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

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The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs unanimously adopted the report drafted by Nadja HIRSCH (ADLE, DE) on the integration of migrants, its effects on the labour market and the external dimension of social security coordination.

The Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs exercised its prerogatives as an associated committee under Rule 50 of the Rules of Procedure on this report.

Members state that the working-age population of Europe will decline from 2012 onwards and, **in the absence of immigration, will fall by 14 million over the next 10 years**. They state that despite an unemployment rate in the EU of approximately 10% (i.e. 23.8 million people out of work), there is a serious shortage of labour in the EU.

It is necessary to react in order to strengthen the integration of migrants into the labour market and into society. This requires **commitment on both sides** with a view to building an inclusive society. The report stresses that the shortage of skilled labour should also be tackled by targeted **education and vocational and lifelong training** in the Member States as well as a commitment by the local and regional authorities.

Combating discrimination: Members call on the Member States to firmly combat discrimination against third-country nationals and other EU citizens, particularly formal and informal discrimination in **jobseeking and in the workplace**. They reject all forms of wage and social dumping and call for a reduction in inequalities and income gaps. Efforts should be made to improve the social and economic inclusion of Roma.

Members take the view that Member States' integration policies and measures must be **better differentiated** and tailored and of higher quality, and, most importantly, that they must distinguish between the needs of individuals. In this regard, the specific situation of migrant women should be taken into account.

Overall, the report stresses that it is not appropriate to exploit the subject of labour migration to frighten the public. Preconceived notions based on prejudice and resentment undermine the solidarity which forms the basis of society.

Members call for the principle of '**integration mainstreaming**' to be introduced, whereby account is taken of integration-related issues in all political, legislative and financial measures. They call on the Commission to set up a cross-departmental integration group to tackle the issues of integration.

Integration and citizenship: once again, Members consider that successful integration also includes participation in political decisionmaking processes. They recall the importance of voting rights for migrants, particularly at the local level. They insist on the importance of their involvement in networks and NGOs working on issues relating to migrant women.

Combating the shortage of labour: Members stress that the shortage of skilled labour should also be tackled by targeted education and vocational and lifelong training in the Member States, also within

businesses. They stress that underachievement and high school dropout rates affecting children of migrant workers should be tackled by guaranteeing **minors rights to education**. Member States are asked to inform foreign students concerning work opportunities after graduation and to create fair opportunities for job competition for migrant workers who have completed their studies in the territory of an EU Member State.

Common European entry system: Members call on the Commission to evaluate the **possibility of drawing up and introducing a common, criteria-based European entry system**, based on transparent criteria and in line with the European Qualifications Framework approach of accumulating and transferring credits, which would be open to the Member States on a voluntary basis. Such a system should be adjusted to labour-market conditions so as to make it easier to attract urgently needed skilled workers. The report calls on the Commission, in connection with the proposed entry system, to consider developing an **international platform on EURES for standardised job and skills profiles**. Members call for concrete proposals on how a mechanism for the recognition of qualifications and diplomas of third-country nationals could be set up.

Migrant rights: Members stress that employers are required by law to treat all employees equally and to avoid discrimination between them on grounds of religion, sex, ethnicity or nationality. They advocate the implementation of freedom of association for trade unions and the right to collective bargaining, without exceptions, in order to enforce, improve and defend decent conditions of work. Vocationally-based language courses should be made available.

Circular migration: Members recognises the potential of circular (labour) migration for producing a 'triple win situation' in which migrant, host country and home country all benefit. They call on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen cooperation with third countries in the field of circular migration and to include them in negotiations and treaties. They call for action to promote intelligent strategies on circular migration, backed up by the necessary resources and legal guarantees and conditions to create secure jobs and prevent irregular immigration. They stress the need to make circular migration programmes **flexible** and also to support **return and integration programmes**.

Members bear in mind that migration and labour market policy should go hand in hand. They call on the Commission, in this context, to strengthen and give priority to the links between labour market demand, circular migration, development, and neighbourhood and foreign policy. They welcome the financial support that the EU has given so far for migration management in third countries, e.g. Migration EU expertise II (MIEUX II).

Battling illegal immigration: Members call on the Member States to open up a route into legality for people without papers who can earn their living through employment. They note that long-term residence entitlement in the foreseeable future is a key prospect as far as integration is concerned. They deplores the **desperate situation of undocumented migrants and failed asylum seekers in the EU**, many of whom are destitute, and call for solutions to be found, with full respect for the fundamental rights of those concerned.

According to Members, both legal and illegal immigration are current phenomena and that a **common legal framework on migration policies is needed** in order to protect migrants and potential victims, especially women and children.

Coordination of social security systems: welcoming the existing EU decisions on social security coordination which have been reached with Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Israel, Montenegro, San Marino, Albania and Turkey, Members call on the Commission to take action to address the issue of social security coordination for third country nationals, and especially the preservation of rights when leaving or re-entering the EU, and to accompany the EU's migration policy with adequate measures addressing the acquired social security rights of migrants. They

point out that, even though the adoption of Regulation (EU) No 1231/2010 has allowed rights provided under Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 to be extended to third-country nationals, these rights can be claimed only in the case of cross-border activity within the EU, which means that **most third-country nationals are excluded**. They call, therefore, for a uniform and reciprocal EU approach to social security coordination vis-à-vis third countries to be adopted, covering all EU citizens and third-country nationals.

Lastly, Members welcome:

- the creation of the European Health Insurance Card, and urges that its use be further extended and simplified;
- the adoption of the Single Permit Directive, which allows for the portability of pensions for third-country nationals and their survivors;
- the plan to declare 2015 the European Year of Integration.