



Resolution 2175 (2017)¹

Migration as an opportunity for European development

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The economic development of Europe depends upon its capacity to better utilise people's skills and talents and to 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 given rise to ungrounded fears among 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 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), migrants accounted for 70% of the increase in the workforce of Europe. In recent years, they have represented 15% of new entries in areas of expertise with strongly growing demand such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics. In some European countries, population growth in recent years has only been possible because of a migration influx. In addition, migrants bring diversity to European countries, contribute to cultural exchanges and have an important impact on the arts, sports, fashion, media and cuisine.
5. The Assembly considers that there is an urgent need to counter the negative rhetoric surrounding 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, realistic and forward-looking 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 all forms of tacit or overt discrimination against migrants, which significantly hinder their integration into host societies.
7. It also considers that to gain a global competitive advantage and attract the most highly skilled specialists, European countries should increase labour market transparency and create more safe and legal opportunities for migration to Europe.

1. *Assembly debate* on 28 June 2017 (24th Sitting) (see [Doc. 14335](#), report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, rapporteur: Mr Andrea Rigoni; and [Doc. 14348](#), opinion of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, rapporteur: Ms Petra De Sutter). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 28 June 2017 (24th Sitting).

See also [Recommendation 2109 \(2017\)](#).



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, as well as providing opportunities and integration measures that specifically target low-skilled and less-educated migrants, and by ensuring that migrants are guaranteed the same pay and working conditions as nationals for equal work;

9.1.3. shortening asylum procedures and considering 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;

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. devising 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 to create and fund vocational training for migrants;

9.2.4. supporting business initiatives of migrants by offering microloans;

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. ensuring access to affordable and adequate health services for all migrants, regardless of their legal status;

9.3.8. encouraging migrants' active involvement in the activities of political parties, trade unions and migrant and diaspora associations;

9.3.9. 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 (ETS No. 35) 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, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 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.