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EU

For a Europe of solidarity and equality

The European Parliament can play an important role in shaping an EU policy that strives towards an **inclusive society for all**.

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Did you know that...



51% of the people who **sought protection** in Europe between 2015 and 2017 fled from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia and Eritrea,¹ countries in which **armed conflict and severe human rights violations** are a daily reality. Many of them will receive protection and stay in Europe.

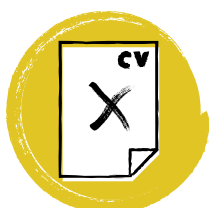


Understanding and adjusting to the way of living in a new country is a challenge. It requires, on the one hand, individual motivation and commitment. On the other hand, **support and openness from the receiving society is essential.**



People with a migration background face significant challenges to keeping a **dignified standard of living** in the EU:

- **48.4%** of non-EU-citizen, working-aged adults living in the EU are at **risk of poverty**.
- **24.5%** of migrants born outside of the EU are likely to live in **overcrowded housing**.²
- The **average unemployment rate** among migrants born outside the EU is **13.4%**.³



People with a migration background **continue to face widespread discrimination** across the EU and in all areas of life – most often when seeking employment.⁴

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Many EU citizens, together with newcomers, work every day to **build inclusive communities** where everyone can strive and make a positive contribution to society. The EU and its Member States should leverage this experience and work toward an EU that leaves no one behind, true to its values of **solidarity and equality**.



Solidarity and equality

are fundamental values for an inclusive society

Solidarity and equality are among the fundamental values upon which the European Union (EU) is founded. These values are the necessary ingredients for an inclusive society. Solidarity implies that the stronger members of society should **help the weakest**. Equality implies that there is **no room for discrimination** and that we strive toward a society in which everyone has equal opportunities.



Racism and xenophobia

on the rise

In recent years, the discourse around migration in Europe has been increasingly dominated by racist and xenophobic rhetoric. Several political forces have systematically linked migration to security issues, presenting people with migration backgrounds as a threat to European welfare and even identity. This has fed a sense of fear and anti-migration sentiment among the local population across Europe, even in countries with very low numbers of migrants.



Higher risk of exclusion

for people with migrant backgrounds

In this context, it is not surprising that people with migration backgrounds in Europe generally face **higher obstacles** than EU citizens to providing for their basic needs, such as decent housing and income-generating activities. The little statistical data available on these issues shows that **48.4%** of non-EU-citizens between 20- and 64-years old living in the EU **are at risk of poverty**. Also, almost a quarter of the migrants born outside of the EU live in **overcrowded housing**, and the unemployment rate among people born outside the EU (13,4%) is high.

The causes for this are manifold. The legal status one has at arrival in Europe can impact future integration possibilities: did someone arrive safe and legally or did the person have to survive a dangerous trip that left physical or mental scars? Did the person immediately have a residence and working permit or did he or she have to wait a long time in the uncertainty of a procedure, putting his or her life on hold for months or even years?

Discrimination is undoubtedly an important obstacle to migrant inclusion. In a study conducted by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, 4 out of 10 respondents (38%) felt discriminated against in the previous five years because of their **ethnic or immigrant background** in one or more areas of daily life, including when looking for a job or a house.



Lack of political will

to create social inclusion

It is important to acknowledge that building **inclusive societies** is a challenge as such. Several European countries struggle with high unemployment rates and housing crises affecting their own citizens.

It is also true that working toward the inclusion of newcomers requires both an effort by a **society to open itself** to other ways of living, and investments to provide the accompaniment necessary for newcomers to learn the language, find a house or find a job.

Around Europe we see few political forces ready to take up these challenges. In such a context, the values of solidarity and equality are often seen as only applicable to 'our own people'. They become a way to foster exclusion instead of inclusion.

Evidence of this trend can be seen in policies adopted by some Member States which deliberately force migrants, including asylum-seekers, into isolation and even destitution. One example is a number of changes to **Italian legislation** on reception in the fall of 2018, which limited the reception of asylum seekers to collective reception centres, as opposed to small-scale reception facilities that had in the past proven to be more effective in fostering social inclusion and integration. A similar process happened in **Belgium**, where small-scale reception has in recent years been reserved to asylum seekers of nationalities with a 'high chance to obtain a protection status'. This discriminatory practice arbitrarily deprives some asylum seekers of better chances at integration. In **France**, although asylum seekers are theoretically

allowed by law to work six months after applying for asylum, it is in fact extremely difficult for asylum seekers to access the labour market because of the cumbersome procedures to obtain a working permit. They also face difficulties in accessing vocational training, since admission to training requires a working permit as well.



Need to promote

inclusive community building

What an exclusive discourse forgets is that **migration and diversity bring talents, competencies and new ideas**, which are enriching and can positively contribute to the development of a society. Complying with the values of solidarity and equality does not mean limiting these values to citizens alone but striving toward the **inclusion of all**. This will ultimately benefit society as a whole.

The experience of JRS shows that, contrary to the visible anti-migration discourse, there is widespread support across Europe for the inclusion of migrants and refugees in our societies. Many EU citizens, together with newcomers, work every day to **build inclusive communities**. Although the responsibility to welcome, protect and **facilitate the integration** of migrants and refugees lies in the first place with authorities, **citizens' involvement** is a crucial element to work toward social inclusion, create understanding among different communities and **effectively combat racism and xenophobia** to the benefit of society as a whole.

The European Parliament can play a crucial role

in shaping an EU that is true to its values and strives to build inclusion for all. JRS Europe's electoral support goes to all political forces that commit to work toward the inclusion of migrants and refugees, and in particular those who commit to:

Leverage existing experiences and best practices at community level when adopting policies and frameworks for social inclusion, countering racism and xenophobia and promoting integration.

Foster direct **dialogue** and **cooperation** between authorities and citizens' initiatives.

Encourage actions that mainstream the integration of migrants within **broader policies on social inclusion** by prioritising the funding of projects with **mixed target groups**, including both migrants and other local vulnerable groups.

Encourage national governments to **invest in local, small-scale, community building initiatives**, by giving priority to the financing of such projects within the relevant European funds.

Simplify the existing EU funding channels or create new specific ones to make it possible for small scale initiatives to apply and obtain funding.

Promote **policies aimed at fostering inclusion** such as the use of inclusive, small-scale reception facilities for asylum seekers, the creation of accessible language and vocational training, and the elimination of all legal and administrative barriers to employment access.

¹ Eurostat, Asylum and first-time asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex Annual aggregated data (rounded), http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_asyappctzm&lang=en [last accessed on 17/12/2018]

² Eurostat, Migrant integration 2017 edition, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/8787947/KS-05-17-100-EN-N.pdf/f6c45af2-6c4f-4ca0-b547-d25e6ef9c359> [last accessed 17/12/2018]

³ Eurostat, Unemployment rate by sex, age and country of birth, http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsa_urgacob&lang=en [last accessed 17/12/2018]

⁴ EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey Main results, 2017, https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2017-eu-midis-ii-main-results_en.pdf [last accessed 17/12/2018]

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