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I

(Resolutions, recommendations and opinions)

RESOLUTIONS

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

P8_TA(2016)0297

Refugees: social inclusion and integration into the labour market

European Parliament resolution of 5 July 2016 on refugees: social inclusion and integration into the labour market (2015/2321(INI))

(2018/C 101/01)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to Article 78 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms,
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
- having regard to the Geneva Convention of 1951 and the additional protocol thereto,
- having regard to its resolution of 29 April 2015 on the latest tragedies in the Mediterranean and EU migration and asylum policies ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 10 September 2015 on migration and refugees in Europe ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to the Commission Ten Point Action Plan on Migration, presented at the Joint Foreign and Home Affairs Council held in Luxembourg on 20 April 2015,
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled 'A European Agenda on Migration' (COM(2015)0240),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 7 June 2016 entitled 'Action Plan on the integration of third country nationals' (COM(2016)0377),
- having regard to the Commission proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of highly skilled employment (COM(2016)0378),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 10 June 2016 entitled 'A new skills agenda for Europe' (COM(2016)0381),

⁽¹⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0176.

⁽²⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0317.

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- having regard to the Commission proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an EU common list of safe countries of origin for the purposes of Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection, and amending Directive 2013/32/EU (COM(2015)0452),
- having regard to Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (the Reception Directive),
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled 'EU Action Plan on Return' (COM(2015)0453),
- having regard to the Commission recommendation establishing a common 'Return Handbook' to be used by Member States' competent authorities when carrying out return-related tasks (C(2015)6250),
- having regard to the Commission communication on public procurement rules in connection with the current asylum crisis (COM(2015)0454),
- having regard to the joint communication by the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on addressing the refugee crisis in Europe: the role of EU external action (JOIN(2015)0040),
- having regard to the Commission Decision on the establishment of a European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa (C(2015)7293),
- having regard to the Commission communication on managing the refugee crisis: immediate operational, budgetary and legal measures under the European Agenda on Migration (COM(2015)0490),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 27 May 2015 entitled 'EU Action Plan against migrant smuggling (2015-2020)' (COM(2015)0285),
- having regard to the Commission communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of Regions on the European Agenda for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals,
- having regard to the Commission communication on managing the refugee crisis: state of play of the implementation of the priority actions under the European Agenda on Migration (COM(2015)0510),
- having regard to the conclusions adopted by the European Council at its meeting in June 2014, at its special meeting of 23 April 2015, at its meeting of 25 and 26 June 2015, at the informal meeting of EU heads of state or government on migration of 23 September 2015, at its meeting of 15 October 2015, and at its meetings of 17 and 18 December 2015, and of 18 and 19 February 2016,
- having regard to the conclusions adopted by the Council on safe countries of origin at its meeting of 20 July 2015, on migration at its meeting of 20 July 2015, on the future of the return policy at its meeting of 8 October 2015, on migration at its meeting of 12 October 2015, on measures to handle the refugee and migration crisis at its meeting on 9 November 2015, and on statelessness at its meeting of 4 December 2015,
- having regard to the conclusions adopted by the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on resettling through multilateral and national schemes 20 000 persons in clear need of international protection at their meeting on 20 July 2015,
- having regard to the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan of 15 October 2015,

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- having regard to the Declaration of the High-level Conference on the Eastern Mediterranean — Western Balkans Route adopted on 8 October 2015, and to the leaders' statement adopted at the meeting on refugee flows along the Western Balkan route on 25 October 2015,
- having regard to the action plan and political declaration adopted at the EU-Africa summit on migration, held in Valletta on 11 and 12 November 2015,
- having regard to Council Directive 2003/86/EC of 22 September 2003 on the right to family reunification,
- having regard to the Joint Employment Report from the Commission and the Council accompanying the communication on the Annual Growth Survey 2016,
- having regard to resolution 1994 (2014) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe,
- having regard to the work and reports of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), and in particular to their Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the European Union 2014,
- having regard to Article 33(1) and (2) of the 1984 UN Convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment,
- having regard to the work, annual reports and studies of the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), and in particular to their studies on severe forms of labour exploitation,
- having regard to the Policy Department A study on the Integration of Migrants and its Effects on the Labour Market, to the Policy Department C studies on the implementation of Article 80 TFEU, on new approaches, alternative avenues and means of access to asylum procedures for persons seeking international protection, on exploring new avenues for legislation for labour migration to the EU, on enhancing the common European asylum system and alternatives to Dublin, and on EU cooperation with third countries in the field of migration, to the Policy Departments A and D notes and papers on EU funds for migration policies and refugee integration: analysis of efficiency and best practice for the future, and to the Policy Department EXPO study on migrants in the Mediterranean: protecting human rights,
- having regard to the studies by the European Migration Network (EMN), and in particular to their study on policies, practices and data on unaccompanied minors,
- having regard to the work and reports of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees,
- having regard to the work and reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants,
- having regard to the work and reports of the International Organisation for Migration,
- having regard to the work and reports of the European Council of Refugees and Exiles,
- having regard to the Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions — European Agenda on Migration, adopted at its 115th plenary session of 3-4 December 2015,
- having regard to the Opinions of 10 December 2015 of the European Economic and Social Committee on the European Agenda on Migration and on the EU Action Plan against migrant smuggling,
- having regard to the Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 27 April 2016 on integration of refugees in the EU,

