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Integration of migrants and refugees: benefits for all parties involved

Report[1]
Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons
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Summary

The report underscores the need to take specific measures to improve the integration of refugees and migrants, so that this dynamic process benefits all parties involved: host countries and their local communities as well as the refugee and migrant population. Seeing integration as a long-term investment in human capital is key.

The report presents a wide range of approaches, which the Council of Europe member States can apply, encouraging "a sense of togetherness" and minimising fear and resentment towards people arriving from other countries. The report recommends inviting migrants and refugees to accept a "new social contract" which sets out their rights and responsibilities; offering them the help of mentors and guides when they first arrive in a host country; creating spaces where they can be brought together with local communities; and aiming for a fair and balanced distribution of the migrant population across a national territory to avoid ghettos.

Drawing on positive examples from Norway, Sweden and Finland, the report highlights the importance of access to interpretation for migrants and refugees, as well as of language and citizenship training, of actively matching their skills with job opportunities, and of targeted assistance with housing, access to health care and schooling. Vulnerable groups should be offered specific extra support. Finally, communication with the public on migration should be fair and fact-based, addressing both its benefits and challenges, while avoiding stigmatising, xenophobic, racist, alarmist or inaccurate reporting.

The Council of Europe programmes in the field of migration, inter-cultural dialogue, and social cohesion, could provide essential support and a platform for international cooperation for the benefit of European societies.

1. Reference to committee: Doc. 15335, Reference 4604 of 27 September 2021.

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A. Draft resolution[2]

1. The Parliamentary Assembly is alarmed by the fact that migration into Europe in the last decade triggered numerous negative reactions, fuelled by a public discourse inducing fear and resentment towards people arriving from other countries. The term “integration” identifies a dynamic process of mutual adaptation where both migrants and host societies bear some responsibilities in its fulfilment. Integration is a long-term investment in human capital. The ultimate aim is inclusion or an inclusive participation from both sides, which implies that all members of the society have the opportunity to participate in social, cultural and political life, encouraging a sense of togetherness.

2. The process of integration may demand special enabling measures to develop the ability of immigrants to achieve the same social and economic outcomes as natives, taking into account their characteristics. The Assembly notes that host countries benefit from the successful integration of migrants and refugees. Successful integration benefits the whole society, maximising the advantages for all parties involved in that process. Although the State has to invest money in integration, when the migrants arrive and a few years after, their macro-economic impact becomes positive as they become permanent residents, are integrated in the labour market and pay taxes. Migrants and refugees boost the working-age population, arrive with skills, and therefore contribute to human capital development and to technological progress. Furthermore, local communities can benefit greatly from the richness offered by the diversity of cultures, commitment to work hard to build a future for oneself and one’s family, and the new social contract that clarifies the rights and responsibilities of all actors in society.

3. Integration programmes can have positive outcomes only if, and when, they are well prepared and implemented in co-operation with all the relevant stakeholders. To improve the benefits for all the parties involved in the process of refugees’ and migrants’ integration, integration policies should be designed in a way that takes into account the needs of all key actors. This means that democratic processes allowing for consultations of relevant stakeholders should take place. In addition to that, States should pursue an evidence-based approach to inclusion planning, through expanding the collection and analysis of socio-economic data, building upon existing tools and programmes by national and sub-national authorities. Through this they will obtain a detailed overview on refugees’ and migrants’ profiles and practical, legal and administrative barriers impeding the full enjoyment of their economic and social rights.

4. It is important to engage in effective consultations with stakeholders in national judicial, legislative and human rights bodies, academia and civil society actors, including migrants’ organisations, in the development, adoption, implementation and review of integration measures. The experiences of migrants and refugees should be taken into account in devising future integration policies and programmes. Civil society and non-governmental organisations play a crucial role in the integration of migrants and refugees. A long-term and independent funding of civil society organisations is, therefore, particularly important for successful integration of migrants and refugees.

5. The Assembly calls upon the Council of Europe member States to take positive measures to enhance the integration of migrants and refugees aiming at their full inclusion in the host society. Integration can be put in practice using a great variety of methods. The exchange of best practices at local, national and European levels needs to be supported. The following approaches can be promoted:

5.1. *Establish a new social contract:* public authorities, when confronted with major changes in society, are often prompted to make significant changes. Such changes may need to be better prepared. Integration of migrants and refugees may benefit from a new social contract which sets out rights and responsibilities of all parties involved in refugees’ and migrants’ integration. Acceptance of such a new social contract depends on democratic processes in place that build social support. Highlighting the rights and responsibilities for the newly arrived groups of populations allows to clarify things from the start and build trust and respectful co-operation between local communities and the beneficiaries of resettlement programmes. As regards the integration of refugees, member States should base their actions on the goals stipulated in the United Nations global compacts for migrants and refugees, as underscored in Resolution 2379 (2021) “Role of parliaments in implementing the United Nations global compacts for migrants and refugees” and Resolution 2408 (2021) “70th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention: the Council of Europe and the international protection of refugees”.

2. Draft resolution adopted by the committee on 15 March 2023.

5.2. *Support mentor programmes and integration guides:* one solution that proved to improve the integration of migrants are mentor programmes with the participation of so-called "integration guides". Through these programmes, local mentors accompany and support migrants and refugees when they first arrive in the host countries, support them in their cultural and social orientation, practice the language of the host country with them, and support them with personal relationships and networking in the new community. It is important to raise employers' awareness of the refugees' and migrants' potential, which can be done through the networks of chambers of commerce. Public-private partnerships should be developed to support integration.

5.3. *Develop nationwide interpretation services:* another crucial factor for the successful integration of migrants and refugees is the availability of interpretation services during the entire integration process. The possibility to understand and actively participate is especially important in the fields of health, justice, asylum and issues in the municipalities.

5.4. *Enhance education – from language training to democratic citizenship and human rights education:* Language training is crucial for being able to live in a new country, including for getting access to employment. The better the training, the higher the likelihood that the person will become less dependent on support services and more autonomous in his/her daily life. Language training should take into account and caters for different education levels, fluency levels, time commitments (accelerated or reduced hours), modalities (in person or remote) and care responsibilities. In addition, specific programmes designed to educate about societal developments in the host country, including programmes promoting democratic citizenship and human rights education, would benefit both the newly arrived persons and host communities.

5.5. *Improve recognition of skills obtained abroad:* to ensure a successful integration into the labour market and to enable migrants and refugees to participate, subsequently, in social security and pension systems, the recognition of qualifications and prior learning is of fundamental importance. Whether partial or full, recognition opens up further education or employment opportunities and allows refugees and migrants to make more efficient use of their knowledge, skills and competences. In that regard, member States should promote the implementation of the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees, an international project grounded in the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (CETS No. 165, the "Lisbon Convention"). The Passport can improve access to employment or give the possibility to continue education, helping refugees integrate in the host societies.

5.6. *Take into consideration the special needs of vulnerable groups:* vulnerable groups like women, (unaccompanied) children, elderly people, people with disabilities, members of the LGBTQI+ community, stateless persons and others need specific support in order to successfully integrate into the host country. Increasing the possibility for migrant children to attend kindergartens and other day-care facilities would allow women to continue education and have access to employment. Involvement of healthcare professionals with a migrant background in elderly homes and communal living can help improve the integration of elderly migrants and refugees into the society and allow them to age in dignity. Empowering refugees and asylum seekers with disabilities and/or long-term illnesses would give them the tools they need to assert their human rights.

5.7. *Create spaces to bring migrants, refugees, and the local community together:* states should do their utmost to avoid building new retention camps. This is contrary to the goal of integration and full inclusion of refugees and migrants in their host country. Even without camps, segregation of refugees and migrants in certain urban areas is detrimental to societal progress. Supporting the refugees' and migrants' diaspora to meet and share their experiences and form mutual support networks can be beneficial short-term in terms of local job opportunities, resilience, and social networks, but it can become problematic, as it prevents certain groups of people from accessing the opportunities and services that would allow them to fully participate in economic and social development of the host country. It is essential for successful integration to create spaces in the public sphere that bring the local community, migrants, and refugees together. This allows to reduce tensions and strengthen social cohesion, building bridges between various groups in society.

5.8. *Improve financial settings:* there is a need for a person-centred approach to integration support and adaptation of national services to take into account specific needs and circumstances. Refugees and migrants require housing as well as support for other fundamental necessities, such as health care, and access to education for their children. Significant upfront investments are needed to cover the costs of both immediate assistance for asylum seekers and education. Funding therefore is an important tool for managing integration processes in a country and works as a strong leverage for co-ordination in this area. More efficient and effective funding mechanisms should be designed and implemented based on

dialogue between policy makers and the local authorities and actors in charge of finding solutions (mayors, municipal authorities, local civil society organisations, and service providers). Refugees' and migrants' financial inclusion should also be strengthened, including access to basic services such as bank accounts, through awareness-raising and information provision, as well as support to refugee and migrant entrepreneurs through effective access to finance and business development services.

5.9. *Develop targeted housing policies*: an affordable and decent accommodation is a prerequisite for a successful integration of migrants, a smooth access to the job market as well as to basic services, such as healthcare and education. In addition, there is a need for targeted settlement policies, aiming to distribute the migrant population in a fair and balanced way on the national territory, facilitate the connection between the newly arrived and the local population, prevent the development of ghettos or parallel societies thus reducing the likelihood for migrants to be involved in illegal activities.

