Integration of migrants, its effects on the labour market and the external dimension of social security coordination

2012/2131(INI) - 20/07/2011 - Document attached to the procedure

PURPOSE: to propose a European agenda for the integration of third-country nationals.

BACKGROUND: over the past decades, most EU Member States have experienced increasing migration. **Migrants from third countries represent around 4% of the total EU population**. The composition of EU's population is thus changing, and European societies are faced with increasing diversity.

Europe is also strongly influenced by demographic changes, including the ageing population, longer life expectancies and a declining working-age population Legal migration can help to address these issues, in addition to maximising the use of the labour force and skills already available in the EU. If the full benefits from migration are to be realised, Europe needs to find a way to better cope with its diverse and multicultural societies through more effective integration of migrants.

There is already a framework for EU co-operation on integration through the Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the European Union, which were agreed by the Council in 2004. The Principles underline that integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by migrants and by the societies that receive them. All EU actions presented by the Commission in the Common Agenda for Integration have been completed. However, the social, economic and political context has changed and not all integration measures have been successful in meeting their objectives.

The introduction of a new legal provision in the Treaty concerning EU support to the promotion of integration of third-country nationals residing legally in Member States (Article 79(4) TFEU) allows further concerted action while excluding harmonisation.

Accordingly, it is appropriate to renew the 2005 Agenda with a range of approaches, depending on the different integration challenges faced by various types of migrants, both low and highly skilled, as well as beneficiaries of international protection. This is the purpose of the Communication.

CONTENT: building on experiences across the EU, this Communication highlights European integration challenges. To address these challenges, it suggests recommendations and areas for action.

The proposed actions focus on the following key areas: (i) integration through participation; (ii) more action at local level; (iii) involvement of countries of origin.

(1) Integration through participation: several actions are proposed both through Member States and also directly by the Commission. These are as follows:

- The socio-economic contribution of migrants: it is broadly agreed that the acquisition of language skills is critical for integration. Accordingly, it is proposed that Member States should ensure: (i) the provision of language courses, reflecting migrants varying needs at different stages of their integration process; (ii) the organisation of introductory programmes for newly arrived migrants, including language and civic orientation courses; (iii) measures to map and assess the individual's needs and to validate qualifications and professional experiences; (iv) increasing labour market participation of migrants through active labour market policies; (v) efforts in education systems equipping teachers and school

leaders with the skills for managing diversity; recruiting teachers from migrant backgrounds; and participation of migrant children in early childhood education; and (vi) special attention to specific needs of vulnerable groups of migrants.

The Commission, for its part, should support: (i) the exchange of practice and policy coordination in the areas of employment, education and social policies; and (ii) a better use of existing EU financial instruments to support migrants' participation.

- **Achieving equal treatment and a sense of belonging**: the aim is to strengthen efforts to fight against discrimination and to give migrants instruments to become acquainted with the fundamental values of the EU and its Member States. Member States should ensure: (i) measures to implement in practice the principle of equal treatment and to prevent institutional as well as every-day discrimination; and (ii) efforts to remove obstacles to migrants' political participation. The involvement of migrant representatives in the drawing up of and implementation of integration policies and programmes should be further enhanced.

The Commission should ensure the full and correct implementation of existing directives on non-discrimination and in the area of legal migration.

(2) Action at local level: integration policies should be formulated and implemented with the active involvement of local authorities. The latter are responsible for a wide range of services and activities and they play an important role in shaping the interaction between migrants and the receiving society. Member States should ensure comprehensive integration strategies designed and implemented with the effective involvement of all local and regional stakeholders with a 'bottom-up' approach. Actors at all levels of governance should support ‘territorial pacts', as a framework for cooperation between relevant stakeholders at different levels, to be developed for designing and implementing integration policies. The Commission should support: (i) the involvement of local and regional actors in the definition of integration policies within the framework of EU programmes, through a strategic partnership with the Committee of the Regions and European networks of cities and regions; and (ii) a higher degree of coordinated programming of existing EU financial instruments to target local action. This should be done through the use of the European Fund for the Integration of third-country nationals, the European Refugee Fund, the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund.

(3) Involvement of countries of origin: countries of origin can have a role to play in support of the integration process in three ways: 1) to prepare the integration already before the migrants' departure; 2) to support the migrants while in the EU, e.g. through support via the Embassies; 3) to prepare the migrant's temporary or definitive return with acquired experience and knowledge.

Member States and countries of origin should ensure pre-departure support to migrants in order to facilitate integration to be part of the dialogue and cooperation frameworks between the EU and partner countries. A key element in this regard is to improve methods for recognition of the migrant's qualifications and skills.

The way forward: managing integration is crucial for realising the full potential of migration, both for the migrants and the EU. Effective integration policies are fundamental to reconcile economic growth with social cohesion and to deal with increasingly diverse European societies. This process requires a structured and informed debate. Coherent strategies are needed in order to achieve better participation of migrants in the societies in which they live. In this respect, the Commission should support:

The Commission should support:

- the further use and coordination of European platforms for consultation and knowledge exchange (including the National Contact Points on Integration, the European Integration Forum and the European

Web Site on Integration), to enhance their input in policy decision-making, monitoring and coordination of policies;

- the further development of a flexible tool-box, including 'European modules', to support national and local policies and practices. It will be implemented, in strategic alliance with the Committee of the Regions, by national, regional and local authorities and civil society; and

- **common European 'indicators'** in the areas of employment, education, social inclusion and active citizenship to monitor results of integration policies and which should serve as a basis for systematic follow-up.