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Migrants: ensuring they are a benefit for European host societies

Report¹

Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons

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Summary

All too often migrants are unfairly portrayed as being a burden on public finances, and threatening economic prosperity and social cohesion in host societies. Worryingly, this has led to an increasingly hostile environment and debate, and has also contributed to the rise of xenophobia and right-wing extremism.

The reality is in fact quite different and the overwhelming evidence suggests that migrants are a benefit to society. On the economic front, the OECD has clearly indicated that, overall, migration is not a major burden for the public purse.

Migrants fill labour shortages and often carry out low-paid, dangerous, insecure and difficult jobs shunned by many nationals. Without them, in certain countries, whole sectors of the economy would collapse (construction, tourism, agriculture, health care, home care, etc.). Furthermore, foreign students provide significant income for higher education which also contributes to host countries' economies.

Migrants also bring solutions to some of the demographic challenges facing Europe in terms of population decline, particularly of the labour force, and ageing. Furthermore, they are a source of cultural enrichment and dialogue through literature, film, art, sports, food and fashion.

Member States of the Council of Europe are invited to tackle misconceptions about migrants, in particular those propagated by certain politicians and the media. They are encouraged to promote the integration of migrants as a two-way process, in order to maximise the benefits that migrants can bring. They are also encouraged to ensure that their labour migration policies reflect market needs, but take into account that certain types of migration (carried out by asylum seekers, refugees and people seeking family reunion, for example) cannot be regulated in the same way.

1. Reference to committee: [Doc. 12946](#), Reference 3882 if 29 June 2012.



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A. Draft resolution²

1. One of the consequences of the economic crisis which struck in 2008 is that many European States have taken a hard look at migration in a debate that has not always been based on fact but rather more on fears and prejudices.
2. While some legitimate concerns have been raised at the highest political levels about Europe's experience of multiculturalism, particularly in relation to second generation migrants, the debate should more usefully focus on how to successfully integrate migrants and ensure that they bring benefits to their host societies, countries of origin and to the migrants themselves.
3. The Parliamentary Assembly is concerned that all too often migrants are unfairly portrayed as being a burden on public finances, and threatening economic prosperity and social cohesion in host societies. This view has been exacerbated by the economic crisis and widespread austerity measures. Worryingly, this context has led to an increasingly hostile environment and debate on immigration in many Council of Europe member States.
4. Both media and politicians have played a role in allowing misconceptions about migrants to take hold in many member States. While in some instances this has been a result of passivity, in others it has been deliberate. Far-right extremist and neo-Nazi opinions are increasingly finding their way into mainstream politics, either by politicians with significant public support, or when the rhetoric of these groups is taken up by mainstream parties.
5. The Assembly considers that it is essential to portray an honest picture of the benefits that migrants bring to member States, and that there is a clear understanding that States have a choice as to whether or not migrants become more of a benefit or more of a burden. This choice will depend on the steps member States take in terms of the migrants they accept on their territory and their commitment to integration, which has to be a two-way process involving both migrants and the host society.
6. There are many ways in which migrants bring benefits to member States. On the economic front, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has clearly shown that, overall, they are not a major burden for the public purse. Furthermore, in the European Union, the European Commission has found that mobile European Union citizens are not a burden on national social security systems.
7. Migrants make an enormous contribution to the labour market, filling shortages which hold up growth, and accepting jobs which many Europeans shun because they are low-paid, insecure, dangerous and difficult. In some countries whole sectors of the economy would come to a halt without migrants, such as construction, seasonal agriculture, tourism, health services or household services. Their contribution as entrepreneurs, employing 2.4% of the total employed population in OECD countries, is substantial. Allied to this, their links with foreign markets provide new outlets for business growth, and the contribution that international students make through spending and then providing a pool of highly qualified labour with the requisite language skills should not be underestimated.
8. Europe is ageing and the working age population in the European Union is set to fall by 10.5% by the year 2050. Current fertility rates are also low and below the replacement level in many European countries. For example, they stand at 1.74 children per woman in Armenia, 1.42 in Germany and 1.54 in Russia. It has been projected that Europe will need between 40 and 60 million immigrant workers by 2050 to sustain its level of prosperity and welfare.
9. The benefit that migrants bring can not only be measured on the economic and demographic front. They can be a source of cultural enrichment through literature, film, art, sports, food and fashion, and potentially increase intercultural and interfaith dialogue.
10. The Assembly considers that member States should do more to ensure that the benefits that migrants can bring are maximised. More specifically, the Assembly recommends that member States:
 - 10.1. tackle the misconceptions that exist about migrants, and in particular those that portray them as being a burden on public finances and threatening economic prosperity and social cohesion. This they should do by:
 - 10.1.1. providing a fair and accurate portrayal of the fiscal and other impact of migrants in terms of labour, entrepreneurialism, demography, higher and university education, culture and co-development;

