

Summary of the

EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027

What you need to know

INTRODUCTION

On 24 November 2020, the European Commission published its [action plan on Integration and Inclusion for the period 2021-2027](#). More generally, the document is clear about fostering social cohesion and building inclusive societies with migrants and it adds a new specific reference to EU citizens with a migrant background.

“The action plan proposes targeted and tailored support that takes into account individual characteristics that may present specific challenges to people with a migrant background, such as gender or religious background”; it also addresses the role of local and regional governments (LRGs).

In the integration and inclusion of migrants, the local level plays a key role in **welcoming and guiding** newcomers when they first arrive in their new country. Maximising EU added value through **multi-stakeholder partnerships** and supporting all other integration actors through funding, developing practical tools, coordinating actions and establishing relevant partnerships is the key role of the EU.

This action plan is part of the comprehensive response to tackling the challenges linked to migration put forward in the [New Pact on Migration and Asylum](#). The action plan is divided into **actions on four themes** (education, employment, health and housing) and **five cross-topical areas** (partnerships, EU funding, host society participation, new technologies and digital tools, and monitoring).

RECOGNITION OF CEMR CONTRIBUTION TO THE PREPARATORY WORKS

Together with the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, the Action Plan represents the overall structure of a new European common framework for migration and integration issues. Designing the Action Plan has been an intense process based on the results of [2016 action plan on the integration of third-country nationals](#) and takes it a step further by presenting new actions and a stronger framework for promoting integration and inclusion. CEMR participated in the consultation meeting between DG Migration and Home Affairs together with the representatives of LRGs, on 15 September 2020. Several challenges were identified during the session, most notably:

- the move from emergencies to long-term strategies;
- the shift from a quick labour market integration to sustainable self-reliance and economic independence;
- the need to secure long-term structural funding (EU funding is often short-term and project based);
- the need to improve access to health, including mental health services;
- the improvements in the recognition of qualifications;
- the shift away from negative attitudes towards migration, anti-migrant rhetoric and sentiment.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING:

Education and training is the foundation for successful participation in society and one of the most powerful tools for building more inclusive societies. To achieve this, the EU proposes:

- Targeted support and training for the teachers and youth workers to acquire the skills required for supporting integration of young migrants (under the [Erasmus teacher Academies](#) and through [ECEC2021](#));
- To facilitate a quick, fair, transparent and affordable recognition of qualifications acquired in third countries through the Erasmus Programme and the [European Qualifications Framework](#);
- To develop comprehensive and accessible host country language learning programmes, through funding and exchanges of experiences;
- Finally, to promote exchange between member states on successful approaches to gain an understanding of the laws, culture and values of the receiving society as early as possible.

EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS:

Migrant entrepreneurs contribute to economic growth, create jobs and can support the post COVID-19 recovery. For this reason, the EU has been working to ensure that:

- Migrant entrepreneurs receive more support through easier access to financing, training and advice;
- Support is provided for inclusive entrepreneurship under [InvestEU](#) for both women and men, including migrant entrepreneurs; fostering inclusive mentoring schemes is essential.

HEALTH:

Insufficient access to healthcare services can be a major obstacle to integration and inclusion of migrants, affecting virtually all areas of their life.

- Migrants and EU citizens with a migrant background must be informed about their rights and have equal access to quality health care services, including mental health services.
- Promote access to health care services for migrants through funding dedicated projects under the [Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund](#) and inclusion actions addressed to people with a migrant background under the [Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme](#) is fundamental.

HOUSING:

The access to adequate and affordable housing is a key determinant of successful integration. Therefore:

- Under the [Renovation Wave](#), the Commission will setup an [Affordable Housing Initiative](#) to support further implementation and replication of successful initiatives.

For all these topical areas, the European Commission encouraged LRGs to make full use of EU funding. In particular the [European Social Fund Plus](#), the [Asylum and Migration Fund](#) and the [European Regional](#)

[Development Fund](#), as well as [InvestEU](#) to support programmes and measures related to education, integration into the labour market, access to healthcare services and to promote adequate and affordable housing, in accordance with identified needs at national and regional level.