5.10. *Invest in social cohesion:* Social Impact Bonds are a possible solution for efficient funding. They offer funding to solve societal issues and support preventative measures and connect financial success with achieving quantified social outcomes. Partnerships can be built between private investors, the government, and civil society organisations.

5.11. *Match migrant skills with job opportunities:* access to the labour market is key to integration and refugees' and migrants' economic contribution to the host nation. Integration policies should ideally take into account the unique profiles of immigrants and their chances of integrating into local communities. Newly arrived migrants can be advised of job opportunities in meetings with the state employment office after receiving their residence permit, where their placements are governed by agreements between municipalities and the central government.

5.12. *Develop effective communication strategies:* the public's impression of immigrants' actual outcomes may not match the facts. Integration policies must have a communication component that encourages a fair and fact-based approach while identifying and addressing the benefits and challenges that migration can have for the host nation. New media channels offer a variety of opportunities due to their ability to connect with audiences that traditional media do not reach. But there are other difficulties, like the spread of misleading information and unfavourable stereotypes.

5.13. *Ensure respect for refugees' and migrants' dignity in media*: member States should take steps to encourage accurate and non-discriminatory portraying of migrants and refugees, help media gather and share accurate and non-discriminatory information about migration and the human rights implications of migrants' and refugees' integration, while avoiding messages that are stigmatising, xenophobic, racist, alarmist or inaccurate.

5.14. *Fight against xenophobia and discrimination:* specific programmes should be put in place for improving knowledge and addressing negative perceptions of migrants and refugees with the aim of protecting them from xenophobia, violence and discrimination. States can undertake information campaigns in co-operation with civil society organisations, the media and other relevant actors to, *inter alia*, shed light on the situation of migrants and refugees and raise awareness of the risks and dangers of trafficking and transnational organised crime.

5.15. *Develop welcoming programmes:* various cities in Europe have welcoming programmes in place, as well as related communication campaigns that make use of photos, posters, press releases, and social media. Communication emphasizes diversity as an advantage.

5.16. *Enhance public health support for vulnerable refugees and migrants:* availability of public health support is an important issue. Refugees, especially children, that fled high intensity conflict areas may need psychological support. While the protection of the health of migrants and refugees has so far been linked solely to the guarantee of basic physical care, it is essential to recognise that mental health and psychological support are equally essential. The World Health Organization's "Strategy and Action Plan for Refugee and Migrant Health in the WHO European Region" (2016) places improving the mental health of refugees and migrants on the political agenda.

6. States should take measures at European level to promote integration of refugees and migrants based on the respect for the rights and dignity of every individual. The Assembly calls upon member States to take into consideration, when devising public policies for refugees and migrants' integration, the recommendations put forward by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights in the issue paper "Time for Europe to get migrant integration right" (2016).

7. Bearing in mind the importance of best practice exchange at European level, the Assembly recommends enhancing international co-operation to promote integration of refugees and migrants at local, national and European levels.

8. Participation in programmes aimed at managing diverse societies, such as the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities programme, is highly recommended. The programme supports cities and regions in reviewing and adapting their policies through an intercultural lens and developing comprehensive intercultural strategies to manage diversity as an advantage for the whole society.

9. The Assembly welcomes co-operation with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe in the implementation by the Congress of the Cities4Cities initiative – a new matchmaking platform launched to support Ukrainian local and regional authorities.

10. Finally, the Assembly underscores the importance of enhancing reception capacities and integration facilities for refugees and migrants. Social projects responding to emergency situations can be financed with the support of financial instruments available through the Council of Europe Development Bank – a major instrument of the solidarity policy in Europe.

B. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Domagoj Hajduković, rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. Migration is a natural phenomenon in the history of mankind. Throughout centuries, people have been on the move within Europe as well as to and from Europe. This has been important for the progress and benefit of each individual and society as a whole. The European Union (EU) has received wide public support by overcoming national borders as dividing lines, creating an area of free movement of persons and even lifting border controls under the Schengen Agreement. Integration of migrants has therefore become a cornerstone of building stable and prosperous societies and nations. Failures in such integration lead to human suffering, fractured societies as well as social, economic and political instability.

2. While data of all Council of Europe member States are less accessible, Eurostat provides up dated figures for the EU:[3] for 2019, it found that 2.7 million persons immigrated to the EU and 1.5 million emigrated from the EU. 39% of all EU residence permits at the end of 2020 were issued for family purposes, 17% for work purposes and 9% for asylum. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) figures of Council of Europe member States, the highest numbers of refugees were in Türkiye with approximately 4.4% of the population and in Germany with approximately 1.5%.

3. Behind these numbers are human beings who deserve our attention and whose integration must be a common objective of all States in Europe. Marginalised, discriminated or excluded migrants are a source of serious concern. From a human perspective, but also socially, economically and politically, migrants should be well integrated into society. This understanding led to the motion for a resolution which this report originates from (Doc. 15335), which was tabled on 25 June 2021.[4]

2. Definitions

4. Within the immigration process there is a distinction between the assimilation, integration, and inclusion of migrants and refugees. Assimilation describes the process, in which migrants and refugees are the only ones that need to adapt to existing norms, behaviours, values and the culture of the host country and therefore become similar to the native majority. Integration on the other side is defined as a “two-way” street, where all members of society find common ground and make compromises. Critics say that this is only theoretical and that the burden is most often placed only on the refugees and migrants. Inclusion therefore implies that all members of the society have the opportunity to participate in social, cultural and political life and encourages a sense of togetherness.[5] In my report the term “integration” will be used in a broader way, which implies inclusive participation coming from both sides, along the lines of the definition used by the UNHCR with regard to the integration of refugees[6]: a dynamic and multi-faceted two-way process leading to full and equal membership in society. This includes preparedness by refugee communities to adapt to host societies without giving up cultural identity, and the receiving communities and institutions equally ready to welcome refugees and meet the needs of a diverse population. The process is complex and gradual, comprising legal, economic, social, and cultural dimensions.

5. Scholars have proposed a conceptual framework for integration, grouped into four key areas: i. *Foundational*: refugee status, access to rights, and citizenship; ii. *Functional*: access to housing, health, social security, decent work, financial services and education; iii. *Social*: social connections and bonds within the host community, social bridges, networks, social links; iv. *Facilitation*: language, training, counseling, cultural knowledge, safety, and stability.[7] Most theories define successful integration for newcomers as equitable access to opportunities and resources, participation in the community and society, and feelings of security and belonging in their new homes.[8]

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3. https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/statistics-migration-europe_en.
4. https://pace.coe.int/en/files/29367/html.
5. www.friendsofeurope.org/insights/europes-migration-challenge-from-integration-to-inclusion/.
6. UNHCR Executive Committee Conclusion on Local Integration No. 104 (LVI) – 2005: www.refworld.org/docid/4357a91b2.html.
7. Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). “Understanding integration: A conceptual framework”, Journal of Refugee Studies, 21, 166–191; https://academic.oup.com/jrs/article/21/2/166/1621262.
8. See Hynie, M. (2018). “Refugee integration: Research and policy. Peace and Conflict”, Journal of Peace Psychology, 24(3), 265-276; https://psycnet.apa.org/fulltext/2018-39059-002.html

6. It's interesting to note that the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the EU adopted two definitions sharing common features: the term integration would identify a dynamic process of mutual adaptation where both migrants and host societies bear some responsibilities in its fulfilment. This understanding of the concept has informed all the policies of the European Commission on the subject, including the recent Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027. Contrariwise, the OECD relied on a definition focused on the outcome, not the process. Accordingly, integration is "the ability of immigrants to achieve the same social and economic outcomes as natives taking into account their characteristics."

7. The lack of integration of migrants and refugees does not only lead to social, economic, and psychological problems of the person arriving in a new country, but also to the loss of income taxes and contributions to the pension and social security due to poor integration in the labour market.[9] Furthermore, the lack of integration leads to fragmented societies and political instability.

8. In the past years, not only governments focused on the topics of migration and integration, but also the rising right-wing populists. By using dehumanising and harmful narratives they have increasingly influenced media, public discourse, and political movements. Rhetoric and policies which criminalise and dehumanise migrants and refugees leave them without a place in society. That is why it is essential to ensure successful integration of migrants and refugees in all Council of Europe member States and to focus on the benefits to all parties involved in that process. The assimilationist approach to integration policy has been widely criticised, given that it would annihilate the identities of minorities.

9. Finally, multiculturalism is sometimes cited as an approach to integration as opposed to assimilation. It promotes the integration of migrants in society, while advocating the preservation of their cultural identities. This approach has been criticised because it would encourage migrants' segregation rather than fostering the cohesion among different communities in society.

3. European action

10. Several legal standards set by the Council of Europe as well as by the EU and the United Nations protect migrants and refugees against discrimination, exploitation and neglect. In addition, specific programmes and action have been created to improve integration of people on the move. The European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5) and the European Social Charter (ETS No. 35) are two of the major achievements of the Council of Europe that should guide member States in all policies, including as regards integration of refugees and migrants.

11. In 1956, the Council of Europe Development Bank was founded, with one of the main purposes being the support, integration and social development of persons displaced in member States as a consequence of the Second World War.[10] This objective is still valid and necessary, given the continued presence of migrants and refugees in Europe.