2. Draft resolution adopted by the committee on 20 November 2013.

10.1.2. encouraging the media to use impartial and accurate information and research, proper terminology and less emotive language in reporting on the situation of migrants and migration;

10.1.3. urging politicians to show responsibility in the debate on migrants and migration and not allowing extremist views and terminology to become part of accepted mainstream discourse. Furthermore, politicians should be encouraged to lead the public debate away from misconceptions which damage migrants and their prospects for integration;

10.1.4. encouraging further research and data collection on the impact of migration in order to provide an evidence-based approach to the issue;

10.2. ensure that the benefits of migrants and migration are maximised, through promoting the integration of migrants as a two-way process, *inter alia* by:

10.2.1. promoting their economic participation through the removal of legal and other barriers, such as the non-recognition of qualifications, which restrict their participation in the labour market, whether as employed or self-employed workers or entrepreneurs;

10.2.2. increasing their education levels and achievements so that they reflect more closely those of the total population;

10.2.3. tackling discrimination and promoting equality, taking into account the recommendations of the Council of Europe's monitoring bodies, such as the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the case law of the European Court of Human Rights, the conclusions of the European Committee of Social Rights and the No Hate Speech Movement/Campaign of the Council of Europe;

10.2.4. facilitating their democratic participation, including through granting nationality/citizenship and the right to vote, in particular at local level, in accordance with the Council of Europe's Conventions on Nationality (ETS No. 166) and on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level (ETS No. 144);

10.2.5. encouraging their sense of belonging by allowing dual citizenship, particularly for those in mixed marriages and for their children;

10.2.6. ensuring that higher education remains attractive to overseas students by facilitating an efficient and straightforward visa process;

10.3. ensure that labour immigration policies match realistic market needs and take into account that some avenues of immigration cannot be regulated to the same extent as others without conflicting with human rights and humanitarian obligations. This is particularly the case with regard to refugees and asylum seekers and also with family reunification policies.

11. The Assembly recognises that large-scale movements of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees place responsibilities and burdens on southern Mediterranean States, in particular when they do not have the necessary infrastructure or economic resources to effectively deal with them. The Assembly calls on member States to help these countries to better meet their human rights obligations when handling migrants' needs and prevent misconceptions about migrants and the spread of xenophobic rhetoric in public discourse.

B. Explanatory memorandum by Ms Kyriakidou, rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. One of the consequences of the economic crisis which struck in 2008 was a resurgence, in the debate on migration, of concerns about whether or not it had become a benefit or a burden for the countries of Europe. Linked to this debate was a discussion on Europe's experience of integration and whether or not this had been a success or a failure.
2. Migrants represent 8.7% of Europe's population. Whether Europe likes it or not, it will continue to attract migrants. The challenge that it faces is to ensure that both Europe and its migrants reap the maximum benefit from the migration experience. But this experience should not be allowed to become a burden.
3. In this report, I intend to highlight how migrants can and do benefit our society, focusing on the contribution they make to the economy, the culture and also the political life of our society. I also want to highlight what is often incorrectly seen to be the burden of migrants and tackle the negative stereotypes of migrants which have become increasingly prevalent since the start of the economic crisis.
4. Europe has a choice over whether it wants migrants to be a benefit or a burden, and this choice comes down to not only understanding migration patterns, accepting immigration as a reality and responding realistically to these, but also to taking the necessary steps to invest in integration of migrants as a two-way process for society involving both migrants and their host society.
5. In preparing this report, I have kept in mind important work that is being carried out by the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons on "Integration of migrants: is Europe Failing?" (Rapporteur: Ms Pelin Gündeş Bakir, Turkey, EDG). Ensuring migrants are a benefit for society is closely interlinked with ensuring their successful integration.³

2. Promoting the positive contribution of migrants to European society

6. At the risk of over-simplifying and without wanting to undermine or dismiss the challenges that migration can also bring to host societies, there are essentially four ways in which migrants can and do make an important contribution to European society. These can be seen in terms of the economy, demography, culture and politics. While this contribution is not always measurable, it can often be clearly seen.

2.1. On the economic front

7. The economy of Europe has slowed down markedly in recent years and has in many countries moved in and out of recession. Allied to this, Europe is heavily in debt and its prospects for reducing its debt levels are substantially hindered without economic growth. A shrinking labour force and ageing population has begun to seriously undermine Europe's economic standing in the world as well as its capacity to bounce back from the current economic crisis.
8. I would first of all like to look at how migrants help Europe on the economic front. The answer to this can be seen in a number of ways, including through what economists term "fiscal impact" and more specifically through the contribution of migrants to the labour market (skilled and non-skilled), entrepreneurship and establishment of links with foreign markets. It can also be seen through the contribution of international students and tourism as well as remittances, co-development and circular migration which benefit both countries of origin and host countries.

