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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027

{SWD(2020) 290 final}

Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027

“We will make sure that people who have the right to stay are integrated and made to feel welcome. They have a future to build – and skills, energy and talent.”

President von der Leyen, State of the Union Address 2020

1. Fostering social cohesion and building inclusive societies for all

The European way of life is an inclusive one. Integration and inclusion are key for people coming to Europe, for local communities, and for the long-term well-being of our societies and the stability of our economies. If we want to help our societies and economies thrive, we need to support everyone who is part of society, with integration being both a right and a duty for all.

This means empowering those facing disadvantages, while ensuring our communities are united and cohesive. It means giving equal opportunities to all to enjoy their rights and participate in community and social life, regardless of the background and in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights. It also means respecting common European values as enshrined in the EU Treaties and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, including democracy, the rule of law, the freedoms of speech and religion, as well as the rights to equality and non-discrimination. These fundamental values are an essential part of living and participating in European society. They are also the reasoning behind the creation of the ‘Promoting our European way of life’ portfolio within the Commission – defending the simple but essential premise that everybody matters, that no one should be left behind, and that all should be able to effectively exercise their rights and have access to opportunities and security.

The challenge of integration and inclusion is particularly relevant for migrants, not only newcomers but sometimes also for third-country nationals who might have naturalised and are EU citizen¹. This is why the scope of this action plan covers both migrants and EU citizens with a migrant background². It is thus broader than the 2016 Commission action plan on integration³, which covered only third country nationals.

Ensuring effective integration and inclusion in the EU of migrants is a social and economic investment that makes European societies more cohesive, resilient and prosperous. Integration

¹ The expression “EU citizens with migrant background” covers nationals of EU Member States who had a third-country nationality and became EU citizens through naturalisation in one of the EU Member States as well as EU citizens who have a third country migrant background through their foreign-born parents. EU citizens with migrant background benefit from the status and rights of EU citizens, as enshrined in Articles 20 and 21 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

² EU citizens with migrant background cannot be subject to the fulfilment of integration conditions in order to access their rights linked to EU citizenship. Directive 2004/38/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States amending Regulation (EEC) No 1612/68 and repealing Directives 64/221/EEC, 68/360/EEC, 72/194/EEC, 73/148/EEC, 75/34/EEC, 75/35/EEC, 90/364/EEC, 90/365/EEC and 93/96/EEC (OJ L 158, 30.4.2004, p. 77). Furthermore, third country family members of mobile EU citizens fall under the Free Movement Directive 2004/38/EC. These family members have specific rights of entry and residence, which cannot be subject to other additional conditions than the ones established in this Directive.

³ Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160607/communication_action_plan_integration_third-country_nationals_en.pdf.

and inclusion can and should be a win-win process, benefiting the entire society. But if integration and inclusion are to be successful, it must also be a two-way process whereby migrants and EU citizens with migrant background are offered help to integrate and they in turn make an active effort to become integrated. The integration process involves the host society, which should create the opportunities for the immigrants' full economic, social, cultural, and political participation. It also involves adaptation by migrants who all have rights and responsibilities in relation to their new country of residence.

Today, around 34 million inhabitants were born outside the EU (around 8% of the EU population)⁴ and 10% of young people (15-34 years) born in the EU have at least one foreign-born parent⁵. While the proportion of inhabitants born outside the EU has overall increased over recent years⁶, it still varies widely across Member States. It is around 10% or above in Sweden, Estonia, Luxembourg, Croatia, Latvia, Austria, Malta and Germany, while it is below 3% in Czechia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Poland and Slovakia.

Above a quarter of migrants are highly educated⁷. They offer resources, ambition and motivation but they often are not able to put their skills to use. Almost 40% are overqualified for the job they do⁸. We cannot afford to waste this potential. At the same time, almost a fifth of migrants have only primary school education and need further support.

Migrants and EU citizens with a migrant background play a key role in the European economy and society. The COVID-19 crisis has made their contribution all the more evident⁹. Many helped address the crisis as workers in essential services, doctors and nurses. At the same time, they are among those who are more exposed to the pandemic¹⁰. The EU will need everyone's contribution to the recovery and resilience of our economies in the aftermath of COVID-19¹¹. It is therefore not only a moral duty in line with the EU's fundamental values, but also an economic imperative to step up action in promoting integration and inclusion. As shown by recent research, fully integrating migrants into the labour market could generate large economic gains, including fiscal profits, contributions to national pension schemes and national welfare in general¹².

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 Asylum¹³. Successful integration

⁴ Eurostat, Population data, 2019 (note that all indicators provided below refer to EU-27 area).

⁵ Estimates for 2017 (latest year available) based on OECD/EU (2018), Settling In, Indicators of Immigrant Integration, section 7.

⁶ At the end of 2019, most residence permits in the EU were issued for the following reasons: family (38%), work (17%), asylum (9%), education (1%) and other (32%). Source: Eurostat, residence permits data. See also: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/statistics-migration-europe_en.

⁷ 26.8% of non-EU born adults (25-64) had a high level of education in 2019 (Eurostat, EU-LFS).

⁸ 38.6% in 2019, based on Eurostat, EU-LFS (age group 20-64). Overqualification is defined as working in low or medium skilled occupations (ISCO 4-9) despite having a high level of education (ISCED 5-8).

⁹ See: JRC (2020), Immigrant Key Workers: Their Contribution to Europe's COVID-19 Response https://ec.europa.eu/knowledge4policy/sites/know4pol/files/key_workers_covid_0423.pdf.

¹⁰ See: OECD (2020), What is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on immigrants and their children?, <http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/what-is-the-impact-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-on-immigrants-and-their-children-e7cbb7de>. Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2021 COM(2020) 575 final.

¹¹ See: Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2021, COM(2020) 575 final.

¹² For instance, fully integrating migrants into the labour market could generate up to €3 500 increase in the average net fiscal contribution of each migrant by 2035. See: JRC (2020), Projecting the net fiscal impact of immigration in the EU, <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC121937>.

¹³ Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/new-pact-migration-and-asylum_en.

policies are also a cornerstone of a well-functioning asylum and migration management system. They underpin and complement Member States' asylum and migration policies, by ensuring that all individuals who have a right to stay in the EU can fully take part in our societies. They can also support the dialogue with third countries and programmes under the external dimension of the EU's migration and development policies. Migrants are often part of various forms of socialisation in the diaspora communities in the EU Member States. Diaspora can play a critical role to support inclusion in host societies, contribute to investments, innovation and development, while also preserving relationship with countries of origin.

This action plan covers all the different stages and phases of the integration process: pre-departure measures, reception and early integration, long-term integration, and the building of inclusive and cohesive societies. It takes into account the different situation of migrant populations in Member States and supports Member States and other relevant stakeholders in finding the adequate response in their integration and inclusion policies.

2. Lessons learnt from the 2016 action plan on integration and key facts and figures on integration and inclusion

This action plan builds upon, among other things, the achievements of the 2016 Commission action plan on the integration of third-country nationals. Following its adoption, the Commission put in place more than 50 concrete actions to support Member States and other key stakeholders across a broad spectrum of policy areas: pre-departure/pre-arrival measures, education, employment and vocational training, access to basic services, active participation and social inclusion. The Commission also strengthened its tools for coordination, funding and monitoring. In many Member States, the action plan contributed to the development or review of national integration strategies and provided information on the use of funding for integration. In a number of cases, tailor-made technical support was provided to national authorities in designing and implementing integration policy reforms¹⁴.

