

**POLICIES AND WAYS OF INTEGRATION: CONCEPTS AND AWARENESS
RAISING – A FEW ELEMENTS FOR A COMMON STRATEGY**

By Mitja Žagar*

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Diversity is the key characteristic of modern societies; consequently, diversity should be considered a normal state of affairs in most societies and environments. Actually, a certain – at least minimal – level of diversity and pluralism have existed in almost all societies throughout our history; in many cases this fact was so obvious that nobody paid special attention to it. The situation changed with the elaboration and introduction (initially in Europe and later world-wide) of the concept of a nation state, more precisely a single nation state that defined a particular state as a nation state of a titular nation, a dominant ethnic community in such a state. As a result all those who did not belong to this dominant ethnic community became persons belonging to minorities. These distinct communities – if they managed to survive – are known now as traditional national minorities; the birth of nation states gave birth to traditional national minorities.

From the perspective of nation states, however, ethnic and cultural diversity and the very existence of minorities were seen as problems rather than a normal state of affairs; frequently, states considered the very existence of minorities an obstacle in the realization of the idea of ethnically and otherwise homogenous state union. The fear was that diversity could harm uniform ethnic identity of nation states, exclusive in its nature. For this reason states ignored diversity or were even hostile to it, which has conditioned policies and treatment of minorities in many nation states in the past two centuries. Consequently, the development of concepts, norms and standards of the protection of persons belonging to minorities was a slow and often painful process in individual countries and internationally; in most cases, the protection of minorities as collective entities is yet starting to appear. Nevertheless, by now it is universally recognized that the protection of minorities is necessary and is an integral part of universal human rights.

Historic origins and development of diversity in any environment are unique and differ. Surely, at different historic stages migrations have contributed to the diversity. Reasons for, and intensity of, migrations change and are conditioned by a number of factors; however, migrations are permanent and normal phenomena – people have always migrated and probably always will. Technical progress and development make their mobility ever easier. We can expect that migrations will continue to contribute to increasing diversity in receiving societies (countries of immigration). However, we should not forget that migrations can have severe impacts also on emigrant societies (aging, changing social and gender structure of population, possible depopulation, etc.). For these reasons, it is necessary to consider all possible aspects, impacts and consequences and to develop an adequate universal strategy for the management of migrations that will be based on concerted actions, programs and policies of states (both states of emigration and of immigration), international organizations and civic society. Such universal strategy requires not only adequate regulation of migrations,

* Dr. Mitja Žagar, Research Councilor, is Director of the Institute for Ethnic Studies and Associate Professor at the University of Ljubljana (Faculty of Law, Faculty of Social Sciences).

measures, programs and activities that assist migrants and enable their participation, inclusion and full integration into host societies, but should address also reasons that might force people to migrate and should pay special attention to the improvement of living, social and economic conditions in societies of emigration, thereby decreasing possible negative impacts of migrations both in emigrant and immigrant societies. This could be the most effective way to reduce forced migrations (due to economic, political, military and/or ecological reasons), but also illegal migrations (mostly for economic reasons) and to fight trafficking in human beings connected with these phenomena.

From the perspective of integration of immigrants in recipient societies it is important to stress that they often find themselves in a similar position and have similar needs and interests as persons belonging to national minorities. Although the legal status and existing (national and international) standards of the protection of persons belonging to national minorities and immigrants still differ, the nature and approaches of integration policies and measures could and should be similar. Namely, sometimes in the future (in my view, the sooner the better!) it might be expected that today's immigrants and their communities will be recognized officially and treated as recognized minorities in the receiving societies. In this context it will be necessary to complement the traditional territorial protection of national minorities (limited only to the territory of their traditional compact settlement) with new concepts that will take into account specific conditions (such as dispersed settlement, communities that are yet being established, etc.), needs and interests of many and diverse "new minorities" and persons belonging to them. Establishing minimal common standards as the basis for the protection of all minorities, the protection of minorities will have to offer to establish a specific protection for each minority that will suit and serve its conditions, needs and interests best. However, for the time being such an approach remains just wishful thinking.

