



Resolution 2586 (2025)¹

Immigration, one of the answers to Europe's demographic ageing

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly notes that, in the past decade, the global refugee population has more than doubled, reaching more than 36.4 million refugees, according to data of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In most cases, refugees in Africa, who were fleeing war, persecution and the climate crisis, were not able to reach Europe or North America and took shelter in neighbouring countries. By UNHCR's calculations, in 2023, Uganda recorded 1.6 million people of concern, including 1.5 million refugees. Another country, Ethiopia, which is at the crossroads of several of the world's largest refugee crises, was host to over 900 000 refugees in 2023, and Chad was the 10th largest host community for refugees with more than 700 000 refugees recorded in the same year. Most have escaped conflict in Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan.

2. Migration pressure has become a key issue for Europe. European solidarity to host refugees has been limited, but some countries have provided sanctuary. Türkiye hosts 3.4 million refugees, including 3.3 million Syrians under temporary protection. Germany hosts 2.5 million refugees, which largely include people from Syria and Ukraine. Poland, which shares a border with Ukraine, accommodates nearly 60% of all refugees from there. Sadly, however, there are countries that have refused to contribute to the common effort of receiving asylum seekers.

3. The Assembly deplores the fact that the rising populist discourse blames migrants for the failures of public policies. For political reasons, non-European migrants are left without any chance of integrating in a host community. Yet, many countries in Europe are confronted with considerable changes due to population ageing and the newly arriving migrants could, if given such an opportunity, integrate, work and live decently in Europe, contributing like all other European citizens to strengthening the society they live in.

4. Europeans are living longer than ever before, and the age profile of society is rapidly developing. Due to demographic ageing, the proportion of people of working age in Europe is shrinking, while the number of older people is expanding. Several countries have experienced a worrying reduction in the youth and working age cohorts as opposed to the exponential growth of the number of retirees, many of whom are reaching the fourth age, often associated with dependency. This pattern will continue in the next few decades, as the post-Second World War baby boom generation completes its move into retirement.

5. At a personal level, physical and cognitive impairments brought on by ageing increase dependency. These impairments may lead to reduced mobility, resulting in increased vulnerability and, often, social isolation and loneliness. The help of social care workers may be of vital importance in meeting older dependent people's daily transport or care needs and in ensuring a minimum of social contact, which, alongside healthcare, improves emotional well-being. It should be noted that long-term care in Europe is very often provided by informal carers such as family members and friends – mainly spouses and children, whose care work is not recognised.

1. *Assembly debate* on 29 January 2025 (6th sitting) (see [Doc. 16072](#), report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, rapporteur: Ms Kate Osamor). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 29 January 2025 (6th sitting).



6. Demographic ageing will have profound implications, not only for individuals, but also for public services, businesses and civil society, which will affect, among others: health and social care systems, labour markets, public finances and pension entitlements. Demographic indicators that describe the latest developments for an ageing Europe show that, in a time span of fifty years, the old age dependency ratio is projected to more than double. This old age dependency ratio for the European Union-27 was 25.9% in 2001. It will reach 56.7% by 2050, when there will be fewer than two people of working age for each older person. As a result, the elderly population will require increasing support to meet their needs, and future generations will find themselves having to bear the costs for an ageing society with less social security and a weaker public welfare system.

7. The Assembly is convinced that the current demographic ageing therefore requires positive action to help support an increase in birth rates and assist parents with child upbringing. More generous policies are needed to raise fertility rates at the national and European levels. This is, however, not sufficient. Adequate integration policies for newly arriving persons are needed to bridge the population pyramid gaps due to rapid demographic ageing. Specific measures must therefore be taken to avoid severe macro-economic and social implications of this phenomenon, for the benefit of all.

8. The Assembly therefore calls Council of Europe member States to develop, as a matter of priority, effective policies and initiatives to ensure the well-being and quality of life of the elderly population. Countries need to build a “longevity society” which aims to promote healthy ageing and exploit the advantages of longer quality lives. It requires a cultural shift, investments in research and the development of social policies that empower older citizens to move towards a more inclusive, healthy and prosperous society for all generations.

9. In parallel to that, States should strive to improve their policies promoting the general integration of migrants and social cohesion. Comprehensive, multidimensional and gender-responsive integration policies must be implemented, from the regularisation of undocumented migrant workers in the informal economy to the promotion of direct and targeted aid in local communities and job training. Failure to address migrants’ integration needs would lead to negative outcomes, including social tension, cultural clashes and economic disparities, with a decline in overall well-being for all.