2.1.1. Fiscal impact

9. In terms of the fiscal impact,⁴ which is the difference between the taxes and other contributions migrants make to public finances and the costs of the public benefits and services they receive,⁵ most studies⁶ conclude that, overall, migrants make a positive contribution. In the short term, immigration helps decrease the ratio between those not in work and those in work. Migrants furthermore increase revenue by paying value added tax (VAT) on their consumption. A 2013 study by the Organisation for Economic Co-

3. In drafting this report, I was assisted by a consultant, Mr Jérémie Zaloszc, and I would like to thank him and all the other people who contributed to the preparation of this report and commented on it.

4. It is important to note that calculating immigrants' fiscal impact is not straight-forward, as there is a lack of sufficient data and information; it is thus based on a number of assumptions.

operation and Development (OECD) comparing 27 countries concluded that migration is “Neither a significant gain nor drain for the public purse” but generally had a favourable impact on national budgets.⁷ Furthermore, the OECD concluded that migration made a key contribution to employment growth during the past decade.⁸ It is also interesting to note that a recent study by the European Commission found that mobile European Union citizens are not a burden on national social security systems.⁹

2.1.2. Labour

10. Through their labour, migrants often provide host societies with specific know-how and competences which are in short supply and as a result many European countries have set up specialist bodies to link labour shortages with immigration policy.¹⁰ An example of such a policy is the recent German Blue Card which is aimed at attracting highly skilled migrants to work in innovative technologies. Other workers are also sought, including electricians, nurses and carers for the elderly. Most countries have shortages in one area or another. In the United Kingdom, for example, the shortage list includes over 30 professions, ranging from chefs to scientists.

11. Labour migrants largely belong to an age bracket whereby they are fit for work and want to work, which reinforces the economic dynamism of their host countries. Migrants often take on socially non-prestigious jobs and carry out hard, low-paid, insecure and even dangerous work shunned by many nationals. In certain countries of Europe whole sectors of the economy would grind to a halt without migrants. Seasonal migrant workers in agriculture in Italy, tourism in Spain (making up 14.7% of the total migrant worker population in 2009¹¹) and the hotel industry worldwide¹² are just a few examples. To these examples one can add the construction industry, health-care services and private household services (including cleaning, childcare and care of the elderly). Without migrants carrying out such domestic work, many nationals would not be able to go out to work. Furthermore, studies have shown that migrants contribute to an increase in the earnings of native medium- and high-skilled workers, while they may bring about slight decreases to the earnings of low wage workers.¹³

2.1.3. Entrepreneurial contribution

12. In terms of entrepreneurial contribution, one should not underestimate the impact many small and medium-sized enterprises set up by migrants have. In OECD countries migrant entrepreneurs employ 2.4% of the total employed population, and each foreign-born entrepreneur employs on average 1.4 to 2.1 additional individuals.¹⁴ Furthermore, in countries such as Belgium and France and in the Nordic countries, foreign-born workers have higher rates of self-employment than natives.¹⁵ In Germany, not only have new jobs been

5. Vargas-Silva, Carlos, “The Fiscal Impact of Immigration in the UK”, Migration Observatory briefing, COMPAS, University of Oxford, United Kingdom, February 2013. This further notes that the impacts depend on varying characteristics of migrants, the country’s labour market and welfare State.

6. Studies have for example been conducted in the United Kingdom, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States, as well as an OECD overview.

7. OECD, 2013, *International Migration Outlook 2013*, OECD Publishing: 160-161. See also: *The Economist*, Immigration and the public finances: Boon or burden?, 15 June 2013.

8. Jean-Christophe Dumont, 2013, The Impact of International Migration on Destination Countries. Presentation to the Office of the President of the General Assembly, United Nations, New York, 25 June 2013.

9. European Commission, 2013. A fact finding analysis on the impact on the Member States’ social security systems of the entitlements of non-active intra-European Union migrants to special non-contributory cash benefits and healthcare granted on the basis of residence.

10. Anderson and Ruhs, 2010, “Introduction”: Who Needs Migrant Workers? Labour Shortages, immigration, and public policy, Oxford University Press.

11. Tom Baum, 2012, Migrant workers in the international hotel industry, International Labour Organization (ILO).

12. Ibid.

13. See, in this respect, a study of the Netherlands which concluded that a 10% increase of ethnic minority workers from non-European Union countries increased the earning of highly skilled workers by 0.21% (Hartog & Zorlu (2002), “The Effect of Immigration on Wages in Three European Countries”, IZA Discussion Papers 642, Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA)). Other research in the United Kingdom similarly suggested that medium- and high-paid workers gain in terms of average wages, while low-wage workers average wages minimally decrease. Ruhs M. and Vargas-Silva C., “The Labour Market Effects of Immigration”, Migration Observatory briefing, COMPAS, University of Oxford, United Kingdom, January 2012.