However, persisting challenges in relation to employment, education, access to basic services and to the social inclusion of migrants demonstrate that additional action is needed as described below.

Key facts and figures on integration and inclusion (EU-27, 2019)¹⁵

¹⁴ For more details on the implementation of the 2016 action plan, see the Commission Staff Working Document Assessment of the implementation of the 2016 action plan on the integration of third-country nationals, SWD(2020) 290.

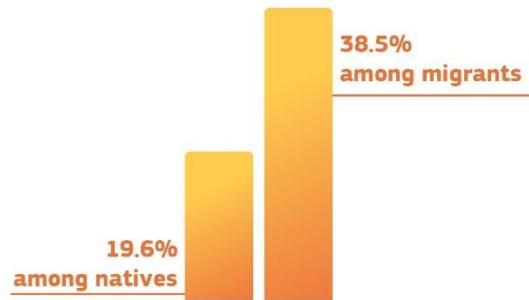
¹⁵ Eurostat 2019 data. Education and employment indicators based on EU-LFS. Poverty and housing indicators based on EU-SILC. Migrants defined as those born outside of EU-28 (as the reference year is 2019, UK nationals were not counted as 'non-EU migrants': given their small share in overall migrant population in the EU, this does not make a difference in terms of overall gaps in integration outcomes).



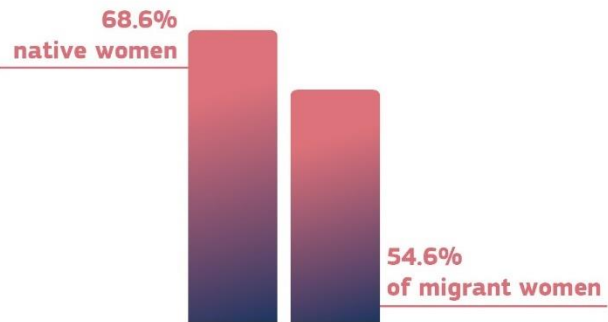
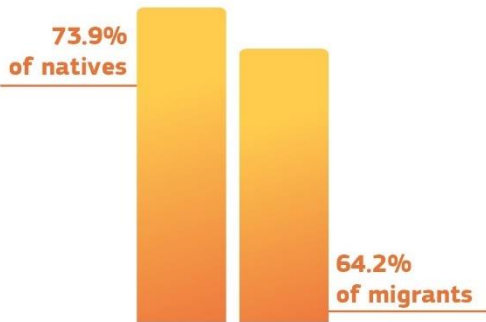
Share of dropping out among young people (18-24) (without upper secondary education)



share of adults (25-64) with low level of education



Share of population in employment among those of working-age (20-64)



39.0% among migrants
19.5% among natives

27.6% among migrants

14.2% among natives

19.1% among migrants

8.8% among natives



risk of poverty or social exclusion



rate of overcrowding



housing cost overburden

In addition to the gaps faced by migrants in key areas such as education, employment, poverty, social exclusion and housing (see charts above), migrants also face an unfavourable situation in the following areas:

- Young migrants (18-24) born outside the EU were much more likely (21%) than natives (12.5%) to be ‘neither in employment nor in education and training’, especially migrant girls and young women (25.9%).
- Migrants are more likely to face unmet medical needs¹⁶ related to various factors such as: lack of access or limited health insurance (in some countries) depending on residence status, lack of knowledge on how to access services, financial resources, concentration of migrants in some disadvantaged areas with lower access to quality health services, language barriers and lack of adaptation of national systems to the specific needs of migrants.
- While the proportion of migrants in the population of rural areas is relatively low (2.9%)¹⁷, they tend to fare worse on most indicators of integration not only compared to natives but also with respect to migrants living in cities and towns¹⁸. As there is generally a shortage of basic services in many rural areas, migrants may also lack the specific support services that they need.

Moreover, the implementation of the 2016 action plan confirmed that, while the areas targeted by the action plan remain relevant, stronger action is needed to promote the integration of migrant women, to foster the inclusion of EU citizens with a migrant background, to better involve the host society in integration and inclusion policies and to strengthen monitoring and evaluation of these policies. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on migrants and EU citizens with a migrant background has also highlighted the need to increase action to facilitate their access to healthcare services.

3. Key principles and values of the EU action plan on integration and inclusion

The EU’s work on integration and inclusion is underpinned by a shared set of principles and values, which should also guide the work of Member States when they design, implement or review their strategies. This is true across the full range of EU inclusion policies, as set out by the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Inclusion for all

Inclusion for all is about ensuring that all policies are accessible to and work for everyone, including migrants and EU citizens with migrant background. This means adapting and transforming mainstream policies to the needs of a diverse society, taking into account the specific challenges and needs of different groups. Actions to help migrants integrate need not, and should not, be at the expense of measures to benefit other vulnerable or disadvantaged groups or minorities. On the contrary, they contribute to make policies more inclusive overall.

This action plan promotes an integrated approach to migrants inclusion and aims to create close synergies with existing and upcoming EU strategies to foster equality and social cohesion to ensure everyone is fully included and participates in European societies. In particular, it will be implemented in close interaction with the forthcoming action plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights and the EU’s anti-racism action plan¹⁹. It will also build synergies with the EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and

¹⁶ Based on EU-SILC data, see OECD/EU (2018), Settling In, Indicators of Immigrant Integration, Figure 4.11. “Unmet medical needs”.

¹⁷ Eurostat, EU-LFS (2019)

¹⁸ See: JRC (2020), Migration in EU Rural Areas:

https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC116919/migration_in_eu_rural_areas.pdf.

¹⁹ A Union of equality : EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025, COM(2020)565 final.

participation²⁰ the LGBTIQ equality strategy 2020-2025²¹, the forthcoming strategy to combat antisemitism and the EU citizenship report. It will aim to build and strengthen contact and trust between different communities within society, and fight isolation and segregation.

A more cohesive and inclusive society for all can also help prevent the spread of all forms of extremist ideologies that can lead to terrorism and violent extremism. Enhanced preventive actions can, in turn, address societal tensions and extremist ideologies and thus foster integration and peaceful coexistence among communities and individuals. Through the Radicalisation Awareness Network²², the Commission supports first line practitioners from across Europe to develop best practices and equip them with the skills they need to address violent extremism, support resilience building and disengagement, as well as rehabilitation and reintegration in society. Promoting inclusion and providing opportunities for young people at risk through education, culture, youth and sports can further contribute to the prevention of radicalisation, and cohesion inside the EU. Working closely with practitioners and local actors can be particularly effective in preventing radicalisation. Inclusion is also about addressing unconscious bias and achieving a change in mentality and the way people perceive one another and approach the unknown.

Targeted support where needed

While mainstream social policies should be inclusive for all and mindful of the needs of a diverse society, certain groups and certain areas in host countries will need targeted support to overcome specific challenges. Newly arrived migrants often face a number of challenges when integrating into European societies, depending on how they arrived, their skills level, language knowledge and their background. Within each policy area, policymakers should design targeted and tailored support mechanisms to help newcomers quickly integrate. An example are complementary courses designed for highly qualified migrants to help them make the best use of their skills in their new job²³. Member States under migratory pressure face additional challenges in developing or expanding such targeted measures and should in particular be supported. Children will need additional protective support, always ensuring the best interest of the child, not least when they are unaccompanied²⁴.