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- having regard to its resolution of 17 December 2014 on the situation in the Mediterranean and the need for a holistic EU approach to migration ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to the experience gained via the EQUAL programme and the lessons learned,
- having regard to the Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU, adopted by the Justice and Home Affairs Council in November 2004, particularly principles 3, 5 and 7,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 March 2013 on the integration of migrants, its effects on the labour market and the external dimension of social security coordination ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to the relevant Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) publications, in particular 'Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015: Settling In', 'Making Integration Work: Refugees and others in need of protection', and 'A New Profile of Migrants in the Aftermath of the Recent Economic Crisis',
- having regard to the relevant Eurofound publications, in particular 'Challenges of policy coordination for third-country nationals' and 'Approaches towards the labour market integration of refugees in the EU',
- having regard to the International Monetary Fund staff discussion note 'The Refugee Surge in Europe: Economic Challenges',
- having regard to the Asylum Information Database Annual Report 2014-2015 entitled 'Common Asylum System at a turning point: Refugees caught in Europe's solidarity crisis',
- having regard to the UNHCR's International Protection Considerations with regard to people fleeing the Syrian Arab Republic, update II of 22 October 2013,
- having regard to its resolution of 19 January 2016 on skills policies for fighting youth unemployment ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 10 September 2015 on social entrepreneurship and social innovation in combating unemployment ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 8 March 2016 on the situation of women refugees and asylum seekers in the EU ⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to the study drawn up by Parliament's Policy Department C in February 2016 on 'Female refugees and asylum seekers: the issue of integration',
- having regard to the European Tripartite Social Summit conclusions of 16 March 2016, in particular the Statement of the European Economic and Social Partners on the refugee crisis,
- having regard to the international obligations found in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, bearing in mind the fundamental right of all children to have access to free primary education, irrespective of their gender, race, or ethnic or social origin,
- having regard to its resolution of 26 November 2015 on education for children in emergency situations and protracted crises ⁽⁶⁾,

⁽¹⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2014)0105.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 36, 29.1.2016, p. 91.

⁽³⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0008.

⁽⁴⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0320.

⁽⁵⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0073.

⁽⁶⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0418.

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- having regard to Rule 52 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the opinion of the Committee on Culture and Education (A8-0204/2016),
- A. whereas the refugee crisis is first and foremost a humanitarian crisis, brought about, inter alia, by the destabilisation of states in the neighbourhood of the EU, having, as well, long-term impacts on its labour markets and civil society, requiring long-term and considered responses that serve to guarantee social cohesion at local level and the successful integration of newcomers in our societies;
- B. whereas the Geneva Convention came into being to protect European refugees after the Second World War, and whereas it defines who is a refugee and lays down a series of refugee rights, along with the obligations of states;
- C. whereas there are three types of legal status benefiting or potentially benefiting from international protection, i.e. people with refugee status, people seeking asylum and people benefiting from subsidiary protection; whereas social inclusion and labour market integration policies should be tailored to their specific needs;
- D. whereas there is a need to analyse the causes of the refugee crisis in order that effective and immediate action may be taken; whereas, furthermore, the main causes of the refugee crisis are conflicts, and whereas resolving them could drastically reduce the number of refugees, and make it possible for the remaining to return to their own countries;
- E. whereas the number of asylum seekers and refugees recorded in Europe in 2014 and 2015 is unprecedented, and is the result of the difficult humanitarian situation in certain countries neighbouring the EU; whereas better access to information through new technologies could help prevent traffickers and smugglers from flourishing;
- F. whereas the action plan and political declaration adopted at the EU-Africa summit on migration, held in Valletta on 11 and 12 November 2015, did not result in practical, decisive action;
- G. whereas refugees' integration into both society and the labour market can only be achieved if there is solidarity among, and united commitment of, all Member States and their societies;
- H. whereas the working-age population in the EU is projected to decline by 7,5 million by 2020; whereas projections on the development of labour market needs in the EU point to emerging and future shortages in specific fields;
- I. whereas professional integration is a stepping stone to social inclusion;
- J. whereas the social inclusion and integration of refugees in the host societies, and in particular in their labour markets, is a dynamic, two-way process, as well as a two-dimensional one (involving rights and duties), representing a challenge and an opportunity whereby the inclusion of refugees requires concerted but distinct responsibilities and efforts on the part of the refugees themselves as well as of the Member States, their local and, where applicable, regional administrations and host communities, and requiring as well as the involvement and support of social partners, civil society and volunteer organisations;
- K. whereas successful integration requires not only inclusion in the labour market, but also access to language courses upon arrival, and to housing, education and training, social protection and healthcare, including mental health support;
- L. whereas labour market conditions within host countries are a determining factor for the successful integration of refugees; whereas unemployment in the EU, in particular youth and long-term unemployment, is still at alarming levels, and matching supply and demand on the labour market is a persistent challenge;