14. Jean-Christophe Dumont, op. cit.

15. OECD, 2010, “Entrepreneurship and Migrants”, Report by the OECD Working Party on SMEs and Entrepreneurship, OECD. See also European Commission “Migrant entrepreneurs/Ethnic minority entrepreneurs”.

created, but new ranges of goods and services have been developed,¹⁶ such as food groceries and restaurants. In the late 1990s, Turkish entrepreneurs generated 185 000 jobs of which 20% went to Germans.¹⁷

13. In certain countries, migrant entrepreneurship is on the upswing and in the United Kingdom it increased nearly 50% between 1998 and 2008. This has been strongly linked to higher education,¹⁸ in that many migrant entrepreneurs initially came to study and subsequently set up businesses. Internationally, a large proportion of high-growth firms are launched by migrant entrepreneurs, for example Google, Etsy, YouTube, eBay and Intel.¹⁹

14. There is therefore a lot of evidence that migrants contribute to innovation and the creation of new jobs, the number of which is not finite, through their entrepreneurial activities.

15. Migrant entrepreneurs can also promote trade with their countries of origin and studies have found increased trade volume as a consequence of immigration.²⁰ In addition, changes in consumption patterns due to immigrants have had an impact on the growth of imports and exports. The flow of remittances has led to the establishment of financial institutions specialised in money transfer and so-called “immigrant banks”. In Germany for example, cultural diversity is considered an advantage for the competitiveness of its national economy in the context of globalisation.²¹ Furthermore, a study on Ireland has found that immigration helped to dismantle barriers to foreign trade and encouraged foreign direct investment.²² Another example of how immigration and trade are linked can be seen in the recent decision by the British Government to relax visa rules for Chinese nationals.²³ From 2005 to the present day, China has spent US\$17.8 billion on investments and contracts in Britain.

2.1.4. International students

16. The value of international fee-paying students has long been recognised by many European governments and is seen as an essential investment into higher education as public investments decline. International students represent a large proportion of non-European Union nationals residing in certain member States and in the European Union their entry is regulated by Council Directive 2004/114. Furthermore, students contribute to local economies through their spending, bring talent as future employees or entrepreneurs and encourage trade between their countries of origin and destination.²⁴ More recently, many European countries have also engaged in setting up offshore campuses, further increasing their revenues.²⁵

2.1.5. Tourism

17. Another form of mobility in today’s globalised world, and linked to migration in a variety of ways, is tourism. Although the links between tourism and migration require a separate examination, I would nonetheless like to highlight that in 2012, tourism in the world contributed 9% of the GDP, US\$1.3 trillion in exports and one in 11 jobs, with Europe being the most visited region in the world.²⁶ It is estimated that the European Union tourism industry directly employs 5,2% of the total labour force, representing 9,7 million jobs, many of them carried out by migrant workers.²⁷

16. European Migration Network (EMN), *Impact of Immigration on Europe’s Societies*, 2006.

17. Hania Zlotnik (United Nations Population Division), undated. “Migrant Entrepreneurship: An Overview”. (www.un.org/esa/population/migration/turin/Turin_Statements/ZLOTNIK1.pdf).

18. “Entrepreneurship and Migrants”, Report by the OECD Working Party on SMEs and Entrepreneurship, OECD, 2010, p. 21.

19. *Business for New Europe*, May 2013. Migration – Making it Work.

20. EMN, 2006.

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid.*

23. BBC, 14 October 2013, “Visa rules for Chinese coming to the UK to be relaxed”.

24. EMN, 2012. *Immigration of International Students to the European Union*, European Commission. For the United Kingdom, see Spencer S., 2011, *The migration debate*, Bristol, Policy Press.

25. See Altbach P.G. and Knight J., 2007, *The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities*. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 11: 290; Maslen G., 22 November 2009, *GLOBAL: Huge expansion in overseas campuses*, *University World News*; and Verk L. 2006, “The International Branch Campus – Models and Trends”.

26. Europe received 1 035 million arrivals and US\$1 075 billion from international tourism receipts in 2012: *World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO)*, 2013, *Tourism Highlights*, 2013 Edition.

27. This rises to 12% when sectors related to tourism are taken into account. To take the example of Chinese tourists to the United Kingdom, in 2012, the United Kingdom issued 210 000 visas for Chinese nationals, contributing about £300 million to the British economy

2.1.6. Contribution to countries of origin through remittances, co-development and circular migration.

18. International migration also has an impact on countries of origin in what is called the migration-development nexus. The committee will be examining this in greater detail in some of its future work, including in a report concerning migrant diaspora.²⁸ As the issue is not directly within the subject of the report, and would need an in-depth examination, I would simply like to note that the total value of remittances exceed the total amount of development aid paid by industrialised countries.²⁹ As remittances are paid directly to households, their benefits are often more effective than development aid, although one does not replace the other. Remittances can thus contribute to poverty reduction, help improve levels of education³⁰ and health³¹ and stimulate the economy.³² Other benefits to countries of origin include the transfer in skills, technology and democratic ideas,³³ investment in education, the creation of small businesses³⁴ and the alleviation of labour market pressures.³⁵

