# SOUTHERN AND EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN GOVERNMENTS AND THE INTEGRATION OF THEIR EXPATRIATES IN EUROPE*

**ABSTRACT**

In December 2005, the Office of Tunisians Abroad (OTE) and the Euro-Mediterranean Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration (CARIM) jointly organized a seminar titled Integration Policies: The View from Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries, held in Tunis. This seminar addressed the need for policy-makers from both sending and receiving countries to evaluate the impact of their policies on the actual integration of migrant integration in the receiving society. In this article, the author provides an overview of the current situation regarding Middle East and North Africa immigration to European countries, and presents the major conclusions reached at the Tunis seminar, notably in the following areas: the role played by the countries of origin in the integration of their expatriates; family reunification, education and religious practice; access to work, income, health, and housing; naturalization and political participation; and discrimination and protection of rights.

Mediterranean countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)[1] form a major region of emigration, with approximately 12 to 13 million first-generation emigrants, representing some 4.8% of their aggregated population, which amounted to 260 million in 2005. Emigration has gained momentum in most of the region in recent years. At the same time the region receives significant flows of immigration, whether destined for the region as such or in transit to Europe and stuck at the gate of their intended destination.

Europe is the single largest destination of first-generation emigrants from Mediterranean countries of the MENA, and hosts almost half of all such emigrants worldwide. The Arab oil countries, i.e. the Gulf States and Libya, constitute the second largest destination, with the rest of the world, mainly North America, ranking far behind.

At a time when economic immigration into Europe could resume in relation with demographic developments in the EU and deficits in the labour supply, integrating immigrants appears to be a condition for their full participation in the economic, social and human development of both destination and origin countries. Integration of migrant populations in destination societies can be broadly defined as the process through which migrants are able to participate in helping to build a cohesive society respectful of comparable rights and obligations.

The European Commission has recommended that immigrants gradually acquire core rights and assume obligations, so that they are treated in the same way as nationals of their host state, even if they are not naturalized. EU member states have established specific tools, which vary from one country to another, in order to facilitate the integration of migrant populations and to progressively eliminate all forms of segregation to which these populations may be subject. These tools include urban, housing, education, linguistic, health and cultural policies, among others.

On the other side, governments of migrants' countries of origin have established institutions – either full ministries or specialized ministerial sections, as well as specialized agencies – in order to develop links between MENA expatriates, wherever they reside, and their country of origin. These institutions have developed tools which operate mainly in two domains: economic and cultural. Their action is defined along the two following lines:

- *Economic line*: facilitating financial transfers and investments made by MENA expatriates in their country of origin, allowing them to contribute to its economic, social and human development;
- *Religious and linguistic line*: offering migrant populations, and particularly second-generation migrants, the means to maintain their cultural and religious identity.

**PHILIPPE FARGUES**

Director of the Euro-Mediterranean Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration (CARIM), European University Institute, Florence, Italy. His research interests include migration, population and politics in Muslim countries, family building, demographic methodologies and their application to the MENA.

Origin countries' institutions may also intervene in other domains, for example:

- *Legal*: with a view to protecting migrants' rights in their country of residence;
- *Political*: with a view to managing political participation of migrants in their country of origin.

To what extent do policies to integrate immigrant populations pursued by European countries, on the one hand, and policies regarding expatriates pursued by MENA governments, on the other, complement or contradict each other? What effective contribution do they make to the successful integration of migrants?

The seminar "Integration policies: The view from Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries," jointly organized in Tunis in December 2005 by the Office of Tunisians Abroad (OTE) and the Euro-Mediterranean Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration (CARIM), addressed the need for policy-makers from both sending and receiving countries to evaluate the impact of their policies on the actual integration of migrants in the receiving society.[2] The seminar, which was attended by high-level representatives of MENA countries, reached the following conclusions.

### States of origin and the integration of their expatriates

Integration policies designed to help immigrant populations should be defined in a dialogue between the host countries and countries of origin.

The integration of new immigrants by host countries should be accompanied by concrete policies to promote their reception with a view to successful integration, and should not be treated merely as a set of conditions to limit and control immigration.

Countries of origin should not view expatriate communities solely as a source of external financing. Institutions set up to manage relations between expatriates and their country of origin should take into account the range of assets that these communities represent, not only financially, but also in terms of human, cultural and social resources. The management of emigrants' remittances and their impact on the development of the country of origin are important, but not the sole aspects of the work of these institutions.

The policies of countries of origin vis-à-vis their expatriate communities have evolved with, and in response to, the immigration and integration policies of host countries, and to the calls of immigrant groups in response to changes occurring within these groups.