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- M. whereas each refugee is an individual with his or her own personal background, knowledge, skills, qualifications, working and living experience, and needs that all deserve recognition; whereas refugees can undertake and generate economic activity that could bring positive return to the host communities;
- N. whereas, furthermore, 24,4 % of the total population in the EU live in risk of poverty and social exclusion, and almost 10 % are facing severe material deprivation;
- O. whereas third-country nationals face many difficulties in obtaining recognition of their skills and qualifications; whereas the recognition of qualifications from a third country goes hand in hand with screening of skills;
- P. whereas recognition of the training and qualifications of adult refugees and specific provisions for them to obtain academic qualifications and specific skills are essential for their entry into the labour market;
- Q. whereas granting refugees and asylum seekers effective access to the labour market is important to restoring their human dignity and self-worth, and is cost-efficient, and it also provides a responsible approach towards public finances, easing the cost borne by Member States and local authorities while also enabling them to become active fiscal contributors;
- R. whereas women and minors, both refugees and asylum seekers, have specific protection needs; whereas all social inclusion and labour market integration policies need to include a gender and child protection perspective;
- S. whereas, according to figures supplied by Europol in 2015, at least 10 000 unaccompanied children have disappeared after arriving in Europe;
- T. whereas forced displacements, conflicts, human rights violations and wars can have a severe impact on the physical and mental health of the people affected; whereas, in addition to this, female refugees and asylum seekers experience very high rates of gender-based violence;
- U. whereas a large proportion of asylum seekers who have arrived in Europe are facing subhuman and precarious conditions, and are living in camps without access to resources and services of sufficient quality to meet their basic needs;
- V. whereas Article 33(1) of the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees stipulates that 'No Contracting State shall expel or return ("*refouler*") a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion';
- W. whereas Article 3(1) and (2) of the Convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (1984) stipulate that 'No State Party shall expel, return ("*refouler*") or extradite a person to another State where there are substantial grounds for believing that he would be in danger of being subjected to torture' 'the competent authorities shall take into account all relevant considerations including, where applicable, the existence in the State concerned of a consistent pattern of gross, flagrant or mass violations of human rights';
- X. whereas discrimination, along with linguistic, educational and institutional factors, is one of the most significant barriers preventing migrants in general from fully participating in the labour market and in society ⁽¹⁾;

⁽¹⁾ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2014/518768/IPOL-EMPL_NT%282014%29518768_EN.pdf

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- Y. whereas, among the asylum seekers and refugees that arrived in the EU in 2015, half are between 18 and 34 years old, and one in four are children; whereas these children have come from conflict areas where their school attendance has been interrupted or restricted, sometimes for long periods, or from refugee camps where only a minority of them have been able to obtain any form of education or attend local schools;
- Z. whereas Directive 2003/86/EC stipulates, with regard to family reunification for refugees, that EU countries may not impose conditions relating to a minimum period of residence in the territory before refugees can be joined by their family members;
1. Stresses the need for the EU to base its immediate response to the situation on solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility, as stated in Article 80 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), and on a holistic approach that takes into account the need to improve safe and legal migration channels, and that ensures full respect for existing laws and for fundamental European rights and values; highlights that for managing the inflow of refugees and asylum seekers it is necessary to put in place immediately a permanent relocation mechanism for all Member States;
 2. Takes note of the high degree of heterogeneity and lack of clarity in the use of the term refugee in the public and political discourse; stresses the importance of clearly identifying refugees in accordance with the legal definition enshrined in the Geneva Convention of 28 July 1951, as amended by the New York Protocol of 31 January 1967, and in EU legislation, in particular the Qualifications Directive (2011/95/EU)⁽¹⁾ as defined by Article 2 (c), (d), (e), (f), (g), and the Reception Directive as defined by Article 2 (a), (b) and (c); stresses the importance of making a clear differentiation between refugee and economic migrant for the purposes of implementing the various European and international policies;
 3. Points out that a person eligible for subsidiary protection is a third country national or a stateless person who does not qualify as a refugee, but who likewise faces a real risk of suffering, torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, or a civilian facing a serious and individual threat to his or her life by reason of indiscriminate violence in situations of international or internal armed conflict (see Qualifications Directive);
 4. Stresses that significant differences exist in the times and modalities of processing requests for international protection within Member States; highlights that slow and excessively bureaucratic procedures may hinder refugees and asylum seekers' access to education and training, employment guidance and the labour market, the activation of EU and Member States' programmes, and the effective and coordinated use of funds in this field, as well as increase the refugees and asylum seekers' vulnerability to undeclared work and precarious working conditions; points to the urgent need to establish a common asylum system to improve recognition procedures while, at the same time, ensuring the highest level of safety for refugees and European citizens; recommends that the necessary measures be taken to support those Member States which, for geographical reasons, are involved more intensively in initial reception; recognises that the length of residence permit granted (especially to those with subsidiary protection) acts as a barrier to labour market integration if it is only of relatively short duration;
 5. Calls as well for effective steps to be taken outside EU territory, both to ensure that those who are entitled can reach host countries safely and with a view to managing applications for international protection and containing undefined migration flows;
 6. Highlights the fact that in order to facilitate the social inclusion and integration of refugees into the labour market, it is necessary to develop an approach, which prescribes appropriate adaptation and presupposes cooperation, and to address a range of serious and multi-faceted issues, such as: all forms of discrimination; linguistic barriers, being the first obstacles to integration; the validation of skills; diverse socio-economic, education and cultural backgrounds; housing; health needs, including psychosocial and post-trauma support; family reunification; and the significant share of vulnerable groups among refugees, in particular worrying numbers of children, including unaccompanied children, people with disabilities, elderly persons and women⁽²⁾, all of whom require responses tailored to their specific needs;

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 337, 20.12.2011, p. 9.