10. The Assembly strongly encourages member States to support programmes aimed at building bridges between various communities. In this context, public authorities should consider investing in relevant capacity-building measures for civil society organisations. Promoting engagement within existing social infrastructures, such as membership of sports associations or participation in local festivals and events, can also lead to more sustainable integration.

11. The Assembly strongly believes that intergenerational and intercultural co-operation programmes can improve social links. There is no development without intergenerational co-operation. Intergenerational learning for children brings higher self-esteem and helps them make new friendships. As for older people, they feel valued, their health and well-being improve and they are less isolated and learn new skills, including the use of new technologies. Finally, their general physical well-being improves. Communities, families and family networks together benefit from intergenerational learning, thanks to the social inclusion that is brought by intergenerational solidarity.

12. The Assembly underscores the importance of developing European programmes to support non-formal education and to provide space for intergenerational and intercultural solidarity. Adequate recognition and resources are needed to help newly arriving persons socialise and get access to public services or informal support. Creating spaces for informal meetings, where intergenerational and intercultural contact is possible, should be key in developing policies at the local, national and international levels.

13. The Assembly calls upon member States to put into practice its [Resolution 2502 \(2023\)](#) “Integration of migrants and refugees: benefits for all parties involved”, acting in particular to:

13.1. establish a new social contract, which sets out the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved in the integration process. Acceptance of this new social contract depends on the existence of democratic practices that build social support. Highlighting the rights and responsibilities of the newly arriving populations provides clarification from the start and builds trust and respectful co-operation between local communities and the beneficiaries of resettlement programmes;

13.2. support mentoring programmes and the work of “integration guides”;

13.3. develop nationwide interpretation services to support integration;

13.4. enhance education, from language training to democratic citizenship and human rights education;

- 13.5. improve recognition of skills obtained abroad;
- 13.6. take into consideration the special needs of vulnerable groups, such as women, children, including unaccompanied children, elderly people, persecuted religious minorities, people with disabilities, members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex (LGBTQI+) community, stateless people and others, who need specific support in order to successfully integrate into the host country;
- 13.7. create spaces to bring migrants, refugees and the local community together;
- 13.8. improve financial settings, with a person-centred approach to integration support and adaptation of national services to take into account specific needs and circumstances;
- 13.9. develop targeted housing policies for affordable and decent accommodation;
- 13.10. invest in social cohesion with partnerships between private investors, public authorities and civil society organisations;
- 13.11. match migrant skills with job opportunities to support access to the labour market;
- 13.12. develop effective communication strategies to support integration, including a more positive narrative towards refugees and asylum seekers;
- 13.13. ensure respect for the dignity of refugees and migrants in the media, while avoiding messages that are stigmatising, xenophobic, racist, alarmist or inaccurate;
- 13.14. develop welcoming programmes at the municipal level which emphasise diversity as an advantage;
- 13.15. enhance public health support for vulnerable refugees and migrants.

14. Urban planning needs to be reconsidered towards enhancing multicultural and intergenerational solidarity at the local level. Projects aimed at bringing together the ageing population and the newly arriving migrants and refugees need to be supported, including through specific measures to facilitate the integration of refugees and migrants and to help elderly people cope with loneliness and dependency due to old age. Bringing different generations together is essential.

15. Care-related challenges in the urban and rural settings would need special consideration. Immigration can be one means through which Europe could fulfil its current and future labour shortages in care provision occupations, thereby decreasing the caregiver support ratio. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, foreign-born workers already make up around 20% of the current caregiver workforce, or even more, taking into account the large informal and home-based care provision. In general, most foreign-born long-term care workers immigrated through non-economic channels. These people arrived through other legal pathways for admission, such as family reunification, student visas, general migration routes for non-specialised workers and international protection.

16. The Assembly strongly encourages member States to develop policies to attract high-skilled migrants to enhance Europe's capacity to meet future challenges. The European Union member States and candidate countries should support the implementation of the EU Blue Card (Directive (EU) 2021/1883 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2021 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purpose of highly qualified employment, and repealing Council Directive 2009/50/EC), which is a work and residence permit for non-European Union/European Economic Area nationals that provides comprehensive socio-economic rights and a path towards permanent residence and European Union citizenship.

17. Finally, States should foster positive communication and information in local communities and counter hate speech in public discourse. It is now crucial to move from emergency approaches to facing migration to structural and sustainable approaches.