The need to maintain links with their expatriate communities is recognized by all country of origin governments, particularly regarding language, religion and the role of their professional elites. However, the tools to manage this link differ depending on the country in question.

Institutions set up in some countries of origin to protect and promote immigrant populations in host countries should be used as a model for those countries that concentrate exclusively on the financial aspects of relations with their expatriate communities.

Best practices occur when three actors are willing to cooperate: the institutions of the host countries, institutions in the countries of origin, and the organizations and associations that operate within the immigrant communities.

Dialogue and coordination among the countries of origin should encourage the formulation of policies to promote the integration of expatriates, given that the latter may share similar experiences and request similar rights. The formation by immigrant groups originating from Maghreb countries of a genuine Maghrebine community in Europe suggests the need for a South-South cooperation in managing relations with the expatriate communities.

An effective instrument would be decentralized cooperation between the institutions in the countries of origin responsible for managing relations with their expatriate communities, local administrations in host countries and the associations active within the immigrant communities themselves.

The ratification by the host countries of the 1990 *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Family* would create a situation conducive to a more successful integration of immigrant groups.

The particular situation of Palestinian refugees in Europe, who cannot invoke the protection of a country of origin, calls for the definition of the status of "stateless person." Such persons would be entitled to international protection provided as refugees as per the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

### Integration in private life: Family reunification, education and religious practice

Host counties must respect the freedom of immigrants to choose a husband or wife, including from country of origin with which they maintain affective links, although the right to family reunification via marriage should not be used as a way to skirt immigration regulations.

The definition of the beneficiaries of family reunification must take into account the specific cultural nature of family composition in the country of origin.

The basic right to migrate on the grounds of family reunification should play a pro-integration role in the host society, and shouldn't generate exclusion by creating ethnic enclaves. Urban social planning policy must take this concern into account and promoteethnic mix in urban neighbourhoods.

Bilingualism and biculturalism are positive practices for integration. Promoting the creation of mixed

neighbourhoods, and introducing the teaching of Arabic and Turkish in schools for migrants and non-migrants alike, are ways to avoid the creation of ethnic enclaves in urban agglomerations.

The school must recuperate its role as an instrument of integration and social mobility. It should thus eliminate inequality of access to academic tracks within the school, just as inequality of access to the labour market should be eliminated upon completion of schooling.

The transition from first- to second-generation immigrants is accompanied by a cultural transition within the family, as the first generation is educated in its country of origin and the second in the host country. The school must take this fact into account using systems of support and specifically adapted programs.

Countries of origin play a role in the moral and religious education and also of restraint of immigrant groups and in encouraging their integration. This helps them understand the authentic values of their culture of origin and to avoid their falling prey to extremist movements in the host country.

The role of the imams in the transmission of moral values conducive to integration must be promoted. The shortage of sufficient numbers of religious teachers to instil and to restrain identification with religious values leaves room for the appearance of leaders who are beyond the control of the authorities, and cut off from the true values of Islam.

The training of imams in State-controlled institutions in their countries of origin is a guarantee against the self-appointment, within the immigrant populations, of elements that could undermine the maintenance of civic order.

The school must recuperate its role as an instrument of integration and social mobility. It should thus eliminate inequality of access to academic tracks within the school, just as inequality of access to the labour market should be eliminated upon completion of schooling.

### Integration and socio-economic conditions: Access to work, income, health, and housing

The prevalence of unemployment among immigrant populations and the fact that a considerable proportion of the people in these groups remain outside the labour market are matters of serious concern.

In the near future the demographic situation in Europe will require the resumption of economic immigration, and this may function as an instrument of integration for the older immigrant populations, which, thanks to the arrival of new immigrants possessing different educational and professional profiles from those of their predecessors, will tend to raise the overall educational and professional profile of immigrant groups.

Migratory flows are regulated exclusively by the host countries. The formulation by the countries of origin of educational and employment policies that treat emigration as an option could promote the integration of their émigré workers in the host countries.

### Integration and civic life: Naturalization and political participation

With the exception of local elections, nationality, either acquired or by birth, remains a precondition of political participation for immigrant groups in host countries.

The integration of these groups will be facilitated by their participation in the management of local affairs, particularly in neighbourhoods where they represent a significant proportion of the population.

Countries of origin should be active in raising the awareness of immigrants to the importance of integration in their host country, particularly through their involvement in associational activity.

The responsibility of immigrant populations themselves in their own integration should be stressed.