⁽²⁾ http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oced/social-issues-migration-health/making-integration-work-humanitarian-migrants_9789264251236-en

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7. Rejects the idea of creating special labour markets for refugees;
8. Advocates that the respective national minimum wage should also remain valid for refugees;
9. Recalls the extremely worrying situation of women in the refugee camps in Europe, and in particular their living and hygienic conditions, which are such as to warrant emergency sanitary measures; underlines that women have different healthcare needs than men because they have more exposure to multiple risks, including gender-based violence, complications in reproductive health and cultural barriers in access to health care; considers, therefore, that policies in this area cannot be gender-neutral;
10. Points to the importance of differentiating between emergency measures and measures to be taken in the medium to long term in order to cope effectively with disparate needs;
11. Reiterates the importance of recognising the gender dimension right from the start when processing applications for refugee status, and of acknowledging the needs of women who apply for international protection, and the specific social inclusion and labour market integration challenges that women face; calls for equal opportunities for men and women in all policies and procedures relating to social inclusion and labour market integration, and asylum and migration, bearing in mind that women take more often than men the responsibility for the care of children and of elderly, ill or otherwise dependent family members; recalls that provision of quality and accessible childcare and care for other dependants, as well as flexible working arrangements, are crucial examples of how to improve access to labour markets for all parents and enable their economic and social empowerment;
12. Emphasises the benefits of education on social inclusion and integration into the labour market; stresses the importance of guaranteeing all refugees, in particular girls and women, access to formal, informal and non-formal education and long-life training, combined with work experience⁽¹⁾; calls, furthermore, for robust and transparent procedures for recognising qualifications obtained abroad, outside the European Union;
13. Calls on the Member States to establish a language training system, closely linking general and vocational language training;
14. Stresses the importance of a tailor-made integration approach based on equal opportunities, with the necessary attention given to the needs and specific challenges of different target groups; emphasises, in this regard, the great demand for literacy programmes;

Challenges and opportunities

15. Believes that facilitating effective access for refugees and asylum seekers to housing, health care, education, social protection and the labour market, while guaranteeing respect for their fundamental rights and making labour markets more inclusive at local and national level, could play an important role in restoring their human dignity and self-worth, and stresses that this is also cost-efficient, as it would allow them to be self-sufficient, to gain economic independence and to contribute in a positive way to society, which is an essential step for their successful inclusion into that society, and a responsible approach towards public finances, easing the cost borne by Member States and local authorities, as it involves integrating refugees while at the same time enabling them to become active fiscal contributors, which could be considered beneficial for their individual growth, development, self-esteem, recognition in society, as well as for the society and community as a whole; points out that not all refugees arriving in the EU are able to work for reasons of health, age or other issues; recalls that the Qualifications Directive and the Reception Conditions Directive provides for the right of access to the labour market and to vocational training, both for asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection;

⁽¹⁾ See Texts adopted of 8.3.2016, P8_TA(2016)0073.

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16. Asks the Member States to work on the implementation of the country-specific recommendations set out in the framework of the European Semester;

17. Points out that early and continuous intervention is crucial to efforts to guarantee the social inclusion and integration of refugees into the labour market, and into local communities, as effectively as possible, which serves to diminish the risk of them later experiencing feelings of isolation, inadequacy and of not fitting in; recalls that early intervention measures could include early participation through volunteering, internships, mentoring and community engagement;

18. Acknowledges the importance of the work of civil society and volunteer organisations providing support for the empowerment, integration and self-resilience of all asylum seekers and refugees, before and during their participation in the labour market; stresses that necessary measures should be taken to properly train those who are voluntarily engaging in the integration and education of refugees; notes the importance of establishing and building social and community networks among, and with, refugee and migrant communities in order to facilitate their access to the labour market;

19. Highlights the fact that labour market conditions within host countries is one of the determining factors when it comes to ensuring sustainable and successful integration of refugees; is aware of the fact that refugees are heterogenic in terms of age, skills and knowledge; stresses that unemployment in the EU, in particular youth and long-term unemployment, is still at alarming levels in some countries and regions, and that the Commission and the Member States should continue to prioritise policies and investments aimed at providing quality employment for the whole of society, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable people, and on economic growth; recalls that actions to create quality employment, promote active labour markets and tackle unemployment must make sense in the local context, otherwise they will not be effective;

20. Further points to the major disparities in social and economic circumstances within the EU; stresses the importance of taking these into account when refugees are relocated, in order to maximise their labour-market integration prospects, as they too often are first relocated to places where they cannot be integrated into the labour market;

21. Calls on the Member States to ensure that welcoming refugees goes hand-in-hand with a solid integration policy, such as language and orientation courses, that provide comprehensive insights into fundamental EU rights and values and social inclusiveness; emphasises that language skill acquisition plays an essential role in the successful integration of refugees, in particular into the labour market; calls on the Member States to require and provide refugees, who are likely to be granted a permit and find a job in the host country, with both general and work-related comprehensive language courses; takes the view that language learning should already be provided in hot spots and reception centres;

22. Stresses the need for an early, fair, transparent and free-of-charge assessment of refugees' and asylum seekers' formal and non-formal skills, as well as recognition and validation of their qualifications, with a view to facilitating their access to active labour market policies, in particular through training and employment guidance, including measures guaranteeing their access to the labour market and to non-discriminatory working conditions, and tailored measures allowing them to make full use of their potential, and to match labour supply and demand in the host countries; stresses, in this regard, the importance of strengthening the role of the European Qualifications Framework, and of promptly introducing more effective arrangements for recognising and validating qualifications, experience and skills; points out that the EU citizenry as a whole would benefit from such effective arrangements; stresses, however, that this assessment should on no account amount to a process of discrimination in relation to asylum seekers' qualifications, and skills and potential employability should not be a criterion for decisions on asylum applications; stresses that the limited resources available should be spent carefully on the timely handling of asylum procedures and on the speedy and effective integration of refugees;