Mainstreaming gender and anti-discrimination priorities

This action plan will take into account the combination of personal characteristics, such as gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation and disability that can represent specific challenges for migrants. It will build on and complement the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, the EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025, the EU Roma Strategic Framework for equality, inclusion and participation, the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy and the forthcoming Strategy on the rights of persons with disabilities²⁵.

²⁰ A Union of Equality: EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation, COM(2020)620 final.

²¹ A Union of Equality: LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025, COM(2020)698 final.

²² The Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), brings together over 6,000 first line practitioners from across Europe to develop best practices, and equip them with the skills they need to address violent extremism. Further actions on prevention of radicalisation will be part of the upcoming EU Agenda on Counter-terrorism.

²³ These courses are designed specifically to help migrants complement the education acquired abroad.

²⁴ The specific challenges that children in migration face in relation to access to integration measures will also be addressed in the upcoming EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child.

²⁵ The respect for human rights standards and the inclusion of a gender perspective in partnerships and agreements on migration between the EU and third countries is also supported by the EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2019-2024) EEAS(2019) 747.

In particular, **migrant women** and girls face additional obstacles to integration compared to migrant men and boys, often having to overcome structural barriers linked to their being both a migrant and female, including facing stereotypes. They are more likely to come to the EU to join a family member, bringing with them domestic responsibilities that can prevent them from fully participating in the labour market and in integration programmes, skills assessments, re-training and other measures when these do not cater for such caring responsibilities. When employed, migrant women are more likely to be over-qualified for their jobs than native women²⁶.

Moreover, EU citizens with a migrant background often face direct or indirect discrimination as well as racism when searching for housing or employment, or in their daily lives at school, in the neighbourhood and at work. Such discrimination can be based solely on their migrant background, but may be exacerbated due to their ethnic or racial origin as well as their religion or belief. LGBTIQ²⁷ migrants and migrants with disabilities can also face multiple forms of discrimination.

Support at all stages of the integration process

The successful integration of migrants depends both on **early action** and **long-term investment**. Providing support to migrants and their receiving communities at the earliest possible moment in the migration process is essential. Integration can start even prior to arrival in the EU. Member States should therefore, where possible, set up and expand pre-departure integration measures (e.g. training, orientation courses), and effectively link them with post-arrival measures to facilitate and speed up the integration process, including in the context of resettlement and community sponsorship²⁸.

At the same time, integration does not stop after a defined period of time. This is why mainstream policies are essential to supporting ongoing inclusion and meaningful participation. The proposed Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 takes into account the need for investments along the whole integration pathway, through a dedicated Asylum and Migration Fund, and financial support in the areas of employment, education, social and health care, and housing through Cohesion Policy Funds, such as the European Social Fund Plus, the European Regional Development Fund, and other funds such as the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and Erasmus+.

Maximising EU added value through multi-stakeholder partnerships

While national governments are primarily responsible for the overall design of integration and social policies such as education, employment, housing and healthcare, the EU plays a key role in supporting them and all other integration actors through funding, developing practical tools, coordinating actions and establishing relevant partnerships.

Integration happens in every village, city and region where migrants live, work and go to school or to a sports club. The local level plays a key role in welcoming and guiding newcomers when they first arrive in their new country. In addition, civil society organisations,

²⁶ 40.7% for migrant women in 2019, compared to 21.1% among native women (age group: 20-64), based on Eurostat, EU-LFS. See also JRC (2020), Gaps in the EU Labour Market Participation Rates: an intersectional assessment of the role of gender and migrant status.

²⁷ LGBTIQ people are people: who are attracted to others of their own gender (lesbian, gay) or any gender (bisexual); whose gender identity and/or expression does not correspond to the sex they were assigned at birth (trans, non-binary); who are born with sex characteristics that do not fit the typical definition of male or female (intersex); or whose identity does not fit into a binary classification of sexuality and/or gender (queer).

²⁸ As stressed in the Commission Recommendation on legal pathways to protection in the EU, C (2020) 6467 final, community sponsorship models can enable faster and more efficient integration for refugees.

educational institutions, employers and socio-economic partners, social economy organisations, churches, religious and other philosophical communities, youth and students' organisations, diaspora organisations as well as migrants themselves play a key role in achieving a truly effective and comprehensive integration policy.

4. Actions in main sectoral areas

This action plan sets out measures to step up action and to bring together actors at all levels in a common endeavour to achieve integration and inclusion and to ultimately build more cohesive and inclusive societies for all. While building on the achievements of the 2016 action plan on the integration of third-country nationals, this action plan proposes new and broader measures whereby the EU and Member States can bring most added value and have a greater impact. These actions complement those included in recent equality strategies²⁹. The proposed actions are based on broad consultations that the Commission conducted between June and October 2020 among a wide range of actors. These include a public consultation as well as targeted consultations with Member States, local and regional authorities, social and economic partners, employers, civil society organisations, foundations, international organisations and migrants, including refugees³⁰.

I. Education and training

From early childhood education and care (ECEC) to tertiary and adult education and non formal education, education and training is the foundation for successful participation in society and one of the most powerful tools for building more inclusive societies. The COVID-19 pandemic has made the importance of inclusion and equality of opportunities in education even more evident. Inclusion and gender equality is one of six dimensions of the European Education Area³¹ to be achieved by 2025 through the rolling-out of a number of concrete initiatives. Making our education systems more inclusive is also a key objective of the Digital Education Action Plan³². The European Skills Agenda boosts skills development all across life³³.

Schools have the potential to be real hubs of integration for children and their families. Increasing the participation of migrant children and children with a migrant background in ECEC while ensuring that such programmes are equipped to serve culturally and linguistically diverse children can have a strong positive effect on their future educational attainment, including in learning the host country language, and on the integration of their parents and families at large. A school environment that involves communities, support services and parents can be particularly beneficial for children with a migrant background. To achieve this, teachers need to be equipped with the necessary skills and resources to teach in multicultural and multilingual classrooms and to support children with a migrant background throughout their education. Fighting segregation in schools and fostering interactions between

²⁹ For example, the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, COM(2020)152 final, and the EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025, COM(2020) 565 final.

³⁰ Results of the consultations can be found here: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/summary/summary_of_consultations_in_view_of_the_action_plan_on_integration_and_inclusion.pdf.

³¹ Communication on achieving the European Education Area by 2025, COM(2020) 625 final.

³² Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027. Resetting education and training for the digital age, COM(2020)624 final.

³³ Communication on a European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience, COM(2020) 274 final.

migrant and native children, is also crucial to making our education system more inclusive. By teaching democracy, citizenship and critical thinking skills, schools play an important role in preventing young people from being attracted to violent extremist ideologies, organisations and movements³⁴.

Migrant children with disabilities need additional support to participate in education on equal basis with others. Inclusion will be the leitmotif of the upcoming EU Comprehensive Strategy on the Rights of the Child, which will seek to ensure that all children, regardless of origin, ability, socio-economic background, legal and residence status have equal access to the same set of rights and protection. The youth sector, and youth work in particular, can help young migrants gain skills and competences through non-formal learning.

The transition into adulthood and from school to work can be particularly challenging for recently arrived migrant children, in particular unaccompanied young people, not least because support measures often stop when a child reaches 18 years of age. Preparing for such a transition in advance – through supporting their educational achievement, including them in vocational education and training and in the Youth Guarantee³⁵, and providing coaching and mentoring – can be particularly effective.