2.2. On the demographic front

19. Europe is an ageing continent where the number of births no longer offsets the number of deaths. The Assembly has highlighted in [Resolution 1864 \(2012\)](#) on “Demographic trends in Europe: turning challenges into opportunities”, that “Europe has to urgently develop the policies and strategies necessary to cope with changing demographics in order to maintain its power and influence in the world”. In October 2011, the world population reached the milestone of 7 billion of which there were about 800 million people in Europe. This figure is however expected to fall by 9% for Europe by the year 2050. Eurostat estimated that the share of the working age population (between 15 and 64) in the EU25 will decrease from 67.2% in 2004 to 56.7% in 2050.³⁶ These demographic trends will have significant consequences for native workforces, fiscal plans and social policies.

20. Without migration, the drop in population in Europe will no doubt increase at an even greater rate. While migration is not a permanent solution to demographic change, it is one of a range of solutions that can offset declining populations and provide workforce growth in Europe. The Ukrainian population, for example, is predicted to decline by 1% per year, and hence Ukraine is considering policies to attract migrant workers, as well as strengthening income through remittances.³⁷

21. Migrants can help with the sustainability of pensions systems, the provision of long-term care for elderly people and the filling of labour and skill shortages,³⁸ all of which are a consequence of an ageing Europe. As emerging markets and countries such as China and South Korea are showing high economic growth, these may become more attractive alternative destinations for migrants in the future.³⁹ European countries should therefore be careful not to deter migrants. In an article in the *World Policy Journal*, Thorbjørn Jagland, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, stated that “we cannot escape the demographic reality of Europe’s aging population” and acknowledged economists’ projections that Europe will need between 40 and 60 million immigrant workers by 2050 to sustain its level of prosperity and welfare.⁴⁰

28. Rapporteur: Mr Andrea Rigoni (ALDE, Italy). See also [Doc. 13272](#), motion for a resolution on “Political participation for migrant diaspora”.

29. In 2012, officially recorded remittances reached \$401 billion This was an increase of 5.3% compared with 2011: The World Bank, Migration and Development Brief. 19 April 2013.

30. For example when children attend school instead of participating in the labour market from an early age. See Binci M., 2012. The Benefits of Migration. Economic Affairs, 32(1): 4-9. Oxford.

31. Skeldon R. 2001. Migration and Development. Power Point Presentation. University of Sussex.

32. For example, in Ukraine, research has shown that “a 10% increase in per capita remittances leads to a 3.5% decline in the share of people living in poverty”: International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2011. Migration in Ukraine: Facts & Figures (www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/activities/countries/docs/Ukraine/Migration-in-Ukraine-Facts-and-Figures.pdf).

33. For example, a UNDP report found that women migrating from the Republic of Moldova had an impact on gender roles and equality, as it gave them greater financial independence and increased decision-making powers. See Peleah M., 2007. The Impact of Migration on Gender Roles in Moldova, UNDP.

34. For example in the Republic of Moldova, see Pantiru M.C., Black R. and Sabates-Wheeler R., 2007, Migration and Poverty Reduction in Moldova, Working Paper C10, University of Sussex, p. 21.

35. Clemens M.A., 2013. What do we know about skilled migration and development? Migration Policy Institute Policy Brief.

36. Kyieri F-M., 2007. Demographic Changes, Immigration Policy and Development in the European Union. Immigration Policy, EIPASCOPE 2007/3.

37. Profazi M., 2011, Role of migration in shrinking Ukraine, *KyivPost*.

38. Cangiano A., 2011, Demographic Objectives in Migration Policy-Making, Migration Observatory Policy Primer.

39. Münz R. 2013. Demography and Migration: An Outlook for the 21st Century. Migration Policy Institute Policy Brief.

40. Jagland T., 2013, Embracing Diversity. Spring Issue, *World Policy Journal*.

2.3. On the cultural front

22. The diverse origins of immigrants can be a source of enrichment to host societies and can contribute to intercultural and interfaith dialogue. This enrichment can be seen in literature, film, art, sports, food, fashion and in a range of other ways.

23. However, a prerequisite for enjoying the benefits of migration at the cultural level is proper integration of migrants in the host society, a matter which I will come back to later in the report. Integration depends on open-mindedness on the part of both migrants and members of the host society. It cannot be successful in the context of ghettos or ethnic segregation of immigrants and their descendants. Nowhere can the richness of mixing of cultures be better seen than in mixed marriages between people of different origins or nationalities. These contribute to the integration of immigrants on the one hand, and constitute possible factors for social and cultural evolution on the other.

