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Migration as an opportunity for European development

Report¹

Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons

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Summary

This report challenges the common misconception that migrants are a threat to local populations as they will take their jobs and exploit social security systems. It provides concrete examples of how migrants contribute to increasing economic growth and to the creation of national wealth and draws the attention of the authorities of member States and their societies to the positive impact of migration on European economic development. It analyses European policies which should contribute to taking full advantage of the opportunities provided by migration.

The report suggests concrete actions to facilitate win-win results in relation to the migration phenomenon in Europe, by learning from the errors of the past and adapting to the fast-changing realities of today's society. It also demonstrates the advantages of accepting asylum seekers and refugees and creating opportunities for them to become regular migrants.

The Council of Europe member States are encouraged to gather, analyse and monitor information on their labour force needs with the aim of developing forward-thinking migration strategies and responding to their needs in different sectors of the economy. Targeted national regularisation programmes for irregular migrants should be promoted and European qualification and competence standards developed, to facilitate the recognition of migrants' qualifications and assessment of their skills.

1. Reference to committee: Doc. 13974, Reference 4196 of 22 April 2016.



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A. Draft resolution²

1. The economic development of Europe depends upon its capacity to better utilise people's skills and talents and promote innovative technologies and businesses. In a time of economic and political crisis in Europe, all efforts should be deployed to create cohesive societies, enabling the full and active participation of every member in their development and economic growth.
2. The number of migrants, including both refugees and economic migrants, has significantly increased in recent years, presenting a number of challenges and opportunities for Europe. The absence of a co-ordinated migration policy at European level has paved the way for the rise of ungrounded fears amongst the European population, fears which have been subsequently exploited by some political forces and media outlets to present a distorted image of migration as a threat.
3. The Parliamentary Assembly is very concerned about this negative approach to migration. In fact, there is a divergence between the reality of the economic and demographic situation of Europe and the general negative perception of the consequences of migration. Shortages in the labour force in a number of sectors, including farming, construction, hospitality, catering, information technology and financial services, and population ageing as a result of increased life expectancy combined with low birth rates, all lead to a significant reduction in the proportion of the working age population and show that migration could be very beneficial for Europe, if only the necessary policy measures were implemented.
4. During the last decade, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), migrants accounted for a 70% increase in the workforce of Europe. In recent years, they have represented 15% of new entries into strongly growing occupations such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics. In some European countries, population growth in recent years was only possible because of a migration influx. In addition, migrants bring diversity to European countries, contributing to cultural exchanges and having an important impact on arts, sports, fashion, media and cuisine.
5. The Assembly considers that there is an urgent need to counter the negative rhetoric used against migration and to bring to the public's attention the economic evidence of its benefit to European society. All public and private actors should be involved in formulating new evidence-based migration policies for Europe, centred on its potential for development.
6. The Assembly believes that to optimise the benefits of migration for Europe, it is necessary to eliminate a number of bureaucratic barriers and practices of covert and overt discrimination against migrants, which significantly hinder their integration into host societies.
7. It also considers that to gain advantage in the global competition for the most highly skilled specialists, European countries should increase labour market transparency and create more legal opportunities for migration to Europe.
8. The Assembly underlines that to harness the benefits of migration, well-devised policies should be implemented, including at local level, which would promote knowledge of different cultures and traditions while at the same time integrating migrants into the host societies. Such policies would prevent possible conflicts and eradicate the negative image of migrants.
9. The Assembly is convinced that to facilitate mutually beneficial migration to Europe, member States should take concrete measures in areas which have a positive impact on migration. Therefore, it recommends that member States:
 - 9.1. improve national legislation by:
 - 9.1.1. simplifying migration procedures for skilled workers whose qualifications respond to national economic needs;
 - 9.1.2. providing clear regulations on the employment of unskilled migrants and seasonal and domestic workers;
 - 9.1.3. shortening asylum procedures and consider granting access to the labour market to asylum seekers even before completion of the procedure;
 - 9.1.4. introducing the right to vote and to stand in local elections for all regular migrants after five years of residency in the host country;