23. Highlights the fact that public spending, covering extraordinary investments in social inclusion and labour-market integration measures and programmes, are likely to have a positive effect on national GDPs in the short term, while medium- or long-term impacts on public finances will depend on the effectiveness of these measures;

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24. Welcomes, in this context, the Commission's decision to take into account the budgetary impact of the exceptional inflow of refugees related to extraordinary expenditures for Member States under the preventive and corrective arm of the Stability and Growth Pact when assessing possible temporary deviations from the SGP requirements ⁽¹⁾;

25. Highlights the fact that the main EU funds available for social inclusion and integration into the labour market, in particular the European Social Fund (ESF), the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Fund for Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), have different focuses, target groups and management modes at Member State level; stresses that these funds support targeted initiatives to improve language and professional skills, to promote access to services and to the labour market, and to support awareness campaigns targeting both host communities and migrants; recalls the importance of using integration funds for real integration measures, and reminds the Member States of the importance of the partnership principle in order to ensure effective and more coordinated use of these funds; points out, however, that the objective of labour-market integration of refugees must be reflected in greater importance being given to the European Social Fund;

26. Stresses, as these funds are insufficient, that increased public investment and additional resources are required in order to provide, as a matter of priority, local authorities, social partners, social and economic actors, civil society and volunteer organisations with direct financial support for measures aimed at facilitating swift integration of refugees and asylum seekers into society and the labour market, not least in order to forestall social tensions, in particular in those areas where unemployment is highest;

27. Acknowledges the Commission's efforts to simplify and increase synergies among the available funding instruments; stresses, however, the need to further develop accessibility, complementary and transparency of these funds with a view to strengthening Member States' reception and integration capacities of refugees and asylum seekers;

28. Emphasises, in that connection, that the AMIF has used up all its resources; urges, therefore, that the fund be retained when the MFF is revised;

29. Highlights the fact that the principles of equal treatment, non-discrimination, equal opportunities and gender equality should always be ensured when designing and implementing social inclusion and integration policies and measures;

30. Further highlights that integration and inclusion measures aimed at refugees and asylum seekers should not draw on financial resources destined for programmes targeting other disadvantaged groups, but necessarily require additional social investments reflecting the need for additional measures; stresses, moreover, that the EU funds available should be spent in a more efficient and effective manner; calls on the Commission to take into account labour market and social situation data when designing such integration policies in order to ensure that the integration process does not worsen the social and economic situation in host regions;

31. Calls, therefore, on the Commission to consider introducing a minimum share of 25 % of the cohesion policy budget for the ESF Fund in the revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), in order to ensure adequate resources for labour market integration in the long term; calls on the Council, in the context of the forthcoming revision of the MFF, to adjust the ceilings for total allocations and for the individual headings to take account of the internal and external challenges which have arisen in connection with the refugee crisis, and to bring them into line with the needs of the Member States facing greatest integration challenge ⁽²⁾;

32. Points out that in order to ensure an expedient allocation within the scope of the ESF, Member States should, where needed, adjust related national rules in order to ensure that asylum seekers are treated equally with EU and third-country nationals having access to the labour market;

⁽¹⁾ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-6067_en.htm

⁽²⁾ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20131118IPR25534/MEPs-approve-new-cohesion-policy-%E2%82%AC325bn-to-invest-in-Europe's-regions>

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Making integration work

33. Stresses the need for strict correlation between all the legislative acts forming the EU Agenda on Migration ⁽¹⁾ in order to ensure good management of refugees and migrants;

34. Notes that the participation of all actors involved in society is crucial, and suggests, therefore that, while respecting the competences of Member States on integration measures, the exchange of best practice in this field should be strengthened; underlines that integration measures for all legally-residing third-country nationals should promote inclusion rather than isolation; notes that local and regional authorities, including cities, have a key role to play in integration processes;

35. Is firmly convinced that integrating refugees into the labour market will be difficult without active, large-scale support from microenterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises in the EU; takes the view that appropriate authorities in the Member States should provide SMEs with comprehensive, tailored support and advice in the context of the integration of refugees into the labour market;

36. Supports the Commission's efforts in updating the European Agenda on Migration, in particular by revising the Dublin III Regulation in order to improve solidarity, responsibility-sharing and the harmonisation of protection standards among Member States; underlines the positive impact that mobility of refugees would have on addressing labour needs and shortages, as well as on refugees' inclusion into the labour market, including aspects such as encouraging Member States to allow for family reunification; stresses that further efforts are necessary to create a truly uniform Common European Asylum System, and a comprehensive and sustainable legal migration policy in the EU that meets labour market demands in terms of skills, in which social inclusion and active integration policies play a central role;