12. The EU, having been created on the basis of the fundamental values and freedoms enshrined in the Council of Europe treaties, added the freedom of movement of persons among member States as one of the pillars of the European Economic Community of 1957.[11] The latter freedom is now enshrined in Article 3(2) of the Treaty on European Union, Article 21 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and Article 45 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. However, specific attention must also be paid to non-EU citizens on the move within the EU. New developments in the EU will certainly have repercussions on the integration policies in the Council of Europe member States, as mentioned in Resolution 2416 (2022) "European Union Pact on Migration and Asylum: a human rights perspective".

13. People on the move are also protected by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the United Nations. The rights of refugees are enshrined in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. States in different parts of the world have also developed regional laws and standards that complement the international refugee protection regime. UNHCR acts as 'guardian' of the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol, however the 1951 Convention expressly provides that States are expected to co-operate with UNHCR in ensuring that the rights of refugees are respected and protected.

9. https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/social-costs-non-integration-immigrants-communities_en.
10. https://coebank.org/en/about/mission/.
11. www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/147/free-movement-of-persons.

14. The adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) in 2018, subsequent pledges made at the first Global Refugee Forum in 2019, as well as the upcoming next Global Refugee Forum in December 2023, provide renewed impetus for refugees' integration in Europe. The GCR, affirmed in 2018 by the UN General Assembly, sets out a vision for a more predictable, equitable, comprehensive, and timely refugee response and calls for a whole-of-society approach. It recognises local authorities, including in urban settings, as frontline actors and notes opportunities for the engagement of city networks. In parallel, efforts were undertaken to anchor city implementation of the GCR in international refugee and migrant policy fora, including the Intergovernmental Conference to adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.[12]

15. Looking at the current situation of migrants and refugees in Council of Europe member States, one can acknowledge that a lot has been achieved, but still much remains to be done for their full integration into the societies where they have chosen to live. The situation of irregular and undocumented migrants as well as stateless persons is of particular concern in this regard. The lack of a legal status for many stateless hinders access to rights and services. In addition, refugees and asylum seekers face multiple legal, administrative and practical barriers.[13]

16. The Council of Europe dealt with the topic of migration and integration in various resolutions and reports. In 2005 the Parliamentary Assembly adopted Resolution 1437 (2005) "Migration and integration: a challenge and an opportunity for Europe" that pointed out the importance of effective policies to ensure the successful integration of migrants and refugees and to address the challenges of migration.[14]

17. In 2014 the Assembly adopted Resolution 2006 (2014) "Integration of migrants in Europe: the need for a proactive, long-term and global policy".[15] The focus of the report and the resolution was on the unsatisfactory progress that the member States had made so far in integrating migrants and refugees into society. To ensure better integration of migrants, the Assembly underlined the need to return to comprehensive policies, to facilitate vocational training and recognition of diplomas and, if possible, to grant long-term residence permits.

18. In 2017 the Assembly adopted Resolution 2175 (2017) "Migration as an opportunity for European development" that provided concrete examples of how migrants contribute to increasing economic growth, challenging the misconception that migrants are a threat to local populations.[16]

19. Furthermore, the Assembly adopted Resolution 2176 (2017) "Integration of refugees in times of critical pressure: learning from recent experience and examples of best practice".[17] It provided an overview of different national approaches to the integration of migrants in Council of Europe member States and put emphasis on good practices which could be broadly used to succeed in engaging refugees in the daily economic, social and cultural life of host communities.

20. A year later, the Assembly adopted Resolution 2220 (2018) "Integration, empowerment and protection of migrant children through compulsory education".[18] The report highlighted the gap between States' undertakings under domestic and international law on primary and secondary education and its actual delivery to migrant and refugee children. Examples from Council of Europe member States illustrated good practices and many areas for improvement. The recommendations constituted a "checklist" of conditions for ensuring migrant children's education.

21. As regards integration, member States should base their actions on the goals stipulated in the UN global compacts for migrants and refugees, as agreed in Resolution 2379 (2021) "Role of parliaments in implementing the United Nations global compacts for migrants and refugees" and Resolution 2408 (2021) "70th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention: the Council of Europe and the international protection of refugees".

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12. Global Compact on Refugees (2018), United Nations, New York, paragraphs 37 and 38.
13. See UNHCR (2021): "Social Protection Policy Brief. Leave no one behind: promoting effective access of refugees in social protection systems in post-pandemic Europe", and UNHCR (2022): "The Implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive – Six Months On".
14. Resolution 1437 (2005), Doc. 10453.
15. Resolution 2006 (2014), Doc. 13530.
16. Resolution 2175 (2017), Doc. 14335.
17. Resolution 2176 (2017), Doc. 14329.
18. Resolution 2220 (2018), Doc. 14524.

22. For the preparation of this report, various exchanges of views were held. On 19 September 2022, during its meeting in Athens, the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons held an exchange of views with Ms Maria Clara Martin, UNHCR Representative in Greece, Mr Gianluca Rocco, Chief of Mission and Regional Response Coordinator of the IOM Greece, Ms Melina Daskalaki, Special Advisor to the Mayor of Athens for Migrants and Refugees and President at City of Athens Reception and Solidarity Centre, and Mr Christos Papadopoulos, Special Advisor to the Mayor on the field of culture, city of Ioannina (Greece). On 11 October 2022, the committee held an exchange of views with Ms Salomé Brun, Conference of INGOs' Communication unit (Médecins du Monde), and Mr Samir Hećo, Project Officer at the Education Department, Council of Europe. Finally, on 7 December 2022, the committee saw the presentation by Mr Sølve Sætre, Head of section for diversity and inclusion, City of Bergen, Norway, on the asylum policy implementation at local level, in Bergen, and a video projection about the "Straight to work" programme of integration of refugees carried out in the municipality of Øygarden. The report will highlight some key elements of these contributions.

4. Benefits for all parties involved

23. Studies have shown that host countries benefit from the successful integration of migrants and refugees. Although the State has to invest money in integration, when the migrants arrive and a few years after, their macroeconomic impact becomes positive as they become permanent residents, are integrated in the labour market and pay taxes. Furthermore, migrants and refugees boost the working-age population, arrive with skills, and therefore contribute to human capital development as well as to technological progress.[19]

24. On 19 September 2022, Ms Martin described integration as fundamental to achieving self-sufficiency and stability, as well as social peace and to preventing conflict. Full integration is defined as the ability to provide for oneself and being part of the hosting community. She illustrated the benefits stakeholders may gain from integration. First, all migrants can benefit the hosting communities by providing an increase in the workforce, the demand of goods and the entrepreneurial initiatives. Inclusion of diverse people improves productivity and stimulates innovation. Economically speaking, according to EU studies, spending 1 euro on the integration of refugees can generate 2 euros in benefits within a period of no more than 5 years. Regarding societal aspects, it was noted that peace and social cohesion are promoted and subsequently the cost of social conflict decreases. In conclusion, she highlighted the contributions of the Council of Europe and mentioned the parliaments' role in fostering positive dialogue and legislation.

25. Mr Rocco stressed the following advantages of integration of migrants: when they become economically independent, they decongest reception facilities and support the housing market. He referred to some studies demonstrating the positive impact of integration on economic growth, whatever the level of development of the country. Migrants can find a job, pay taxes and mitigate the brain-drain phenomenon. Besides, integration avoids the high social and economic costs of marginalisation. Furthermore, he emphasised the need that migrants are trained, speak the local language and share the values of the hosting country, otherwise interaction with the society is hard. Finally, he illustrated the positive outcome of the integration programme started in Greece in 2018. In 3 years, 18 000 migrants received subsidies, training and education; 6 000 were put in contact with employers, although they were mainly employed as seasonal workers. The Greek case stands as an example to other countries, showing that integration benefiting both migrants and society is possible.

26. Numerous studies show the economic effects of migration, which are often positive also for the host countries. For example, an International Monetary Fund (IMF) study found that the longer-term impact of migration on the GDP per capita was positive, mainly due to an increase in the labour productivity.[20] The rise in firms' productivity as a result of the influx of migrants on the labour market has been solidly proven by several scholars, for example by Ottaviano, Peri and Wright, who concentrated on the United Kingdom services sector.[21] Academic research has also suggested that an increase in the number of refugees pushed less qualified natives towards less manual intensive jobs, so their wages and their occupational mobility ramped up.[22]

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19. H. d'Albis, E. Boubtane, D. Coulibaly (2018), "Macroeconomic evidence suggests that asylum seekers are not a "burden" for Western European countries". Science Advances 4.
20. Florence Jaumotte, Ksenia Koloskova, and Sweta Chaman Saxena. "Impact of migration on income levels in advanced economies". International Monetary Fund, 2016.
21. Gianmarco IP Ottaviano, Giovanni Peri, and Greg C. Wright. "Immigration, trade and productivity in services: Evidence from UK firms." Journal of International Economics 112 (2018): 88-108.

27. In addition, immigration of skilled workers has greatly contributed to innovation and patenting in the US. Recently, it was also demonstrated that even in Europe an increase in skilled immigrants leads to an increase in the innovation and patenting of firms.[23] These findings are consistent with the studies showing that in Denmark and the Netherlands culturally diverse firms tend to be more innovative and more likely to apply for patents.[24]

28. Scientific literature has also studied the effects of integration policies, which are usually deemed essential in amplifying the economic benefits of migration. In Europe, a great number of studies has concentrated on the integration of migrants in the labour market of the Nordic countries because of their high-quality accessible data and their comprehensive integration policies.

