

Briefing paper on Migration: Challenges and opportunities for the integration of migrants in Europe

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I. Introduction

The integration of migrants is not a new issue, but it is becoming more pressing because of the large numbers of migrants that have entered Europe during the past two decades¹. The most recent surge is fuelled by the growing numbers of Syrians, Iraqis, Libyans, Afghans and Eritreans escaping war, ethnic conflict or economic hardship and risking their lives to attempt to reach Europe in 2015-2016². The incidence of migrants is very different across European countries. Italy, Greece, Malta and Cyprus have been particularly experienced a disproportionate number of new arrivals. More recently, transit countries such as Hungary and Croatia have also seen heavy inflows, while Germany was the country with the largest absolute increase in the number of first time asylum applicants due to its favourable policy toward migration and asylum seekers and its relatively healthy economy³.

In 2016, the EU political debate focused on the main challenges faced by the EU and Member States not only in managing the high number of actual arrivals but also in promoting integration policies that could have a social, economic and political impact on the European Union. In many EU countries, the political scene has been dominated by growing anti-migrant sentiments which considered migration as a threat for cultural identities and welfare systems. *“Such fears and the exaggeration of both numbers of actual arrivals and actual impact have resulted in increased xenophobia, hate, and has been used to justify restrictive immigration policies and increased discrimination of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in accessing their economic, social and cultural rights”*⁴.

Migrants face a greater risk of social exclusion than the native population, especially with respect to accessing employment, education, health and social services. Within the migrant population some groups are particularly at risk and thus require tailored integration measures. This is especially the case for third-country nationals, refugees and beneficiaries of international protection, low-skilled migrants, women, unaccompanied minors, migrants with disabilities and irregular migrants. *“The integration of migrants in a host country is multidimensional; it should involve their socio-economic integration, meaning the convergence between the migrant and native population with respect to access to the labour market, earnings, education and training, housing, social benefits, and social services, but also legal and political integration, i.e. citizenship rights, and, in the more extensive form of assimilation, cultural integration, through the acceptance of the host country’s values and beliefs”*⁵.

In this very complicated context, not-for-profit social service providers and civil society organisations have been involved in the provision of short and long-term solutions for building cohesive societies and fostering the integration of migrants and refugees in the receiving countries, as well as the integration of otherwise disadvantaged people within their own country.

In this paper the term “migrant” is used to indicate people with a migration background, also including refugees and asylum seekers. Often the terms refugees and migrants are used interchangeably, but their meanings are different: refugee is defined by the UN Convention Related to the Status of Refugees (1954) as someone who is fleeing conflict or persecution (for reasons of race, religion, nationality, social group or political opinions) and is seeking refuge across international borders. A refugee who has submitted a request for asylum in a hosting

¹ Today, there are 20 million non-EU nationals residing in the EU who make up 4% of its total population. See: Eurostat (2015).

² The total number of asylum applicants (first-time applicants and repeat applicants) in EU Member States topped 1 million in 2015 and 317.900 in 2016 of which 96% were first time applicants. See [Eurostat, asylum applicants](#).

³ According to Eurostat: 101.700 more applicants were received in Germany, followed by Italy and Greece (12.200 and 9.200 more applicants respectively). Greece has notably recorded the second largest relative increase of first time asylum seekers, 3 times more (or 9.200 applicants more) in the second quarter of 2016 compared with the same quarter of 2015. Croatia, despite the small number of first time applicants, has recorded the largest relative increase of 13 times more first time asylum applicants (or 300 more) in the second quarter of 2016 compared with the same quarter of 2015.

⁴ Social Services Europe “Role of social service providers in the integration of migrants”, www.socialserviceseurope.eu

⁵ Peer Review in social protection and social inclusions - *Making a success of integrating immigrants in the labour market*, Manuela Samek Lodovici, November 2010

country and awaits a decision on the application for refugee status is called an asylum seeker. A migrant is someone who makes a conscious choice to leave their country for a better quality of life. An irregular migrant is someone who lacks legal status in a transit or host country.

This paper provides a brief analysis of the social and economic implications of migration for the EU, the impact on social services and an overview of the EU political and financial measures adopted to promote the integration of migrants. It also showcases examples of successful initiatives funded by the European Union to promote the integration of migrants. This briefing paper represents the first step of a longer process that involves EPR members in reflecting on and testing how labour market integration models and Vocational Education and Training services (VET) developed for PWD can support migrants. The paper highlights the similarities between migrants and people with disabilities (hereafter PWD) in accessing social and health care services, education and labour market, and the main challenges they are confronted with in participating in society. Social Services Europe recommendations on how to enable a supportive environment for social service providers to offer support and integration services to migrant are also integrated in this paper.

