Day on migration and integration** in the historic City of Aachen on 19 – 20 November 2007.
2. The population of migrant origin in North Rhine-Westphalia is 4 million (out of a total population of 18 million), coming from 186 different countries. The State plays an important role for the development of Germany's migration and integration policy, and it has since 2005 a separate Ministry responsible for integration.
3. The Conference was attended by representatives of civil society, migrants' organisations, religious institutions, academic institutions, local, regional and national governments and parliaments as well as the European Parliament and international Parliamentary Assemblies.
4. A **panel of young migrants** assisted during the debate to enhance the understanding of the role of **migrants as actors and vectors of intercultural dialogue**.
5. The debate had two main focuses. The first was on **policies of integration in multicultural societies: challenges and perspectives**. The second was on **migration, diversity, intercultural dialogue and inter-religious understanding: conditions and political framework**.
6. The Conference was opened by Mr. René van der Linden, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and Mr. Armin Laschet, Minister of Intergenerational Affairs, Family, Women and Integration of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia. Opening addresses were also given by Mr. Peter Altmaier, Parliamentary State Secretary, Federal Ministry of the Interior (Germany), Dr. Jürgen Linden, Mayor of Aachen, and Mr. Melvüt Çavuşoğlu, Chair, Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, PACE.
7. Participants were addressed by Mr. Stavros Lambrinidis, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs of the European Parliament, Mrs. Nebahat Albayrak, State Secretary for Justice, the Netherlands and Mr. Cem Özdemir, Member of the European Parliament. Prof. Dr. Rita Süßmuth, Former President of the German Parliament and member of the Global Commission on International Migration, made a closing statement.
8. The Conference agreed that migrants are an integral and important part of European society. Although at times migration has led to tensions in host countries, present-day Europe is composed of a mix of people from different origins and backgrounds.

Europe as a whole is a true multicultural and multiethnic society with a rich and diversified cultural heritage.

9. Integration can never be a one-sided adaptation process. It demands a readiness of the host society and of migrants to take part in a frank dialogue. Integration is much more than simply "living together". It requires a culture of mutual respect. The families and parents of migrant children can play a particularly important role.
10. Integration-policy is not only a responsibility for the State. Integration depends on the active co-operation of all sectors of civil society and on the positive attitude of migrants. Countries of origin can also contribute, in an important manner, to the integration of their emigrants in European host countries.
11. The political ambition manifested through the **European Day on migration and Integration in Aachen** is the design of policy-measures that will encourage and facilitate integration of all persons in their respective countries and in Europe as a whole. A priority in this work is to preserve and protect cultural diversity and intercultural co-operation, dialogue, understanding and respect.
12. An important aspect of such policy is the **respect for human rights, the rule of law and the promotion of democracy**. A particular priority should be given to women's and children's rights. Any tradition or initiative that aim or contain elements contrary to these principles can not be tolerated. Above all, there is no place for discrimination, intolerance, racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in Europe.
13. Migrants in Europe must be assured an equal right to participate in the societies in which they live, and to assume responsibilities, including political, at local, regional, national and European levels. An integration policy must be a joint project between migrants and society that will assure migrants the same level of education and access to the labour market as the host population.
14. Inter-faith dialogue is part of inter-cultural dialogue. In many cases extremist positions can hamper a constructive exchange of views as well as mutual understanding and respect. This dialogue must be open to all and not limited to religious leaders who nonetheless have a particularly important role to play. The dialogue should increasingly involve elected representatives of faith communities.
15. A good knowledge of the local language is of fundamental importance. Successful integration is favoured by early acquisition of this language. Language learning of the host society language by migrant children should be encouraged while respecting the need for children to also learn their mother tongue. It is not only the education system that is important in this context. Other institutions and associations (sports, diasporas, media, different NGOs, etc.) can also contribute to the integration process.
16. Working life has a particular important function for the integration of migrants. Unemployment is a fundamental obstacle for successful integration of migrants. This is unfortunately a grave problem for many young migrants. Industry and commerce, but also public institutions have in several cases played a pioneering role in the integration process and in fostering multicultural dialogue, understanding, respect and tolerance. Such work must be made better known and be rewarded.
17. Diasporas in Europe could be even more involved in promoting development co-operation as well as multicultural understanding and integration. Worker mobility and circular migration could play a positive role for countries of origin, host countries and migrants themselves, including their families. A good co-operation between countries of origin and host countries, as well as a good mutual understanding between them,

would facilitate and further such positive developments (remittances, investments, education and training, etc.). Countries of origin should assist their diaspora in keeping close links with their home country in order that both migrants and their countries of origin can benefit from the migration process, both in the short and long term.

18. Multicultural Europe must encourage and reward the knowledge of languages and the understanding of different cultures. European states and institutions can work together to foster this endeavour. In the context of the **European Day on Migration and Integration** the proposal was made to ask the Council of Europe, the European Union and their member states to organise a **European Day for Integration and Intercultural Tolerance** every year. Aachen and its Charlemagne Prize Foundation should be closely associated with this **European Day**.
19. It is particularly important to fully involve young people and schools, but also civil society, in the promotion of a tolerant and multi-cultural Europe as a natural home for all persons, regardless of their background and origin. Peace and co-operation in Europe based on common values of equality, human rights and democracy must be promoted by all means. The proposed **European Day** will be one of the contributions towards this goal.
20. The event should have a local, regional, national and European character. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and its Parliamentary Assembly as well as the European Parliament and other relevant EU institutions must be fully involved. Commerce and Industry should be privileged partners.
21. The **Declaration** of the **Aachen European Day on Migration and Integration** should be communicated to the European Union to be taken into account during the **2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue**. The **Aachen Declaration** should also be presented to the **8th pan-European Conference of Ministers responsible for Migration Affairs**, organised by the Council of Europe, which will take place in Kiev on 4 – 5 September 2008, at the invitation of the Ukrainian Government.

Aachen, 20. November 2007.

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