2. Draft resolution adopted unanimously by the committee on 27 April 2017.

- 9.1.5. introducing relevant provisions punishing discrimination against migrants;
 - 9.2. facilitate the access of migrants to the labour market by:
 - 9.2.1. developing policies and action plans promoting the inclusion of migrant women in the labour market by addressing their specific needs;
 - 9.2.2. improving admission conditions for the best students and researchers from non-European countries and providing them with attractive employment opportunities;
 - 9.2.3. promoting effective co-operation between governments and business communities on the development and funding of vocational training for migrants;
 - 9.2.4. supporting business initiatives of migrants by offering micro loans;
 - 9.2.5. involving representatives of the private and public sectors, as well as trade unions and migrant organisations, during the revision of national migration policies;
 - 9.3. promote inclusive societies by enabling the full and active participation of migrants in all aspects of life by:
 - 9.3.1. promoting targeted national regularisation programmes for irregular migrants;
 - 9.3.2. promoting and financially supporting local initiatives, including initiatives of migrant organisations aimed at increasing the participation of migrants in the life of local communities;
 - 9.3.3. providing all migrants with free access to civic orientation courses in the host country;
 - 9.3.4. providing opportunities for language learning for migrants;
 - 9.3.5. ensuring that language and citizenship classes are made available to asylum seekers and refugees;
 - 9.3.6. developing educational programmes in schools to promote knowledge of different cultures, languages and religions;
 - 9.3.7. encouraging migrants' active involvement in the activities of political parties, trade unions and migrant and diaspora associations;
 - 9.3.8. facilitating the naturalisation processes of migrants after five years of regular residence in the host country;
 - 9.4. co-operate to create a European system to facilitate social security protection for all working migrants and their families, protecting the social and economic rights guaranteed in the European Social Charter treaty system and based on the standards set in the European Code of Social Security (ETS No. 48) and its Protocol (ETS No. 48A).
10. The Assembly encourages more co-operation between the Council of Europe, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the OECD and the European Union, with a view to promoting a positive image of migrants in Europe by developing joint activities in the fields of human, economic and social development.

B. Draft recommendation³

1. The Parliamentary Assembly, referring to its Resolution ... (2017) on migration as an opportunity for European development, underlines that in order to ensure that migration into Europe has beneficial consequences for both migrants and the host countries, the member States should take concrete measures to optimise the impact of migration on European societies.
2. The Assembly welcomes the important work in this area accomplished by various Council of Europe bodies and institutions, including intergovernmental activities, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights and the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees. However, it regrets that there is no intergovernmental body in the Council of Europe to specifically promote Council of Europe standards among the member States.
3. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers considers the feasibility of creating, possibly as an enlarged partial agreement in co-operation with the European Union, a European migration and intercultural development observatory, which would assist Council of Europe member States in the development of strategies, legal frameworks, action plans and specific projects in the field of migration.

3. Draft recommendation adopted unanimously by the committee on 27 April 2017.

C. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Andrea Rigoni, rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. Ways and means to enhance the positive role of migration have been highlighted in several of the Parliamentary Assembly's reports and resolutions, in particular in the recent Resolution 2124 (2016) on educational and cultural networks of migrant and diaspora communities, Resolution 2006 (2015) "Integration of migrants in Europe: the need for a proactive, long-term and global policy" and Resolution 1972 (2014) "Ensuring that migrants are a benefit for European host societies",⁴ in which the Assembly addressed a number of issues, such as recognition of qualifications; access to the labour market during the asylum application process; employment opportunities for foreign students; involvement of the private sector in identifying labour shortages in different sectors of the economy; and developing joint strategies with governments.

2. I initiated this report as a follow-up to my previous report on "Democratic participation for migrant diasporas" and its Resolution 2043 (2015) adopted by the Assembly in 2015.⁵ This resolution stressed the importance of diasporas' involvement in the economic, social and cultural development of their countries of residence. The present report also constitutes a reaction to the increase in xenophobic and anti-migrant rhetoric in many European countries in the context of the ongoing refugee and migration crisis. It challenges the common misconception that migrants are a threat to the local population by taking their jobs and exploiting social security systems. It provides concrete examples of how migrants contribute to increasing economic growth and to the creation of national wealth. It draws the attention of the authorities of member States and their societies to the positive impact of migration on European economic development and analyses European policies which should contribute to taking full advantage of the opportunities provided by migration.

3. In this report, I use the term "migrants" in a narrow sense, applying it to regular migrants and recognised refugees. However, in some specific sections of the report I refer to the particular problems faced by asylum seekers or irregular migrants, and in such cases, I clearly specify the category.

4. The aim of this report is to suggest concrete actions to facilitate win-win results in relation to the migration phenomenon in Europe, by learning from errors of the past and adapting to the fast-changing realities of today's society. The report will also demonstrate the advantages of accepting asylum seekers and refugees and creating opportunities for them to become regular migrants.

5. During the preparation of the report, I conducted two fact-finding visits to Luxembourg (20-21 December 2016) and to the United Kingdom (11-12 January 2017) and would like to thank the national delegations of these countries and their secretariats for their support in the organisation of these missions. The findings of these missions are reflected in this report.

2. Contribution of migrants to European development

6. The refugee crisis, which was provoked by a number of armed conflicts in regions close to Europe, has created a significant influx of migrants into Europe during the last few years. Many European countries have shown solidarity and empathy by welcoming refugees; however, due to a distorted image of migrants presented by the media and manipulation by some political parties, the misconception that migrants are a threat to local populations and will take their jobs and exploit social security systems has become a dominant theme amongst the European population. 52% of European Union residents have expressed a negative attitude towards the increase in migration flows to Europe⁶.