37. Deplores the fact that the Commission had to adopt 40 infringement decisions against many Member States for having failed to implement key policies of the Common European Asylum System, including letters of formal notice to 19 Member States for not having communicated measures for the transposition of the Reception Conditions Directive, which lays down essential standards on matters such as access to employment, vocational training, schooling and education of minors, food, housing, healthcare, medical and psychological care and provisions for disadvantaged persons; firmly believes that the Commission should do more to ensure that existing rules are fully and effectively implemented; urges the Member States to rectify this situation, in compliance with human rights norms and with the European principles of solidarity, fair share of responsibility and sincere cooperation, as enshrined in the Treaties;

38. Notes President Juncker's statement ⁽²⁾ in the State of the Union 2015 address affirming his support for granting asylum seekers access to the labour market while their applications are being processed; regrets, however, the lack of resolve shown by the Commission in implementing the decisions taken; is concerned at the decision taken by some Member States to close their internal borders or introduce temporary border controls, jeopardising freedom of movement within the Schengen area;

39. Regrets the fact that the September 2015 agreement on sharing refugees among the Member States is not being implemented satisfactorily; stresses that the quotas for receiving refugees are not being met in the majority of the Member States; urges the Commission and Member States to implement the agreements as swiftly as possible, and to speed up the processes of receiving and resettling refugees;

40. Points out that a lengthy processing of international protection applications, and a failed registration of asylum seekers at their arrival, not only impedes timely and legal access of refugees and asylum seekers to the labour market, but also generates conditions for the development of undeclared work practices and all forms of exploitation; stresses the need to support those Member States, which are in the front line in managing registrations of asylum seekers;

⁽¹⁾ COM(2015)0240.

⁽²⁾ <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?ref=I107934>

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41. Stresses that access to justice and protection should be ensured to all victims of exploitation and discrimination; highlights the crucial work done by social partners, civil society, local authorities, economic and social actors and volunteer organisations in reaching out to these workers, and in providing them with information, in particular about their rights and duties and the protection to which they are entitled, and with the support they need, also taking into account the possible temporary nature of the refugees' stay;

42. Highlights the importance of avoiding the formation of ghettos in order to secure the effective integration of refugees into society;

43. Welcomes the establishment of a 'Skills Profile Tool' for third-country nationals in the framework of the Commission's 'New skills agenda for Europe', aimed at strengthening early identification and documentation of the skills and qualifications of third-country nationals, introducing a guide on best practices to support labour market integration in Member States and improving online language learning for newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers through the Erasmus + online language courses;

44. Welcomes the Commission's 'Action Plan on the integration of third country nationals', addressing pre-departure and pre-arrival measures, education, employment and vocational training, access to basic services, active participation and social inclusion;

Recommendations and best practices

45. Calls on the Member States to ensure swift and full labour-market integration and social inclusion of refugees, in accordance with the principle of equal treatment, the national labour market situation and EU and national legislation, and to inform them about, and grant them access to, public services, in particular access to housing, healthcare and social protection, integration courses, language-learning modules and other educational and training measures;

46. Calls on the Commission to consider a targeted revision of the Reception Conditions Directive in order to ensure that applicants of international protection have access to the labour market as soon as possible after their applications were lodged; urges the Commission to promote upward convergence of social protection standards and a swift delivery of work permits in the Member States;

47. Calls on the Commission to intensify its efforts to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers are granted effective access to the labour market, in particular by verifying that Member States do not impose too restrictive conditions for access to employment, which would render the access to employment unduly difficult; calls, furthermore, on the Member States to cut red tape in order to make it easier for employable persons to enter the labour market; points out that such actions would be both conducive to the integration of refugees and, more generally, to the benefit of EU citizens;

48. Encourages the Member States to shorten the processing time of applications for international protection, with due regard for the rights of the individuals concerned and without compromising the quality of the decision making, to assess levels of education and qualifications at initial reception facilities and, thus, to extend, on a more targeted basis, early intervention measures such as language training, skills assessment and civic integration courses, including courses on European fundamental rights, values and culture, in particular to those asylum seekers who have good prospects of being granted international protection, and urges that there be equal access to these measures; urges the Commission to support Member States with specific and effective measures that help streamline the processing of applications;

49. Calls on the Member States to ensure early, easy and equal access for refugees and asylum seekers to training, including internships and apprenticeships, in order to ensure rapid, effective and full integration into our societies and the labour market, including by equipping them with the necessary skills to build a new future on their return; stresses that this should be done in the form of initiatives taken jointly with the private sector, trade unions and civil society; calls, furthermore, on the Member States to recognise and validate refugees' existing skills, and formal and non-formal competences, talents and know-how, on an individual basis; recalls that the first barrier that refugees have to overcome is language; recommends, therefore, effective measures that enable them not only to learn and understand the language of the host country, but also to promote a process of mutual familiarisation between different cultures in order to avoid the spread of xenophobic and racist sentiments;

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50. Calls for a DG EMPL task force to be set up at the Commission in order to devise, as quickly as possible, pan-European standards for soft skills, as well as methods for cataloguing them;

51. Welcomes solutions providing multilingual information on opportunities involving formal and non-formal education, vocational training, work placement and volunteering for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers; calls, therefore, for such services to be extended;

52. Highlights that innovative instruments based on new media, such as social media and apps, could play a pivotal role in facilitating access to services, as well as exchanges of information, regarding refugees' registration, skills assessment, job-searches and language training, as well as in providing direct assistance to people in need; further encourages Member States to set up dedicated platforms and multilingual internet portals aimed at providing concise and easily accessible information about recognition possibilities, existing integration programmes and lists of the institutions responsible, recalling that every EU and EEA Member State has a designated National Academic Recognition Information Centre, which provides a way to compare academic qualifications; encourages the Member States, in this context, to promote this service;