For this reason I will focus first on the policies and some ways of integration of persons belonging to national minorities. Traditionally, the first necessary condition for a person, a citizen (national) of a state to be given a (formal, legal) status of a person belonging to a specific national minority is the recognition of the official status of national minority for this minority by the respective state. As a citizen of a country that embraces the principle of the rule of law such a person enjoys all rights provided by the constitution and legal system. The principle of non-discrimination and the prohibition of discrimination shall guarantee equal rights and position of all persons or in some cases all citizens regardless of their ethnic, religious, linguistic or other characteristics or background. This is also the basis for the protection of minorities. However, some countries additionally establish a special protection and minority rights for persons belonging to national minorities and – in some cases – for national minorities (as distinct communities). Although some critics argue that such a practice could be viewed as the violation of the non-discrimination principle, the defenders of the special protection of national minorities claim that it means the actual realization of this principle: (national) minorities and/or persons belonging to them, who are objectively often in a marginalized position, need certain additional special rights to have an equal starting position and to be able to realize their rights guaranteed by the constitutions and legal systems. So, rather than a form of discrimination they should be viewed as anti-discrimination measures and are sometimes called "affirmative

action” or “positive discrimination.” These special rights in the context of human rights are the basis for full integration of national minorities and persons belonging to them that should encompass all spheres and dimensions of life.

Full participation, inclusion and integration of all citizens and, ideally, all persons residing in a territory of a state are among central principles and ideals stated by democratic states. Consequently, a state can claim more democratic legitimacy if these ideals and principles are better realized. From the perspective of universal human rights and non-discrimination, also the traditional and established division between citizens and non-citizens might become questionable – although it is still being the rule of the day. Even more questionable is the exclusion of certain groups of citizens, which should be viewed as the violation of human rights and discrimination. This is true not only in the case of national minorities, but in cases of all marginalized distinct communities and individuals that are discriminated against.

The measures and policies of integration of persons belonging to national minorities shall, above all, ensure the existence of these minorities including the preservation and development of their specific cultures, languages, values, religions and other specific characteristics that constitute their distinct identities – both individual and collective minority identities. For this reason it is extremely important that they have access to adequate education that can offer these contents, and that adequate minority institutions and associations exist that can realize their specific needs and interests. However, there can be no full integration if persons belonging to minorities do not master the official languages or main languages of communication in a certain environment. Even in cases when minority languages might be recognized as official languages in the territory of traditional settlement of national minorities their full participation and integration at the national level requires adequate knowledge and command of official and main languages. Additionally, adequate civic education and knowledge about democratic institutions are also necessary. Minorities and persons belonging to them need such educational systems, democratic and public institutions and media that can provide the necessary services, skills, contents, information and possibilities. Ensuring all the above should be considered preconditions and means for a full integration of minorities and persons belonging to them, but also the most effective way to combat direct and/or hidden discrimination.

Very important dimensions of integration are economic inclusion and participation of persons belonging to minorities. Policies and measures of integration should stimulate and provide for not only their full and equal inclusion and integration into national economy, equal employment opportunities (in public and private sector), but also their economic initiative and building of their capacities. Minority economies as they develop should be integrated into national economies, so that both sides benefit and can contribute to their better competitive capabilities in a global economy. Especially in cases of marginalized minority communities, such as the Roma and Sinti in some countries, these countries should think of establishing special funding (e.g. economic development funds) for the purposes elaborated above, and of adequate institutions that can assist persons belonging to these minorities in their integration and in realizing their economic initiative.

For a successful integration of national minorities and persons belonging to them it is required that all relevant target populations and actors are included in the process. They shall include individuals belonging to minorities, minority communities, their associations, organizations and institutions, all relevant state and public institutions, in some cases international organizations and institutions and civic society with its nongovernmental organizations, corporations and businesses; some integration activities and programs should address also the majority population in a certain environment. Such an approach demands that target populations are defined in every specific case and that duties, responsibilities, competences and rights of all actors are clearly spelled out; necessary funding should also be provided. In some cases it might be necessary that specific and targeted activities and programs are organized for specific populations within certain minority communities, especially those who are marginalized or in a worse position or discriminated against also within minorities (e.g. women, children, economically disadvantaged, handicapped, etc.). These specific programs and activities should be, however, designed in the way that they will facilitate integration of these target populations – both in the society and within individual minority communities.