BUILDING STRONG PARTNERSHIPS FOR A MORE EFFECTIVE INTEGRATION PROCESS:

Integration is a societal process where the responsibility rests with many and relevant stakeholders must be empowered and enabled to contribute to the integration process. Next steps:

- Expanding the [Urban Academy on Integration](#), launched in the framework of the [Partnership on the Inclusion of Refugees and Migrants](#) of the [Urban Agenda](#), into a comprehensive capacity-building programme for policymakers and practitioners from the local, regional and national levels;
- Providing targeted funding and capacity building to Member States to promote coordination between key integration stakeholders at national, regional and local levels;
- Promoting mentoring and buddy programmes between local communities and newly arrived migrants;
- Building up the capacity of local and regional authorities to involve local communities in the design and implementation of integration measures and programmes;
- Strengthening inter-religious dialogue among communities and supporting cities in preventing radicalisation.

INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES FOR EU FUNDING UNDER THE [2021-2027 MULTI-ANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK](#):

Supporting Member States' action in integration and inclusion through EU funding will remain a priority for the Commission. For this reason it is important to:

- **Facilitate the access to EU funding for local and regional authorities through specific calls for proposals targeting them;** other key integration stakeholders will also have greater access to funds;
- Recommend Member States to involve local and regional authorities, civil society organisations, including organisations representing migrants and diaspora, and social and economic partners in preparing, revising, implementing and monitoring programmes for the 2021-2027 EU funds (AMIF, ESF+ and ERDF);
- Ensure a coordinated approach at national, macro-regional, regional and local level in the programming and implementation of EU funds contributing to integration and inclusion;
- **Partnerships with all relevant stakeholders, in particular local and regional authorities should be reinforced in programming and implementation of EU funds;**
- Authorities managing EU funds that are relevant for integration are to coordinate their actions at macro-regional, national, regional and local levels.

FOSTERING PARTICIPATION AND ENCOUNTERS WITH THE HOST SOCIETY:

Developing welcoming, diverse and inclusive societies is a process that depends on the engagement of both migrants and the receiving society. It can help empower them and ensure that integration and

inclusion policies are more effective and address needs identified at local and regional level that reflect real needs. Indeed, the EU Commission will be:

- Financing projects **to increase the capacity** of national, regional and local authorities to involve migrants and migrant-led organisations in decision-making processes;
- Working with media, education institutions as well as civil society organisations to better inform citizen in the EU about the realities of migration and integration;
- Promote exchanges with the host societies through volunteering, sport, non-formal education, youth and cultural activities.

ENHANCE THE USE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND DIGITAL TOOLS FOR INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION:

Technological innovation opens up new opportunities to modernise and facilitate access to integration and other services:

- As part of the [Digital Education action plan](#), need to purchase digital equipment and e-learning applications for schools and students from disadvantaged groups;
- Work on an inclusive EU e-government action plan that promotes human-centric digital public services for citizens, including migrants.

MONITORING PROGRESS - TOWARDS AN EVIDENCE-BASED INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION POLICY:

Efficient integration policies should be built upon reliable evidence about both integration outcomes and the impact of integration policies. Next steps:

- Launch a new Eurobarometer on integration;
- Improve the availability of data on integration outcomes, including at regional and local levels.

CONCLUSION

Ensuring that migrants and EU citizens with a migrant background can fully participate and contribute to the civil society is key to the future well-being, prosperity and cohesion of European societies.

With this action plan, the Commission sets out a strong framework to strengthen and step up integration and inclusion policies across the EU, thus contributing to the broader social inclusion agenda. In implementing this action plan, the Commission will work closely with Member States, local and regional authorities, civil society organisations, social and economic partners, the private sector, host communities, diaspora organisations and migrants.

To ensure full transparency on the implementation of the action plan, the Commission will develop an interactive online platform, to be hosted on the [European Website on Integration](#), to monitor progress and allow for contributions from a wider range of partners.