53. Draws attention to the range of training possibilities and models available in the Member States and, in particular, to the combined vocational education and training model, which is unknown or virtually unknown in some Member States and to refugees and asylum seekers, but which can make a major contribution to the integration of refugees into the labour market and society by smoothing the transition from education and training to employment, as a result of which workers can also be trained in skilled professions in which there is a shortage of new entrants;

54. Calls on the Commission to propose guidelines on how refugees' existing qualifications and skills can be recognised; points out, in this connection, that, in many instances, training, and the process of acquiring qualifications in refugees' countries of origin, are not up to European standards; suggests that the Commission draw up recommendations enabling Member States to identify refugees' skills, competences, talents and know-how more easily, more quickly and more effectively; points, in this connection, to the differences between labour markets in the Member States, and to their differing needs, and hopes that, by taking this into account, manpower requirements in some areas can be met more speedily, more easily and more efficiently and that, at the same time, refugees are integrated faster into the labour market;

55. Calls on the Commission to consider a revision of the Blue Card Directive;

56. Stresses the need for the Commission and the Member States to step up their efforts to combat all forms of discrimination, xenophobia and racism, including by raising awareness of anti-discrimination laws, by supporting local authorities, civil society organisations, social partners and National Equality Bodies in their work, and by stepping up their communication efforts vis-à-vis the media and citizens in the EU to combat any disinformation or xenophobia, which are contrary to fundamental European values, all of which efforts will greatly assist refugees' social acceptance and inclusion; encourages Member States to use funding from the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme to provide training on diversity, and to educate and inform refugees and migrants entering the labour market of their legal rights as workers, helping them avoid falling victim to exploitative practices or employers; stresses that multiple discrimination should be taken into account throughout all migration and integration policies;

57. Welcomes the joint statement of 16 March 2016 on the refugee crisis issued by the social partners participating in the Tripartite Social Summit, in which they underline their commitment and willingness to work with governments and other stakeholders to design and develop policies to support inclusion; is of the opinion that the social partners and civil society organisation are irreplaceable intermediaries that have a major role to play in the inclusion of refugees in the labour market and in society as a whole; encourages the Commission to enhance the dialogue with social partners, based on a balanced representation of interests, with a view to identifying labour market and employment opportunities for refugees;

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58. Calls on the Member States to learn from and facilitate the sharing of the experience and practices accumulated at city level to promote inclusive labour markets for all residents, including beneficiaries of international protection, and to involve cities and local authorities in the design and implementation of social and economic inclusion policies; takes the view that a more effective partnership is needed between the different levels of government, and that EU and national initiatives must complement and strengthen city actions, targeting the real needs of our citizens; believes that Member State good practices — in effective coordination with, and involving, cities — should be acknowledged and given visibility;

59. Considers it necessary that adequate training on employment legislation and non-discrimination is provided to refugees as well as to authorities, in order to ensure that refugees are not exploited by means of undeclared work practices and other forms of severe labour exploitation, or that they suffer discrimination in the workplace;

60. Calls on the Commission to provide financial support to transnational schemes ensuring the transferability and adaptability of good practices — such as the peer-to-peer mentoring and coaching projects involving all levels of governance and multiple stakeholders, designed and implemented by different stakeholders at EU level — and to ensure their effective implementation on the ground;

61. Calls on Member States to implement the Framework Decision on Combatting Racism and Xenophobia and the new Victims of Crime Directive, as well as to ensure the timely investigation and prosecution of any incitement to violence, including gender-based violence, against migrants and asylum seekers, irrespective of their residence status;

62. Highlights increasing levels of hate speech, anti-migrant sentiments and xenophobic violence on the part of both institutions and individuals;

63. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to intensify diplomatic relations, and to take all necessary economic and social measures, to allow the stabilisation of the countries of origin of refugees so that they can remain in their own countries or return to them;

64. Calls for monies to be redeployed as quickly as possible within the ESF, the AMIF, the ERDF and the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) so that those Member States bearing the brunt of the refugee crisis are given more effective support;

Culture, education and sport

65. Stresses the urgent need to ensure that unaccompanied minors receive particular protection from exploitation at work, violence and trafficking; underlines the need for mentors and specific measures for girls in particular, who are often more vulnerable and exposed to various forms of exploitation, trafficking and sexual abuse, and are more likely to be deprived of educational opportunities;

66. Calls on the Commission to increase the profile of culture, education and training in those operational measures undertaken as part of the European Agenda on Migration; invites the Commission to adopt a specific policy on intercultural dialogue;

67. Calls for the EU and the Member States to give priority to integration through early targeted measures on education, training, culture and sport, as well as to the challenges faced by host societies in guaranteeing, in particular, children's right to education, regardless of their refugee status, as set out in Article 22 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, thus giving priority to the best interests of the child;

68. Insists on the need for an exhaustive analysis, through studies, research and statistics, on the basis of which the best suggestions for policy initiatives and action can be made with a view to ascertaining what the education strategy should be for refugees, specifically as regards adult learning, in light of their current qualifications;