Facilitating the recognition of qualifications acquired in third countries, promoting their visibility and increasing comparability with European/EU qualifications, while offering bridging courses to help migrants complement the education acquired abroad, is key to a faster and fairer inclusion of migrants into the labour market and enables them to fully use their competences and skills. This can also help migrants pursue their studies in the host country thus increasing their level of participation in higher education and lifelong learning.

Learning the language of the host country is crucial in order to successfully integrate. However, this should not stop a few months after arrival. Language classes should be supported also for intermediate and advanced courses and tailored to the needs of different groups. Combining language training with the development of other skills or work experience and with accompanying measures like childcare has proven to be particularly effective in improving access to and the outcome of language training. Finally, gaining an understanding of the laws, culture and values of the receiving society as early as possible, for example through civic orientation courses, is crucial for migrants to fully participate in the receiving society.

What do we want to achieve in this area?

- More migrant children and children with a migrant background participate in high quality and inclusive early childhood education and care.
- Teachers are better equipped with the necessary skills, and are given the resources and support to manage multicultural and multilingual classrooms for the benefit of both migrant and native children.

³⁴ The Radicalisation Awareness Network has issued a number of supporting documents to better equip teachers to detect early signs of radicalisation and to address underlying factors:
https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/topics-and-working-groups/ran-y-and-e_en.

³⁵ The Youth Guarantee is a commitment by all Member States to ensure that all young people under the age of 25 receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, apprenticeship, or traineeship. The reinforced Youth Guarantee strengthens the focus on the particular needs of vulnerable groups, for example young migrants or young people with a migrant background. See:
<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079&langId=en>.

- Multi-stakeholder learning communities are created with the involvement of schools, health and social services and parents.
- Qualifications acquired in non-EU countries are recognised faster and more easily.
- More migrants participate in comprehensive language training and civic orientation programmes which start upon arrival and accompany them along their integration journeys.

What will the Commission do to support these objectives?

- **Improve participation and achievement in education through:**
 - a new toolkit with practical guidance on inclusion in ECEC to be published at the beginning of 2021;
 - targeted support for teachers to develop competences for dealing with cultural, religious and linguistic diversity in classrooms under the Erasmus Teacher Academies;
 - peer learning and peer counselling activities to support Member States in designing and implementing effective inclusive education policies in the European Education Area;
 - providing targeted training for youth workers to acquire the skills specifically required for supporting integration of young migrants.
- **Improve the recognition of qualifications through:**
 - fostering cooperation between national authorities in charge of integration and national centres for the recognition of qualifications (ENIC-NARIC networks);
 - Supporting transparent recognition practices of qualifications of refugees through the Erasmus Programme;
 - promoting exchanges between Member States on providing complementary/bridging courses for migrants;
 - providing information on recognition practices and on skills and qualifications for migrants using the full potential of the Europass portal;
 - promoting the transparency of qualifications systems, including through the European Qualifications Framework.
- Work with Member States to further develop **comprehensive and accessible language learning programmes**, including intermediate and advanced courses, through funding and exchanges of experiences.
- Promote exchanges between Member States on successful approaches to civic orientation courses.

In this area, Member States are encouraged to:

- Increase the number of migrant children and children with a migrant background participating in ECEC while ensuring that general ECEC programmes are equipped to support culturally and linguistically diverse children.
- Ensure that procedures for recognising foreign qualifications are quick, fair, transparent and affordable.
- Include managing multicultural and multilingual classrooms and valuing and mobilising learners' individual linguistic backgrounds as key skills in teaching curricula and provide teachers with the necessary resources to address these issues.
- Develop support programmes that are specific to unaccompanied minors who arrive past the age of compulsory schooling and programmes for unaccompanied minors on

the transition to adulthood.

- Ensure the accessibility and affordability of after-school leisure activities and sports.
- Ensure support for language learning after an initial integration period to promote it beyond initial or intermediary proficiency levels.
- Make full use of EU funding, in particular the European Social Fund Plus, the Asylum and Migration Fund and the European Regional Development Fund, to support programmes and measures related to education, skills and language training, in accordance with identified needs at national and regional level.

II. Employment and skills

Migrants make up a significant part of the EU's workforce. The COVID-19 crisis has made their contribution to European economies and labour markets all the more evident³⁶. Many migrants arrive with skills that are highly needed in our labour markets but they often face difficulties in having them valued and finding jobs that reflect their skills level. Migrant women are at particularly high risk of being over-qualified for their job, which may lead to depreciation of their skills. They tend to face greater obstacles and more limited access to support³⁷. Also, the challenges migrants with disabilities face should be addressed so that they can participate in the labour market.

The European Skills Agenda³⁸ aims to support everyone, including migrants, in developing more and better skills and putting them to use. Furthermore, innovative tools to quickly assess the skills of migrants have recently been developed in several Member States. Skills assessments already conducted in the pre-departure phase, can help migrants to integrate more quickly into the labour market, in particular within resettlement and complementary pathways programmes.

Migrant entrepreneurs contribute to economic growth, create jobs and can support the post-COVID-19 recovery. However, they face several challenges, such as a lack of networks, difficulties in accessing credit and insufficient knowledge of the regulatory and financial framework. Access to financial information and increased financial literacy can play an important role in overcoming these challenges. The availability of and access to financial services is essential for all migrants to fully participate in a country's economy or build a stable life for themselves and their families, including as regards sending remittances. Digital finance can help in making financial services more accessible.

Effective inclusion of migrants and EU citizens with a migrant background into the labour market requires the active collaboration of a large variety of actors, including public authorities at local, regional, national and European level, civil society organisations, economic and social partners and employers.

³⁶ See: JRC (2020) Immigrant Key Workers: Their Contribution to Europe's COVID-19 Response https://ec.europa.eu/knowledge4policy/sites/know4pol/files/key_workers_covid_0423.pdf.

³⁷ See: JRC (2020), Gaps in the EU Labour Market Participation Rates: an intersectional assessment of the role of gender and migrant status, <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC121425>.

³⁸

See: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223#:~:text=The%20European%20Skills%20Agenda%20is%20a%20five-year%20plan,on%20the%20lessons%20learnt%20during%20the%20COVID-19%20pandemic>.

Good quality Vocational Education and Training (VET) with a strong work-based learning dimension can be a particularly powerful tool to help migrants enter the labour market. However, obstacles to their participation in VET still remains.

What do we want to achieve in this area?

- Cooperation at EU, national and local level between key labour market actors and the migrants themselves is stronger.
- Migrant entrepreneurs, including social entrepreneurs, receive more support through easier access to financing, training and advice.
- More migrant women participate in the labour market.
- Assessment of migrants' skills is more effective and faster. Upskilling and reskilling are continuously supported, including through validation procedures for non-formal and informal learning.
- More migrants participate in high-quality VET.

What will the Commission do to support these objectives?

- **Work with social and economic partners** to promote a multi-stakeholder approach to labour market integration through the *European Partnership for Integration*³⁹.
- **Support employers** through exchanges and peer-to-peer learning, building on the *Employers together for integration* initiative⁴⁰.
- Provide support for **inclusive entrepreneurship** under InvestEU for both women and men, including migrant entrepreneurs and foster inclusive mentoring schemes.
- **Facilitate assessment and validation of skills through:**
 - Sharing and scaling up practices on skills assessment through the European Integration Network, the European Network of Public Employment Service and the updated Europass platform.
 - Further developing the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals and promoting its use among public authorities and other organisations, including before arrival, particularly in the case of resettlement and complementary pathways.
- Support people with a migrant background under the upcoming Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme⁴¹.