7. This negative attitude towards migration has led to a political crisis in Europe, with a significant rise in populist anti-migrant movements, inspired by certain right-wing parties. The migration issue – an issue which was exploited and manipulated by pro-Brexit parties – was one of the main causes of the vote to leave the European Union in the United Kingdom. Generally speaking, the migration problem in Europe has demonstrated a large divergence between the reality of the situation, and the image it has acquired.

4. Doc. 14069, report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media (rapporteur: Mr Pierre-Yves Le Borgn'); Doc. 13530, report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons (rapporteur: Ms Marietta Karamanli), and Doc. 13367, report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons (rapporteur: Ms Athina Kyriakidou).

5. Doc. 13648, report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons (rapporteur: Mr Andrea Rigoni).

6. Global Migration Trends, factsheet 2015, International Organization for Migration (IOM), April 2016.

8. The reality in the world today is that over 1 billion people are migrants. Among the top 10 countries who are welcoming migrants are five European countries: Germany (12 million registered migrants), the Russian Federation (11.9 million), France (7.8 million) and Spain (5.8 million). A number of European countries have a significant proportion of their population living abroad: Bosnia and Herzegovina (with 43% of the population living abroad), Albania (over 39%), Armenia (over 31%), Portugal (over 22%) and Ireland (19%).⁷

9. The migration flows into Europe will only increase, not only because of the crises in Syria, Iraq and Libya, but also because of the globalisation of the labour market and the natural desire of people to seek a better job and better living conditions. Climate change and natural disasters will also influence the migration process. Therefore, policies which are aimed at closing frontiers and building walls will never bring about the expected results. People will continue to move around and additional restrictions will only increase irregular migration.

10. Moreover, the economic, demographic and cultural development of Europe proves contrary to the negative rhetoric: Europe needs migrants for its future growth and prosperity.

2.1. Contribution to economic growth

11. During the last decade, migrants accounted for a 70% increase in the workforce of Europe. In recent years, they have represented 15% of new entries into strongly growing occupations, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics.⁸ It is expected that the demand for highly skilled workers in Europe by the end of 2020 will increase significantly; up to 13.5 million people.

12. Many European countries, especially members of the European Union, are experiencing shortages in the labour force in a number of sectors of the economy, including farming, construction, hospitality, catering, information technology and financial services, which are partially covered by the migrant labour force.

13. Migrants are also more willing to take the jobs which are not attractive to the local population, especially in sectors such as cleaning, catering and domestic work for women, and agricultural work, construction, and semi-skilled jobs in manufacturing for men. In Luxembourg, for example, economic sectors such as construction, hospitality and catering are totally dependent on the migrant working force. Furthermore, there is a significant contribution of seasonal migrants to the agriculture sector.

14. In contradiction to most populist anti-migrant rhetoric stating that migrants are a heavy burden for the social protection system, the recent OECD study on the fiscal impact of migration for all European OECD countries showed that migrants contribute *more* in taxes and social contributions than they receive in individual benefits.⁹ In Luxembourg and Switzerland, migrants “provide an estimated net benefit of about 2% of gross domestic product (GDP) to the public purse”.¹⁰ Therefore, facilitating the access of migrants to employment opportunities would not only respond to the vital needs of migrants, but also benefit the economic development of the host country.

15. The examples of such countries as the United Kingdom and Luxembourg show that skilled migrants contribute a lot to the economic and scientific progress of these countries. Among EU countries, the United Kingdom is attracting the highest number of university-educated migrants, who work primarily in the financial, technological and media sectors.¹¹ In general, skilled migrants contribute more to the host country than the native population, as the host country does not bear the expenses of their education and professional training.

16. Migration provides important potential for the development of the private sector. Migrants are very interested in creating commercial links with their countries of origin and are sharing innovative ideas with private companies on how to fill gaps in the market and how to better profit from existing opportunities. They can also act as consultants on the transfer of technologies and investment opportunities.

17. In general, migrants complement the local labour force, rather than replace it; as in many European countries, the labour legislation favours the local employees. However, in some cases migration can indeed increase unemployment among the local population, as was reported in southern Turkey, where a large

7. Ibid., p. 5.

8. Is migration good for the economy?, Migration Policy Debate, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), May 2014.

9. Ibid., p. 2.

10. Ibid.

11. Mass EU migration into Britain is actually good news for UK economy, Alan Travis, *The Guardian*, 18 February 2016.

number of Syrian refugees arrived. The local population who subsequently lost their jobs had worked mostly in the informal sector, therefore the arrival of refugees for whom the only possibility to get a job was in the informal sector created tense competition in the local labour market.¹²

18. It is very important to mention the contribution which migrants make in their countries of origin through remittances, transfer of knowledge and creation of joint enterprises. In some countries like Armenia and the Republic of Moldova, remittances sent by migrants constitute up to 14% and 25% respectively of national gross domestic product (GDP).