Countries of origin should also emphasize the need for their dual nationals to take part in the political life of their host country *and* their country of origin (i.e. elections), which will help achieve equality of opportunity.

Countries of origin must assign some form of political participation for their expatriates, possibly in cooperation with the host countries in the practical organization of elections.

### Combatting discrimination and protecting rights

Combatting discrimination, direct or indirect, in order to achieve equality of opportunity, not only formally, but also in fact, means carrying out educational work with the indigenous population of host countries. This involves a long-term program of awareness building, particularly cultural awareness building, which should be carried out in cooperation with the countries of origin.

During a period of transition, affirmative action, or positive discrimination, should help overcome prejudices and frustrations, provided that this is not done to the detriment of merit, that it does not stigmatize the beneficiaries, and that it is understood and accepted by the autochthonous population.

There is a risk that anti-discrimination legislation will not achieve its goals if they are not accompanied by measures of affirmative action. In particular, the presence of immigrant groups in the media as an instrument of positive identification with the host society is still very weak.

The representation of migrant groups in democratic institutions and in the mass media better proportioned to their presence in society, is a pressing goal and one which affirmative action can help achieve.

Immigrant populations are not *between* two cultures, but *of* two cultures, and the media have a role to play in the diffusion of a common culture.

The popularity of Arab and Turkish television media among the immigrant groups helps maintain links with

the countries of origin, as does the popularity of European media in the countries of origin. Using the media to promote an understanding of the culture of origin in the host country will certainly facilitate integration.

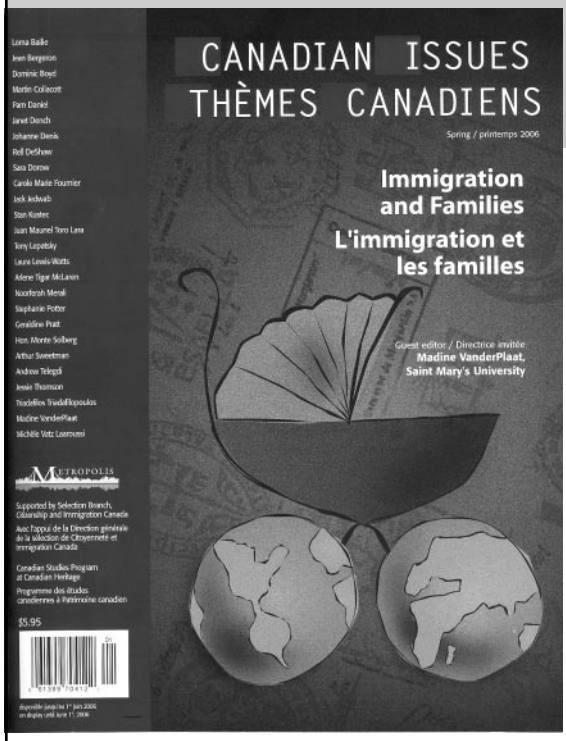
Countries of origin must work with their nationals to instil respect for the rules and values of host countries in order to improve their chances of successful integration.

**Notes**

* Conclusions of a seminar presented by Philippe Fargues.

1 Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestinian Territories, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey.

2 www.carim.org/index.php?areaid=15&contentid=23.


# Immigration and Families
# L'immigration et les familles

**Special Issue of / Édition spéciale de**
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Metropolis has continued its successful partnership with the Association for Canadian Studies to produce special issues of the magazine *Canadian Issues / Thèmes canadiens* on immigration and diversity topics. This issue (Spring 2006) focuses on immigration and the family. It features an introduction by Madine VanderPlaat of Saint Mary's University, an interview with Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Monte Solberg, and twenty articles by knowledgeable policy-makers, researchers and non-governmental organizations. Like earlier issues, it has been assigned as course readings in many disciplines at several universities.

Le partenariat entre Metropolis et l'Association des études canadiennes continue de porter fruit, avec la production de numéros spéciaux de la revue *Thèmes canadiens / Canadian Issues*, portant sur l'immigration et divers thèmes connexes. Ce numéro (printemps 2006) met l'accent sur l'immigration et la famille. Il comporte une introduction signée Madine VanderPlaat (Saint Mary's University), une entrevue avec le ministre de Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada, Monte Solberg, ainsi qu'une vingtaine d'articles rédigés par des responsables des politiques publiques, des chercheurs et des organisations non gouvernementales spécialisés dans le domaine en question. Ce numéro de la revue, comme les numéros précédents, compte parmi les lectures obligatoires de nombreux cours universitaires de disciplines variées.

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