In this area, Member States are encouraged to:

- Make use of the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals at an early stage, in particular for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, and strengthen procedures for validation of non-formal learning.
- Raise awareness of discrimination in the recruitment process and in the workplace and

³⁹https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/legal-migration/european-dialogue-skills-and-migration/european-partnership-integration_en.

⁴⁰ The initiative was launched by the Commission in 2017 to highlight what employers are doing to support the integration of refugees and other migrants into the labour market: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/legal-migration/european-dialogue-skills-and-migration/integration-pact_en.

⁴¹ Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Rights and Values programme, COM/2018/383 final/2 - 2018/0207 (COD).

reinforce anti-discrimination measures.

- Encourage entrepreneurship among migrants through tailored training and mentoring programmes, by opening up mainstream entrepreneurship support structures to migrants and including entrepreneurship in integration programmes.
- Make full use of EU funding, in particular the European Social Fund Plus and the European Regional Development Fund, to support programmes and measures related to integration into the labour market, in accordance with identified needs at national and regional level.

III. Health

Insufficient access to healthcare services can be a major obstacle to integration and inclusion, affecting virtually all areas of life, including employment and education. Migrants are confronted with specific persistent barriers to accessing healthcare services, including administrative hurdles, fears linked to uncertainties about the duration of their stay, discrimination, a lack of information and of familiarity with the healthcare system, and linguistic and intercultural obstacles. Migrant women face additional challenges as they tend to have lower proficiency in the host country language, weaker social networks, and greater responsibilities for childcare and family.

The COVID-19 pandemic shed light on deep-seated inequalities in access to health services. It has also shown that these inequalities can pose risks for society at large. Migrants are more likely to work in jobs that require close contact with others, which expose them and their families to a higher risk of contracting COVID-19⁴², as well as other infectious diseases.

Mental health is critical to migrants' integration. While migrants, especially refugees, may be at higher risk of developing mental health problems due to trauma experienced in their country of origin, difficulties encountered during their migration journey or post-arrival experiences, such as social isolation or discrimination, they often face obstacles in accessing mental health services.

What do we want to achieve in this area?

- Migrants and EU citizens with a migrant background are informed about their rights and have equal access to regular health care services, including mental health services under the conditions established by national law and practices.
- Specific challenges faced by migrant women, including prenatal and post-natal healthcare for mothers, are fully considered when facilitating access to health care services.

What will the Commission do to support these objectives?

- **Promote access to health care services for migrants through:**
 - Funding dedicated projects under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund⁴³ and inclusion actions addressed to people with a migrant background under the upcoming Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme;
 - Working with Member States to foster equal access to quality and affordable healthcare services through EU funds such as the European Social Fund Plus and the

⁴² See: OECD, What is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on immigrants and their children?, <http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/what-is-the-impact-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-on-immigrants-and-their-children-e7cbb7de/>.

⁴³ To be financed under direct management still under the 2014-2020 financing period.

European Regional Development Fund.

▪ **Support and promote exchanges between Member States on:**

- Prevention and health promotion programmes specifically targeting migrants, with suitable outreach tools;
- Access to mental health and rehabilitation services⁴⁴.

In this area, Member States are encouraged to:

- Provide training to health care workers on diversity management and the needs of specific migrant groups (migrants with trauma, victims of trafficking in human beings or gender based violence, unaccompanied minors, older people, persons with disabilities etc.), making use of the different projects and training materials developed under the EU health programmes.
- Facilitate migrants' access to general health services, including mental health, by providing services adapted to their needs and tackling discrimination.
- Make full use of EU funds, such as the European Social Fund Plus, the Asylum and Migration Fund and the European Regional Development Fund, to support programmes and measures related to access to healthcare services, in accordance with identified needs at national and regional level.

IV. Housing

Access to adequate and affordable housing is a key determinant of successful integration. Housing conditions have a strong impact on employment and education opportunities and on the interactions between migrants and host communities⁴⁵. Poor housing conditions and segregation can exacerbate divisions, which undermine social cohesion. Increasing housing prices, shortages of affordable and social housing, and discrimination on the housing market make it difficult for migrants to find adequate and long-term housing solutions.

While responsibility for housing policies is a national competence, the Commission can play an important role in supporting Member States as well as local and regional authorities to address the challenges and promoting inclusive housing solutions.

In recent years, many innovative housing solutions have been developed in several EU countries, including through EU funding⁴⁶. Partnership-based approaches, co-housing and accompanying housing with employment and social services have proven to be particularly promising models that foster inclusion and community building. As announced under the Renovation Wave⁴⁷, the Commission will setup an Affordable Housing Initiative to support further implementation and replication of such successful initiatives.

Autonomous housing for asylum applicants with a high likelihood to be granted protection can speed up the integration process, especially when linked with early provision of integration support.

⁴⁴ As per article 26 of the UN Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities.

⁴⁵ See for example the EU anti-racism action plan which underlines that discrimination on the housing market reinforces segregation, with a knock-on effect in terms of education or employment opportunities and, in the case of families with children, significant detrimental impact on children's development.

⁴⁶ See for example the projects financed under the Urban Innovative Actions, <https://www.uia-initiative.eu/en>.

⁴⁷ A Renovation Wave for Europe - Greening our buildings, creating jobs, improving lives, COM(2020)662 final.

What do we want to achieve in this area?

- Migrants and EU citizens with a migrant background have access to adequate and affordable housing, including social housing.
- Member States and local and regional authorities have access to a wide range of tools and good practices to fight discrimination on the housing market.
- Innovative housing solutions that foster inclusion and fight segregation are widely used across the EU.

What will the Commission do to support these objectives?

- Work with Member States to promote non-segregated **adequate and affordable housing, including social housing**, and to provide accompanying integration services through EU funds, in particular under European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund Plus, Asylum and Migration Fund and InvestEU.
- Promote mutual learning between Member States, cities, villages and regions on **fighting discrimination on the housing market and reducing residential segregation** through the European Integration Network, the Urban academy for integration and dedicated funding under the Asylum and Migration Fund.
- Promote models of **autonomous housing** (rather than collective housing) for asylum applicants, especially families, and disseminate and scale up successful innovative models of inclusive and affordable housing for beneficiaries of international protection.

In this area, Member States are encouraged to:

- Ensure an integrated approach and coordinate housing policies with policies on access to employment, education, healthcare and social services.
- Provide adapted and autonomous housing solutions as early as possible for refugees and asylum seekers who are likely to be granted international protection, and enable a smooth transition for asylum seekers to independent living once they have been granted international protection.
- Make full use of EU funds, such as the European Regional Development Fund, the Asylum and Migration Fund and InvestEU, to promote adequate and affordable housing, including social housing in accordance with identified needs at national and regional level, as well as the European Social Fund Plus to support access to housing.