19. As a result of the globalisation of the labour market, all countries are competing to attract the most skilful specialists worldwide. In future, this struggle for brainpower will only become fiercer and only countries which provide better living conditions for skilled migrants, ensuring their security, high living standards and social inclusion for them and their families, will obtain the most qualified labour force.

2.2. Impact on demographic development of the population

20. According to the analysis made by Ms Kristin Ørmen Johnsen in her report on “The impact of European population dynamics on migration policies”,¹³ the trend of ageing amongst European populations will only accelerate in the future as a result of increasing life expectancy and insufficient rates of fertility. It will lead to a decline in the labour force, which will inevitably create a need to attract young skilled migrants.

21. Proactive migration policies could significantly improve the demographic situation in Europe. Recent statistical data has shown that in some European countries, population growth was only made possible because of a migration influx. The reduction of the workforce in Europe will result in strong economic consequences, as fewer people will be contributing to pension financing, consumption will fall and social protection will be limited. As the majority of migrants are coming to Europe for work and tend to be of a working age, between 22 and 45 years of age, their participation in European labour forces will help to reduce the dependency ratio.

22. In Germany, a country with negative natural demographic growth, the population increase in 2015 was only due to the growth in population of people with a migration background, who now account for 21% of the country's total population.¹⁴

23. In Luxembourg, the foreign population has contributed to natural demographic growth, which sees a surplus of 2 150 births, while a birth deficit of -18 was registered among the native population.¹⁵

24. In Scotland, according to data provided by an expert from the COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities), 90% of the projected increase in population over the next 10 years will be due to migration, assuming continuing levels of the current inward net migration.

25. Certainly, the problems of European demographic development cannot be solved only through migration; however, policy makers should make better use of the current migration flows by developing long-term migration strategies responding to the current needs of the European economy.

2.3. Impact on cultural development

26. Migrants representing different cultures and traditions bring diversity and contribute to cultural exchanges. In countries such as Switzerland and Luxembourg, where the migrant population is respectively 26% and 47%, cultural diversity has become an everyday reality, with new ways of intercultural communications and cultural exchanges.

27. Migration has a big impact on sports in Europe. A large number of migrants are young people and they are choosing sports activities as a means to integrate into the local community. This big interest has led to a number of professional athletes of foreign origin representing their host countries at the Olympic Games and various world championships.

12. Refugee and Migrant Labour Market Integration: Europe in Need of a New Policy Agenda, Klaus Zimmermann, Princeton University and UNU-MERIT, 29 September, 2016.

13. Doc.14143, report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons.

14. Population with a migrant background at record high, DESTATIS, press release, 16 September 2016.

15. Report “Migration internationale au Luxembourg. Système d'observation permanente des migrations internationales (SOPEMI)”, October 2016, Olai, 19 December 2016.

28. The influence of the cultures of migrants has had a significant impact on European artistic, fashion and eating trends, leading to more diversity.

29. The significant presence of migrants in some European countries has also had its influence on the mass-media. The media has developed a number of programmes for and with the participation of migrants. There is an increasing tendency toward the diversification of media output in Europe.¹⁶

30. Multicultural societies create new perspectives and are much more attractive for economic opportunities; therefore countries with a high proportion of foreigners achieve higher levels of development and economic progress.

31. In a long-term perspective, migration can have a positive impact on European society by making it more tolerant and diverse, and more open-minded.

3. How to facilitate win-win results in relation to migration in Europe?

32. The European economy, population and cultural development have undergone important transformations under the influence of migration flows; this process is irreversible, as I mentioned earlier. Our task is to discover how we can achieve the best win-win results for our societies and for the well-being of migrants.

33. There are several factors which directly influence the impact of migrants on European development. The major factor is the access of migrants to the labour market. Here, regrettably, migrants are faced with a number of legal and administrative barriers which prevent their smooth integration into European labour forces and expose them to exploitation and discrimination. Other important factors are migrants' inclusion into the host society and their participation in cultural and political life.

3.1. Eliminating discrimination and barriers to access in the labour market

34. Despite the evident need for migrant labour forces in many European countries, a number of bureaucratic barriers and cases of hidden and open discrimination against migrants continue to complicate their life and integration into the host society.

35. The latest International Migration Outlook report by the OECD¹⁷ provides findings which show that employment rates of migrants in most OECD countries remain below those of nationals, while the unemployment rate of both new and settled migrants exceed that of the native population.

36. Newly arrived migrants encounter more difficulties in finding a job than settled migrants as they lack the language skills of the host country, experience problems with recognition of their diplomas, are frequently overqualified and enter into competition with native-born people who, in many European countries, have priority in employment over migrants. They also experience difficulty in obtaining information on local employment opportunities, regulations and requirements, and do not have the necessary contacts to get this information. The uncertainty as regards their residence status significantly limits their employment opportunities.

