

Joint statement by the European Commission and Economic and Social Partners

Renewal of the European Partnership for Integration, offering opportunities for refugees to integrate in the European labour market

Migrants and refugees make up a significant part of the EU's workforce. The COVID-19 crisis has made their contribution to European economies, labour markets and public services all the more evident. Many of them contributed in a crucial way to making it possible for all of us to get through the crisis and address economic and social needs.

However, many of them also face specific challenges and are likely to be hit heavily by the crisis. Rising racism and xenophobia may represent additional obstacles to their participation in the labour market and in society at large, especially in time of increasing unemployment rates.

Supporting sustainable labour markets, social inclusion, equal opportunities and gender equality requires the active collaboration of public authorities at local, regional, national and European level with civil society and particularly with the economic and social partners, given the key role these play in the functioning of the labour market, the economy and the protection and welfare of all workers.

At the same time, migrant workers and entrepreneurs can play an important role in the recovery phase following the COVID-19 crisis. Better using the skills and potential of refugees will be key to make our labour markets more inclusive and contribute to the prosperity and cohesion of European societies in the long run.

For this reason, and in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights, the European Commission and the European Social and Economic Partners today renew their commitment to the [European Partnership for Integration offering opportunities for refugees to integrate into the European labour market](#). In doing so, they reaffirm the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach for early integration into the labour market benefitting both refugees and the economy and society at large.

Since its launch in December 2017, the Partnership has brought the European Commission and European Social and Economic Partners together to work closely to create new opportunities for the labour market integration of refugees. Social and economic partners have put in place a wide range of actions and initiatives in twenty EU countries. The European Commission has co-funded several innovative projects bringing together employers, chambers of commerce and industry, chambers of skilled crafts and trade unions to help refugees integrate into the labour market.

It is now time to build on these results and to give new life to this fruitful cooperation, in order to achieve a greater impact for the European economy and society alike.

In the context of the Partnership, the European Commission and the European Social and Economic Partners recall the need for a comprehensive approach to integration that empowers all relevant stakeholders at local, national and European level, and the essential role played by public authorities. They agree to focus their future efforts on the following areas:

- Fostering a multi-stakeholder approach involving public authorities, employment services, Social and Economic Partners, business organisations, chambers of commerce and industry, skilled crafts chambers, companies and workers, public services' employers, education and training providers, civil society organisations and the refugees themselves
- Supporting entrepreneurship as an important contribution to the economy and the recovery
- Facilitating the identification, assessment and validation of skills and the transparency of qualifications and, for the Social and Economic Partners, providing information and advice on rights and duties concerning access to the labour market and at the workplace.

We have a long road ahead but we will eventually move beyond the current COVID-19 crisis. It is essential that we match the recovery needs of Europe's labour market, including in the context of the transition towards a green and digital economy, with the skills and talents of refugees and migrants by supporting Member States to integrate those already staying regularly in Europe and to attract the skills their economies need.

This is why, in parallel to the ongoing work on the Partnership, focusing on labour market integration, the European Commission - in line with the objectives of the new European Skills Agenda and the upcoming New Pact on Migration and Asylum - and the Social and Economic Partners express their interest in exploring how to extend their dialogue and future cooperation also in the area of labour migration. This could focus on how to improve labour migration channels to meet Europe's changing labour market and skills needs. Beyond the current crisis, and structurally, labour migration can offer a unique opportunity to support economic growth and make our labour markets more resilient. Cooperation with countries of origin and better intelligence on skills and labour market shortages can play an important role in this endeavour.

The Commission reaffirms its commitment to support the Social and Economic Partners in their efforts to implement the Partnership, including through continuing to provide support for projects facilitating the labour market integration of refugees.

More than ever, only together can we achieve a fair and inclusive recovery that builds on the skills and potential of migrants and refugees and makes our societies and economies stronger.