5. Actions supporting effective integration and inclusion in all sectoral areas

I. Building strong partnerships for a more effective integration process

Integration is a societal process where the responsibility rests not with one particular group but rather with many: migrants, host communities, public authorities and institutions, social and economic partners, civil society organisations, churches, religious and other philosophical communities and the private sector. Empowering both migrants and host communities to actively engage in the integration process is essential to achieve sustainable and successful integration. The Commission will seek to empower and enable all actors to contribute to this process, by building strong and long-term multi-stakeholder partnerships at various levels of governance. In doing this, the Commission, will build on successful examples of cooperation such as the Partnership on the inclusion of migrants and refugees under the Urban Agenda for

the EU⁴⁸, the European Partnership for integration with social and economic partners⁴⁹ and a partnership with rural regions under the upcoming long term vision for rural areas.

It is also important to ensure that all levels of governance – European, national, macro-regional, crossborder, regional and local – are fully involved in designing and implementing integration strategies, so as to maximise the effectiveness of the actions.

What do we want to achieve in this area?

- All relevant stakeholders are empowered and enabled to contribute to the integration process.
- Multi-stakeholder partnerships are built at EU, national, regional and local level.
- A structural and open dialogue exists between the Commission and key integration stakeholders.

What will the Commission do to support these objectives?

- **Support Member States through:**
 - Strengthening the **European Integration Network** and using it to support Member States to develop, update and implement national strategies and action plans for integration;
 - Providing targeted funding and capacity building to Member States to promote coordination between key integration stakeholders at national, regional or local levels;
 - Transferring and upscaling innovative solutions in employment, skills and social inclusion, across Europe through the European Social Fund Plus transnational cooperation and partnership.
- **Support local and regional authorities through:**
 - Launching a partnership with the Committee of the Regions to start a political dialogue and promote learning and exchanges on integration for local and regional authorities;
 - Expanding the Urban academy on integration⁵⁰ into a comprehensive capacity-building programme for policymakers and practitioners from the local, regional and national levels in the field of integration;
 - Strengthening inter-religious dialogue among communities, supporting cities in preventing radicalisation by providing funding, guidance and training to practitioners and local actors, including under the Radicalisation Awareness Network and under the *EU Cities against Radicalisation*⁵¹ initiative and its future developments;
 - Exploring rural partnerships to ensure inclusion and integration of migrants in rural areas.
- **Empower host communities through:**
 - Building capacity of local and regional authorities to involve local communities in the design and implementation of integration measures and programmes;

⁴⁸ See: <https://www.inclusionpartnership.com> and <https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/inclusion-of-migrants-and-refugees>.

⁴⁹ See: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/legal-migration/european-dialogue-skills-and-migration/european-partnership-integration_en.

⁵⁰ See: <https://www.inclusionpartnership.com/urban-academy>.

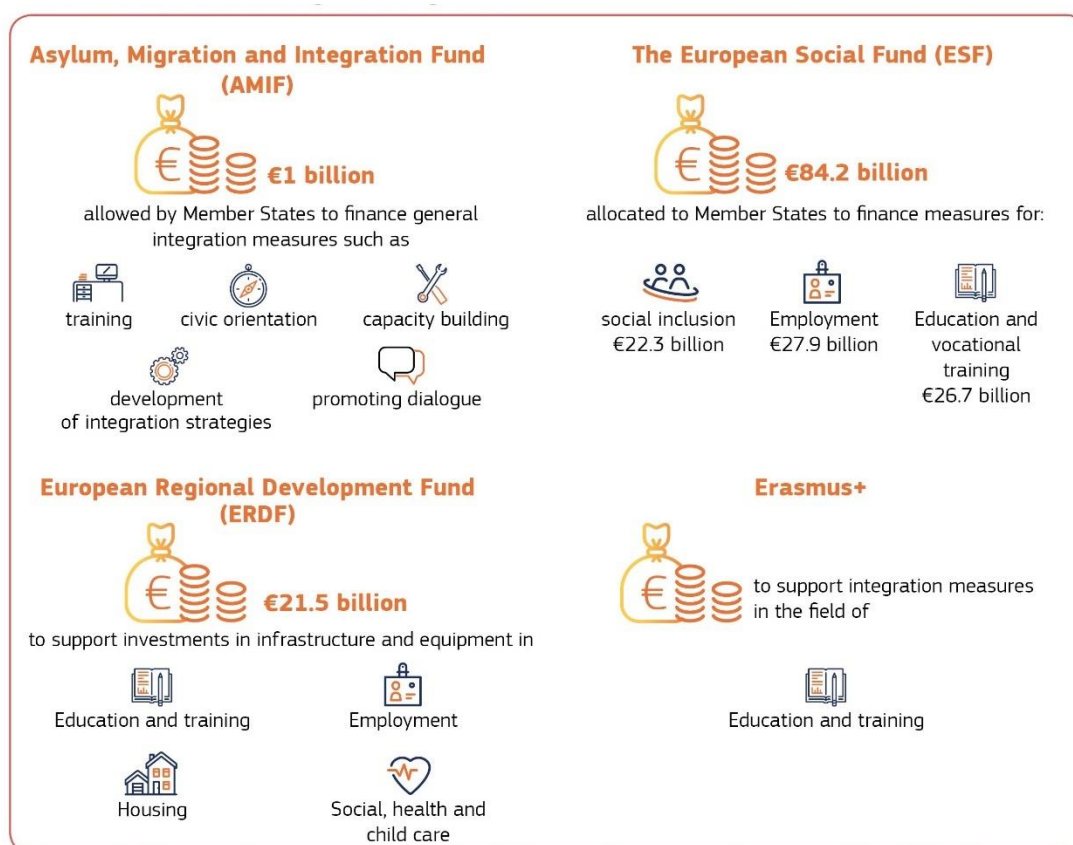
⁵¹ The European Commission has launched this initiative in 2019. It addresses primarily mayors and their advisors and complements the efforts of the Radicalisation Awareness Network in particular with policy exchanges among cities on prevention of radicalisation.

- Financing projects to promote volunteering actions co-designed by migrants and host communities;
- Promoting mentoring and buddy programmes between local communities and newly arrived migrants.
- **Support civil society through:**
 - Engaging in regular consultation and dialogue with civil society and diaspora organisations, including through the annual European Migration Forum.
- **Support social and economic partners and employers through:**
 - Implementing the European Partnership for Integration with social and economic partners and providing support to employers (see actions under Employment).
- **Support foundations and other social economy organisations through:**
 - Establishing a structural dialogue on migrant integration and exploring possible tools for cooperating with foundations and network organisations that work with foundations.

II. 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. This will be carried out directly by the Commission or through Member States' programmes under shared management. As integration is a long-term process and given its cross-cutting nature, it is supported through different EU funds in their respective areas.

Main EU funds contributing to integration and inclusion under the 2014-2020 period



For the **2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework**, the Commission has proposed to focus the future Asylum and Migration Fund (AMF) on supporting tailor-made measures implemented in the early phases of integration and horizontal measures. Meanwhile the labour market integration and social inclusion of migrants could be financed under the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+). The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) supports inclusion through infrastructure, equipment and access to services in education, employment, housing, social, health and child care. Moreover, in the areas relevant for integration, ESF+, AMF and ERDF investments should be complementary and work in synergy with other EU funds and programmes, including in particular Erasmus+, the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the European agricultural fund for rural development (EAFRD) and InvestEU, in order to support social inclusion in an integrated manner. In addition, the Technical Support Instrument⁵² will be able, on request, to provide technical support to Member States to develop or improve integration and inclusion policies. Specific actions addressing the inclusion of EU citizens with a migrant background may also be funded under the upcoming Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme.

