

Joint statement by the European Commission and European Social and Economic Partners

Leveraging the European Partnership for Integration to support the labour market integration of refugees, including people fleeing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and other third-country nationals

Integrating refugees and other migrants in the labour market at an early stage and at the appropriate skill level has proven to be beneficial for them and host societies alike. Under the European Partnership for Integration, the European Commission and European Social and Economic Partners have worked together closely since 2017 to create opportunities for integrating refugees and other migrants into the EU labour market. In 2020, we confirmed our objective to harness the skills and competences of migrants and refugees as well as to support sustainable labour markets, social inclusion, equal opportunities, and gender equality in order to make European societies and economies stronger¹. In parallel, the joint statement of 2020, which renewed the partnership, identified the interest of the Social and Economic Partners to explore how to extend their dialogue and future cooperation in the area of labour migration.

The basis and key asset of our Partnership is its multi-stakeholder approach, which links up partners from the European to the national, regional and local levels and extends to additional stakeholders such as public authorities, training providers, civil society and migrant organisations, amongst others. Over the past years, this approach has generated tangible results in terms of developing and disseminating good practices, building cooperation structures and putting people into jobs, including through various projects co-financed by the European Commission and implemented by Social and Economic Partners². In its policy framework for integration, the Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027, the European Commission recognises the value of multi-stakeholder partnerships involving relevant integration actors and considers it a priority to support them.

To respond to the unprecedented challenge of supporting the millions of people who have fled Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine to the EU in addition to the refugees from other parts of the world, we re-confirm our commitment to the Partnership. Whereas the immediate needs of the persons fleeing Ukraine, the majority of whom are women and children, revolve around safety and stability, integration into the labour market of those who can take up work is equally important. While beneficiaries of temporary protection in the EU have the immediate right to engage in employed and self-employed activities, they face similar practical challenges as other refugees to integrate effectively into the labour market.

Such challenges include providing adequate information to people about their rights, ensuring equal opportunities and access to the labour market; ensuring access to childcare and education, in particular in local schools; providing access to essential services in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights; housing and ensuring language and other training, as appropriate. In addition, the uncertainty over how long refugees from Ukraine will stay in the EU makes planning difficult for all involved and calls for flexible approaches.

¹ [Joint statement of September 2020](#)

² The Labour-INT project is an example of such projects (<http://www.labour-int.eu>)

Another overarching challenge is the need to assess, evaluate and validate skills and qualifications, including formal recognition of qualifications where required. Matching competences with vacancies at the right level is also very important. This is crucial given labour shortages in many sectors and professions in the EU, which is one of the reasons why the President of the European Commission proposed to make 2023 the European Year of Skills.

Refugees and other migrants bring much needed talent to the EU. As part of the Skills and Talent Package, and in line with the European Skills Agenda, the Commission will continue to work with the Social and Economic partners to roll out the EU Talent Pool and Talent Partnerships with key partner countries, with a view to improving legal pathways for third-country nationals to the EU. As part of the European Year of Skills in 2023, the Commission will promote these existing initiatives and work to maximise their impact. It will also adopt an initiative on the recognition of qualifications of third-country nationals.

In the wake of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the Commission has taken specific actions to help displaced people coming from Ukraine integrate in the EU labour market. For example, on 5 April 2022, the Commission adopted a Recommendation on the recognition of qualifications for people fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine³ and on 14 June 2022, the Commission issued guidance (Communication) for access to the labour market, vocational education and training and adult learning of people fleeing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine⁴. The guidance underlines, for instance, the importance of avoiding exploitation and undeclared work with the support of the European Labour Authority.⁵ On 10 October 2022, the Commission launched an EU Talent Pool pilot initiative that seeks to help beneficiaries of temporary protection to find employment and integrate in the EU labour market, taking into account the specific needs of the applicants⁶.

