

A European Partnership for Integration Offering opportunities for refugees¹ to integrate into the European labour market

Acknowledging that global mobility has become an inherent feature of the 21st century, and that the increased arrivals to EU Member States over the last years, in particular of persons in need of international protection, pose a number of challenges to Member States' societies,

Recognising that it is an important objective for the Member States to succeed in getting refugees quickly and effectively into work to face the humanitarian crisis Europe is confronted with while ensuring that they can fully contribute to the economy and to the cohesion of our societies,

Stressing that labour market integration requires an appropriate legal framework, incremental investments, taking into account the different skills levels of refugees and the time needed for an effective integration, and action from a multitude of stakeholders, both public and private, and that only a coordinated effort, each in their respective areas of competence, can lead to impactful and sustainable results,

Acknowledging that many national and local initiatives have already been taken in this area or are in the process of being initiated, including by Social and Economic partners, but that, in response to prevailing challenges in this area, more needs to be done towards implementing a comprehensive approach which empowers all relevant stakeholders at local, national and European level, while taking into account different national industrial relations and labour market contexts,

Underlining that employment is a core element of the integration process, as stressed by the European Commission in its Action Plan on the Integration of third-country nationals, adopted on 7 June 2016², and that inclusive labour markets should draw on the skills and talents of all, as stressed by the European Commission in its New Skills Agenda for Europe adopted on 10 June 2016³,

Acknowledging the essential role played by public authorities, particularly in the reception phase and in taking the first steps towards creating the appropriate conditions favouring labour market integration of refugees,

¹ The word "refugees" is used in the title and in the text for the sake of simplicity but should be understood as covering all third-country nationals legally staying in a Member State on protection or humanitarian grounds and who are granted access to the labour market, under the national law of the respective Member State.

² COM(2016) 377 final

³ COM(2016) 381 final.

Welcoming the engagement of Member States in the Council Conclusions on the integration of third-country nationals legally residing in the EU adopted on 9 December 2016⁴ to focus their efforts on the promotion of labour market integration of third-country nationals, as well as the Opinion of the Employment Committee on the labour market integration of refugees as endorsed by the Council on 15 June 2017⁵ calling for an early action by Member States on areas such as language training, combined where possible with work practice, vocational training, housing, health support, child care and for ensuring that the different layers of integration paths work in synergy,

Highlighting the specific role that Social and Economic partners play in the labour market integration of refugees, and their commitment and willingness to work with governments and other stakeholders to design, develop and implement policies to support inclusion, as stressed *inter alia* in their Statement on the refugee crisis at the Tripartite Social Summit of 16 March 2016⁶,

Stressing that equality of opportunity and treatment between national and refugee workers – in accordance with all relevant frameworks or agreements at national level as well as the objective situation of refugees and their skills as part of active labour market instruments available to job-seekers – is key to build solidarity and social cohesion in our societies,

Highlighting the specific challenge to identify and assess skills and competences of refugees and the need of upgrading and further developing their skills to facilitate their integration in the European labour market, in particular through language trainings, vocational education and training and entrepreneurial education,

Recognising the role that entrepreneurship can play in the successful integration of refugees in the European labour market,

Stressing that apprenticeships and other forms of work-based learning can be a key instrument for integration into the labour market and the need to build on the work done under the European Alliance for Apprenticeships,

By joining this Partnership, we endeavour to further promote the labour market integration of refugees in our respective domains of competence.

This Partnership should be based on the following principles:

1. Labour market integration should be supported as early as possible, as finding employment is fundamental to becoming part of the host country's economic and social life;
2. Successful integration efforts should benefit and bring value to refugees as well as to the entire workforce, companies, economy, and society at large, ensuring that no skill or competence is wasted;
3. Successful labour market integration necessitates a multi-stakeholders approach, involving public authorities, employment services, Social and Economic partners, business organisations, chambers of commerce and industry, skilled crafts chambers, companies and workers, public services' employers, education and training providers and civil society organisations, in full respect of the role and competences of each of these actors.

⁴ <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15312-2016-INIT/en/pdf>

⁵ <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9258-2017-INIT/en/pdf>

⁶ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=521&langId=en&agreementId=5464>

To promote this Partnership, the European Social and Economic partners undertake to take action in one or more of the following areas, according to their priorities and competences:

- Promoting the European Partnership for Integration among their members and raising awareness about the necessary conditions for early and effective labour market integration of refugees, as well as of its economic and social benefits, in close cooperation with national public authorities.
- Gathering and sharing examples of national and local initiatives and best practices aiming to facilitate the labour market integration of refugees on issues, such as:
 - facilitation of the identification, assessment and documentation of competences, skills and qualifications;
 - organisation of mentoring programmes that support refugees to integrate into the workplace and/or support their skills development;
 - provision of pre-recruitment and on-the-job training;
 - provision of information and advice to refugees on rights and duties concerning their access to the labour market and at the workplace, in accordance with national law and practices;
 - support to employers in hiring refugees (e.g. through providing information on legal framework, providing training etc.);
 - support to trainers in adapting training to refugees' needs, for example in the context of vocational training while taking into account employers' skills needs;
 - provision of post-placement support to refugees after they start employment to ensure sustainability of employment;
 - promotion of inclusion and non-discrimination at the workplace.
- Providing feedback to public authorities at all appropriate levels on the specific challenges faced in the economic and social integration of refugees and cooperating further with them, and all other relevant stakeholders, to support labour market integration in the areas most relevant in their respective countries.
- Fostering closer cooperation between public and private enterprises, business organisations, chambers of commerce and industries, skilled crafts chambers, trade unions and migrants' associations, by exchanging objectives, methods and practices related to labour market integration of refugees.

The European Commission endeavours to:

- Continue to work with Social and Economic partners, employers and other key actors to support the aims of the European Partnership for Integration.
- Continue to address the issue of labour market integration of refugees in relevant groups, committees and networks at EU level, such as the Employment Committee, the European Integration Network and the European Network of Public Employment Services.
- Work with relevant EU bodies, such as the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee, in the area of labour market integration of refugees.

- In line with the Action Plan on the integration of third country nationals⁷, promote synergies between relevant EU funds to support labour market integration of refugees.
- Support under the Asylum, Migration and integration Fund projects promoting sharing of good practices and experiences, as well as the setting up and development of transnational networks aimed at facilitating the labour market integration of refugees.
- Continue to support the identification, assessment and validation of skills and the transparency of qualification of refugees, including through the tools developed under the New Skills Agenda for Europe, such as the "Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals".
- Ensure synergies with other related initiatives at European level, in particular the European Alliance for Apprenticeships to support the integration of refugees into the European labour market through apprenticeships.
- Promote entrepreneurship among migrants, including refugees, in line with the Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan⁸.
- Give visibility at European level to activities put in place by employers to support the integration of refugees and other migrants into the labour market through the initiative "Employers together for integration"⁹.

We acknowledge that these actions require a multi-stakeholder approach, involving Social and Economic partners, business organisations, the European Commission, Member States authorities, including public employment services, large companies, SMEs and public services' employers, chambers of commerce and industry, skilled crafts chambers, education and training providers, the civil society and the refugees themselves.

We, the European Commission and the Social and Economic partners, commit to meet regularly to take stock of the results achieved and plan possible further action.

⁷ COM(2016) 377 final.

⁸ COM/2012/0795 final.

⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/legal-migration/european-dialogue-skills-and-migration/integration-pact_en

Signatures

For the Commission:

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