II. The social and economic implications of migration for the EU

The recent increase in the flow of asylum seekers to Europe has undoubtedly provoked a growing interest and concern about migration and it has raised questions about the EU's ability to quickly integrate the newcomers into the economy and society. At the same time, forced and economic migratory movements are likely to continue in the future. This is due to the persistency of conflicts in neighbouring regions, to the increasing number and magnitude of natural disasters resulting from climate change and to the increasing of poverty in the world. Migration impacts many different aspects of society, both in the countries of origin and destination. Typically, migrants come from regions of lower labour productivity and tend to reach higher labour productivity regions. As such, migration generates economic gains and can be a decisive factor in helping Europe to address its challenges: ageing population, prosperity and security.

Looking at the economic dimension of migration, newcomers represent a valuable labour force that can in the long-term period support EU countries to recover their economies. In the short term, the reception and support of asylum seekers, through the provision of services such as housing, food, health and education, require additional public spending. This effect is concentrated in the main destination countries, namely Austria, Germany, and Sweden. The fiscal impact of refugees is particularly significant for countries facing budgetary constraints or unprecedented numbers of people coming in or passing through.

The impact of refugees in the medium and long-term period depends on how (and how fast) they will be integrated in the labour market, *“the extent to which the newcomers’ skills will complement or substitute those of the native labour force, and their impact on the allocation of resources, product mix, and production technology”*⁶. Rapid labour market integration is key to reducing the net fiscal cost associated with the current inflow of asylum seekers. Indeed, the sooner the refugees gain employment, the more they will help the public finances by paying income tax and social security contributions. Their successful labour market integration will also counter some of the adverse fiscal effects of population aging. On the contrary, slow integration processes reflects the presence of factors and barriers that make difficult for newcomers to find a job: lack of language skills and transferable job qualifications, legal constraints on work during the asylum application period, high entry wages and other labour market rigidities.

⁶ International Monetary Fund, *“The Refugee Surge in Europe: Economic Challenges”* by Shekhar Aiyar, Bergljot Barkbu, Nicoletta Batini, Helge Berger, Enrica Detragiache, Allan Dizioli, Christian Ebeke, Huidan Lin, Linda Kaltani, Sebastian Sosa, Antonio Spilimbergo, and Petia Topalova, January 2016.

Another important limit is represented by the so called “welfare traps” created by the interaction of social benefits and the tax system that tends to keep people on social insurance because the withdrawal of benefits that comes with entering low-paid work causes a no significant increase in total income and improvement of quality of life.

III. Challenges experienced by migrants in integration and access to services

The argument of bringing people into jobs to make them active contributors in society is widely accepted and often evoked in relation to the inclusion of PWD in society. PWD, as well as migrants, are often socially excluded and face a higher risk of poverty. As stated in the European Commission Joint Employment Report 2017, “unemployed people (66.6%) third-country nationals (48.2%) and persons with disabilities (30.1% in 2014) are among those most affected by poverty and social exclusion”⁷. Often, PWD and migrants suffer from discrimination in terms of access to rights, employment, education and social services. Challenges that migrants experience and similarities and differences with the situation of PWD are outlined below.

a) Accessing the labour market

The road to employment is not without obstacles for migrants. First of all, the transition period from official recognition to getting an identity card can be time consuming. This may hinder the person in pursuing education/training (e.g. language course or professional course) or being able to apply for a job shortly after arrival due to national policies/procedures⁸. Linked to this is the recognition in the receiving country of a degree obtained in the country of origin. Since the procedures often take time and money, migrants may decide to not have their diploma recognised. Also, competencies and previous work experiences are not easily acknowledged in the receiving country. In addition, it is very common that female refugees with children did not obtain the necessary work experience needed⁹. Furthermore, geographical factors may also play a role in the migrant’s access to the labour market. In some European countries the reception centres¹⁰ are remotely situated which can cause difficulties in reaching job opportunities situated in more central areas due to the lack of/poorly organised public transportation¹¹. Unfortunately, when looking for work, migrants are also subjected to discrimination and stereotypes because of difference in religion, norms and values etc.¹²

A final and more obvious barrier to overcome is the difference in culture. It needs to be taken into consideration that there are challenges to tackle for employment services when working with migrants. This means that employment services have to adapt on different levels in order to answer the migrant’s needs in the job searching process. A challenge can be in ensuring staff training about intercultural communication. Examples of topics that would need to be addressed are cultural differences in politeness, communication with the opposite sex or discussing certain sensitive topics¹³.

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2017-european-semester-draft-joint-employment-report_en page 13

⁸ http://www.caritasinternational.be/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Caritas_Brochure-Integration-2014_FR_web.pdf?x28370. Note: This research only entails Belgium.