The lessons learned from the actions to support displaced persons from Ukraine should inspire our continuous labour market integration measures for all third-country nationals. With the Integration Partnership, we can make an important contribution to tackling all these challenges, which are inextricably intertwined, in particular by:

- Promoting a **multi-stakeholder approach** to labour market integration:
 - Building on the results and lessons learnt from previous joint projects, we will continue developing and disseminating good practices on labour market integration. We will also continue strengthening cooperation structures between relevant actors at the local, regional, national and European level. This includes cooperation with civil society organisations, including migrant-led organisations, and, where relevant, with the Ukrainian authorities and the diaspora⁷.
 - In particular, we will encourage further cooperation with Public Employment Services, in order to share information on training and job opportunities to

³ Commission Recommendation (EU) 2022/554 of 5 April 2022, OJ C (2022) 2319

⁴ C(2022) 4050 final

⁵ <https://www.ela.europa.eu/en/undeclared-work>

⁶ https://eures.ec.europa.eu/eu-talent-pool-pilot_en

⁷ COM(2022) 131 final stresses the importance of cooperating with the Ukrainian authorities and the diaspora on assistance to people fleeing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

refugees, for example, and with the relevant social services as well as with education and training providers.

- We will pay particular attention to promoting such activities in the Member States and regions with a high concentration of people fleeing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.
- Raising awareness and maximising synergies in the use of **EU funding** for labour market integration, in line with the Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-27⁸:
 - Several EU funds include support for the labour market integration of migrants in their objectives, such as the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), in particular. Through a call for proposals on migrant integration under the AMIF thematic facility, for example, the Commission will support projects that foster multi-stakeholder initiatives for integration into the labour market. With measures to increase the flexibility of cohesion policy funding under the Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE) and Flexible Assistance to Territories (FAST-CARE), the Commission has provided the necessary flexibility for Member States, regional and local authorities and other stakeholders to address the question of integration of displaced persons following Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine⁹.
- Contributing to making the assessment, recognition and validation of **skills and qualifications** easier and more straight-forward, in light of the 2023 European Year of Skills:
 - We will continue to make use of, improve and promote EU skills-related tools and materials. These include the EU Skills Profile Tool for third-country nationals; services under the Europass platform, such as a self-assessment tool for digital skills and the Europass E-portfolio; a report comparing the Ukrainian Qualifications Framework with the European Qualifications Framework; forthcoming new European guidelines on validation of non-formal skills and updates of the European Inventory on Validation. Finally, the European Training Foundation has created an information hub on education and work for Ukrainians in Europe¹⁰.
 - Social and Economic Partners will disseminate these tools and materials through their networks and relay feedback on their contribution to labour market integration of third-country nationals to the Commission.
- Facilitating **integration into the EU labour market and equal opportunities**:
 - We will continue our cooperation with a view to supporting the integration of third-country nationals into the labour market on sustainable terms, working with companies and other stakeholders (public employment services, training

⁸ COM(2020) 758 final

⁹ [Communication and proposal for a Regulation on FAST-CARE](#)

¹⁰ [Education and work information for Ukrainians and EU countries | ETF \(europa.eu\)](#)

providers etc.). More specifically, Social and Economic Partners will contribute to implementing the EU Talent Pool Pilot for beneficiaries of temporary protection and adequate national protection who have been granted the right to work, in order to maximise the opportunities and access to quality jobs in the EU.

- We will engage in a joint communication campaign promoting the EU Talent Pool Pilot among all stakeholders in their fields of activity. For example, employers' organisations could inform employers about the Talent Pool Pilot and encourage them to make full use of it.
 - We will also closely cooperate on the development of the future EU Talent Pool¹¹ for third-country nationals interested in coming to live and work in the EU and able to provide the skills and qualifications required by the EU's labour market.
 - We will enhance the provision of relevant information to refugees and migrants about their rights and opportunities on the EU labour market. Through their channels of cooperation, the Social and Economic Partners can also encourage those arriving in the EU to register promptly with the local Public Employment Services.
- **Following up on progress:**
 - We will meet at least twice per year at working level to take stock of the results of our cooperation in the above-mentioned areas, and at political level as appropriate.

We can only rise to the challenge of effectively supporting those seeking safety in the EU from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, as well as other wars and conflicts, with the concerted effort of all parts of society. As regards access to and integration into the labour market, the European Commission and Social and Economic Partners are committed to play our part by, amongst others, leveraging our longstanding cooperation in the European Partnership for Integration and contributing actively to fulfilling the objectives of the European Year of Skills.

¹¹ Announced in the Skills and Talent package, COM(2022) 657 final