2.4. On the political front

24. Migrants in many Council of Europe member States are directly or indirectly affecting political discourse. In terms of voting rights, some countries allow migrants just to vote locally. However, some governments have set up instruments or bodies that deal directly with migration issues as an institutional response to their presence. Although it is known that some migrants have low levels of participation and some political or religious engagement could even be considered problematic, they also engage in a variety of civil society organisations and are increasingly represented in trade unions.⁴¹ Migration can also lead to an exchange of political ideas between countries of origin and destination.⁴² Furthermore, migrants, and in particular international students, contribute to forging friendships and links between countries, with many foreign leaders being educated in Europe.⁴³

3. Unfounded fears

3.1. The most common fears

25. The economic situation has become a factor exacerbating the “fear of immigrants”, leading to the view that they have an extremely negative effect on the management of public finance, social security systems and industrial relations, and that integration measures require expenditure which further increases the strain on the national budget. At the same time, assumptions exist that migrants deprive nationals of the available jobs on the labour market, bring wage levels down and that they have significantly contributed to the economic crisis. Socially, migrants are often perceived as a threat to the traditional, national identity of host countries, and as a source of criminality.

26. In 2011, the report “Living Together: Combining diversity and freedom in Europe in the 21st century” by the Group of Eminent Persons of the Council of Europe already highlighted a number of these concerns, and pointed out the challenges posed by the resurgence of intolerance and discrimination in Europe.

27. Despite such concerns, it is important to note that immigration does not feature highly in opinion polls. A recent Eurobarometer survey found that rather than immigration, unemployment and the economic situation were the main concerns of Europeans.⁴⁴ Only in Malta was immigration the first most frequently mentioned concern (29% of those surveyed) and in the United Kingdom it came second (32%). In all other countries, immigration did not make it into the top three.

3.2. Lack of any reliable evidence for such fears

28. On the contrary, all economic studies⁴⁵ show that the presence of immigrants has no significant effect on public finances. In 2009, for example, immigrants in France received €47.9 billion in welfare, housing and other payments, but contributed €60.4 billion, making a net contribution of €12.4 billion.⁴⁶ In terms of the labour market, it is important to acknowledge that there is no such thing as a finite quantity of work and the

41. Some have set up special departments to deal with migrant workers, like, for example, UNISON in the United Kingdom, www.unison.org.uk/knowledge/pay/migrant-workers/overview/.

42. EMN, 2006.

43. See, for example, Tony Blair, 2006, “Why we must attract more students from overseas”, *The Guardian*.

44. European Commission, 2013, Standard Eurobarometer 79. Spring 2013.

45. For example OECD 2013 and EMN, 2006.

46. Pivot M., 2012. Time to value migrants' contribution, www.europeanvoice.com/.

negative impact on wage levels has not been proved. In some countries, larger share in crime statistics can be explained by the composition of migrants (predominantly young male adults). Regarding the perceived threat to the national identity of the host countries, this is relative and depends on one's understanding of the concept of "nation". By contrast, increasing numbers of European countries are acknowledging migration as a long-term reality.⁴⁷

29. It should be noted however that "migrants" cannot be treated as a homogeneous group.⁴⁸ Indeed, the impact of migration depends on a number of variables. These may relate to the migrants themselves, such as their type of residence permit or visa, their socio-economic background, level of education and qualification; or their gender, age, length of stay, language and geographical origin; or whether they migrated themselves or were born to migrant parents in host societies (second-generation migrants). These are further linked to the structure and economy of host societies, as well as their respective immigration, integration/multiculturalism, welfare and labour policies.

30. Furthermore, there is a crucial lack of available, comparable and rigorous data to calculate the impact of migration on host societies. Existing studies have predominantly focused on economic factors of immigration, leaving us with even less knowledge about the social, cultural and political impact of immigration on destination and sending countries.

3.3. Hijacked fears

31. As shown above, neither opinion polls nor evidence support the widespread concerns about immigration to Europe that are so often aired in the media and sometimes by politicians. What then is the source of such fears? As the Council of Europe report "Living Together" has pointed out, some can be attributed to "distorted images and harmful stereotypes of minorities" portrayed in the media and by extremist or populist politicians.

3.3.1. Hijacked by the media

32. Media sensationalism sells, which explains the spotlight on news items involving migrants. As the Assembly noted in its [Resolution 1889 \(2012\)](#) on the portrayal of migrants and refugees during election campaigns, "the media have a vital role to play here and bear a major responsibility in shaping the image of migrants and their descendants". The Internet, social networks and media also play an increasing role in the dissemination of xenophobic and anti-immigrant attitudes. Accordingly, it is important to encourage the media to use proper terminology, less emotive language and to report on incidents in a fair and responsible manner.

3.3.2. Hijacked by certain politicians

33. Immigration has become a highly charged and politicised issue in many countries and is increasingly being used by extremist or populist parties to explain current economic problems. In response, a significant number of mainstream politicians have engaged in such debates, accepting the existence of migrants as a problem, rather than providing explanations of past or current policy failures, or putting forward sound proposals. This attitude panders to voices of nationalism and popular misconceptions. While such political exploitation of the fear of foreign immigrants is particularly prevalent during electoral campaigns, there is a danger that it also becomes the stock-in-trade of too many political parties which know that migrants do not vote in national elections and that fear of migrants is an easy way to gain rather than lose votes, in particular with the resurgence of far-right parties.