29. Overall, consolidated results show that better schooling outcomes and social integration of migrants' children are positively associated with their parents' economic success.[25] Consequently, integration policies aimed at promoting access of adult migrants to the labour market have significant positive spillover effects on their children, who attain better education and employment results than in the absence of such policies.[26]

30. Moreover, it was pointed out that when a group of migrants is excluded by certain integration programmes (language courses, training programmes) it experiences a loss in human capital development and tends to end up in the informal economy.[27] An IMF study found that providing support to young migrants is key to reducing the risk of involvement in criminal and violent activities.[28]

31. As regards refugees, since they are not selected on the basis of their schooling and skills and often experienced trauma and loss of human capital, their access to the labour market is extremely difficult but would be instrumental in greatly reducing poverty and inequalities in the host country.[29] Moreover, as a consequence of refugees' integration, public costs in supporting them would fall, and their economic outcomes would boost. Some works have estimated that an incomplete integration of refugees into the labour market would cost the EU between 0.4% and 0.6% of its GDP.[30] Another study has projected that refugees' integration could in the long-term lead to a GDP growth between 0.2% and 1.6 % above the baseline, depending on the designing and the financing of integration policies.[31] Another important factor is time. A reduction in the length of the process to assess the asylum application increases the chances of the asylum seeker to find a job. A study on Switzerland found that a reduction of one year of the waiting time increases the employment rate by 4 or 5 percentage points.[32]

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22. Mette Foged, and Giovanni Peri. "Immigrants' and native workers: New analysis on longitudinal data". No. w19315. National Bureau of Economic Research, 2013.
23. Valentina Bosetti, Cristina Cattaneo, and Elena Verdolini. "Migration of skilled workers and innovation: A European perspective." Journal of International Economics 96.2 (2015): 311-322; Anna Maria Mayda, Gianluca Orefice, and Gianluca Santoni. "Skilled Immigration, Task Allocation and the Innovation of Firms." (2022).
24. Ceren Ozgen, Peter Nijkamp, and Jacques Poot. "The impact of cultural diversity on firm innovation: evidence from Dutch micro-data" iza Journal of Migration 2.1 (2013): 1-24; Pierpaolo Parrotta, Dario Pozzoli, and Mariola Pytlikova. "The nexus between labor diversity and firm's innovation." Journal of Population Economics 27.2 (2014): 303-364.
25. George J. Borjas "Ethnic capital and intergenerational mobility." The Quarterly journal of economics 107.1 (1992): 123-150.
26. See for example the following study on the Finnish integration policies: Hanna Pesola, and Matti Sarvimäki. "Intergenerational Spillovers of Integration Policies: Evidence from Finland S Integration Plans." (2022).
27. Herbert Brücker, Philipp Jaschke, and Yuliya Kosyakova. "Integrating Refugees and Asylum Seekers into the German Economy and Society: Empirical Evidence and Policy Objectives" Washington (DC): Migration Policy Institute (2019), p. 26.
28. Dilip Ratha, Sanket Mohapatra, and Elina Scheja. "Impact of migration on economic and social development: A review of evidence and emerging issues." World Bank policy research working paper 5558 (2011).
29. Courtney Brell, Christian Dustmann, and Ian Preston. "The labor market integration of refugee migrants in high-income countries." Journal of Economic Perspectives 34.1 (2020): 94-121; Francesco Fasani, Tommaso Frattini, and Luigi Minale." (The Struggle for) Refugee integration into the labour market: evidence from Europe." Journal of Economic Geography 22.2 (2022): 351-393.
30. Shekhar Aiyar, et al., "The refugee surge in Europe: Economic challenges." International Monetary Fund, 2016; Ruist, Joakim. "The fiscal aspect of the refugee crisis." International Tax and Public Finance 27.2 (2020): 478-492.
31. D'Artis Kancs, and Patrizio Lecca. "Long-term social, economic and fiscal effects of immigration into the EU: The role of the integration policy", The World Economy 41.10 (2018): 2599-2630.
32. Jens Hainmueller, Dominik Hangartner, and Duncan Lawrence. "When lives are put on hold: Lengthy asylum processes decrease employment among refugees", Science advances 2.8 (2016).

32. There is a shared consensus that language training for migrants bring benefits to the economy of a host country. Consequently, policies that make language courses mandatory for the newly arrived have positive economic effects.[33] Strong evidence in this direction comes from Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden.[34] This result is extremely pronounced in Nordic countries probably because they have a higher share of jobs requiring high-skilled workers, for whom linguistic competences are essential.

33. Some findings on the Danish integration policies demonstrated that language training, together with settlement in areas with a strong labour market, significantly improve the long-run labour market outcomes of migrants.[35] In particular, a Danish reform that encouraged language training for adult refugees generated intergenerational spillover effects, decreasing the school dropout rate.[36] This being said, the Danish decision of cutting welfare payments for migrants was not very successful. In the short-term, migrants' employment rates grew, yet in the long-term their employability was negatively affected.[37]

34. Other scholars found that an improvement in the immigrant workers' proficiency in Norwegian led to a surge in productivity.[38] A study on the integration of migrants in the Norwegian job market pointed out that the acquisition of human capital, through additional schooling and language courses, was key to increasing the long-term employability prospects of migrants.

35. In general, active labour market policies focused on matching refugees with simple jobs boost occupation in the short-term, but their effects in the long run are unclear, since a quick entrance into the labour market could not ensure a job in the long run.[39] For instance it was shown that in Sweden only a long education track ensures a solid establishment in the labour market for the following years.[40] So, job matching policies may prove more effective if combined with other policies aimed at honing migrants' skills and language proficiency.[41]

36. A 2013 Danish policy aimed at training refugees in occupations where there were local labour shortages was very effective, increasing the employment rate of the targeted group by 5-6 percentage points after one year and by 10 percentage points after two years.[42]

37. Scientific literature also shows that integration is beneficial not only from an economic point of view. For instance, it was found that in countries with inclusive integration policies native population tend to have a lower perception of the economic threat coming from immigrants and more friendly attitudes towards them.[43] Consistently, whereas policies discouraging integration are enacted, locals become more likely to hold anti-immigrant sentiments.[44]

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33. Michael Neureiter. "Evaluating the effects of immigrant integration policies in Western Europe using a difference-in-differences approach." Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 45.15 (2019): 2779-2800.
34. Anna Karlsdóttir, et al., "State of the Nordic region 2018: immigration and integration edition", Nordic Council of Ministers, 2018, and Godøy, Anna. "Local labor markets and earnings of refugee immigrants." Empirical Economics 52.1 (2017).
35. Mette Foged, Linea Hasager, and Giovanni Peri. "Comparing the Effects of Policies for the Labor Market Integration of Refugees." No. w30534. National Bureau of Economic Research, 2022; Mette Foged, et al. "Intergenerational Spillover Effects of Language Training for Refugees". No. w30341. National Bureau of Economic Research, 2022; Anna Piil Damm, and Michael Rosholm. "Employment effects of spatial dispersal of refugees." Review of Economics of the Household 8.1 (2010): 105-146; Luz Azlor, Anna Piil Damm, and Marie Louise Schultz-Nielsen. "Local labour demand and immigrant employment." Labour Economics 63 (2020).
36. Mette Foged et al., *op. cit.*
37. Michael Rosholm, and Rune Vejlin. "Reducing income transfers to refugee immigrants: Does start-help help you start?", Labour Economics 17.1 (2010): 258-275; Duy T. Huynh, Marie Louise Schultz-Nielsen, and Torben Tranæs. "Employment effects of reducing welfare to refugees" Rockwool Foundation, 2007; Jacob Nielsen Arendt, Christian Dustmann, and Hyejin Ku. "Refugee Migration and the Labor Market: Lessons from 40 Years of Post-arrival Policies in Denmark" (2022); Lars Højsgaard Andersen, Christian Dustmann and Rasmus Kløve Landersø. "Lowering welfare benefits: Intended and unintended consequences for migrants and their families." Centre for Research and Analysis of Migration, Department of Economics, University College London, 2019.
38. Harald Dale-Olsen, and Henning Finseraas. "Linguistic diversity and workplace productivity." Labour Economics 64 (2020).
39. Vilde Hernes, et al. "Rapid or long-term employment? A Scandinavian comparative study of refugee integration policies and employment outcomes." Journal of European Public Policy 29.2 (2022): 238-258; Bernt Bratsberg, Oddbjorn Raaum, and Knut Roed. "Immigrant labor market integration across admission classes." (2017).
40. Hernes, V. et al., *op. cit.*
41. J. Arendt et al., 2020, "Integrating Refugees: Language Training or Work-First Incentives?", NBER: National Bureau of Economic Research; Jacob Nielsen Arendt, and Iben Bolvig. "Early labor market entry, language acquisition and labor market success of refugees", The Danish Center for Social Science Research (2020).
42. Mette Foged, Janis Kreuder, and Giovanni Peri. "Integrating Refugees by Addressing Labor Shortages? A Policy Evaluation", No. w29781. National Bureau of Economic Research, 2022.

5. Existing shortcomings

38. States should pursue an evidence-based approach to inclusion planning, through expanding the collection and analysis of socio-economic data, building upon existing tools and programmes by national and sub-national authorities. This would enable them to obtain a detailed overview on refugees' and migrants' profiles and practical, legal and administrative barriers impeding the full enjoyment of their economic and social rights.