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69. Stresses the crucial role of free public education, culture, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, non-formal and informal education, lifelong learning, and youth and sports policy in fostering the integration and social inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in Europe, as well as the understanding and solidarity of the host countries in combating racism, xenophobia and extremism, and in contributing to building more cohesive and inclusive societies based on cultural diversity, the promotion of common European values and the protection of fundamental rights; underlines the need to ensure cultural and linguistic mediation while refugees and asylum seekers are developing knowledge of the host country's language and cultural and social values;

70. Underlines the important role of sport as an instrument for fostering social and intercultural dialogue by promoting the establishment of positive links between the local population and refugees and asylum seekers, and calls on the European institutions and the Member States to implement programmes aimed at the social integration of refugees through joint cultural or sporting activities; supports, therefore, the existing initiatives of sports organisations, and encourages the exchange of best practices between different entities engaged in sports activities aimed at the social integration of refugees;

71. Deeply regrets the current disappearance of cultural networks owing to the new orientation of Creative Europe;

72. Emphasises the need for effective procedures to enable a smooth transition between the educational facilities available in refugee camps and the educational systems of the Member States in which they are located;

73. Insists on the need for Member States to facilitate the enrolment of refugee students at all educational levels, and calls for greater efforts to be made to distribute pupils and place them effectively in national school systems;

74. Calls on the EU and the Member States to establish 'education corridors' by promoting agreements with European universities and the Mediterranean Universities Union (UNIMED) to host refugee students coming from conflict areas, in order to facilitate their access and to promote peer support and volunteering; welcomes the initiatives adopted in this regard by a number of European universities and their partnerships;

75. Welcomes the European and national programmes, and the private initiatives launched by non-profit institutions, providing assistance to migrant academics in science and other professional areas, and advocates their development and support;

76. Calls on the Member States, in order to ensure that integration begins immediately, to guarantee solutions for practice-oriented, understandable preparatory educational information in several languages;

77. Calls on the Member States to provide targeted support to refugee and asylum-seeking children and young people as they enter the school system, such as through intensive language courses and general induction programmes, including pedagogical support, to allow them to participate in mainstream classes as soon as possible; stresses the need to respond to the distinct needs and vulnerabilities of specific groups, in particular unaccompanied minors and adults without basic education;

78. Reminds the EU and the Member States of their duty to ensure special protection for minors, including refugee children, in emergency situations, in line with international provisions, and, in particular, to guarantee their access to schools and educational facilities; welcomes the target of 4 % funding for education of the EU's overall humanitarian aid budget for 2016, and calls on the Commission and the Member States to continue to advocate, at international level, an increase in funding for education in emergencies within existing aid programmes, in view of the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May 2016;

79. Recommends that supplementary language classes be provided to refugee children in their home-country languages;

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80. Stresses the importance of launching educational support actions, in particular with a view to providing suitable facilities in EU hotspots and hubs, that underpin the efforts of humanitarian organisations and NGOs that have already begun to organise educational and other activities in the camps, and of providing incentives and support for the development of formal educational structures in refugee camps, including those located in third countries;

81. Welcomes the new calls for proposals dedicated to cultural, educational, sports and youth mobility programmes and projects aimed at intercultural dialogue, cultural and social inclusion and integration under Creative Europe and Erasmus+; stresses the need to break down obstacles and existing barriers to the application of projects aimed at the integration of refugees and to facilitate access to the programmes for all;

82. Asks the Member States to promote initiatives to ensure greater cooperation, policy coherence and dialogue among public authorities, appropriate NGOs, social partners, civil society organisations and refugee communities in order to enhance mutual knowledge and understanding and to evaluate further potential initiatives to ensure equal access to high-quality education, thus integrating migrants and refugees into a positive learning environment;

83. Stresses the essential role of teachers in integrating refugee and migrant children and young people into the education system, and emphasises the need for specialised teaching staff and advanced training for teachers to qualify them; calls, in this context, for the EU and the Member States to consider establishing cooperation channels for teachers so that they can share their experiences, exchange best practices and receive peer support;

84. Calls on the Member States to help migrant teachers and professors find teaching jobs, with a view both to improve their situation and to put their language and teaching skills and experience to good use in the school systems;

85. Supports the idea of setting up helpdesks for teachers that offer timely support in handling various types of diversity in the classroom, and in promoting intercultural dialogue and guidance when they are confronted with conflicts or students at risk of being radicalised; calls, moreover, on the Member States to extend opportunities of political education, and to provide appropriate further training opportunities and educational materials, as a means of clarifying why people flee and of combating extremism;

86. Stresses the importance of schools in providing counselling, and linguistic and cultural mediation, including as regards democratic values through civic education and active citizenship programmes, and playing a key role in accelerating and ensuring the social and cultural inclusion and integration not only of the students, but also of their families;

87. Welcomes the Council's decision to dedicate specific actions in the 2015-2018 Work Plan for Culture on the role of culture, the arts and intercultural dialogue in the integration of migrants, and to take stock of existing good practices in the Member States;

88. Stresses that the use of the arts as an integration tool should be promoted in a better way, and that the participation of refugees in arts activities should be facilitated and enhanced;

89. Welcomes the new Expert Working Group on intercultural dialogue and integration of migrants and refugees through arts and dialogue⁽¹⁾ established by the Commission, which is expected to publish a handbook of good practices by the end of 2017;

⁽¹⁾ <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14444-2015-INIT/en/pdf>

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90. Emphasises the importance of promoting and further developing educational apps, videos and exercises, as well as learning platforms for refugees, in order to facilitate and complement their education and training;

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91. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.