⁹ http://www.caritasinternational.be/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Caritas_Brochure-Integration-2014_FR_web.pdf?x28370

¹⁰ A reception centre is a location where refugees/immigrants are accommodated immediately after arrival in their country of migration.

¹¹ Eurofound (2016), *Approaches to the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers*. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

¹² http://www.caritasinternational.be/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Caritas_Brochure-Integration-2014_FR_web.pdf?x28370

¹³ PERCO (2004). Cultural diversity in your organisation, p. 23-24. Available at <http://redcross.eu/en/upload/documents/pdf/2013/Migration/perco-diversity-en.pdf>.

Similar to migrants, PWD might face discrimination such as being refused for job interviews because of stereotypes¹⁴. Next, PWD also encounter difficulties due to inaccessible transportation¹⁵. Research shows that both migrants and PWD indicate the family situation as a possible obstacle to access the labour market, more specifically because of caring responsibilities (e.g. taking care of children)¹⁶. A last similarity between both groups is inaccessible information. Information about procedures with regards to work/education for migrants might be unclear¹⁷. For PWD an example can be not providing information in accessible formats such as an audio or Braille version for people who are visually impaired or a simple language version for persons with an intellectual disability¹⁸. For some PWD, 'easy-to-read' versions of written information can facilitate understanding. Ensuring the availability of documentation and information in easy-to-read can also be helpful for migrants learning a new language in the host country, making it easier for them to understand information, rights and obligations. As mentioned above, migrants can have work experience and the necessary education, but the lack of recognition leads to difficulties accessing the labour market. This is a difference between migrants and PWD where research shows that the latter group has significant lower levels of education compared to people without disabilities¹⁹.

The experience of EPR members in providing high quality services to PWD in the fields of vocational education and training and employment reintegration offers some insights on how labour market integration models and VET developed for PWD can be transferred to working with migrants in order to overcome barriers to the integration process. Some examples are provided below.

- Supported Employment is a method of working with disabled people and other disadvantaged groups to access and maintain paid employment in the open labour market. Supportive measures include assistance to the employee before, during, and after obtaining a job as well as support to the employer. Key to this is the job coach function. The perspective of Supported Employment is the focus on people's abilities rather than disabilities. The emphasis is on employment and not on activation or subsistence. Supported Employment is completely consistent with the concepts of empowerment, social inclusion, dignity and respect for individuals. This method of working is a proactive policy in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. The [European Union of Supported Employment \(EUSE\) Toolkit](#) and the [Study of Supported Employment in Europe](#) provide more comprehensive information about this method.
- Individual Placement Support is a model of supported employment. IPS was developed for people who have a long-term severe mental illness, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major depressive disorder, and who have difficulty functioning in important life domains, including employment. Different from most other vocational rehabilitation approaches based on the skills-training model, the IPS model has no prerequisites, no classes, no training, and it is fully integrated with the individual's other mental health and social services. IPS services are delivered by a team that typically includes at least two full-time employment specialists supervised by a team leader with IPS experience and sufficient time to provide intensive supervision, including field mentoring in job development. Professionals from each sector who assist the person meet regularly to coordinate and develop a plan that suited the individual's specific mental health and employment goals. Important considerations for IPS include its impact on

¹⁴ Sally, L. (2010). Discrimination and other barriers to employment for teens and young adults with disabilities, p. 4-5. DOI : 10.3109/09638288.2010.531372. See <http://bit.ly/2kQ5ZGs>

¹⁵ ILO (September 2015). Inclusion of people with disabilities in national employment policies, p. 1. Available on http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_407646.pdf

¹⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Disability_statistics_-_barriers_to_employment; http://www.caritasinternational.be/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Caritas_Brochure-Integration-2014_FR_web.pdf?x28370

¹⁷ Ibidem

¹⁸ http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_407646.pdf

¹⁹ OECD (2010). *Sickness, disability and work: breaking the barriers* ©, p. 27. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/mental_health/eu_compass/reports_studies/disability_synthesis_2010_en.pdf.

general well-being, IPS implementation, financing, and cost-effectiveness and expansion to different target groups²⁰.

- Peer-to-peer support is a strategy that involves individuals in pairs or in small groups exchanging knowledge and experience with each other. It recognises that learning takes place between individuals and it facilitates interpersonal interchanges that are well-matched and that are based on trust and commitment. It is a research-based methodology that has positive results related to individual achievement and a sense of “belonging” to the course he follows. Peer supports provide teachers with a learning tool to enhance instruction for students with and without disabilities. Peer support can use in different ways to meet the instructional and social needs of the person. The “[Peer2Peer](#)” project, implemented by INTRAS Foundation in Spain, showcases how this method can be used to support the employment of people with mental health problems.

b) Accessing health care and social services

Beyond its economic dimension, migration has also an impact on health care systems and social services, which need to adapt quickly to the increasing diversity of populations in Europe and ensure their responsiveness. In general, barriers to access health care and social services are related to the physical environment, to information and communications technology, to legislation or policy, or to societal attitudes.