39. In many countries, the government finances the integration of migrants and refugees by providing lump-sum payments to local and regional authorities, which are not tailor-made to meet individual needs. The payment of a certain amount of money per person should, therefore, take into account different local costs or the needs of certain groups of migrants and refugees. There is a need for a person-centred approach to integration support and adaptation of national services to take into account specific needs and circumstances. More efficient and effective funding mechanisms should be designed and implemented based on dialogue between policy makers and those local authorities/actors often in charge of finding solutions (mayors, municipal authorities, local civil society organisations, and service providers).[45]

40. Most migrants and refugees have participated in the labour market in their country of origin, and many have vocational training, diplomas, or university degrees. However, when they arrive in the host countries, these skills and diplomas are often not recognised and cannot be transferred. As a result, integration into the labour market of the host countries is made more difficult and migrants and refugees work in positions for which they are overqualified. The resulting frustration further complicates the integration process.[46]

41. Many countries show a lack of policy focus on the integration of vulnerable groups and apply standardized policies. These one-fits-all policies do not take into account the special needs of vulnerable migrant and refugee groups. Vulnerable groups within our society include, but are not limited to women, (unaccompanied) children, people with disabilities, elderly people, members of the LGBTQI+ community, stateless persons, victims of human trafficking and victims of torture that need specific psychological support.[47]

42. Since the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, millions of Ukrainians fled their country seeking protection in other European countries. Across Europe, free phone service and public transportation are provided for Ukrainians. Furthermore, the Temporary Protection Directive of the European Union[48] has been activated which allows Ukrainian refugees to stay up to three years in a country without having to apply for asylum. It also includes right to a residence permit and access to housing, education, the labour market, social welfare, medical care, banking services, and free movement within EU countries, among others. While this example shows how international refugee protection and integration should work, the reality for millions of migrants and refugees from Middle Eastern and African countries looked completely different in the past years. They often faced racism, xenophobia, and discrimination not only at borders, where often they have been violently pushed back, but also in the host countries where the public discourse is tainted by dehumanizing and discriminating rhetoric. This double standard hinders a successful integration of all migrants and refugees and fractions societies.[49] This is an example of how political will can make a difference. Certainly, there was very strong political will to demonstrate unity against the aggression of a Council of Europe member State. Such political will is, however, lacking when it comes to integration of migrants and refugees coming to Europe from other parts of the world.

43. Finally, the Covid-19 pandemic slowed down the integration of migrants and refugees all over the world. In many countries, integration programmes were put on hold and school closures and distant learning put migrants, refugees, and their children at a disadvantage in several ways. Because government offices have

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43. Marie-Sophie Callens, and Bart Meuleman. "Do integration policies relate to economic and cultural threat perceptions? A comparative study in Europe." International Journal of Comparative Sociology 58.5 (2017): 367-391; Elmar Schlueter, Anu Masso, and Eldad Davidov. "What factors explain anti-Muslim prejudice? An assessment of the effects of Muslim population size, institutional characteristics and immigration-related media claims." Journal of ethnic and migration studies 46.3 (2020): 649-664.
44. Kaya, Serdar. "Social Consequences of Securitizing Citizenship: Two-Tiered Citizenry and Anti-Immigrant Attitudes." Canadian Ethnic Studies 49.3 (2017): 27-49.
45. See also the UNHCR's and MPG's municipalities toolkit: *"*Effective inclusion of refugees: Participatory approaches for practitioners at the local level*"*, which provides step-by-step guidance and good practices on how to develop impactful integration and inclusion practices.
46. www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/policy-areas/skills-migration/lang--en/index.htm.
47. www.ohchr.org/en/migration/migrants-vulnerable-situations.
48. Temporary protection (europa.eu).
49. https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukraine-crisis-double-standards-has-europe-s-response-refugees-changed.

scaled back their services or shut down at this time, the Covid-19 outbreak has had an influence on the processes for requesting and obtaining residence and work permits which led to social and economic uncertainty for the migrants and refugees and hindered a successful integration.[50]

6. How can integration policies be improved?

6.1. A new social contract

44. Public authorities, when confronted with major changes in society, are often prompted to make significant changes. Such changes may need to be better prepared. Integration of migrants and refugees would benefit from a new social contract respectful of rights and responsibilities of all parties involved in refugees' and migrants' integration. Acceptance of such a new social contract depends on democratic processes in place to build social support.

45. Highlighting the rights and responsibilities for the newly arrived groups of populations allows to clarify things from the start and build trust and respectful co-operation between local communities and the beneficiaries of resettlement programmes. As regards the integration of refugees, member States should base their actions on the goals stipulated in the UN global compacts for migrants and refugees, as underscored in Resolution 2379 (2021) "Role of parliaments in implementing the United Nations global compacts for migrants and refugees" and Resolution 2408 (2021) "70th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention: the Council of Europe and the international protection of refugees".

6.2. Mentor programmes and integration guides

46. One solution that proved to improve the integration of migrants are mentor programmes or so-called "integration guides". Through these programmes, local mentors accompany and support migrants and refugees when they first arrive in the host countries, support them in their cultural and social orientation, practice the language of the host country with them, and support them with personal relationships and networking in the new community. In cities in Bulgaria and Germany, these programmes have shown great results in integrating the migrants and refugees into their new environment. Although some of these programmes rely on volunteers providing assistance, a proper funding by the member States is necessary to ensure a constant level of quality and the evaluation of the integration outcome.[51] Positive practices include also tying mentorship to labour market integration of refugees. Partnerships between the public and private sectors could be developed to support the implementation of mentorship programmes.[52]

47. Another example of a mentoring scheme, called the "Bergen Opportunity" was set up in the City of Bergen (Norway). Originally, the "Mentor and leadership development programme" involved 20 diverse participants and 20 mentors with 10 modules and 6 to 12 mentor meetings per year. The latest group that is currently working has 80 participants and 80 leaders from private and public sector that agreed to work with them. As a result, 6 out of 10 programme participants had career progress after 1 year, some with new job or position including a leading position. Mentors and mentees rated the program highly. It improved participants' CV and self-efficacy and enhanced their visibility on the job market. Amongst the advantages cited by the mentors were the following: the programme supports the most important issue: attracting and retaining talent; it puts diversity and inclusion on the agenda; skills meet potential; it affects attitudes among leaders, and it improves the networking capacity, as an important factor for career progress.

48. The "Bergen Opportunity" was implemented in other regions. A project template was created for the European Union through REGAL – Regional Capacity for Adults Learning and Education. Today it includes the Stavanger Opportunity, the Trondheim Opportunity, and the Bergen Opportunity Alumni network. Synergies across classes are created and new networks developed as a result.

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50. www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/what-is-the-impact-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-on-immigrants-and-their-children-e7cbb7de/.

51. www.iska-nuernberg.de/fzf/integrationslotsen.html; Bulgarian Council on Refugees and Migration 2017: Best Practices for Refugee Integration.

52. The INGKA Group (IKEA) has published a guide based on their success stories: Skills-for-employment-toolkit_A-how-to-guide-for-opening-pathways-to-decent-work-for-refugees_Ingka-Group-an-IKEA-Retailer.pdf.

6.3. Nationwide interpretation services

49. Another crucial factor for the successful integration of migrants and refugees is the availability of interpretation services during the entire integration process. The possibility to understand and actively participate is especially important in the fields of health, justice, asylum and issues in the municipalities. In the German state of Thuringia, for example, professional interpreting services are offered in more than 50 languages. The languages are available to users within certain response times via the internet or by telephone. Across the state, more than 400 institutions, namely local authorities, public administration, schools, hospitals, doctors, counselling centres, women's shelters and many more, use this service and thus ensure communication with people whose knowledge of German is insufficient. The interpretation services are funded by the Ministry of Migration, Justice and Consumer Protection.[53]

6.4. Education: from language training to democratic citizenship and human rights education

50. Language training is crucial for being able to live in a new country, including for getting access to employment. The better the training, the higher the likelihood that the person will become less dependent on support services and more autonomous in his/her daily life. Given the importance of speaking a language to get a job, a Swiss study found that the distribution of migrants in a multilingual territory should aim to reduce the likelihood of language mismatch in order to facilitate the integration in the labour market.[54] In addition, specific programmes designed to educate about societal developments in the host country, including programmes promoting democratic citizenship and human rights education, would benefit both the newly arrived migrants and host communities.

51. Refugees stress the need for access to accelerated language learning, as even working knowledge may often not be enough to secure employment, while fluency unlocks most opportunities. States are advised to develop language training that takes into account and caters for different education levels, fluency levels, time commitments (accelerated or reduced hours), modalities (in person or remote) and care responsibilities.[55]

6.5. Recognition of skills obtained abroad

52. In order to ensure a successful integration into the labour market and to enable migrants and refugees to participate in social security and pension systems the transfer of skills and degrees obtained abroad is particularly necessary. So called “quick assessments” have proven to be particularly successful. In Norway and Germany these assessments are used successfully and give migrants and refugees the chance to get proof of their abilities and thus to integrate successfully into the labour market without having to accept jobs for which they are overqualified.

53. Recognition of qualifications and prior learning is of fundamental importance. Whether partial or full, recognition opens up further education or employment opportunities and allows refugees and migrants to make more efficient use of their knowledge, skills and competences.