37. Migrants who are confronted with legal and administrative barriers are very often forced into the shadow economy, where they can be exploited and experience violence and abuse.

38. It is therefore necessary to include provisions in the national legislation which regulate the migrant workforce. It is also crucial to prescribe clear regulations on their access to working visas and work permits, as well as ensure recognition of their diplomas and professional qualifications. Labour legislation should include a simplified procedure for skilled workers whose qualifications respond to the economic needs of the European market. As regards low-skilled employment areas; this sector is very poorly regulated in many European countries, especially in relation to the employment of domestic workers. It would be important to develop common European standards on the employment of migrants for these types of jobs. Also, for seasonal and low-skilled workers, governments should create legal migration opportunities as alternatives to the illegal methods which irregular migrants may use to access work opportunities.

16. Impact of Immigration on Europe's Societies, European Migration Network, March 2006, p. 11.

17. International Migration Outlook 2016, OECD, pp. 60-61.

39. Particular attention should be paid to the situation of asylum seekers and refugees. They often face administrative restrictions in accessing the labour market, in particular in becoming self-employed. Only a small number of European countries grant immediate access to the labour market to asylum seekers. For example, Greece, Norway, Portugal and Sweden do not apply any restrictions on the access of asylum seekers to the labour market. On the other hand, in Ireland and Lithuania, asylum seekers have no access to the labour market throughout the whole procedure.¹⁸ Access to education for the children of asylum seekers and refugees is also not adequately guaranteed in many host labour markets and should be assured at an early stage of the status determination procedure.

40. With regard to the problem of recognition of diplomas of migrants, it would be important to develop European qualification and competency standards, which could resolve this issue.

41. During my fact-finding visits to Luxembourg and the United Kingdom, the trade union representatives made it clear to me that very often the lack of implementation of labour legislation and bureaucratisation of the migration process create the biggest obstacles for migrants.

42. At the policy development level, there is a significant lack of data and analysis on the impact of existing legislation on the different categories of migrants and statistics on their involvement in the European labour force. In order to effectively develop a new evidence-based migration policy, European countries should collect such information on a regular basis.

43. Representatives of the private and public sectors, as well as of trade unions and migrants' organisations should be involved in the revision of national legislation and labour migration policies.

44. The role of diaspora networks is also important in supporting newly arrived migrants and providing them with necessary information on the particularity of the host labour market and administrative rules in the host country. Overall, free and easy access to information for migrants on the labour market should be facilitated by the host countries, as it is essential to match the economic needs of the local markets with the migrants' specific skill sets.

3.1.1. Role of the private sector

45. The private sector has a particular interest in helping migrants to smoothly integrate into European labour forces.

46. There are some very good examples of private sector initiatives which are helping to find employment opportunities for refugees. One example is the "Welcome Talent" programme run by LinkedIn in Sweden, which compiles talented migrants into database pools, which could then be consulted by employers. The system can also provide migrants with training on how to create an effective LinkedIn profile.¹⁹

47. In Germany, skilled manual labour enterprises have an urgent need for workers to cover unfilled positions. Big companies such as Deutsche Telekom, Evonik, Bosch Group, Uniqlo and Siemens provide training courses, *internships* and scholarships for refugees.²⁰ Other corporations such as Daimler even requested that the *Bundestag* adopt legislation allowing refugees and asylum seekers to work after having spent one month in the country.²¹

48. The sports sector can be very helpful in the promotion of better social and work participation of migrants and refugees. In Germany, for example, the football club Bayern Munich created a "training camp" which offered food, German language classes and football equipment for young refugees. Moreover, in February 2016, this club raised 1 million euros at a friendly match to support integration projects in Germany.²²

49. In Finland, some private companies have entered into partnerships with the government in order to provide bank accounts, prepaid debit cards and mobile payment accounts to refugees.

18. Challenges in the Labour Market Integration of Asylum Seekers and Refugees, European Commission, May 2016, p. 7.

19. <https://linkedinforgood.linkedin.com/welcome-talent-se>.

20. <https://www.devex.com/news/the-role-of-the-private-sector-in-alleviating-the-refugee-crisis-87901>.

21. German Companies See Refugees as Opportunity, Markus Dettmer, Carolina Katschak and Georg Ruppert, *Der Spiegel*, 27 August 2015.

22. <https://www.devex.com/news/the-role-of-the-private-sector-in-alleviating-the-refugee-crisis-87901/>, Private sector engagement.

