

## Press Release EPIM:

Successful migrant integration is crucial for the future of Europe. Recognising this, 11 major European foundations have joined forces to form 'EPIM', the European Programme on Integration and Migration.

The group has pooled 3 million euro which will be used to foster civil society initiatives exploring and promoting positive integration.

On 24-25<sup>th</sup> September 2008, representatives of 15 new projects – all selected by an independent jury – will meet together in Brussels to mark the start of the programme.

Speaking on behalf of EPIM, Françoise Pissart, the chair and Director of Social Justice of the King Baudouin Foundation, said: "We see these as critical issues which are currently not receiving enough attention. We hope that our new programme will make a clear statement about the importance of these areas of work, as well as providing new evidence and fresh thinking."

The projects all fall within three strands of work:

- defending the human rights of undocumented migrants living in the EU;
- hearing the voice of immigrants themselves in the debate on immigrant integration, and in the development of appropriate policies;
- ensuring a balanced representation of immigrants in the media.

In each of these strands, EPIM will provide funding for NGOs to explore policies and practices that will lead to sustainable solutions at the European and Member State level.

### Undocumented migrants

Seven projects will work to defend the human rights of undocumented migrants living in the EU. Understandably, EU and Member States work to reduce illegal migration through regulation. There are, however, many undocumented migrants currently living and working in the Union - a situation which receives only limited attention, whether in policy instruments such as the Common Basic Principles on Integration or through public funding streams.

The selected projects include: the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM); the European Borders Observatory of Migreurop; the Averroes Network of Médecins du Monde, which aims to improve access to health care for asylum seekers and undocumented migrants; the Advocacy Network for People on Destitution (ANDES of the Jesuit Refugee Services – JRS Europe); a project to tackle the specific problems of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum (Stichting Nidos, Netherlands); and national projects in Greece (Greek Refugee Council) and France (Association Primo Levi for the victims of torture).

### Migrants' voices

The second priority is to hear the voice of immigrants themselves in the debate on immigrant integration, and in the development of appropriate policies. While some Member States have mechanisms for consulting

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immigrant organisations, the voice of immigrants is not heard at European level. The foundations in EPIM want to enable organisations to involve immigrants as principal agents in the debates and policy development.

The five projects dealing with the promotion of immigrant voices include an approach from Practice to Policy brought about by the European Network Against Racism (ENAR); support for the “Alternative voices on integration” promoted by the Institute of Race Relations (IRR); the involvement of parents in education for integration (Immigrant Council of Ireland - ICI); attention to giving women “equal voices” as stressed by the European Women’s Lobby (EWL); and a project to consider the views of the new migrants in Estonia (Legal Information Centre for Human Rights - LICHR).

### The role of the media

The media’s role in immigrant integration is crucial. The media can play a part in addressing both the challenges and the opportunities connected with the presence of immigrants in the EU. This is essential for a well-informed and constructive public debate, and to underpin integration policies which are in everyone’s interest.

Three out of the 15 projects aim to ensure a balanced representation of immigrants in the media, by training media spokespersons from immigrant communities and helping these communities to, for example, develop media strategies (People in Need - PIN - in the Czech Republic and Migrant Resource Centre - MRC - in the UK), or by creating an association of media professionals from ethnic minority backgrounds (Co-operation for the Development of Emerging Countries - COSPE, Italy).

Some of these NGOs and foundations involved in EPIM will attend the Policy Dialogue organised by the European Policy Centre in cooperation with the Network of European Foundations, on *The role of civil society in EU immigration and integration policy: a two-way street*, on Wednesday 24 September, and will be available for interview after the event.

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