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## **Session 2: Building public confidence in Migration Issues**

### **Introductory speech**

**Mrs Solveig Horne, Minister of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, Norway**

Chair, Excellencies, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank to the OECD for hosting this important ministerial meeting.

It is a pleasure to be here in Paris - and to have this opportunity to discuss how to build public confidence in migration issues.

How to integrate immigrants into wider society is a challenging and important task for all of us.

It is very much at the heart of my work as the Norwegian Minister of Integration.

Immigration has made Norway more diverse as a nation. Since 2007, work has been the most common reason for immigration, followed by family immigration.

Knowledge, competence and diversity help to increase innovation and industrial development. While immigration adds to our diversity, there are also challenges.

The aim of our policy is to ensure that immigrants become a part of - and have a sense of belonging - to our society.

A primary goal is to ensure that more people participate in the labour market. A country`s main asset is its workforce.

As Minister of Integration I believe it is important that immigrants should be met with a requirement to contribute to - and participate - in the Norwegian society.

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Children of immigrants – born in Norway - should have the same opportunities to succeed in society as the children of ethnic Norwegians.

Our integration policy is designed to stimulate more people to join the labour market. The key to successful social and economic integration is work, education, the ability to speak the Norwegian language - and to have basic knowledge of our society.

Immigrants in Norway have a high employment rate. But - I am concerned about the women with immigrant background who participate less in the labour market. We have targeted measures aimed at improving these women's participation in working life.

For refugees and their families we have a compulsive – full time - program aimed at preparing them for employment and further education.

It is also designed to provide them with fundamental skills in the Norwegian language and some insight of our society.

Our aim is to strengthen this language training.

We are evaluating the results in this program. I have recently put forward a proposal that immigrants who are granted Norwegian citizenship should pass a test in spoken Norwegian and civics.

As part of the OECD's skills strategy the OECD presented a country report on Norway. The OECD concluded that we are not doing enough to ensure that people's skills are used effectively.

Norway appreciates working together with OECD on this topic.

We can become better at developing skills that are in demand.

We also need to consider improvements in the system for recognition of foreign qualifications.

My Government takes the OECD's findings very seriously - and has invited to a joint effort to provide a national skills strategy.

Immigrants account for a large proportion of the adults who need education and training.

One way to help prevent mismatches in the labour market is to coordinate better the policies for adults with weak basic skills.

The integration is not only my concern – it is also the concern of the whole Government.

The needs of immigrants and their children are provided for within the general welfare policies, programmes and services of our society.

It also means that all Ministries and public sector agencies on all levels must ensure that their services reach all individuals, including immigrants.

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Dialogue and contact between the government and the civil society are important elements in the policy making and policy implementation.

Several immigrant organizations have established themselves as a part of the voluntary sector - in the local communities.

Some weeks ago I hosted the first annual national conference for dialogue with immigrant organizations and government officials. We discussed and heard the participants view on matters like the labour market, health and child welfare services.

Including the civil society is an important element in our Governments policy on integration.

My final point is to underline the importance of data and research as a tool for monitoring and improving our policy. We can follow the integration of new immigrants over years.

But these facts and figures are also a tool to enlighten the public and political discussions. This is why we have invested a lot in developing data on migration - and integration.

The OECD is setting an important example to us all in its work on monitoring migration streams and developing indicators of integration.

OECDs reports are very useful for us when it comes to compare countries and analyze trends. We therefore invite you all to support the OECD in their important work and to invest in data development nationally.

It is much needed - to achieve the openness and trust - of a truly well integrated society!

Thank you for your attention!