50. It is interesting to note that migrants often demonstrate more entrepreneurial interest than the native population. In the United Kingdom, for example, self-employment among migrants is higher than among the native population. In Luxembourg, some studies have shown that there is large potential for entrepreneurship among first generation migrants, especially among highly educated people.²³ Therefore, it is important to support any entrepreneurial initiatives of migrants by eliminating bureaucratic barriers to their access to credit and necessary documentation, and providing them with the necessary logistical support and professional training.

51. The private sector could also support business initiatives of migrants by providing them with microcredits. They could also benefit from migrants' inside knowledge when developing investment projects in their countries of origin, which could create jobs and provide development opportunities for these countries.

52. Private sector engagement in devising effective migration policies which respond to labour shortages in concrete sectors of the economy should be actively encouraged by governments. They should promote effective co-operation by developing and funding necessary vocational training for migrants, and elaborating strategies on how to encourage the migrant labour force to become involved in less attractive sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing.

53. Governments should also encourage the private sector to employ refugees by providing information on potential benefits for the company of the cultural diversification of their labour force.

3.2. Creating inclusive societies

54. The subject of integration of migrants has become a hot topic of current political debates. In her report, Ms Susanna Huovinen looks into the particular aspects of integration of refugees in times of critical pressure.²⁴ In my opinion, the failures of integration policies in many European countries have led to the negative connotations related to the term "integration". The integration of migrants is perceived by many actors as the obligatory process of acquiring language knowledge and basic courses on the functioning of the host society prior to obtaining residence status. Language knowledge has become an indicator of the integration of the migrant into the host society; however the reality has shown that even with a perfect fluency of the host language, migrants could be segregated and even radicalised.

55. Therefore, I believe that integration should be replaced by a social inclusion process; a process of creating conditions which enables the full and active participation of every member of society in all aspects of life; including civic, social, economic, and political activities, as well as participation in decision making. Social inclusion should involve all members of society – not only the migrant population; everybody should learn how to live in a multilingual, multicultural and multi-religious community.

56. The Council of Europe was one of the first international organisations to develop an Action Plan on Building Inclusive Societies²⁵, which provides a number of actions to assist its member States in managing Europe's diversity by promoting mutual understanding and respect. This action plan includes a number of important initiatives, as set up by a working group on refugees' qualifications, such as the creation of the "No Hate Parliamentary Alliance" and the promotion of the "Guidelines to combat radicalisation and manifestation of hate at grassroots level" adopted by the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. I am pleased to mention that our committee's idea for the creation of a "Parliamentary Network on Diaspora Policies" has also been included in this action plan and this network will be launched in September 2017 in Lisbon.

57. Social security of migrants is one of the most important aspects of their inclusion process. Generally speaking, social protection is one of the conditions of social inclusion and is a very good investment in the economic development of the country. As local authorities play a primary role in the social inclusion process, it is very important to promote positive local initiatives, which could be endorsed further at European level.

58. In France, a Solidarity City Network was created to exchange best practices in welcoming refugees and mobilising citizens to help them. At the initiative of the City of Strasbourg and the Italian municipalities of Catane and Rovereto, this network was extended to European level by launching the "European Solidarity City Network" in October 2016. With the help of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the best

23. Entrepreneurship and immigration: evidence from GEM Luxembourg, Chiara Peroni, Cesare Rillo and Francesco Sarracino, *Economie et Statistiques*, May 2015, p. 15.

24. Integration of refugees in times of critical pressure: learning from recent experience and examples of best practices (rapporteur: Ms Susanna Huovinen, Finland, SOC).

25. Action Plan on Building Inclusive Societies (2016-2019), CM(2016)25, 2 March 2016

practices of this network on public policies on the reception and involvement of refugees were compiled in the "Vademecum". This guide will allow European cities to learn from each other's experience and co-operate closely on the issue of reception of refugees in Europe.²⁶

59. A very interesting initiative was developed at regional level in Scotland, called the "New Scots Strategy"²⁷ which is aimed at co-ordinating all efforts of the organisations involved in supporting refugees and asylum seekers. The Scottish regional community has also developed a Migration Policy Toolkit, designed to help local authorities and their community partners to understand local demographics and to support the implementation of policies for migration.

60. However, in some particular situations like in Luxembourg, the social inclusion process becomes rather complicated even for European citizens. To facilitate this process, the Luxembourg Reception and Integration Agency has developed a Welcome and Integration Contract; an instrument to promote the active involvement of migrants in Luxembourg society. It is offered to all migrants with residence in the country on a voluntary basis. Migrants who have signed the contract can benefit from discounts for language courses, free citizenship courses and a free orientation day (a programme to familiarise migrants with the official bodies and organisations in Luxembourg).

3.3. Promoting an intercultural society

61. Culture is arguably one of the quickest ways of building bridges between people of different origins and backgrounds; but only long-time investments in policies and strategies promoting intercultural dialogue can bring noticeable results in the mentality and behaviour of people.