Local and regional authorities play a crucial role in the integration process but often lack resources to put in place integration measures or have difficulties in accessing EU funding. In the context of the new Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027, the Commission proposed that their access to EU funding should be facilitated through better information and

⁵² Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 May 2020 on the establishment of the Technical Support Instrument, COM(2020) 409 final, subject to its adoption by the European Parliament and the Council.

an increased involvement in the preparation, implementation and revision of the relevant national programmes managed under shared management.

What do we want to achieve in this area?

- Funding for integration is prioritised by Member States under the EU funds contributing to integration, according to identified needs at national and regional level.
- Access to EU funding for integration and inclusion is facilitated for Member States and key integration stakeholders, including local and regional authorities
- Potential beneficiaries being made more aware of the funding possibilities for integration at the EU level.
- Authorities managing EU funds that are relevant for integration coordinate their actions at macro-regional, national, regional and local levels.
- Partnerships with all relevant stakeholders, in particular local and regional authorities are reinforced in programming and implementation of EU funds.
- Innovative instruments for financing integration activities are more commonly used.

What will the Commission do to support these objectives?

- Organise **regular exchanges** with **managing authorities** of the Asylum and Migration Fund⁵³, the European Social Fund Plus, the European Regional Development Fund and other EU Funds, such as Erasmus + and the European agricultural fund for rural development.
- Propose a European Child Guarantee to fight poverty and social exclusion among the EU's most disadvantaged children, including children with a migrant background.
- Develop a series of **webinars** targeting public authorities and civil society organisations and a **toolkit** on the use EU funds for integration in the 2021-2027 programming period⁵⁴.
- Stimulate investment in the fields of education and training, social infrastructure (schools, universities, hospitals, long term care, affordable and accessible housing), microfinance, social enterprises and social innovation, which benefit migrants, under the 'Social Investment and Skills Window' of the InvestEU.
- Develop **public-private partnerships** (e.g. with foundations and private donors).

In using EU funding for integration, Member States are encouraged to:

- Make full use of EU funds to promote integration, according to identified needs at national and regional level. This can include investments in education, employment, housing, health and social care services, together with capacity building actions and measures tackling segregation and discrimination.
- 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.

⁵³ The Asylum and Migration Fund promotes the efficient management of migration flows and the implementation, strengthening and development of a common Union approach to asylum and immigration. It does not cover the financing of inclusion actions of EU citizens with a migrant background.

⁵⁴ This will be an update of the 2018 "Toolkit on the use of Funds for integration of people with a migrant background":

https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/publications/guides/2018/toolkit-on-the-use-of-eu-funds-for-the-integration-of-people-with-a-migrant-background.

- Increase private stakeholders' participation in integration measures by means of innovative instruments, partnerships and incentives.
- Facilitate access to EU funding for local and regional authorities through specific calls for proposals for local and regional authorities.
- Take appropriate measures to make potential beneficiaries aware of EU funding opportunities for integration and inclusion.
- 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 (AMF, ESF+ and ERDF).
- Take into account the situation of migrants and their children (e.g. in health, employment and education) in their national Recovery and Resilience Plans.
- Make use of the Technical Support Instrument to support the design, development and rolling-out of tailor-made reforms related to integration and inclusion policies across the different areas.

III. Fostering participation and encounters with the host society

Developing welcoming, diverse and inclusive societies is a process that needs the engagement of both migrants and the receiving society. Including migrants and EU citizens with a migrant background as well as promoting their active participation in consultative and decision-making processes can help empower them and ensure that integration and inclusion policies are more effective and reflect real needs. This is why the Commission has launched an Expert Group on the views of migrants composed of migrants and organisations representing their interests, and will consult it in the design and implementation of future EU policies in the field of migration, asylum and integration⁵⁵.

Whether it is at school, the office, a sports club, or in the neighbourhood, providing places and opportunities for migrants and local communities to meet and interact is a strong means for inclusion and more cohesive societies. Moreover, the promotion of intercultural dialogue, including interreligious dialogue between faith communities, is essential. Supporting migrants' participation and interactions with the host society also requires providing opportunities for the local communities to learn more about people arriving in their communities and their backgrounds. Community sponsorship schemes not only help Member States increase the number of places for people in need of protection (through resettlement, humanitarian admission and other complementary pathways) but also to successfully integrate them into welcoming host communities, that are aware of and prepared for their arrival⁵⁶.

Grassroots participation in education, culture and sport brings people closer together. It helps combat xenophobia, exclusion, radicalisation and 'us vs. them' narratives while building mutual respect and fostering migrants' sense of belonging. Youth programmes such as the European Solidarity Corps allow young volunteers to work on projects addressing identity, culture and cultural diversity, tackling prejudices and conflicts, fostering mutual respect and understanding.

⁵⁵ The first meeting of the group, focusing on integration and inclusion, took place on 12 November 2020.

⁵⁶ Commission Recommendation on legal pathways to protection in the EU (C(2020) 6467 final). https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/commission_recommendation_on_legal_pathways_to_protection_in_the_eu_promoting_resettlement_humanitarian_admission_and_other_complementary_pathways.pdf.

Promoting exchanges between Member States and factoring in migrants in the design and implementation of relevant EU programmes can contribute to a more active participation of migrants in our societies and to fostering a better understanding in areas such as gender equality, LGBTIQ equality and combating racism, xenophobia and antisemitism.

Being well informed about migration and integration can also help fight prejudices and polarisation. However, a majority of Europeans (61%) feel not well or not at all informed about migration and integration⁵⁷. Working with media representatives, education institutions as well as civil society organisations is key to better inform citizen in the EU about the realities of migration and integration.

What do we want to achieve in this area?

- More migrants and EU citizens with a migrant background participate in consultative and decision-making processes at local, regional, national and European levels.
- Increased opportunities are provided for encounters and exchanges between migrants, EU citizens with a migrant background and local communities, including through art, culture, sport and social life in general.
- Migrant women have equal opportunities for participation in society.
- More Europeans are well informed on integration and migration.

What will the Commission do to support these objectives?

- Finance projects to increase the **capacity of national, regional and local authorities** to involve migrants and migrant organisations in decision-making processes.
- Closely involve the newly created **Expert Group on the views of migrants** in designing and implementing EU policies in the field of migration, asylum and integration.
- Support the development of **community sponsorship** programmes for beneficiaries of international protection across the EU through funding, facilitation of exchange of best practices and strengthened cooperation between all relevant public and private stakeholders.
- Launch an **integration award** for schools, local communities, artistic and cultural organisations, and sports and youth clubs to recognise their contribution to integration and inclusion.
- Organise, in cooperation with the UEFA Foundation, **football festivals** targeting young migrants in host cities of the next European football championship.
- Further improve an enabling environment for social economy and social **innovation** to foster inclusion and participation through the future Action Plan for Social Economy.
- Finance projects to **raise awareness** on facts and figures and main trends of integration and migration for journalists and journalism schools.

⁵⁷ See results of the 2018 Eurobarometer on integration, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/news/results-special-eurobarometer-integration-immigrants-european-union_en.

In this area, Member States are encouraged to:

- Align national integration strategies with national action plans against racism and racial discrimination⁵⁸.
- Involve migrants and migrant organisations in the design, implementation and evaluation of integration and inclusion policies and programmes, including when EU-funded.
- Promote exchanges with the host societies through volunteering, sport, non-formal education, youth and cultural activities.

