

# Migration and integration in Europe

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*The 1st International Conference on Migration and Integration in the Baltic Sea Area* was held in 15–16 November 2002 in Hamburg, Germany. There were 60 participants from 10 countries. The coordinator was GATE, non-profit organization from Hamburg. Our Institute of Migration was one of the organizers.

Helene Urth from European Commission emphasized that given the uncertainties which face our societies today and the insecurity which many of the citizens of Europe feel, the integration of migrants is perhaps the greatest challenge of the common policy on asylum and migration. Migration flows to Europe are very mixed, comprising many different kinds of people: refugees, asylum seekers, displaced persons, family members of migrants already established in the European Union, migrant workers and growing numbers of business migrants. The flows have become more flexible and dynamic, short-term and cross-border movements in particular have increased. There are also large numbers of illegal migrants in the EU and smuggling and trafficking have increased.

Economic and social motives are a major factor why migrants leave their country of origin. The existence of opportunities for work

in the European labour market, even if they are in the non-declared sector, will continue to make the Member States of the Union very attractive for large numbers of people from third countries according to Helene Urth.

Success in the field of integration is an essential part of an efficient migration management policy. Integration is a very emotional issue and it touches upon some very fundamental values within ourselves and in our societies. There have been many attempts over the years to define it, but there has still been no agreement on a common definition on integration. This is understandable, Helene Urth stresses, because integration means different things to different people, each individual experiences it in a different way.

The key to achieving an integrated society is to see integration as a process. The process is dy-

namic and two-way that places demands on both the host societies and the immigrant communities, and a process in which we all have a part to play as individuals whatever our nationality or ethnic origin is. According to Helene Urth we can't create a feeling of belonging within a person. What we can do is to facilitate the process by developing integration policies that enable the individual to become a part of social and political life as well as the labour market in our countries.

Gisela Euscher from GATE emphasized in her presentation "Beyond the Borders" that immigrants are still seen as a threat and competitors in the labour markets. The demographic development of Europe, however, is showing signs of population ageing and there will be demand for manpower in the future.

The leader of the GATE-project Gisela Euscher and Dr. Ekkehard Nuissl at the conference.