62. However, a lack of knowledge of the host society, its culture, language and traditions creates major obstacles for migrants' entrance onto the labour market. Therefore, it is very important to make accessible to all migrants civic orientation courses focusing on everyday life in the host country.

63. The promotion of a culturally diverse workforce creates new opportunities for international businesses through the sharing of different cultural perspectives, innovative ideas and new international partners. The private sector and business communities should encourage cultural diversity in their companies by providing diversity training programmes for their staff, and funding language and professional training for migrant workers.

64. Knowledge of the language of the host society is essential for migrants' survival in the host country. Therefore, it is important to provide opportunities for language learning for migrants not only in the host countries, but also in the countries of origin, in preparation for their departure. In this regard, special language courses developed by cultural institutes such as the Alliance Française, the Goethe Institute, the Dante Alighieri society and the British Council can be very useful.

65. The Council of Europe programme on Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants (LIAM) provides governments with good practices and policy recommendations on language courses for migrants.

66. In many European countries, asylum seekers and refugees can benefit from language and citizenship courses only after a certain period of time of residence in the host country. It greatly hampers their opportunities of inclusion in the host society and of finding a job. Language and citizenship classes should be made immediately available to asylum seekers and refugees, regardless of their status in the asylum procedure.

67. Education has a key role to play in the promotion of an intercultural society. Schools and other education establishments should be prepared to welcome children and students speaking a language other than that of the host country. Special educational programmes should be developed to promote knowledge of different cultures, languages and religions. I believe that this issue will be more widely explored by our committee in the forthcoming report on "Integration, empowerment and protection of migrant children through compulsory education".

68. Migrants with a high level of education have a better chance of entering the workforce in Europe. Therefore the efforts of local authorities to provide educational opportunities for migrants and refugees have a real positive impact on local economies. In this regard, the positive example of the partnership between

26. Welcoming refugees with dignity, vademecum on the reception and integration of refugees in European cities, Strasbourg.eu.

27. New Scots: integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities (2014-2017), COSLA, Scottish Government, December 2013

Strasbourg City authorities and the University of Strasbourg in providing refugees and asylum seekers with an opportunity to learn the French language and receive life-long professional training free of charge is an excellent reference point.

69. The host population should also be prepared to accept migrants from different cultural backgrounds. It requires well-devised policies at local level which promote knowledge of different cultures, traditions and religious practices. Such policies would prevent possible conflicts and would eradicate the negative image of migrants.

3.4. Encouraging the democratic participation of migrants

70. Participation in elections and in the work of political or civil organisations provides better opportunities for migrants to express their views to the authorities and community in general.

71. However, the democratic participation of migrants is limited by a number of barriers: financial resources, language skills, access to networking and citizenship restrictions. The eradication of these barriers should be facilitated by the host countries in order to ensure the strong functioning of democracy in Europe.

72. Regular migrants should be able to exercise their political rights to vote and to be elected irrespective of their current residential status. At the time of writing, not all European countries give this right to their citizens without certain restrictions. In the host countries, as provided for in the Council of Europe Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local level (ETS No. 144), migrants should be accorded a right to vote in local elections after five years of residence in a given country. As I wrote in my previous report,²⁸ granting voting rights to migrants in the host country can also, to a certain extent, protect against negative stereotypes to which they may be subjected in political campaigns.

73. Access to citizenship is an important tool for migrants' more active involvement in the host society. The right to naturalisation after five years of regular residence in the country, which is already a case in several European countries, has a very positive impact on the long-lasting political involvement of migrants. A study recently conducted in Switzerland proved that migrants who received a Swiss passport as a result of local referendums developed a high level of political knowledge and involvement.²⁹ Therefore, lowering the strict residency requirements could beneficially influence the positive results of the naturalisation of migrants.

74. Migrants should also be encouraged to be more actively involved in the activities of political parties, trade unions and migrant and diaspora associations. Through their civil participation in the work of such associations, migrants can acquire necessary networking skills, political knowledge and can be better involved in the society of local communities. Political parties, trade unions and civic organisations should develop special programmes encouraging migrants' involvement.

75. A good example of such a civil society initiative involving migrants is the "One day without us" action which was organised in the United Kingdom on 20 February 2017 to celebrate the contribution of migrants in the country. It was a nationwide event which took different forms of expression including marches, social media forums, stalls, picnics, art performances, workshops and other cultural events in different universities and other locations.

76. Migrant's involvement in consultative bodies at national and local level is another important form of community participation. Migrants should be actively included in migration policy debates and should be consulted on all policy changes which are related to their interests. Much political analysis has come to the conclusion that the absence of migrants' point of view in political and social debates has led to a distorted image of migrants amongst the population. Many European countries which are Parties to the above-mentioned Council of Europe Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level have implemented its provisions on the creation of consultative councils. In Luxembourg for example, migrants have the possibility to express their positions on different policies and legal drafts by being represented in the National Council for Foreigners. In Italy, there are two different systems of political representation of foreigners at local level: the Consultative Body of Foreigners and the Associated Counsellor (Consigliere Aggiunto). The former is an elected body, representing foreign residents with a consultative status. Associated Counsellors are also directly elected by foreign residents and participate on a regular basis in municipal council assemblies. It is important that member States provide the necessary funding for the creation and effective functioning of such consultative bodies.