34. At the opposite end of the scale, there are many arguments which must be used to combat popular misconceptions and xenophobic stereotypes. It has become absolutely vital to inform and alert public opinion on these issues. It is essential that parliamentarians lead public opinion away from the misconceptions and not simply follow them.

47. Böhmer: "Deutschland ist ein Einwanderungsland!" Pressemitteilung 33, Die Bundesregierung, 30 January 2013. See also Papademetriou D.G., 2012, Rethinking National Identity in the Age of Migration. Statement of the Transatlantic Council on Migration.

48. EMN, 2006.

4. The importance of integration to maximise the benefits that migrants can bring

35. Migrants are most likely to bring a benefit to the host society if they are well integrated. The quicker and more successful the integration process the greater the likelihood that the migration experience will be positive for all concerned.

36. Integration does not just happen however. It is a result of many factors including migrants' countries of origin and destination, the locality where they settle, their backgrounds, languages, education, skills and experiences. It also depends on the laws, practices, support and attitudes of the host society and a range of other factors.

37. Integration requires a range of measures addressed at both migrants and the host society, and there is growing recognition of the different steps that need to be taken at local and national levels to promote integration. The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX)⁴⁹ covering 31 European and North American countries is a useful tool for analysing the laws and practices relating to integration across many member States of the Council of Europe.

38. In the context of the economic crisis and the backlash against migrants that has followed, it is perhaps not surprising that many States are less willing to invest in integration measures. When the treasury is closed for nationals, one can understand that finding money for the integration of migrants may be difficult. This, however, is a dangerous short-term approach, with long-term risks.⁵⁰

39. At the committee's meeting in Geneva in October 2012, a representative of the Swiss Ministry of Integration opened his statement by saying that every Swiss Franc invested in integration had a three-fold payback in the long term. It is this long-term approach that is necessary. Germany has in the past seriously miscalculated the importance of integration, but since 2005 when it passed comprehensive reforms and later in 2007 when it introduced a national integration plan, it has started to turn around its policy and is now one of the countries in Europe most active in seeking to attract migrants.

40. The importance of integration in ensuring that both migrants and the host society benefit from the migration experience can be seen by a range of different indicators. The committee will be examining these in more detail in its report on "Integration of migrants: is Europe failing?".⁵¹ It is however important to highlight already here certain indicators which are essential for integration and for ensuring that migrants can make a full contribution to society.

41. Integration in terms of work is primordial. OECD data suggests that raising employment rates of immigrants could make a big difference for budgets, and encouraging migrant entrepreneurs could create further jobs. There still exist too many barriers to access to work for migrants. Some of these are legal, others are political and some are still rooted in direct or indirect discrimination. Work counselling, recognition of qualifications,⁵² skills training and language education are all examples of steps which can help migrants find and keep work. To give an idea of the challenge that is still faced, on average in OECD countries, immigrants are 50% more likely to be unemployed than nationals.⁵³ The benefit migrants can bring will materialise if they are not employed, and as examined earlier in the report, work is not finite and migrants are not *per se* a threat to work opportunities for nationals.

42. While countries have control over the inflows of labour migrants and can create policies to match demands, it is important to recognise that the inflow of asylum seekers and refugees is governed by the 1951 Geneva Convention and based on humanitarian principles. It is therefore important to pay attention to the situation of asylum seekers in Europe, who in many countries do not have the right to work⁵⁴ and as a consequence are reliant on the welfare State. In some instances they may not be able to work for many years, which can further decrease their integration prospects and chances of finding a job once they receive refugee status. This has negative implications for both the host society and the asylum seekers themselves. The committee will be examining this issue in more detail in a report currently under preparation.⁵⁵

49. Migrant Integration Policy Index III (MIPEX), see www.mipex.eu.

50. Recognised and recommended by the OECD, European Commissioner Malmström.

51. Report being prepared by Ms Pelin Gündeş Bakır (Turkey, EDG).

52. The OECD showed that highly educated migrants are often in jobs for which they are overqualified (OECD, SEM Working Paper 126, 2011).

53. OECD, *Settling in: indicators of immigrant integration 2012*, pp. 96-98. The OECD statistics cover not only many of the European Union countries, but also a number of other countries, including Switzerland, Norway, the United States, Canada and Australia.

54. EMN, 2013. Ad-Hoc Query on access to the labour market for asylum seekers.

55. The right to work for refugees (Rapporteur: Mr Christopher Chope, United Kingdom, EDG).

43. Integration and the impact of education is also one of the main challenges. While immigrants in general match the total population in terms of tertiary education (higher education), at secondary level the attainment levels drop significantly. Only 38% of non-European Union born immigrants reach this level as opposed to 49% of the total population.⁵⁶ If host countries want immigrants to make a full contribution, they need to ensure that they have an equal chance to succeed in their education.