Migrants in particular face specific health challenges and are more exposed to physical and mental health problems, which is in part due to the poor health and living conditions in their countries of origin, lack of employment and the trauma associated with the causes of migration and with the journey they headed out to reach Europe²¹. Often, the specific health needs of migrants are poorly understood, the communication between health care providers and migrant clients is very limited due to the different spoken languages and the cultural background which may lead to late diagnosis and to a choice of a non-optimal treatment. The main reason for this lack of understanding is the lack of skilled interpreters due to poor funding and to the habit to prefer ad hoc interpretation by family members and others accompanying the person in need of care. Another reason is the scarcity of data on health status of migrants and their utilisation of health care and social services²². Newcomers often are not aware about their entitlements to health care and social services and even if it is not the case, they are less acknowledged on how to enter and navigate in the health system which is not prepared to respond effectively.

The inaccessibility of health care facilities, the lack of accessible information about health care and social services and rights, the lack of adequate competences for health care professionals have also been identified as major barriers in accessing health care for PWD. In addition, misconceptions about the health care needs of PWD and discriminatory treatment against PWD by private health insurance can prevent them from enjoy their rights to access the highest attainable standard of health without discrimination as enshrined in article 25 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities²³. Insufficient attention has been given to groups facing greater risk of exclusion as a result of the intersection between gender, sexual orientation and other grounds of discrimination such as disability. In particular, access to sexual and reproductive rights is by and large impossible for many women and girls with disabilities. Moreover, PWD, as well as migrants, can face financial barriers to access of health services due to a low or no income. As reported in the European Commission Joint

²⁰ More on IPS in “Individual Placement and Support (IPS) Supported Employment”, Gary R. Bond at <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195389678/obo-9780195389678-0202.xml> or in the presentation done by Blanka Storen Vaczy, Norasone AS, Norway, at the EPR Annual Conference 2015 on [Mental health recovery through work: Individual Placement and Support](#)

²¹ Gushulak et al. 2010

²² Rafnsson and Bhopal 2008; Ingleby 2009; Padilla and Miguel 2009

²³ EDF <http://www.edf-feph.org/health>

Employment Report 2017, “the proportion of the EU population facing unmet needs for medical examination due to either too high costs, too long waiting time or travelling distance, has slightly increased since 2011...with marked increases in Greece, Estonia, Ireland and Portugal”²⁴.

The study “Migration and health in the European Union” published by the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, highlights the point that migrants who have not yet introduced a formal demand in the host country might be inhibited from accessing care²⁵. For migrants, legal status is one of the most important determinants of the access to health services in a country. Each refugee and migrant must have full access to the health system when needed, to quality health care and social services, without discrimination on the basis of gender, age, religion, nationality or race. The World Health Organisation (WHO) supports policies to provide health care services nevertheless migrants' legal status. Rapid access to health care, resulting in adequate cure and treatments, can avoid the spread of diseases and prevent worsening of diseases such as diabetes and hypertension that if not tackled can become a threat for life²⁶.

IV. The EU policy responses and funding to support the integration of migrants

During 2015, the EU adopted a number of **policy measures** aimed at improving the management of migration by reinforcing the control of the Mediterranean Sea and helping entry-point Member States, such as Italy and Greece to process asylum applications. The EU announced two reallocation plans for refugees based on new distribution criteria that include population, GDP, average number of past asylum applications and unemployment rates in the destination country (September: EU Decision 1253/2015 First reallocation plan - September: EU Decision 1601/2015 Second reallocation plan).

In June 2016, the EU approved the [Directive on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purpose of highly skilled employment](#), a legal proposal to reform the rules on highly skilled migrants coming to the EU to work²⁷ in order to improve the EU's ability to attract and retain highly skilled third-country nationals, since demographic patterns suggest that even with the more skilled EU workforce there will still be a need to attract additional talent in the future. The new proposal establishes a single EU-wide scheme, replacing parallel national schemes for the purpose of highly skilled employment to provide more clarity for applicants and employers and make the scheme more visible and competitive.