28. [Doc.13648](#), Democratic participation of migrant diasporas.

29. Naturalization fosters the long-term political integration of immigrants, Jens Hainmueller, Dominik Hangartner and Guiseppe Pietrantuone, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/PMC4611668.

77. I should particularly stress the role of local authorities in the democratic involvement of migrants. As the everyday lives of migrants are taking place at community level, the local communities should be responsive to migrants' initiatives and could even encourage their participation by developing migrant-oriented programmes.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

78. This report has argued that an effective migration process is beneficial not only for migrants and their families, but for all of European society. In addition, through diaspora links, it can also have a tremendous impact on the development of the migrants' countries of origin.

79. The first thing to be done in our countries is to counter the negative rhetoric against migration and demonstrate to the public the economic evidence of its potential benefit to our societies. All public and private actors should be involved in the process of formulation of a new evidence-based migration policy for Europe, centred on the real economic benefits and prospects for development.

80. To increase the benefits of migration to Europe, it is necessary to eliminate a number of legal and bureaucratic barriers and the practice of hidden and open discrimination against migrants, which significantly hinder their integration into the host society.

81. The economic growth of Europe will depend upon its capacity to better utilise people's skills and talents and promote innovative technologies and businesses. Therefore, a key priority should be the elimination of all barriers to migrants' access to the labour market and provision of opportunities for the development of their skills and talents.

82. To make the most of this process, it is important to create an appropriate international and national legal basis and relevant migration management mechanisms, which can ensure the maximum profit for all actors.

83. European countries should gather, analyse and monitor information on their labour force needs with the aim of developing forward-thinking migration strategies and responding to their economic needs in different sectors of the economy.

84. To gain advantage in the global competition for the most highly-skilled specialists, European countries should increase labour market transparency. They should also improve admission conditions for the best students and researchers from non-European countries and provide them with attractive employment opportunities. Targeted national regularisation programmes for irregular migrants should be promoted, as has been done by some countries such as France.

85. It is also important to develop European qualification and competence standards, which would facilitate the recognition of migrants' qualifications and assessment of their skills.

86. Effective co-operation should be developed between governments and business communities on the developing and funding of necessary vocational training for migrants, and the elaboration of strategies on how to encourage the migrant labour force to become involved in less attractive sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing.

87. The creation of a European system which would facilitate social security protection for all working migrants and their families would be one of the main conditions for the social inclusion of migrants and the prosperity of host countries. This system should protect the fundamental social and economic rights guaranteed in the European Social Charter treaty system and be based on the standards set in the European Code of Social Security (ETS No. 48) and its Protocol (ETS No. 48A). The host societies should also ensure that migrants are not discriminated against in the labour market, have the same level of access to employment as native workers, and enjoy equal social, cultural and democratic rights.

88. Local communities should be supported in their initiatives toward the social inclusion of migrants. Local authorities, NGOs and migrant organisations should receive adequate funding for their activities aimed at the better involvement of refugees in social life.

89. Local banks should support the efforts of migrants to help their countries of origin, by lowering the costs of transfer of remittances and developing micro-credits for investment projects of migrants in their countries of origin.

90. The host country governments should sign agreements with the countries of origin of migrants regarding transfer of social and pension rights.

91. The governments of the Council of Europe member States should encourage migrants' active participation in social and political life. Migrants who are contributing to the economic development of the host countries should also be able to present their opinions and concerns regarding the main issues of political development of these countries.

92. At European level, consideration could be given to the creation of a European migration and intercultural development observatory to assist the member States of the Council of Europe in dealing with current migration challenges, including the development of strategies, legal frameworks and action plans, as well as the implementation of specific projects. This could serve as a laboratory for developing legislative frameworks regulating migration-related issues; for supporting projects promoting intercultural development; and promoting dialogue between researchers, policy makers, and civil society activists working on migration problems. As the Council of Europe has already developed an impressive set of standards concerning the human rights of migrants – and for the moment does not have any specific intergovernmental committee dealing with migration issues – it would be very important to promote such an observatory, where these standards could be shared, developed and implemented. It could deal with both policy development and research, and co-operation and assistance activities. It could also act as a Council of Europe agency on migration, bringing together all member States, and could be opened for participation to other countries interested in this co-operation.

93. At institutional level, co-operation should be reinforced between the Council of Europe, the OECD and the European Union, aimed at promoting a positive image of migrants, particularly as far as economic development is concerned.