

THE GIRONA REPORT ON IMMIGRATION

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acism is a subject of debate. And talking about it has almost become a fashion. We anxiously ask ourselves whether or not we are racists, whether or not the country is, or quite simply if all human beings are. We hold debates, write articles, make speeches and express our opinions in a more or less civilized manner. In my opinion, this debate on racism –or, if you like, against racism– is not enough, and unless we adopt constructive attitudes and commitments it could become counterproductive. If what concerns us most is discussing whether or not we are racists, rather than creating the right conditions to make it possible for immigrants to integrate, then we shall be doing very little for either immigrants or the country. We must take the step from talking against racism to the moral commitment of individuals and institutions in favour of integration.

The special “regularization process” put into effect by the Spanish state in 1991, and which meant that 130,000 foreigners were able to get a work permit, has brought about a radical change in the situation. And now is the time to talk seriously about integration. Any foreign worker whose legal situation is in order has to be thought of as one more member of the society: he makes his contribution to economic progress and his culture of origin contains values that can enrich our own. We therefore need to create areas of cultural exchange and, respecting their culture, work shoulder to shoulder with those who share our values as regards democracy, respect for women, etc.

In Catalonia, the challenge of integration is inescapable. And overcoming it is up to all of us. The public will have to leave aside gut reactions, the media will have to be more realistic and objective, immigrant associations and other relevant non-governmental organisations will have to work together and find the way to collaborate with the administrations who have the ultimate responsibility in this field. Otherwise, we shall find ourselves in a dead-end street. There are cases in Europe that illustrate this quite clearly (Germany).

This is the thinking behind the “Girona Report”, a text,



the first of these characteristics to be presented in Spain, published by the Centre UNESCO de Catalunya, which is the result of the joint work of foreigners' associations and the non-governmental organisations of the area of Girona, and which makes fifty proposals to the three administrations (state, autonomy and local authorities) and to social agents, with the object of laying the foundations for collaboration in this field.

The report is arranged under four main headings: Legality, Integration, Attitudes, Recommendations. Legality. This analyses policies on movements, visas, asylum and refuge, and defends the need for controlling entry at the same time as permanence in the country is assured once the legal requirements have been covered. It also makes reference to current expulsion procedures, to security of residence and to policies of family regrouping.

Integration. This covers working conditions and technical training, accommodation, health services, women's promotion, social services, civil and political rights, the training of children and adults, the training of monitors and group leaders and general education for an intercultural society.

Attitudes. This addresses society in general, social attitudes, the discourse of the media and social operators and the attitudes of the public authorities. The report ends with the fifty proposals mentioned above.

Optimists speak of a ten-year period for the process of integration to take off. Ten years during which we must solve problems such as accommodation –one of the most pressing, and not only for immigrants–, medical services, training, etc. Ten years during which to debate and put into effect a global policy on immigration: a policy that must give special priority to social and political consensus and ensure that immigrant groups are protected from precarious situations that necessarily make for social conflicts. Lastly, I think the issue of immigration is a test of ethics for our modern democratic society. This is a good occasion to live up to egalitarian values, to the ideals of tolerance, solidarity and respect for minorities. ■