In parallel, the EU announced €1.7 billion in **EU funding** to help the most affected Member States to manage the flow of migrants, to support aid organisations to provide immediate relief to refugees and to encourage services providers to develop sustainable path for the integration. An overview of the EU funding programmes supporting the integration of migrants in the labour market is provided here below, and many programmes are also those that can be used to support the inclusion of PWD.

a) *Specific EU funding programme targeting migrants:*

- [Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund \(AMIF\)](#) run by DG Migration and Home Affairs, aims mostly at the very early stages of managing migration flows. Its four strands are (1) Asylum, (2) Legal

²⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2017-european-semester-draft-joint-employment-report_en page 68

²⁵ European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies Serie, Migration and health in the European Union, Bernd Rechel, Philipa Mladovsky, Walter Devillé, Barbara Rijks, Roumyana Petrova-Benedict, Martin McKee

²⁶ <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-determinants/migration-and-health/migrant-health-in-the-european-region/migration-and-health-key-issues>

²⁷The EU Blue Card scheme, adopted in 2009, has proven insufficient and unattractive so far and is therefore underused. Restrictive admission conditions and the existence of parallel rules, conditions and procedures at national level have limited the use of the EU scheme. Only 31% of highly-educated migrants to OECD countries chose the EU as a destination, meaning skilled workers are choosing other destinations which compete economically with the EU. http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-2041_en.htm

migration and integration, (3) Return, and (4) Solidarity. The fund can support a variety of activities like improvement of accommodation and reception services for asylum seekers, information campaigns in non-EU countries, education and language training or staff training for people working with migrants.

b) *EU Funding Programmes targeting disadvantaged groups (in general):*

- **[European Social Fund \(ESF\)](#)** is the EU's main tool to support employment, education and training, through investing in human capital. The ESF, implemented at national level, promotes high levels of employment and job quality, improve access to the labour market, support geographical and occupational mobility of workers, encourages a high level of education and training for all and supports the transition between education and employment for young people. Moreover, at least the 20% of the fund has to be allocated to actions combating poverty and social exclusion. This means that people in difficulties and those from disadvantaged groups, as migrants and/or PWD, will get more support to have the same opportunities as others to integrate into labour market and in the whole society. More information can be found in the [EPR briefing paper on ESF](#).
- **[European Regional Development Fund \(ERDF\)](#)** aims to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the EU and between regions. The ERDF contributes to reducing the gap between the levels of development of the various regions by supporting investments in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); in local infrastructure in particular sectors such as health, culture, tourism, education, energy and environment; in cooperation and exchange of experience between regions, towns, and relevant social, economic and environmental actors. ERDF can be used for measures investing in health and social infrastructures, such as accommodation for vulnerable groups, hospitals, schools, facilities for childcare, elderly care and long-term care; measures to reduce health inequalities or promote social inclusion through improved access to social, cultural and recreational services, and to contribute to the transition from institutional to community-based services. Services for migrants, as well as for older people, and PWD are highlighted as being in particular need of infrastructure investment.
- **[Urban Innovative Actions \(UIA\)](#)** is an initiative of the European Commission that provides urban areas throughout Europe with resources to test new and unproven solutions to address urban challenges. Based on article 8 of ERDF, the Initiative has a total ERDF budget of EUR 372 million for 2014-2020. The first call (EUR 80 million) was launched in December 2015 and covers a number of themes like the "inclusion of migrants and refugees". The second call was launched in December 2016 and is open until the 14th of April 2017. To answer the increasingly complex challenges they face, urban authorities need to go beyond traditional policies and services - they need to be bold and innovative. Urban Innovative Actions offers urban authorities with the possibility to experiment the most innovative and creative solutions. The initiative supports urban authority of more than 50.000 inhabitants, or a grouping of urban authorities with a total population of a least 50.000 inhabitants, located in one of the 28 EU Member States. However, given the complexity of the urban challenges, they cannot act alone. In order to design and implement effective and innovative solutions, urban authorities need to involve all the key stakeholders that can bring expertise and knowledge on the specific policy issue to be addressed. These include agencies, organisations, private sector, research institutions, NGOs including service providers.
- **[Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived \(FEAD\)](#)** focusing on vulnerable people living at risk of poverty and social exclusion. The objective is to promote social cohesion, enhance social inclusion, and thus contribute to the Europe 2020 target on poverty reduction. FEAD shall help alleviating the worst forms of poverty, by providing non-financial, basic material assistance and social inclusion activities. FEAD is designed to offer support especially to those furthest from the labour market and not (yet) able to benefit from programmes such as the European Social Fund (ESF). FEAD support is meant to respond

to basic material and assistance needs, accompanied by different forms of social assistance, counselling and support. Early proposals for the FEAD programme suggested a focus on particular issues i.e. tackle homelessness, child poverty and food support. However, the FEAD regulation maintained a broader approach, insists nonetheless on addressing the immediate needs of the most vulnerable groups in society.

