

## **MIGRATION AND MOBILITY: NATIONAL RESPONSES TO CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

Globalization has made international migration easier in many respects. The cost of travel has dropped; information about opportunities in destination countries has increased; the incentives to migrate are high, partly as a result of such increased information flows. These incentives are shared by those with the skills that are sought by destination countries as well as by those who do not possess them, or who migrate for other reasons, for instance as refugees, asylum-seekers, or family dependents. As a result of such different push-pull dynamics between sending and receiving countries, we see both "legal" and "illegal" migration flows throughout the world.

On balance, more countries are now accepting migrants, most often for temporary work, but sometimes for permanent residence. Not that long ago many countries in the West denied the need for immigration. This sentiment has now largely passed as labour supplies in these countries are being stressed by retirements and low fertility rates. Migrants are now being seen as providing part of the answer to how countries can maintain their economic prosperity.

However, migration not only introduces new workers into a labour force but also new people into a society. The globalization of migration means that newcomers to our societies are often from culturally, ethnically, and racially diverse backgrounds, and long-term migration thus means that our cities are becoming more heterogeneous..

How a destination society responds to such important demographic and cultural change will depend on its history, its local culture, its own experiences to date with the presence of immigrants, and its political will to create favourable conditions for the integration and participation of newcomers. Some policy frameworks are more, others less liable to result in the inclusion of immigrants.

One might think that a society that accepts the value of immigration would at the same time accept the value of including its newcomers as members and citizens. However, a look at the policy responses of many countries suggests that this is not necessarily so. In fact, there seems to be a growing convergence among political regimes responding to ethnic and cultural differences toward attempting to minimize the visibility of minorities and the societal impact of ethnic diversity.

In addition, access – both to national spaces and political and social participation – is made more difficult for certain groups, and demands on immigrants, descendants, and national minorities for acculturating are stepped up. In some cases, such policies might be responses to popular opinion; in other cases, they may be more principled, perhaps rooted in a desire to protect a national identity or a long-standing set of national traditions.

This conference will examine the role of policy in determining the outcomes of immigration and the presence of immigrants in different societies. The result should be a better understanding of the varying constraints and opportunities under which governments operate, as well as the implications for immigrants and societies overall of excluding immigrants or denying the cultural and ethnic differences which they bring with them. It will help us to think through the effects of our histories, the impact of globalization and high mobility, and the most adequate responses to growing diversity. Finally, it will also give us a better practical understanding of what we need to do to achieve more prosperous, peaceable, and equitable societies.