Although the full integration of persons belonging to minorities is a socially desired outcome and the central goal of integration policies, the full integration could only be voluntary. A state could stimulate integration, also by the introduction of different incentives for persons who decide to be included in integration programs. It is especially important that people are informed fully about integration and specific integration programs. People should be informed why the full integration of persons belonging to minorities is beneficial to them and to everybody (including majority population) in a certain plural community. However, nobody should be forced to be included in such programs. If a person belonging to a minority who has all relevant information decides that she or he does not want to participate, such a will should be respected.

In defining their ethnic and integration policies, but also their migration policies, all states should take into account that usually a basic need expressed by all (traditional) national and other minorities (including immigrant communities) is their desire to be recognized as a distinct community with a specific identity; they want to preserve and develop their specific culture, language, religion, some traditions and ways of life. For this reason they consider their cultural activities, organizations and institutions very important. In my view, their basic need should be recognized and guaranteed to every individual and distinct community regardless of their formal status. Consequently, the recognition of existing diversity should be followed by measures and policies that can ensure basic conditions and (at least some) funding for associations and organizations of national minorities and other distinct communities, especially for cultural activities and programs of their associations, organizations and institutions.

The key component of integration policy and activities is awareness raising that should provide adequate information, knowledge and understanding of diversity and of integration in modern democratic societies. Such information, knowledge and understanding could be considered important preconditions for acceptance and positive evaluation of diversity, for tolerance, equal cooperation and voluntary full integration of all distinct communities and persons belonging to them, which usually

are defined as central goals of integration policies. The awareness raising should – especially by presenting possible positive and negative impacts of integration of minorities – stimulate people in environments characterized by diversity to be more sensitive regarding diversity, to see the existing diversity as a possible comparative advantage, and to search for common interests as the basis for their equal cooperation. This means that awareness raising activities and programs need to target all people, especially youth and public opinion leaders in a certain environment, all relevant subjects and organizations of civic society – including businesses, public and state institutions (especially people employed in them), political organizations and politicians, etc. In this context, the awareness raising should address all levels – from sub-national to international level. Simultaneously, all listed target populations could be important actors of the awareness raising; in my view, the most important organizations and institutions that should carry out awareness raising activities and can contribute to their success are minority associations, organizations and institutions, all interested factors and institutions of civic society – including NGOs and businesses, educational institutions, programs (especially schools at all levels) and systems, media, political institutions and parties. Awareness raising activities are more successful if all afore mentioned actors cooperate and participate fully in concerted activities. Important and rather effective ways in this context can be awareness raising campaigns.

Considering the goals presented above, ideally the awareness raising should include relevant information and knowledge on the existing diversity, lists and specific characteristics of all distinct communities and persons belonging to them – including their status and social position, detected common and specific perceptions, morale and values, differences and communalities, especially all possible common interests, political institutions and processes, different policies and programs – including integration policies, etc. This information should be presented in a way that can improve mutual understanding, elaboration and development of common interests and values as the basis for equal cooperation and full integration; all participating sides should learn to live together and to cooperate in a way to maximize social profit of all individuals, institutions and distinct communities, but also societies as whole. Everybody should know and be aware of the normative/legal framework that determines rights and duties of all actors, but also of the gap between the normative framework and actual situation, which demands adequate research and participation of researchers and research institutions.

In order to make awareness raising and the whole integration process successful it might be instrumental to develop adequate cooperative strategies and coordinated programs at all levels – including the international level. At the international level, especially for the OSCE space this organization can play a central role in developing a common global strategy and program of actions. However, this should be done in close cooperation with participating states and all relevant international organizations in a way that integrates also civic society with NGOs, companies and businesses. For the development of a common strategy of integration of national and other minorities and persons belonging to them we should stress the importance of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. An important component of this common global strategy should be a declaration of universal and commonly agreed principles of integration of national minorities and persons belonging to them that hopefully

could be applied also for other distinct communities and persons belonging to them. Considering the nature and the importance of integration of minorities and persons belonging to them (including its impacts) for all three dimensions of the OSCE, this attempt and all activities and programs that should follow it should be considered cross-dimensional and should be conceived as a long term process.