- **[Programme for Employment and Social Innovation \(EaSI\)](#)**, run by the DG Employment and Social Affairs, promotes a high level of quality and sustainable employment, guaranteeing adequate and decent social protection, combating social exclusion and poverty and improving working conditions. It aims to increase the availability and accessibility of microfinance for vulnerable groups and micro-enterprises, and increase access to finance for social enterprises. A call on “Fast Track Integration into the Labour Market for Third Country Nationals Targeting Exclusively Asylum Seekers, Refugees and their Family Members” was published at the end of 2016 with the aim to finance innovative transnational projects to test and implement innovative policy schemes and delivery mechanisms that will ensure and facilitate a swift labour market integration of the specific target groups of third country nationals.
- **[ERASMUS+ \(European Programme for education, training, youth and sport\)](#)**, run by the European Commission’s Executive Agency for Education, Audiovisual and Culture (EACEA), aims to contribute to growth, jobs, social equity and inclusion and provides a strategic framework for education and training. Erasmus+ also aims to promote lifelong learning in the field of higher education, and contributes to achieving the objectives of the EU Youth Strategy. Within its various strands “key action 2 – cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practice” and “key action 3 – support for policy reform” also address projects in connection with migrants and refugees. Calls for proposals are published on a regular basis.
- **[Europe for Citizens \(EU programme for history, diversity and participation\)](#)** is run by the European Commission’s Executive Agency for Education, Audiovisual and Culture (EACEA) and aims at contributing to citizens’ understanding of the EU and its history and diversity, improving conditions for civic and democratic participation and raising awareness of remembrance of common history and values. The work programme for 2016 explicitly encourages project applications dealing with the fight against the stigmatisation of immigrants and fostering a two-way process of intercultural dialogue (a total budget for this strand in 2016 allocates EUR 17 million).
- **[European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development \(EAFRD\)](#)**, run by DG Agriculture and Rural Development, co-finances the rural development programmes of the Member States. It is implemented by national authorities and provides medium-term assistance (2-3 years) in housing, healthcare, education and employment in rural areas, also focusing on marginalised communities. Within its objective of combating poverty and social exclusion in rural areas, the fund may contribute to the empowerment migrants, facilitating their access to rural development measures, and promoting their integration in the local/rural economy and population.
- **[European Maritime and Fisheries Fund \(EAMFF\)](#)** is run by DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries. , As regards migrants and refugees, it aims to contribute to social integration by providing professional training and education as well as start-up support so that migrants could better integrate into the labour market or if they wish to become self-employed. Further to that, the implementation of integrated local development strategies may also provide wide range of services, including reception of asylum-seekers, not only within but also beyond the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

V. Examples of local initiatives financed by EU funding programmes promoting the integration of migrants

A number of good practices for refugee integration have been developed in the past, especially in countries with a long-standing experience in integrating refugees. Policies in Sweden, show, for example, how to take account the availability of jobs at the local labour market. Norway has developed an exemplary streamed language training system as well as a national recognition scheme for humanitarian migrants with little or no documentary proof of credentials. More recently, Germany has rolled out an evaluated pilot on early intervention: Public Employment Service staff go out into reception facilities to assess competencies of asylum seekers. The UK is training former refugees to work as mentors, so-called link-officers. The Slovenian and the Portuguese “one-stop shops” are examples of how to build up a coordinated infrastructure for integration in Eastern and Southern EU Member States.

The following projects have been funded by the programmes mentioned above and give examples about what kinds of project are likely to be funded:

- The **AMIF project *New Channels for the Integration of Third Country Nationals (TCNs) in the local community*** is implemented as a collaborative project by 5 Municipalities across Nicosia region, Nicosia Municipal Multifunctional Foundation and two companies. The Programme delivers multiple actions that support different dimensions of the process of integration of TCNs in Cypriot society, such as providing social support and orientation services, creating opportunities for participation in cultural events, sports activities and other forms of interaction with the local community and facilitating the networking and collaboration between associations and informal groups of TCNs with Local Authorities agencies and other local organisations. More information at <http://localintegration.eu/en/>
- The **ESF-funded project “Razkrite roke 3”** brings together immigrant women to set up a business while improving their language skills. It is a creative and educational project that wants to improve the socialisation and employability of unemployed immigrant women, mostly from the former Yugoslavia, living in Jesenice. These women have been regularly meeting in Jesenice and Ljubljana, where they have learned various textile design techniques and put them into practice while at the same time improving their Slovenian language skills. The aim of the project is also to prepare a collection of textile products to sell online and to participate in the creation of a promotional video to use on crowd-funding platforms. ‘Razkrite roke 3’ is co-financed by the ESF and will conclude in July 2017 with a major exhibition in the centre of Ljubljana.
- The **“2 Seas Succes” project funded by the ERDF programme**, aimed at improving quality of life and social inclusion by reducing unemployment levels, is the result of cross-border exchange and co-operation between five agencies operating in the UK, France and Belgium. Disadvantaged neighbourhoods in all partner areas have experienced significant increases in unemployment over recent years, in some cases a doubling in joblessness. The Succes project explores alternative ways of reaching out to specific individuals and groups living in such communities – young people, the long-term unemployed, migrant families, women and single mothers – to improve their connection with the labour market. It works on three fundamental aspects: improving physical and social mobility, building soft skills while tackling the adverse personal circumstances that form barriers to employment, and developing vocational skills and qualifications.
- The **CoRE project funded by the UIA** is meant to support the implementation of innovative approaches and methods in integration work. The project focuses on close cooperation with partner organisations and, most importantly, with the people who are trying to make a new home in Vienna. CoRE’s focus on skills and competences ensures that already during the asylum procedure, refugees’ competences will be routinely assessed and documented in a newly developed data base. Activities in the field of career planning,

