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

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The European Parliament adopted by 334 votes to 247, with 32 abstentions, a resolution on the integration of migrants, its effects on the labour market and the external dimension of social security coordination.

Parliament states 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**. It considers 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.

To encourage integration, 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: Parliament calls 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. It rejects 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.

Parliament takes 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 resolution 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.

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

Integration and citizenship: Parliament considers that successful integration also includes participation in political decision-making processes and that the social participation of migrants should be encouraged. It advocates, therefore, expanding the scope for participation in society and for political codetermination for people with a migrant background, and encouraging them to take advantage of such opportunities. It recalls the importance of voting rights for migrants, particularly at the local level. It insists on the importance of their involvement in networks and NGOs working on these issues.

Combating the shortage of labour: Parliament stresses 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. It stresses 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 create fair opportunities for job competition for migrant workers who have completed their studies in the territory of an EU Member State. The plenary insists that the principle of **equal pay** and equal working conditions for equal work in the same workplace must apply to skilled workers arriving from both the EU and third countries.

Common European entry system: Parliament calls 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 resolution 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**. Parliament calls for concrete proposals on how a mechanism for the recognition of qualifications and diplomas of third-country nationals could be set up.

Migrant rights: Parliament stresses that employers are required by law to treat all employees equally and to avoid discrimination between them: freedom of association for trade unions and the right to collective bargaining, without exception. Vocationally-based language courses should be made available.

The plenary, however, did not take up the committee's proposal calling for asylum-seekers to be guaranteed access to the labour market and education as soon as possible.

Circular migration: Parliament recognises the potential of circular (labour) migration for producing a 'triple win situation' in which migrant, host country and home country all benefit. It calls 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. It calls 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. It stresses the need to make circular migration programmes **flexibl**e and also to **support return and integration programmes**.

It calls on the Commission to strengthen and give priority to the links between labour market demand, circular migration, development, and neighbourhood and foreign policy. It welcomes 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: Parliament calls on the Member States to open up a route into legality for people without papers who can earn their living through employment. It notes that long-term residence entitlement in the foreseeable future is a key prospect as far as integration is concerned. It calls for solutions that respect the fundamental rights of these persons while recalling the importance of smart borders management on the EU's part, as well as the possibility of monitoring with the aid of biometric identifiers.

Recalling that both legal and illegal immigration are current phenomena, Parliament calls for a **common legal framework on migration policies** to be established in order to protect migrants and potential victims, especially women and children. Parliament regrets the recent changes to the 'right to nationality at birth' legislation in some Member States, which are resulting in more cases of statelessness in the EU.

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, Parliament calls 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. It also calls on the Member States and the Commission to broaden the practical scope of the EU's association agreements with both third countries and wider regions as far as social security is concerned.

It points 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**. Parliament calls, 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, Parliament welcomes:

- 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 Commission's plan to declare **2016** the European Year of Integration. It urges it to focus in particular on 'Integration through Work'.

It should be noted that an alternative motion for resolution was tabled by the EFD group but this was rejected in plenary.