54. In Germany, the MYSKILLS test was created in collaboration between the Federal Employment Agency and the Bertelsmann Stiftung. The exam reveals professional expertise and is meant to create chances on the labour market for those who, up until now, have had difficulty demonstrating their informal or non-formal learning of certain skills. The MYSKILLS assessment is available in 12 languages and for 30 different professions offered by employment agencies and job centres.[56]

55. The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance has developed a similar assessment tool that comprises a quick assessment of the candidate's vocational qualifications for a particular job rather than formal acknowledgement of those qualifications. In addition, a toolkit has been developed specifically for the recognition of refugees’ qualifications.[57]

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53. www.gfaw-thueringen.de/zusaetzliche-services/dolmetscherleistungen.
54. Daniel Auer, “Language roulette–the effect of random placement on refugees’ labour market integration.” Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 44.3 (2018): 341-362.
55. Useful guidance can be found in: “Bridging Language and Work: Solutions to Invest in Immigrant and Refugee Talent – The Tent Partnership for Refugees”.
56. www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/our-projects/identifying-occupational-skills/description.
57. www.nokut.no/en/foreign-education/other-services/nokuts-turbo-evaluations/.

56. On 11 October 2022, Mr Hećo presented the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR)[58], an international project grounded in the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (CETS No. 165, "Lisbon Convention"), ultimately aiming at the integration of refugees in the host societies. He informed the committee that 70% of States parties to the Lisbon Convention had either no or very few means to implement their obligation under its Article 7, which referred to the recognition of qualifications held by refugees, even in the absence of available documentation. The EQPR serves as a practical tool to help member States comply with the aforementioned article. The project was financed by the Council of Europe's ordinary budget.

57. The evaluation process for the EQPR is conducted in three steps by professional credential evaluators who come from different international recognition centres. The outcome of the evaluation is a credible, document that summarises the academic background, qualifications, working experience and languages spoken by its holder. Besides the obvious benefits that the EQPR provides for the refugees, Mr Hećo listed the benefits for other parties, for example admission officers of higher education institutions, employers and national recognition centres.

6.6. Consideration of the special needs of vulnerable groups

58. Vulnerable groups like women, (unaccompanied) children, elderly people, people with disabilities, members of the LGBTQI+ community, stateless persons and others need specific support in order to integrate into the host country. Increasing the possibility for migrant children to attend kindergartens and other day-care facilities would allow women to continue education and have access to employment. The EU Action Plan for Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027"[59], which the European Commission released in November 2020, was welcomed for the extent to which it engaged with the specific needs of migrant women, not least by acknowledging the challenges arising from weaker social networks and greater childcare and family responsibilities.

59. Involvement of healthcare professionals with a migrant background in elderly homes and communal living can help improve the integration of elderly migrants and refugees into the society and allow them to age in dignity. Empowering refugees and asylum seekers with disabilities and/or long-term illnesses would give them the tools they need to assert their human rights. In the Netherlands, there is communal housing where local and elderly migrants live together and support each other. Furthermore, ethnic community health professionals serve as the liaison for senior immigrant clients and neighbourhood medical and social services. This leads to an improvement of care for elderly migrants and refugees by developing culturally sensitive care where the seniors can actively participate.[60]

60. The National Confederation of Disabled People of Greece implemented the project "Planning together: Empowering refugees with disabilities". Refugees and asylum seekers with disabilities and/or long-term illnesses were given the tools they needed to assert their human rights. The project placed a strong emphasis on the importance of the numerous advantages resulting from the involvement of refugees and asylum seekers with disabilities and/or chronic illnesses in the planning and execution of initiatives and services aimed at them. The special requirements of refugees and asylum seekers with disabilities were made more widely known to professionals and the public, increasing the likelihood that this group would receive adequate help. The actions included the implementation of awareness-raising and training seminars on disability and chronic diseases addressed to staff active in the provision of services to refugees and asylum seekers, the implementation of consultation meetings with refugees and asylum seekers with disabilities, chronic diseases and their families as well as a hotline for the support of refugees and asylum seekers with disabilities and/or chronic diseases also in Arabic and Farsi languages.[61]

61. The Norwegian city of Bergen pays special attention to the particular vulnerability of LGBTQI+ refugees. Bergen gives residence to vulnerable refugees with various sexual identities, gender identity or gender expression. Furthermore, training and instruction are given to staff working with refugees. In Berlin, the organisation "Schwulenberatung Berlin" runs an official shelter exclusively for LGBTQI+ refugees where they find a safe space and are provided with legal advice on asylum procedures and psychological support.[62]

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58. www.coe.int/en/web/education/recognition-of-refugees-qualifications.
59. EUR-Lex – 52020DC0758 – EN – EUR-Lex (europa.eu).
60. www.eniec.com/2020/05/28/senior-housing-community-in-the-netherlands/.
61. https://globalcompactrefugees.org/article/planning-together-empowering-refugees-disabilities; https://www.in-esamea.gr/en/contact.
62. www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/-/bergen-a-safe-city-for-lgbti-refugees-and-citizens-with-migrant-background; www.dw.com/en/berlins-lgbtqi-refugee-home-where-embittered-victims-become-perpetrators/a-46837142; https://schwulenberatungberlin.de/queer-refugees-en/.

6.7. Create spaces to bring migrants, refugees, and the local community together

62. States should do their utmost to avoid building new retention camps. This is contrary to the goal of integration and full inclusion of refugees and migrants in their host country. Even without camps, segregation of refugees and migrants in certain urban areas is detrimental to societal progress. Supporting the refugees' and migrants' diaspora to meet and share their experiences and form mutual support networks can be beneficial short-term in terms of local job opportunities, resilience, and social networks, but it can become problematic, as it prevents certain groups of people from accessing the opportunities and services that would allow them to fully participate in economic and social development of the host country. It is essential for successful integration to create spaces in the public sphere that bring the local community, migrants, and refugees together. This allows to reduce tensions and strengthen social cohesion, building bridges between various groups in society.

63. Bergen (Norway) is building a centre combining services and learning as part of the global project "Building Dignity", uniting all necessary activities under one roof in a desirable location. The centre will be located in Landås, in a former education facility for teachers. The administration, adult training centre, and refugee integration centre will all be housed in the Bergen Inclusion Centre, which will also have sports and cultural facilities so that it can be used throughout the day. The centre, which aims to promote inclusion and cross-cultural dialogue, will be accessible to members of the neighbourhood community and organisations.[63]

64. As part of its intercultural strategy, the city of Ioannina created a centre to welcome, inform, support, and counsel asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants. By working with all municipal services, the Intercultural Centre for Social Integration, called "Akadimia," also helps to improve their living situations and aids in gaining access to social security programs. The centre organises social and cultural events, as well as other intercultural activities, and offers interpretation services and cultural mediation for all municipal services and their corporate entities. With the use of promotional flyers that have been translated into seven different languages, the centre's services are advertised across the city.[64]

65. On 19 September 2022, Mr Papadopoulos spoke about the Intercultural Cities Programme, a programme that supports cities in reviewing of their policies through an intercultural lens. The city of Ioannina has been part of the programme since 2015 and has greatly benefitted from this. The administration of the city was provided with practical and technical know-how. Mr Papadopoulos invited parliamentarians to discuss the inclusion of their cities in this programme. Speaking about the Intercultural Centre for Social Integration "Akadimia", he underscored that it assisted migrants with interpretation, cultural and administrative services, at organising cultural events and at co-operating with other local, national and international services. Due to the lack of funds of local governments in Greece, the project was financed mainly by EU funds. Discussions were ongoing for the centre to remain open for two more years of financing that could make the Centre even more effective.

6.8. Improve financial settings

66. Refugees and migrants require housing as well as support for other fundamental necessities, such as health care, and access to education for their children. Access to the labour market is necessary for those who will be given refugee status in order to promote their integration and economic contribution to the host nation. Significant upfront investments are needed to cover the costs of both immediate assistance for asylum seekers and the education and training of refugees. Funding therefore is an important tool for managing integration processes in a country and works as a strong leverage for co-ordination in this area.[65]

67. Financial incentives from the central government could be given to municipalities that are exceptionally effective at integrating refugees. Municipalities throughout Europe are in many cases leading and setting standards when it comes to tangible results on refugee integration. As the Ukraine response has once again demonstrated, local authorities throughout Europe are exceptionally effective as frontline responders in delivering concrete solutions and providing services for refugees. Along with ensuring adequate EU-central government funding, the demands currently placed on municipal authorities and local services call for a diversification of funding sources and access to own-source revenue streams through innovative, non-traditional partnerships, such as with private sector actors.

63. www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/-/bringing-all-inclusion-services-in-bergen-under-one-roof.
64. www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/-/ioannina-opens-akadimia-an-intercultural-centre-for-social-integration.
65. www.oecd.org/publications/working-together-for-local-integration-of-migrants-and-refugees-9789264085350-en.htm.

68. Refugees' and migrants' financial inclusion should also be strengthened, including access to basic services such as bank accounts, through awareness-raising and information provision, as well as support to refugee and migrant entrepreneurs through effective access to finance and business development services.[66]

69. Targeted housing policies can be developed to support integration. An affordable and decent accommodation is a prerequisite for a successful integration of migrants, a smooth access to the job market as well as to basic services, such as healthcare and education. In addition, there is a need for targeted settlement policies, aiming to distribute the migrant population in a fair and balanced way on the national territory, facilitate the connection between the newly arrived and the local population, preventing the development of ghettos or parallel societies thus reducing the likelihood for migrants to be involved in illegal activities.