44. The Assembly has highlighted on many occasions the importance of giving migrants a “fair share” in terms of democratic participation.⁵⁷ If migrants do not feel that they have a voice in matters affecting them, this will hinder their prospects of integration. It is for this reason that access to nationality and the possibility of voting, at least at a local level, are so important. While the Council of Europe has two conventions which deal with these issues, the Convention on Nationality (ETS No. 166) and the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level (ETS No. 144), more member States need to ratify these instruments.⁵⁸ They can be important tools for integration and a means for ensuring that migrants and host communities benefit from increased levels of democratic participation of all persons concerned in society.

45. One of the greatest challenges for integration in this period of economic crisis, when States are keeping a wary eye on immigration statistics, is family reunion. It should be kept in mind that for many persons family reunification is the start of the path to integration. Split families are never likely to be properly integrated. States in recent years have unfortunately put in place a range of measures which have had the effect of reducing family reunion. Among these measures are language and citizenship tests. A report by the committee entitled “Integration tests: helping or hindering integration” examines the effects of these tests and their impact on integration. It concludes that where these tests are a “barely veiled migration management measure, they inhibit, and are detrimental to integration and they should be discontinued”.⁵⁹

46. Tackling discrimination and promoting equality are clearly important for integration. States have made great progress in recent years in introducing laws against racism and promoting equality, in part because of bodies such as the Council of Europe’s European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and European Union legislation such as the Race Equality Directive. Unfortunately, practice has not followed laws, and the resurgence of racism, hate speech and other forms of intolerance, including against religious groups, remains a constant challenge. Racist violence against migrants, as recently seen in countries such as Greece, show how Europe needs to guard against all forms of hate speech and crime. However, not all forms of discrimination are so obvious, and levels of institutional racism⁶⁰ within society continue to be a major challenge for the integration of migrants, and hold them back from making a full contribution to society.

47. In concluding on the importance of integration, I would like to highlight the first Common Basic Principle for immigrant integration policy in the European Union:⁶¹ “Integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of member States”. The more the two sides pull together, the better the integration experience will be and the more all sides will benefit.

5. Conclusion

48. In this report, I have highlighted how migration can be a benefit in the three broad areas of the economy, the civitas and the polity, for host societies and migrants themselves, and have touched upon how migration is linked to development and tourism. Without wanting to undermine or belittle concerns in relation to social cohesion and increasing intolerance towards migrants, the evidence presented here strongly suggests that, on balance, migrants make a positive contribution in terms of the economy and demography. The social, cultural and political impacts are less obvious and difficulties exist. It is these areas that are affected by concerns around social cohesion and a lack of integration. More research is needed to better

56. Eurostat, Indicators of Immigrant Integration, 2011 edition, Table 11.

57. See Assembly [Resolution 1618 \(2008\)](#) “State of democracy in Europe. Measures to improve the democratic participation of migrants”.

58. The Convention on Nationality has 20 Parties and 9 signatures. The Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level has 8 parties and 5 signatures.

59. [Doc. 13361](#), Integration tests: helping or hindering integration? (Rapporteur: Ms Tineke Strik, Netherlands, SOC).

60. “Institutional racism” is a phrase which came about in the United Kingdom following an investigation into the racist killing of a black British man, Stephen Lawrence. The enquiry that took place examining the investigation into his killing found “institutional racism” to be a major factor for the failures in the investigation. This finding had a profound effect on race relations in the United Kingdom and brought about many changes in laws, policy and practice.

61. Common Basic Principle 1. The Common basic principles for immigrant integration policy in the European Union were adopted by the Justice and Home Affairs Council in November 2004 and form the basis for European Union work in the area of integration.

understand what impact migration is having and how policy should respond. However, I would like to emphasise that it is the choice of member States to maximise the benefits of migration and not to slip into short-term thinking which carries dangers of alienating migrants and hampering their integration.

49. Integration policies are a key factor to this end. It is clear that migration is most advantageous if migrants are in employment, thus access to the labour market must be a central aim. Furthermore, policies should be made to match labour market demands, and education and training opportunities for migrants as well as greater possibilities for political participation must be considered by governments of member States.

50. Despite increasing hostile media reporting on migrants in many Council of Europe member States and the rise of extremist or populist groups expressing anti-immigrant sentiments, evidence suggests that concerns about migration are unfounded. Furthermore, opinion polls clearly show that the public is in fact less worried about immigration than it is about unemployment and the economy. As European Commissioner Malmström argued recently: "Politicians have a particular responsibility to lead the way in fighting racism and xenophobia ... [and] to tell the truth about the added value migrants bring".⁶²

62. Cecilia Malmström, 2 October 2013. How to reap the benefits of migration, Opinion published on <http://euobserver.com/>, and keynote speech on migration and the post-2015 development framework at the United Nations High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development.