

Introduction

Immigrants discriminated against, immigrants decried, immigrants rejected, immigrants as scapegoats, all these are unfortunately commonplace.

Ethnic, religious and economic discrimination overlap and it is not always possible to differentiate between them. The discrimination immigrants suffer may have several sources and it can be difficult to distinguish between what is religious, economic and ethnic. Discrimination has many causes, some of which vary in importance according to the place (workplace, housing, leisure etc) in which immigrants live and work, the economic context (chronic unemployment, economic problems), their status (“illegal”, “legal”, how long they have been in the host country), the severity of law enforcement measures and the “nationalist” discourse of certain populist parties, etc. A large proportion of the immigrant population does not feel involved in a process of inclusion and sometimes bitterly resents the rejection it experiences.

Such discrimination can be fought through economic, social and cultural policies aimed at equal access to rights for all, regardless of origin, through intercultural dialogue and immigrants’ participation in the life of the community, unions, associations etc. The publication of the Council of Europe White Paper “Living together as equals in dignity” (Council of Europe 2008a)¹, adopted by all its 47 member countries, is therefore an important and very timely event. The White Paper gives impetus to the fight against processes that are harmful to cohesion. To parody certain classics, one might say that it sets the optimism of the heart and the wish to “shake things up” against the pessimism of reason. The White Paper is a *mobilising instrument*. Its recommendations should make it possible to counter discrimination and the various “excesses”, even the rise of hatred and rejection of others.

The purpose of the White Paper is to highlight the democratic management of cultural diversity based on a different way of establishing links between minority and majority, while remembering that a cohesive society is based on equal access to rights for all and, at the same time, respect for a common core of universal values that transcends the different cultures. In addition to fighting against discrimination,

¹ Hereinafter referred to as “the White Paper”.

democratic management means the possibility of developing participatory forms that may go as far as enabling foreigners to participate in local elections under certain conditions. It means trying to establish a *plural identity* within each nation that can form a shared identity within Europe.

The purpose of the following pages is to analyse the different forms of discrimination and show how the various recommendations of the White Paper point to ways of countering them. Intercultural dialogue is a path that can lead to mutual enrichment and peaceful co-existence, but it will only be credible if social policies targeting the most vulnerable sections of society, regardless of whether or not they are immigrants, are strengthened simultaneously. In this respect, the recommendations contained in the White Paper constitute a significant advance.

A whole series of subjects will *not* be discussed, such as the return of immigrants to their countries, the contribution that is made to the development of their countries of origin, the relationship between immigration and financial remittances, and development and poverty reduction in countries of emigration. A great deal has already been written on these subjects by international institutions, NGOs and researchers.²

Part One of this document will give an overview of immigration. Immigration has changed profoundly in recent decades. It is therefore important to analyse the changes in order to describe the context in which discrimination occurs. Part Two will study certain areas of discrimination: economic (the labour market: recruitment, pay, working conditions), education and housing, and the responses in political terms based on intercultural dialogue. It is, however, difficult to distinguish between the different factors of discrimination (ethnic, gender, religious) and economic discrimination connected with the acute vulnerability of immigrant populations depending on their status (naturalised, legal or illegal aliens). For this reason, after studying economic discrimination, Part Three will discuss cultural diversity and social cohesion. Since it is a question of establishing fruitful intercultural dialogue, there has to be agreement on what is meant by culture and its relationship with globalisation and religion, for example. Two questions arise from what are known as

² A great many works have been devoted to the question of financial remittances by immigrants to their families in their countries of origin and a few are cited in this book. Attention is also drawn to a Council of Europe publication (2009a) and the article by G. Massiah (2008).

“reasonable accommodation” policies of the bottom-up type and the positive discrimination policies implemented in some countries, which we will attempt to address by referring to the recommendations in the White Paper: those concerning a common core of values on the basis of which intercultural dialogue may take place and those concerning equality and dignity.