70. Civil society and NGOs play a crucial role in the integration of migrants and refugees. On 11 October 2022, Ms Brun presented the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe, which focused its work on the access of migrants and refugees to their fundamental rights and to INGOs. She remarked that, although political discourses did not particularly convey the ideas of integration, the war in Ukraine had shown that the integration of migrants and refugees in European societies was indeed possible. She underlined that, unlike political actors, NGOs carried humanitarian work as close as possible to the individual's needs, with a particular attention to the vulnerable population, which was often excluded from society and marginalised. In addition, NGOs were not subject to electoral deadlines and were, therefore, particularly well placed to work on long term policy support. She stressed the importance of diploma recognition for integration: education and professional engagement helped individuals avoid marginalisation because they can thus more easily adjust linguistically as well as culturally. Recalling the aim of the report, she noted that the presentation of successful examples in the field of migration should provide an opportunity for governments to strengthen and better invest in solutions that already existed and proved successful. To this end, she informed the committee about the Greek NGO Smile of the Child, which worked on holistic reception solutions, with an emphasis on the integration through the earliest stages of education.

71. A long-term and independent funding of civil society organisations is particularly important for successful integration. Social impact bonds (SIB) are a possible solution for efficient funding. They offer funding to solve societal issues and support preventative measures and connect financial success with achieving quantified social outcomes. The three partners that are involved in SIBs are private investors, the government, and civil society organisations. One of the most comprehensive projects is from Estonia, and it includes a feasibility and impact study that provides specific information for decision makers to determine whether this might be a good pilot case in their country. A feasibility study on the potential introduction of public SIB to strengthen the relationship between civil society organisations and private investors on particular social issues was led by the Estonian Ministry of Interior.[67]

6.9. Matching migrant skills with job opportunities

72. Integration policies should ideally take into account the unique profiles of immigrants and their chances of integrating into local communities. In Sweden, new immigrants are routinely advised of job opportunities in meetings with the state employment office after receiving their residence permit. Their placements are governed by agreements between municipalities and the central government.[68] In Denmark, a subsidy was put in place for municipalities that rewards local job placement agencies for helping migrants find employment, matching their skills with job opportunities.[69]

73. Job platforms with matching and wraparound services designed for refugees based on their needs and experiences can streamline access to decent work. Jobs4Ukr is one such example, offering comprehensive, accessible, and trustworthy information to refugees, employers and service providers.[70] As well as providing the core function of finding refugees jobs congruent with their skills and experience, the platform constitutes an entry point for bringing together an ensemble of actors engaged on refugee inclusion, ensuring a more co-ordinated response, and facilitating the creation of new multi-stakeholder partnerships for economic inclusion, particularly with the private sector.

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66. Guidance and practices available at Microfinance Centre: https://mfc.org.pl/enhancing-refugees-financial-inclusion/.
67. https://ecnl.org/publications/standards-and-good-practices-public-funding-civil-society-organisations.
68. www.oecd.org/migration/making-integration-work-humanitarian-migrants-9789264251236-en.htm.
69. OECD 2017: "Migration Policy Debates No. 13: Who bears the cost of integrating refugees?", p. 8.
70. Jobs4Ukr.

74. Working with employers and businesses through private sector outreach programmes can help enhance refugees' and migrants' access to decent employment opportunities. Specific guidance in this area was developed by the UNHCR and the OECD.[71]

6.10. Effective communication strategies, including welcoming programmes

75. The public's impression of immigrants' integration may not match the facts. Integration policies must have a communication component that encourages a fair and fact-based approach while identifying and addressing the benefits and challenges that migration can have for the host nation. New media channels offer a variety of opportunities due to their ability to connect with audiences that traditional media do not reach. But there are other difficulties, like the spread of misleading information and unfavourable stereotypes.[72]

76. The Spanish city of Sabadell has a welcoming programme in place, as well as a related communication campaign that makes use of photos, posters, press releases, and social media. Additionally, the communication division is encouraged to emphasise diversity as an advantage. The city closely monitors local social media and other channels to see how they portray minorities or migrants. The communication department contacts the concerned media to explain the City Council's communication policy when local media portray people from immigrant/minority origins in an unfavourable way. Additionally, as part of its "Sabadell Antirumors" Strategy, the city has conducted media training workshops on how to avoid negative stereotypes.[73] This was done to ensure respect for refugees and migrants' dignity in media, which is essential for the success of any integration programme.

6.11. Enhance public health support for vulnerable refugees and migrants

77. Availability of public health support is an important issue. Refugees, especially children, that fled high intensity conflict areas may need psychological support. While the protection of the health of migrants and refugees has so far been linked solely to the guarantee of basic physical care, it is essential to recognise that mental health and psychological support are equally essential. The World Health Organization's "Strategy and Action Plan for the Health of Refugees and Migrants in the WHO European Region" (2016) places improving the mental health of refugees and migrants on the political agenda.

6.12. A systemic approach: examples of national integration policies

6.12.1. Norway

78. I take this opportunity to thank the Norwegian Authorities and the Norwegian Delegation to the Assembly for their help in organising the fact-finding visit to Norway, which allowed me to get further acquainted with the refugees' integration programme. I saw how the programme works in practice in the city of Bergen, which is also a member of the Council of Europe Intercultural Cities Programme, and wanted to share this experience, which I find extremely useful and interesting.

79. Under the 2021 Integration Act, which extended the 2003 Introduction Act, adult immigrants between the ages of 18 and 55, settled by an agreement between the municipality and the Directorate of Integration and Diversity, undertake an Introduction Program.[74] Through this Program, lasting between three months and four years, migrants can improve their fluency in the Norwegian language and acquire skills to better adapt to the job market and to Norwegian society. The programme can be adjusted to the individual needs and goals, after an accurate examination of the migrant's background. In addition, parents must attend a parental guidance course. The participants in the program receive an Introduction benefit that amounts to twice the basic allowance in the National Insurance Scheme.

80. Since 2022, an Interpretation Act requires public agencies to make qualified interpreters available to provide assistance or services to migrants.

81. The number of refugees who arrive through the national refugees settlement programme to Bergen increased and will rise further. In 2021, approximately 150 refugees (main nationalities: Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Democratic Republic of the Congo), settled in Bergen. In 2022 (by 6 November), approximately

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71. Engaging with employers in the hiring of refugees - A 10-point multi-stakeholder action plan for employers, refugees, governments and civil society. Good practice example: UNHCR Italy: Welcome – Working for Refugee Integration.
72. OECD 2020: Migration Policy Debates No. 20, "How to make Integration Policies Future-Ready?", p. 5.
73. www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/-/highlighting-diversity-as-an-advantage-through-media-and-campaigns.
74. Norwegian Ministries, Migration and Integration 2020-2021: Report for Norway to the OECD, p. 51.

550 refugees settled in (main nationalities: Ukraine, Syria), with more people to come in 2023. By October 2022, approximately 300 participants were enrolled for the Introduction Program; and approximately 900 participants were enrolled for Norwegian language training.

82. The basic document that governs refugees' integration policies in Norway is the "The Integration Act". The integration framework includes several key measures, as follows: introduction program and training in Norwegian and social studies; early integration into Norwegian society; financial independence; good Norwegian skills; knowledge of Norwegian social life; formal qualifications; and a lasting connection to working life. Participation of refugees in the programmes offered is highly encouraged and is often based on a social contract they sign with public authorities. During the first 3 months after settlement, refugees get the support they may need in order to settle in the host country. This includes a «Start benefit» (financial support), help to getting settled in an apartment, mapping their competences, access to education and non-formal learning experience, access to health services, etc. Their participation in the Introduction Programme is planned, determining their specific goals and training programme content.

83. The Introduction Programme is designed for refugees between 18 and 55 years old. They have the right and duty to participate. The goal is to help them apply to work or further studies, based on their qualifications. The goals are defined for each individual, based on interviews and mapping of education and experience, interests and plans for their life in Norway. The full-time programme amounts to 37,5 hours per week, 47 weeks per year. The duration and elements of the program are individually adapted according to the persons' goals and background. The goals vary according to the target group:

– If the person has minimum secondary education, the goal is for him/her to get higher education and access to work. The programme lasts for 6 months with a possible extension for 6 months.

– If the person has no secondary education, the goal is to complete secondary education. The programme lasts for 3 years, with a possible extension for 1 year.

– As regards other categories, the goals may vary from access to work, primary education, part of secondary education, etc. The programme lasts for 2 years, with a possible extension for 1 year.

84. The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education is in charge of recognising foreign education and training. Employers and recruitment agencies can also take advantage of a free of charge and fast-track procedure for the assessment of foreign qualifications. The Agency also offers an interview-based recognition procedure for refugees and displaced persons without any documentation of their education and training. Furthermore, refugees are given priority enrolment in bridging courses, which allow individuals with a professional qualification to practice in Norway.

85. Mandatory elements of the Introduction Program include learning of Norwegian language, social science, life skills in a new country, parental guiding, and work or education-oriented elements (different job courses, such as health worker, bus driver, hotel, furniture manufacturing). There are programmes that allow for a combination of Norwegian language training and job training (formal education, part time or full time). The target group for Norwegian language training and social science includes refugees (part of the Introduction Program), reunited families, and work immigrants. There are different levels, from basic skills to university level with daytime, evening time or internet-based courses.