competence development and specific trainings facilitate refugees' readiness for the labour market. As a result, refugees' preparation for the labour market starts already during the asylum procedure. More at <http://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities/vienna>

- **“A chance for tomorrow” project funded by the FEAD** is part of the Regional Operational Programme for the Lublin province in Poland 2014-2020, and will run from June 2016 to August 2017. With a total budget of €360,000 the project seeks to support 120 disabled individuals. The support received through the project includes psychological counselling, career counselling, professional workshops and the drafting of an individual action plan. The project also offers specialised training opportunities to develop participants' professional skills in a range of fields and scholarships of up to €300 a month. The ultimate aim is to find employment for at least 60 beneficiaries, 30 of them lasting for a minimum of three months, and at least 10 people should gain new qualifications.
- **The EMPAC project funded by the EaSI programme** aimed to improve the integration and educational achievement of under-performing newly-arrived migrant pupils aged three to 11 years old. It aimed to identify and pilot new innovative training pedagogies as well as effective existing strategies for supporting the integration of newly-arrived families and children into school life within a rigorous research framework in the London Borough of Ealing (UK), Bologna (Italy) and the Ústí region (Czech Republic). This project was funded by the previous programme 2007-2013.
- **ERASMUS+ project “Our asylum seekers center - Life and moments”**. The centre for asylum seekers “St. Elisabeth Haus” is located in Manderfeld (German speaking community) of Belgium. The centre accommodates up to 216 residents of different cultures, nationalities and religions. The centre is managed by the Belgian Red Cross (CRB). There are 18 CRB arrival centres with a capacity of +/- 3800 places for asylum seekers in the south part of Belgium. The CRB tasks include the provision of material aid as well as helping refugees in their difficult situation. The main aim is to offer a safe place to the inhabitants during their procedure, therefore, 25 people are employed in Manderfeld. Another important task is to assist the residents in daily life to facilitate integration. Activities like sport, culture, language, computer courses and long-term projects are currently organised.
- **The “Provins Mat” project funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)** used the hidden cooking skills of female immigrants to create a successful enterprise with six employees in the municipality of Botkyrka in Sweden. “Provins Mat” created a catering business in late 2011 with start-up support from the EAFRD. It recruited its cooks through the local employment service, but also tried to get in touch with people who could not be reached through formal channels. The priority was to find women who were energetic and able to cook interesting and exciting food. It was not a requirement that the women had any qualifications or professional experience in the food industry. The business was based on the culinary traditions of the women's different homelands. “Provins Mat” created a number of real jobs for foreign-born women, thousands of customers got to meet exciting new cuisines and she herself had a positive learning experience.

VI. Social Services Europe recommendations on how to enable the environment for social service providers to offer quality support and integration services to migrants

In 2016, EPR contributed to developing [Social Services Europe briefing paper](#) on the role of social service providers in the integration of migrants and on main challenges they are confronted with. The paper presents some recommendations on how to enable the environment for social service providers to offer quality support and integration services to migrants.

1) Migration is a social and economic opportunity for the European Union.

Contrary to much of the negative rhetoric surrounding migration, refugees and asylum seekers in Europe, Social Services Europe believes that there is a social and economic opportunity for the EU. This view is shared by many institutional commentators including the IMF²⁸ and OECD²⁹ who forecast that migrants are likely to make a net contribution to public finances and be important contributors to growth in our economies. However, for migrants to be able to make such contributions, and most importantly, to ensure their fundamental human rights are observed, access to services is essential.

