

# Foreword by the Standing Committee for the Social Sciences of the European Science Foundation

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In recent decades the geography and dynamics of migration have undergone a transformation. Global mobility patterns have diversified and intensified, to a large extent in response to economic forces and political change, but additionally inflected by government policies vis-à-vis migration, including the provision of incentives or imposition of constraints for various categories of migrants.

The social, cultural and political questions and challenges posed by migration flows and processes since the latter half of the 20th century are numerous, diverse and evolving. In the past decade alone the Standing Committee for the Social Sciences of the European Science Foundation (ESF) has observed and responded to an expanding research and policy interest in a wide spectrum of migration-related issues. The ESF has supported research on these issues in multiple ways, from Strategic and Exploratory Workshops to International Conferences and European Collaborative Research Projects.

A major part of the rationale for an ESF Strategic Workshop on migration research in September 2011 on 'New approaches for researching the determinants of migration processes' (International Migration Institute, Oxford),<sup>1</sup> was that research on migration is fast-growing and fragmented over numerous disciplines. Researchers have approached migration-related issues, including the integration of migrants, from a wide variety of methodological and theoretical perspectives. A significant amount of research has focussed on the social, cultural and economic impacts of migration on sending and receiving societies and on labour market and social conditions of migrant workers. For example, a developing area of study supported by ESF is the nexus between transnational

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<sup>1</sup> See ESF Strategic Workshop: New approaches for researching the determinants of migration processes, available at <http://www.imi.ox.ac.uk/events/past-events> (last accessed 20 July 2012).

migration, cultures of care and inequalities in affluent and ageing Western societies. Other agendas aim to understand better the multi-level drivers of migration processes, their relative importance, mutual interactions and feedback effects.

Central to much new research on migration in the humanities and social sciences has been the recognition that migration and integration processes involve a fundamental transformation of spaces, identities and conceptions of home and belonging. Integration is not a simply a process of more or less successful assimilation of migrants into host cultures; rather, migration and integration set in motion processes of mutual adaptation and dialogue between cultures, which can be rich and rewarding for all involved, but which are also highly sensitive and complex regarding issues of identity and intercultural communication. A recent ESF-COST project ‘Cultural Literacy in Europe Today’<sup>2</sup> proposed the closer study of practices of cultural production (e.g. literature) of migrants as a heuristic to gain more insight into migration, migrants, integration and the politics of representation, communication and translation.

Research supported by ESF has also shown how integration patterns among the ‘second generation’ (children of migrants) vary widely and unpredictably between ethnic and cultural communities and from country to country in Europe. The European Collaborative Research Project ‘TIES’ (The Integration of the European Second Generation)<sup>3</sup> exposed the complexity of the challenges ahead for the nations of Europe as they absorb workers and asylum-seekers from beyond the borders of the EU. This research suggested that, so far, there is no single integration model that performs well in all of three key dimensions of life (education, employment, sense of belonging and identity) for any of the ethnic communities studied.

A very material determinant of the degree of integration of migrants in host countries is the legal framework, at national and – in the case of Europe – supra-national level. The ESF Exploratory Workshop ‘In/equality for Third Country Nationals: Implementation and Effects of EU Directives on Migration and Asylum’ held in Oxford in June 2010 which resulted in the present volume explored the implementation and effects of EU directives on migration and asylum for various categories of third-country nationals, from asylum-seekers through to highly-skilled migrants, and in all cases, their families. This research agenda is critical not only in illuminating and addressing tensions and contradictions

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.esf.org/?id=6795> (last accessed 20 July 2012).

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.tiesproject.eu/> (last accessed 20 July 2012).

between various lines of EU policy (e.g. equality and anti-discrimination policy versus asylum and migration policy), but also in highlighting discrepancies between the formal rights and the lived experience of migrants in diverse national settings. Perhaps most importantly, the comparative, socio-legal approach of the research programme proposed by the editors and authors of this book recognises the need to interrogate the notion of integration itself and to cross-examine legal, political, social and cultural conceptions of integration and their combined impact on individuals and communities. Indeed, integrating analysis of migrant populations and the institutional framework which governs their flows is a major challenge for future research.

As indicated above, research on migration and integration is flourishing but remains conceptually and methodologically multifarious, making it difficult to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the relevant phenomena. In an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world, there is a need for new questions, new perspectives and renewed scholarly debate on how to understand and potentially manage the transnational movement and integration of people so as to secure the potential positive effects while mitigating the negative outcomes. The challenges for further theoretical and empirical research on migration and integration have been summed up in the 2009 Position Paper of the Standing Committee for the Social Sciences of the ESF:

Governing migration and integration in Europe is an arduous task due to the complex and dynamic nature of the phenomena and the enormous diversity of realities and practices within Europe. From a research point of view this combined multiplicity is an opportunity rather than a problem. The wide variety in contexts, experiences and policies provides a natural laboratory to learn to understand the economic, social, cultural and political causes and ramifications. A cross-European research effort could uncover the crucial mechanisms and separate them from the contingencies, identifying points of intervention that not only address the driving forces but also fit the specific context in which they are applied. Strengthening the evidence base is a necessary condition to increase the efficacy of the interventions.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Pieter Hooimeijer, *Vital Questions* (IREG 2009), p.37, available at [http://www.esf.org/fileadmin/links/Social/Publications/SCSSpositionPaper\\_2009-11.pdf](http://www.esf.org/fileadmin/links/Social/Publications/SCSSpositionPaper_2009-11.pdf) (last accessed 20 July 2012).