86. Access to employment being the ultimate goal for the majority of adult refugees, the "Straight to work"[75] programme that was implemented in the municipality of Øygarden proved extremely interesting as it empowered refugees, giving them the opportunity to take full responsibility for their employment from the start.

6.12.2. Sweden

87. Sweden ranks first in the 2020 Migrant Integration Policy Index among 26 countries. The heart of the Swedish integration policies is the Establishment Programme, run by the Public Employment Service and aimed at making newly arrived migrants self-sufficient as quickly as possible.[76] As soon as migrants between 18 and 64 years old obtain a residence, they follow an "Introduction Plan" for their education and professional development, providing them with language training and courses on Swedish society, vocational training and work experience. During the 24-month program, they receive a variable introduction benefit to cover their living costs. The attendance of these activities is mandatory, under penalty of the loss of the subsidy.[77] Since 2021, some of the newly arrived in Sweden can participate in an Intensive Year programme whose goal is to further speed up migrants' access to the job market.[78]

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75. www.imdi.no/en/straight-to-work/.
76. Governance of migrant integration in Sweden | European Website on Integration (europa.eu).

88. Beneficiaries of international protection are fully entitled to access the Swedish education system.[79] Targeted programmes reach immigrant pupils, addressing their needs and ensuring them equal opportunities.[80] Furthermore, The Swedish Council for Higher Education can evaluate foreign qualifications so as to provide support for people looking for work in Sweden, people who wish to continue studying, or employers who wish to hire someone with foreign qualifications.[81] Information is available in several languages. Some universities also offer fast track courses for those already possessing higher education degrees. Authorities at national and regional levels devised some initiatives to fast-track foreign-born entrepreneurs in order to support them in quickly establishing their own business.[82]

89. Both regular migrants and undocumented migrants have access to the healthcare system as much as Swedish citizens. During the last years, Swedish Child Health Services worked on improving the cultural competence of its nurses, enabling them to deal properly with migrant children; it has also taken steps to provide migrant parents with a special support in educating their children.[83] In addition, migrants' access to services is facilitated through a host of tools, including interpretation.[84] They are also part of the Swedish pension scheme. Finally, the Migration Agency has the duty to find suitable accommodations for those hosted in its facilities.

6.12.3. Finland

90. In 2021, 8,5 % of Finnish population had a foreign background, far less than in other countries of the region. This figure is the result of recent waves of immigration, with the country that until the 1990s had not hosted any large group of immigrants. Russians and Estonians who arrived in Finland after the fall of the Soviet Union still represent the two largest groups, although in recent years significant arrivals of migrants from non-European countries were registered.[85] Despite this recent history of migration, thanks to its integration policies Finland ranks 2nd in the 2020 MIPEX index with an increase in the overall score since 2014.

91. The legal basis for the management of integration in Finland is the 2010 Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration. It is centred on the assessment of migrants' starting skills, preparation of an individualised integration plan and organisation of training courses. These courses include lessons on Finnish or Swedish language, communication, society, culture, labour and market skills. However, unlike in other Nordic countries, immigrants are entitled to the assessment and the integration plan only if they are unemployed job seekers or if they are under 18 years old without a guardian in Finland. In addition, their first residence permit cannot date back to more than 3 years. 3 years is also the standard length of the integration plan, which can be extended up to five years.[86]

92. Even though the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment is competent for the development of integration policies, local municipalities are in charge of their concrete implementation.[87] Within the Ministry, a Centre of Expertise in Immigrant Integration raises awareness of Finnish integration policies. It also deals with the training of young practitioners in the field of integration.

93. The Finnish National Board of Education is usually competent for recognising and validating in Finland qualifications obtained abroad. The process requires the payment of some fees and can lead to the recommendation of supplementary training for getting the equivalent Finnish degree. Finland's education policies provide migrants' children with additional linguistic, academic and social support throughout their schooling.[88]

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77. European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), Country Report: Sweden, 2021, p. 114.
78. Sweden: Intensive Year programme facilitates integration and employment | European Website on Integration (europa.eu).
79. ECRE, *op. cit*.
80. Sweden | MIPEX 2020.
81. Recognition of foreign qualifications – Swedish Council for Higher Education (uhr.se).
82. OECD Territorial Reviews: Småland-Blekinge 2019: Monitoring Progress and Special Focus on Migrant Integration.
83. Elisabeth Mangrio, et al. "The Need for Parental Support for Migrant Parents in Transition into Sweden: A Perspective", Frontiers in Public Health 10 (2022).
84. Sweden | MIPEX 2020.
85. OECD, "Finding the Way: a discussion of the Finnish Migrant Integration System", 2017.
86. www.infofinland.fi/en/settling-in-finland/integration-into-finland.
87. www.fes.de/en/displacement-migration-integration/article-page-flight-migration-integration/default-2a05efb2ae.
88. www.mipex.eu/finland.

94. Among the other policies implemented to encourage migrants' integration, one can mention the Startup Refugees, an initiative designed to assist migrants in finding an employment, through a matching platform, and starting a business.[89] Moreover, Finnish institutions try to address the needs of refugees and unaccompanied minor migrants for health care including mental care. To this end, the PALOMA Center of Expertise in Refugee Mental Health Work offers assistance to all professionals and organisations committed to working on refugees' mental health.[90]

6.13. Pan-European co-operation

95. On 19 September 2022, Ms Daskalaki underscored the importance of international partnerships. According to her, integration plans should consider the specific historical framework of the given destination. She described the Greek Migrant Integration Centre's new holistic approach. The specialised services offered included provision of information, psychological support, legal advice, submission of applications for social benefits, networking, social inclusion actions for adults, intercultural activities and preparatory courses to apply for citizenship. The migrant centre of Athens receives on average 60 to 80 persons daily coming there for information. Classes of Greek, English, IT and support for citizenship exam are attended by about 30 people. In addition, she mentioned the MULTAKA project, a German programme where museums educate people of migrant origin to become multicultural guides. Recently it was implemented in Athens as well. Through this programme, migrants contribute with their own culture, experience, and opinions. Ms Daskalaki's concrete policy proposals were: enhancing the participation of cities in the decision-making process at national and EU levels, granting more immediate access to EU funding to the cities, direct consultation of the EU Commission with cities and/or regions. There is a need for clarity and transparency on what Europe can offer and wishes to receive, understanding and analysing migration as a multifaceted issue. There is a need for a common framework of integration indicators for evidence-based policy making, hearing all voices and agreeing on a common agenda of priorities.

96. The fact-finding[91] mission to Norway was an eye opener and clearly demonstrated the fact that successful integration benefits the whole society, maximising the advantages for all parties involved in that process. It also showed that when there is a will, there is a way. All we need is political will.

97. The visit to Norway was based on the work carried out in the framework of the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities Programme. This programme "supports cities and regions in reviewing and adapting their policies through an intercultural lens, and developing comprehensive intercultural strategies to manage diversity as an advantage for the whole society".[92] Moreover, the Assembly should promote cooperation with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe in the implementation by the Congress of the Cities4Cities initiative – a new matchmaking platform launched to support Ukrainian local and regional authorities.

7. Conclusions

98. Through this report, I intended to focus on successful examples of integration while pointing out existing shortcomings and their hugely negative consequences for individuals as well as member States. Parliaments typically review national progress in social development and integration of migrants and refugees and adopt relevant measures. At the level of the Assembly, a European review should lead to better political awareness and enable setting priorities for Council of Europe action.

89. https://startuprefugees.com/.

90. https://thl.fi/en/web/migration-and-cultural-diversity/contact/paloma-center-of-expertise-in-refugee-mental-health-work; and https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/finland-good-practices-refugee-mental-health-support_en.

91. On 10 November in Oslo, meetings were held with Ms Ingjerd Schou, Chair of the Norwegian delegation to the Assembly and Ms Lise Christoffersen, Vice-Chair, Mr Audun Kvale from The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities, and Ms Synnøve Buen (Stellasenteret, inclusion center for refugee women). On 11 November in Bergen and Øygarden, meetings were held with Mr Sølve Sætre, Head of section for diversity and inclusion and Ms Heidi Beate Aasen, senior advisor, City of Bergen; Mr Iver Neptali Belle-Ramos, Bergen Chamber of commerce; representatives of the «Mat og prat» training program for migrants; representatives of the University of Bergen; the NGO «Kirkens bymisjon» (projects on empowerment of migrants and work placement); and the Mayor of Øygarden municipality and her team.

92. www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/about.

99. Europe had demonstrated its capacity to integrate refugees and migrants in modern history, but more can be done to promote integration of refugees and migrants based on the respect for the rights and dignity of every individual. In that respect, States should take into consideration, when devising public policies for refugees and migrants' integration, the recommendations put forward by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights in the issue paper "Time for Europe to get migrant integration right" (2016).

100. In the draft resolution, various measures that could improve the capacity of host countries to integrate people arriving from different countries are listed. Integration is a long-term investment in human capital. The ultimate aim is inclusion or an inclusive participation from both sides, which implies that all members of the society have the opportunity to participate in social, cultural and political life, encouraging a sense of togetherness. Positive involvement of refugees and migrants, following quality integration processes, can contribute to making European societies more dynamic, more resilient, and more cohesive.