



Mutual Learning Conference

“Sustainable inclusion of migrants into society and labour market”

Brussels (Belgium), 12 April 2019

Executive Summary

This Mutual Learning Conference aimed at providing an overview of current policy programmes, initiatives and practices related to the inclusion of migrants in European labour markets and societies. It also contributes to a better understanding of existing and future challenges in this field, including related possible solutions.

The Conference brought together around 125 participants consisting of Member States representatives as well as representatives from the European Commission, social partners, academics and NGOs. Discussions focused in particular on how integrated approaches towards migrants' inclusion can be instrumental for Member States as well as on reinforcing synergies between national and EU funding opportunities. Success factors and lessons learned of promising practices at local and national levels were highlighted, allowing the formulation of key policy messages on how best to foster sustainable inclusion of migrants.

Growing migration flows over the past years have posed challenges to Member States that - within varying national institutional structures and needs - try to develop integrated and coordinated responses to include migrants in society in an effective and sustainable way.

Access to the labour market has proven to be of paramount importance to ensure effective integration of migrants into European societies, as well as a positive impact on the EU economy. While Europe benefits from migrants and talents, integration measures require resources. However, the cost of non-integration would be even more significant. Commissioner Marianne Thyssen who opened the Conference underlined that “effective integration policies are an investment, not an expense”.

Realising migrants' full economic potential is crucial for EU's competitiveness, even more so taking into consideration the ageing of the EU population. Migrants' integration is among the European Commission priorities as reflected by the numerous activities and initiatives undertaken in the recent years to support Member States. Conceiving inclusion of migrants as a dynamic, two-way process, the EU is fostering a holistic and coordinated approach involving all relevant actors and mainstreaming inclusion into relevant policy areas and governance levels. Nevertheless, many challenges remain to ensure a fast, effective and sustainable inclusion of migrants, which requires targeted and innovative solutions also based on stronger coordination among stakeholders.

The key policy messages from the Mutual Learning Conference can be summarised as follows:

How best to develop integrated approaches to actively include migrants in the labour market and society:

- Adopt dynamic and long-term integration policies and pathways by keeping at pace with labour market developments and taking into account work transformations (such as digitalisation and the gig economy as integration policies should be “future-proof”, i.e. consistent with forthcoming opportunities) as well as relying on strengthened social protection measures.

- Ensure that the integrated approach towards inclusion of migrants takes into account the high variety in migrants' profiles and labour market structures and conditions across the Member States.
- Ensure an overall effective coordination among stakeholders at various levels to avoid duplication and achieve complementarity of integration support.
- Engage and build innovative partnerships with non-governmental stakeholders to complement existing services and establish overall conditions conducive to social inclusion.
- Create an enabling environment for migrant inclusion by providing a robust and stable legal framework alongside long-term funding commitments. Uncertainty and changes delay the integration process and might create mistrust towards authorities.
- Support early integration measures and programmes for migrants to maximise success in achieving their future inclusion.
- Involve migrants in designing and implementing services to empower them and encourage them to become active members of society.

How to improve EU policies and better target funding to achieve sustainable inclusion:

- Provide support and incentives for Member States to actively promote exchanges of tested practices and measures. This can be done for example by relying on existing European platforms (such as Eurocities or EaSI-funded initiatives) and tools to further disseminate local initiatives.
- Increase flexibility in the use of EU funding instruments at Member States' disposal and facilitate access to funding for local and regional authorities as well as NGOs as they are at the forefront of the integration process and fundamental in providing services for migrants.
- Support Member States in informing citizens perception vis-à-vis migrant inclusion so that it is perceived as an investment and an advantage for all.
- Encourage synergies among funding and managing authorities as well as implementing actors to pool and coordinate resources to more effectively design and efficiently implement integration measures.

How to develop evidence-based approaches to migrant inclusion in society and the labour market:

- Conduct comprehensive evaluations of existing policies and projects to identify, disseminate and scale-up measures fostering migrant integration as well as to contribute to national evidence-based strategies.
- Review critically promising practices also engaging external evaluators to ensure that initiatives are impartially assessed through robust methodologies, including objective indicators.
- Involve all stakeholders as well as migrants themselves in the evaluation process to ensure that it offers all-round understanding of the various elements that contributed to the success of the measures assessed. Interconnections with and dependence on other initiatives should also be taken in consideration to support transferability.
- Define a clear baseline and plan for evaluation exercises to allow the assessment to capture the length and complexity of the integration process and understanding what measures can influence it positively.

- Strengthen the monitoring of migrant inclusion through the European Semester, including by focusing on integration outcomes, also with support of the OECD.

Labour market integration: how to create sustainable and quality employment opportunities:

- Foster early and fast labour market integration of migrants as a crucial element for their inclusion as it allows them to become financially independent and self-reliant; utilise their skills and qualifications; practice their language skills; and build up social networks.
- Implement individualised and targeted approaches that capture migrants' different needs and skills (e.g. low-skilled versus high-skilled migrants). Taking into consideration such differences is a key ingredient for effective and sustainable integration measures.
- Work towards a multi-stakeholder approach backed by strong political commitment.
- Actors such as employers, civil society, education and training institutes as well as Public Employment Services should be involved in the design and implementation of labour market integration measures.
- Support employers' engagement through government funding, as they are crucial for the sustainable labour market integration of migrants.
- Pair the support to innovative approaches such as start-ups and social enterprises with rigorous evaluations to assess their added value and, eventually, the scalability of these models.

How to improve education outcomes and skills of migrants

- Ensure access to education for migrants through early intervention measures that take into account short and longer-term perspectives. Priority could be given to low-skilled migrants and groups at risk of exclusion.
- Prioritise dual systems that combine language courses with training or employment pathways, that require migrants to know the language before accessing the labour market.
- Design and implement integration policies entailing individualised and tailor-made measures to support migrants in their pathway to reach successful labour market integration. Flexible training and education practices should take into account individuals' psychological needs.
- Further develop flexible upskilling pathways and career management processes that are accessible for migrants to foster sustainable integration. Migrants, like all workers, need the tools to improve their skills further and meet the needs of the changing labour market.
- Design education and training programmes that minimise the risk of drop out by providing adequate support, mentoring and follow up. Particular attention should be given to reaching out to vulnerable groups, besides training premises should be easily accessible for the participants.
- Encourage cooperation and coordination among stakeholders that are involved in migrants' skills development and assessment and enable them to use the right tools to do so. Such cooperation is essential to match people with a certain qualification- or skillset with the right jobs. In this regard, employers should be closely involved as well as Public Employment Services. The latter should have a more active role in the integration process where trust is a very important factor.

How to ensure social inclusion of the most vulnerable migrants

- Adjust inclusion policies to cater to the needs of the most vulnerable migrants: both targeted and mainstream measures should have the 'end user' in mind. Ideally, vulnerability should be assessed individually also taking into account multiple vulnerabilities.
- Design needs-based services for all migrants instead of building parallel services for vulnerable groups.
- Weave targeted outreach programmes in the mainstream integration measures to support migrants who are more vulnerable or at risk of exclusion.
- Provide additional support to service providers at the local level which are at the front line of integration of the most vulnerable migrants.
- Design inclusion programmes that support vulnerable migrants that support vulnerable migrants to build up a social network as a means to improve their outcomes of integration into the labour market.