



EU file

ISSUE 138
9 MARCH 2018



The 4th European Migration Forum addressed the labour market inclusion of migrants

The 6th March 2018 saw the opening of the European Migration Forum, a platform for dialogue between civil society, institutions and authorities on the topic of integration of third-country nationals into the labour market

Held for the fourth consecutive year by the European Commission and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the 2018 Forum had, as its main theme, the challenges and opportunities involved in integrating migrants into the EU's labour markets.

With the Multiannual Financial Framework for EU finances under preparation, this year's Forum focused on current funding opportunities from EU sources to be used for migrant integration.

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos, said: "It is now time to go beyond the "crisis discourse"

about migration we hear every day, and to focus instead on how to turn migration into a real opportunity, for all of us. Now and in the long term. For those who have obtained a legal right to stay into the European Union it is essential, and even urgent, that we now focus on their integration into our societies."

EESC President, Georges Dassis, said: "The majority of migrants have fled persecution, wars and oppressive regimes. Now they are trying to build a life for themselves in Europe. They deserve a new life and that's why we must always promote solidarity and help them achieve normalcy in their lives – among other things, by integrating them into the labour market."

"Migration must be seen as an investment for the future. We sometimes tend to forget what Europe would look like without migration, and we focus on numbers instead of the advantages of an inclusive society. Migration must also be seen as a means to tackle the challenges presented by our ageing population and as a response to the demands generated by new forms of

The MEA Secretariat:

Director General
Mr Joseph Farrugia

Executive in EU & Legal Affairs
Dr Charlotte Camilleri

*Research Executive –
Economic & Social Affairs*
Ms Sharon Farrugia

SME Helpdesk Executive
Mr Anton Vella

Administrative Secretary
Ms Dorianne Azzopardi Cilia

© EU file is prepared and circulated by:
MALTA EMPLOYERS' ASSOCIATION

35/1, South Street,
Valletta VLT 1100, Malta
t: (+356) 21237585, 21222992
maltaemployers.com



work which require new skills", argued Mr Dassis.

Spanning over two days, the 6th and 7 March, the Forum gave the floor to more than 120 civil society organisations from across the European Union, as well as to representatives from local and regional authorities, Member States and EU institutions.

Their discussions touched upon many aspects of the labour market inclusion of migrants, such as the need to promote regular employment and decent work, to prevent exploitation and tackle discrimination, the importance of skills validation and development, encouraging entrepreneurship amongst migrants, and many other issues.

According to 2016 figures, the unemployment rate for migrants born outside the EU was 16.2%, as compared to 7.8% for the native-born population. The evidence suggests that the skills and qualifications of third-country migrants, in particular migrant women, are greatly underused in local labour markets across the EU.

International Women's Day 2018: Statement by the Commission

Ahead of International Women's Day, Europe is speaking out for women's rights in Europe and abroad. Read a joint statement by fourteen Commissioners: "Equality between women and men is one of the fundamental values of the European Union enshrined in our treaties. Our Union is a pioneer in tackling gender-based discrimination and we can be proud of the progress achieved: Europe is one of the safest and most equal places for women in the world. But our work is not over – the path to full equality in practice is still a long one. Women and girls still

face harassment, abuse and violence. And women are still too often prevented from breaking the glass ceiling, receiving lower pay and fewer opportunities for career and business development. We want girls and women to achieve equality in all aspects of life: access to education, equal pay for equal work, access to top positions in companies and politics as well as protection from violence...(…) Advancing women's leadership and economic empowerment is an absolute priority for us. (...) Gender equality is not just about fairness and justice in Europe – it is also a necessity to achieve sustainable peace, security, development, economic prosperity and growth around the world. Investing in the potential of women and girls is an investment in our whole society and is the responsibility of men and boys as much as women and girls."

What are the priorities of the Commission in terms of gender equality?

The Commission's work on gender equality policy is based on the "Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019", which focuses on five priority areas:

- increasing female labour-market participation and the equal economic independence of women and men;
- reducing the gender pay, earnings and pension gaps and thus fighting poverty among women;
- promoting equality between women and men in decision-making;
- combating gender-based violence and protecting and supporting victims; and
- promoting gender equality and women's rights across the world.

In 2017 the European Commission concentrated its efforts on three main areas:

Reducing the gender pay gap: the Commission presented a concrete Action plan to reduce the gender pay gap by 2019. The Action plan includes, amongst others, a call by the Commission to the European Parliament and the Member States to swiftly adopt the work-life balance proposal of April 2017. It also calls on governments and social partners to adopt concrete measures to improve gender balance in decision-making.

Violence against women: 2017 was dedicated as to Ending Violence against Women with the No Non Nein campaign. The Commission dedicated €15 million funding to NGO working in this field. The Commission extended the funding to 2018. The 2017 Annual Fundamental Rights Colloquium was dedicated to Women's Rights in Turbulent Times, addressed violence and harassment against women in our societies as well as the economic and political inequality between women and men, particularly focusing on the gender pay gap and on work-life balance.

The European Commission has also initiated a strategy that will focus on **women's participation specifically in the digital sector** to address the new challenges that the digital future brings. The strategy will look into three main areas: breaking negative stereotypes, skills and education as well as women's participation in the entrepreneurial scene of the digital sector. These focus areas are based on the upcoming study (to be published on 08/03), whose findings reiterate the issue that not only are there less women participating in the digital sector but also that this number is decreasing.

Statement by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini and Commissioner Christos Stylianides on the situation in Eastern Ghouta and elsewhere in Syria

On the 24th February 2018, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2401, which requires all parties to the Syrian conflict to immediately cease hostilities for at least 30 consecutive days throughout Syria to enable the delivery of humanitarian assistance and evacuation of the critically sick and wounded. But since then, almost no progress has been made on the ground to implement this resolution.

On the contrary, the Syrian Regime and its allies continued their military offensive in blatant disregard of the provision of the Resolution, of human suffering and of International Humanitarian Law. The mere presence of Hayat Tahrir al Sham

(HTS) in Eastern Ghouta cannot justify the continued indiscriminate shelling and bombing of the civilian population and of medical facilities, precisely what is happening in Eastern Ghouta.

A year-long siege used for the purpose of starving the population and the indiscriminate shelling of the civilian population may amount to war crimes. Those responsible will be held accountable for their deeds. We therefore fully support the UN's launch of investigations into that matter.

The fact that on 5 March a UN aid convoy was finally allowed to enter Douma, bringing health and food supplies for 27,500 people in need, is a small positive step. But at the same time, it is disappointing that once again the Syrian regime removed critical medical items from the convoy in clear violation of International Humanitarian Law. And one convoy once in a while is far from sufficient.

The list of those in need of medical evacuation from the besieged enclave has grown to more than a thousand people, including many

women and children. What we urgently need to see now is a full compliance with the ceasefire agreed in the UNSC Resolution 2401. The Russian proposal for a daily five-hour pause is simply not sufficient to allow humanitarian workers to deliver aid to the people who need it most and to evacuate those who cannot be treated on the spot. Parties to the conflict on the ground need to ensure unhindered and sustained humanitarian access to those trying to save lives.

The European Union will continue to work for the full implementation of UNSC Resolutions and for the respect of international law. We will use the UN and international fora to keep pressing for the implementation of UNSC Resolution 2401. We call on the guarantors of the ceasefire in de-escalation areas to live up to the expectations of the international community and exercise fully their responsibilities to help to stop these attacks.