IV. 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. Digitalisation of governments at all levels can facilitate access to digital public services. However, if not used in an inclusive way and not accessible, digitalisation of services can widen inequalities instead of narrowing them. The COVID-19 crisis has shown the potential of digitalising services such as education, language and integration courses. Many Member States had to adapt their integration services following social distancing measures and transferred integration and language courses online. However, this shift also made clear that migrants and EU citizens with a migrant background often face obstacles in accessing digital courses and services because of lack of infrastructure⁵⁹, language barriers, lack of electronic identification means and digital trust services (such as electronic signature) or lack of the digital skills to use these services⁶⁰. Online services can be particularly effective in the pre-departure phase to help migrants learn the language and acquire skills that can speed up their integration after arrival, and to connect them with the communities that will welcome them.

What do we want to achieve in this area?

- Newly developed digital integration services are assessed for accessibility, inclusiveness and quality and the most successful examples are integrated in integration programmes.
- Migrants and EU citizens with a migrant background have the digital skills to fully benefit from online services.
- Digital public services are designed in co-creation with citizens, including migrants to make them human-centric, easily accessible and adapted to a diverse population.

What will the Commission do to support these objectives?

- Support Member States in assessing **digital integration services**, including in the pre-departure phase, and identifying and exchanging good practices through mutual learning activities within the European Integration Network.
- Promote and finance projects on improving **digital skills** among migrants and EU citizens with a migrant background.

⁵⁸ The EU anti-racism action plan encourages all Member States to develop and adopt national action plans against racism and racial discrimination.

⁵⁹ E.g. 40% of rural areas still do not have access to high speed broadband.

⁶⁰ 8.1% of people born outside the EU report they cannot afford a computer, compared to 3.1% among those born in the reporting country, Eurostat, EU-SILC (2018 data). Parents from migrant households may have more difficulties in supporting their children in remote learning when they do not master the school language.

- As part of the **Digital Education action plan**, the Commission will make the most of EU support regarding internet access, purchase of digital equipment and e-learning applications and platforms for schools and in particular for students from disadvantaged groups and for students and educators with disabilities.
- Work on an inclusive EU e-government action plan, that promotes human-centric digital public services for citizens, including migrants, and engagement of migrants in the creation and delivery of digital public services⁶¹.

In this area, Member States are encouraged to:

- Develop digital literacy courses for migrants and include them in integration programmes, including using available EU funds.
- Ensure digital public services are inclusive by design, easily accessible and adapted to a diverse population and that migrants are consulted in their creation and further development.

V. 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. Since the adoption of EU indicators on migrants' integration in 2010, statistics have been made available on the Eurostat portal concerning integration indicators⁶². The Commission has cooperated with the OECD to publish a unique international comparison of integration outcomes of migrants and their children⁶³ and worked to improve the availability of data on integration at the local and regional level⁶⁴. Moreover, areas of integration linked to the 'two-way process' approach have been investigated such as discrimination⁶⁵, participation⁶⁶ and host-country attitudes.

To monitor the effectiveness of policies in the long-term, accurate and comparable data on the scale and nature of discrimination suffered by migrants is important. The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights will play a key role in this through a forthcoming EU survey on immigrants and their descendants (2022). This also requires disaggregating data by ethnic or racial origin as proposed in the recent EU anti-racism action plan. Beyond data, innovative research has been supported through Horizon 2020's programmes on 'Innovative, inclusive and reflective societies', as well as through the establishment of the Knowledge Centre on Migration and Demography within the Joint Research Centre, which helps policymakers better understand integration in many areas. The Commission has also invested in a number of

⁶¹ Responding to the Council Conclusions 'Shaping Europe's digital future', <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/06/09/shaping-europe-s-digital-future-council-adopts-conclusions/>.

⁶² See: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/migrant-integration/data/database>.

⁶³ OECD/EU (2018), *Settling In 2018: Indicators of Immigrant Integration*.

⁶⁴ See the work done within the Partnership for the Inclusion of migrants and refugees under the Urban Agenda for the EU: https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/evidence-based20integration20policies20in20cities_options20report.pdf; the regional series under Eurostat portal on integration; and the project 'Data for integration' by the Joint Research Centre': https://ec.europa.eu/knowledge4policy/migration-demography/data-integration-d4i_en.

⁶⁵ FRA (2017), *EU-MIDIS II Main results*; FRA (2017), *EU-MIDIS II Muslims – Selected findings*; FRA (2018), *EU-MIDIS II Being Black in the EU*; FRA (2019) *EU-MIDIS II Migrant women – Selected findings*.

⁶⁶ FRA (2017), *FRA (2017), Together in the EU – Promoting the participation of migrants and their descendants*.

pilot projects⁶⁷ to test new practices, as well as in mapping the integration policies of EU Member States in certain areas such as labour market integration, and the education or integration of refugees.

Despite these extensive efforts a number of knowledge gaps remain that prevent effective evidence-based integration policies from being developed. While most Member States regularly monitor integration, they rarely rely on EU agreed indicators⁶⁸ and the potential for international comparison is under-used. Moreover, most regions and cities continue to face limitations in the data available. Also there is a need to further compare integration policies across EU Member States in order to facilitate mutual learning and tackle the lack of evidence on the impact of measures⁶⁹.

What do we want to achieve in this area?

- Integration policies and their impact on outcomes are better understood across time and territories.
- National authorities and other stakeholders are supported to monitor integration outcomes.
- An evidence-based debate in the field of integration is more widely present.
- The availability of data and knowledge on integration at EU, national and sub-national level is improved.

What will the Commission do to support these objectives?

- Launch a new **Eurobarometer** on integration.
- Publish **regular reports** analysing progress and highlighting areas of common challenges, based on common statistical indicators, as well as recent inspiring policy developments in the Member States.
- Explore with Member States options to develop a **joint ‘scoreboard’** of integration policies in order to support comparison across countries, identification of areas where progress is needed and exchange of good practices.
- Assess regularly research outputs and results on integration dynamics and propose policy options for policy making.

In this area, Member States are encouraged to:

- Develop or update systems for monitoring integration to identify key challenges and track progress over time.
- Improve the availability of data on integration outcomes including at regional and local levels.

6. Conclusions

Ensuring that migrants and EU citizens with a migrant background can fully participate and contribute is key to the future well-being, prosperity and cohesion of European societies. A successful integration can contribute to address many of the challenges faced by society

⁶⁷ Under Urban Innovative Actions, EaSi, AMIF, COSME, Horizon 2020 and the Structural Reform Support Programme.

⁶⁸ EMN ad hoc query on monitoring integration (Dec. 2018), https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/com_ad-hoc_query_integration_wider_dissemination.pdf.

⁶⁹ https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/RefugeeIntegrationCostBenefitAnalysis_Final.pdf.

today: the human and social cost of economic exclusion, the spread of all forms of extremist ideologies and a lack of trust in the fairness of housing or health systems. 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, drawing also on other relevant strategies and actions in the field of education, culture, employment, non-discrimination and equality. 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.

The implementation of the actions presented in the action plan will be monitored, progress will be reported and actions adapted where needed. A mid-term review of the action plan will be conducted at the end of 2024. The Commission will regularly report on the implementation of the action plan to the European Parliament and the Council. 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.