2) Social and health care services are a key component for the integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers

Access to social and health care services is a fundamental right and meets many of the basic needs we have as people³⁰. As such, it is a right that must be applied regardless of origin or status, regular or irregular. Access to affordable and quality services along with adequate income support and inclusive labour markets, are the cornerstones of effective integration and sustainable inclusion policies. Social service providers have an important role to play for successful integration as they have the know-how and experience of supporting vulnerable people, for instance in accessing the labour market or overcoming trauma. Specific and tailored services must be made available for those in acute situations such as pregnant women, women who have suffered from sexual violence, unaccompanied minors and people with disabilities. Access should be immediate, particularly as concerns preventative healthcare and to psychosocial and post trauma support as well as access to housing, education and labour market integration services. Asylum seekers and refugees must also have access soon after their arrival to language courses and translation/interpretation services.

Moreover, effective social and health care services provision must be integrated and coordinated wherever possible to support accessibility and effectiveness. In the same vein, services relating to employment, housing, education and other areas should ensure good communication with each other to ensure that migrants receive the appropriate services in their personal situations with a holistic approach.

3) Universal access to services is key for inclusive, hate-free societies

Universal services and benefits should cover essential needs and all persons should have equal access. In recent years, fundamental rights have come under pressure throughout the EU and world-wide, partly because of measures taken in the context of austerity policies pursued by governments'. Such measures have reduced the quality of and access to education, social assistance, healthcare and services of general economic interest, while the right to work and the right to basic social security guarantees has also been affected. Social Services Europe rejects the logic of austerity and the reductions this has led to in social service provision. Trade-offs between social budgets for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and other groups of users are not acceptable. They are

²⁸ IMF Staff Discussion Note – The Refugee Surge In Europe, January 2016, <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdn/2016/sdn1602.pdf>

²⁹ OECD Discussion Note – Is Migration good for the Economy? May 2014
<https://www.oecd.org/migration/OECD%20Migration%20Policy%20Debates%20Numero%202.pdf>

³⁰ C.f. Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Articles 21, 24, 25; 26; 34, 35; 36

not based on economic logic but on politically vested interests, which block the provision of social services and benefits. Resources must be extended to cover the needs of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, rather than general social budgets being redistributed. Such redistribution is creating new provision gaps and promoting competition for resources. This is potentially damaging in relation to the public perception of the impact of migration on social cohesion; welfare standards and the common good. Such negative perceptions can create social disharmony which can lead to disaffection, discrimination, racism and xenophobia. Social services must be supported in combatting such rhetoric and actions and provide more opportunities for community cohesion. In addition, the EU and Member States must defuse any emerging culture of competition and rights based on identity and devise and effectively implement anti-discrimination measures in all policies including those concerning access to social services and other welfare provision. This should include specific anti-discrimination measures for women, persons with disabilities and other groups, who could suffer from multiple discrimination.

4) Unlocking the full potential EU funds is crucial to ensure integration

In order to ensure a sustainable provision of social services that contributes to integration and social inclusion for all people, irrespective of their background and status, not for profit social and health care service providers must be adequately funded. This can be done at EU level by ensuring complementarity between the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), the Asylum, Migration and Integration Funds (AMIF) and specific funds such as the Fund for European Aid for the Most Deprived (FEAD). The European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI) could also play a role in supporting investment into the field of social services if additional efforts are made by the European Commission and European Investment Bank to ensure it is accessible and better adapted to not for profit organisations. Moreover, Social Services Europe reiterates its call for more flexibility in the macro-economic imbalance procedure³¹, allowing investments in social protection to be exempted from the Macro-Economic Imbalance Procedure, therefore encouraging Member States to invest in social services for positive social and economic development. At the national and local levels, more funding should also be made available for the social inclusion of all and the value of not for profit organisation in providing such services recognised, supported and valued

5) Invest in human capital and communities through social and health care services.

Social Services Europe calls for an increase in investments in social policies general and specifically social inclusion and the integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Such social investment is essential for boosting employment outcomes and empowering people to become self-sufficient as well as preventing the potential high cost in terms of social cohesion of not investing. Investment in early years' education, high quality, accessible and affordable housing, measures supporting access to the labour market including quality and affordable vocational education and training are just some examples where there are demonstrable positive social and economic returns on investment. However, investment must also be made in equipping staff and volunteers in all social services to meet the needs of migrant, refugee and asylum seeker service users. Investments must be made in instruments that facilitate the recognition and validation of skills, competencies and knowledge. This would allow migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to pursue and excel in further education and in accessing the labour market. This should be accompanied by the speeding up of the process of recognition and validation of the learning outcomes of non-formal and informal learning (as adopted in Council's recommendation of 2012). Furthermore, soft skills, such as language knowledge and intercultural competence must also be recognised.

³¹ SSE Letter of recommendations on the Annual Growth Survey
http://media.wix.com/ugd/9f45fc_82ecf9c0f2934f28bdee2055ec49dc46.pdf

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