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Mid-term review of the Commission Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027

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State of play on the implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum

{COM(2025) 319 final}

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Introduction

The **Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027**[1] ('the Action Plan'), adopted in November 2020, is one of the first initiatives taken by the Commission to implement the 2020 Communication on the **Pact on Migration and Asylum**[2] ('the Pact'). The Pact emphasises that a successful integration and inclusion policy is an essential part of a well-managed and effective migration and asylum policy, contributing to reducing the risks of unauthorised movements and to the EU's social cohesion. By helping legally residing migrants participate in the labour market at a time of increasing labour and skills shortages, it is also relevant for the EU's competitiveness: as highlighted by the 2024 Draghi report[3], an orderly and well-managed labour migration is key for our competitiveness, and to tackle skills and labour gaps. With **more than 27 million non-EU nationals regularly living and working in the EU** in 2023, and around an additional **3,5 million new residence permits delivered to migrants every year** on average since 2021[4], Member States face significant pressure on their respective national systems, notably in the education and the housing sectors. Against this background, swift and successful integration is essential, to ensure the functioning of national systems, to uphold social cohesion and to meet the needs of dynamic and specialised economies. In this context, the Action Plan envisions concrete actions across a number of key areas of integration to support Member States and other relevant stakeholders in overcoming integration-related challenges. The Action Plan builds on the experiences gathered with the implementation of the 2016 Commission Action Plan on the Integration of third-country nationals[5] and takes a broadened focus to also cover EU citizens with migrant background[6].

The objective of this mid-term review ('the review') is to provide an overview of the implementation status of the Action Plan, identify remaining challenges and the way forward in implementing the measures of the Action Plan until 2027.[7] This review, which delivers on the commitment taken by the Commission in the Action Plan, also aims to inform on the status of the use of EU funds on integration, especially the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund ('AMIF'), in order to identify current shortcomings, showcase effective practices, and encourage Member States to further explore synergies among various EU funds to improve the integration of third-country nationals and EU citizens with a migrant background *(see section 7)*.

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[1] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 COM(2020) 758 final: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/AUTO/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0758.

[2] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a New Pact on Migration and Asylum, COM(2020) 609 final: EUR-Lex - 52020DC0609 - EN - EUR-Lex.

[3] The future of European competitiveness: https://commission.europa.eu/topics/strengthening-european-competitiveness/eu-competitiveness-looking-ahead_en#paragraph_47059.

[4] Statistics on migration to Europe: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/statistics-migration-europe_en.

[5] Communication from the Commission and the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Action Plan on the integration of third country nationals, COM/2016/0377 final, available at https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52016DC0377.

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

[7] For a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of each action and initiative, see the Action Plan progress tracker: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/migrant-integration/migrant-integration-hub/progress-tracker-action-plan-integration-and-inclusion-2021-2027_en.

To conduct this review, the Commission consulted the Member States and relevant stakeholders[8]. Their views fed in the assessment of the status of the implementation of the Action Plan, as well as the emerging challenges and needs. The Commission also considered developments in the internal and geopolitical context since 2021, along with new global challenges, and their impact on integration policies (e.g. the growing housing crisis). **Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine** also had significant implications for integration policies. The arrival of over 4 million beneficiaries of temporary protection led the Commission and the Member States to implement several specific actions[9] and innovative practices[10] to facilitate their integration and guarantee access to education, employment, health, and housing in line with the **Temporary Protection Directive**[11]. According to some of the stakeholders consulted, the EU and Member States should further replicate the good practices related to the inclusion of displaced people from Ukraine to other migrants.

The legislative acts adopted as part of the **Pact on Migration and Asylum** in 2024 contain provisions relating to the integration of applicants for and beneficiaries of international protection. These cover issues such as access to and integration in the labour market, access to education, access to wider integration measures and healthcare, as well as accommodation and housing. Notably, the revised **Reception Conditions Directive**[12] reinforces provisions on minimum standards of assistance and reception for asylum applicants by Member States and promotes early integration. Under the **Qualification Regulation**[13], the rights and obligations of beneficiaries of international protection in terms of employment, social benefits, healthcare, education, integration, etc. are clarified and strengthened. More broadly, effective and sustainable integration and related economic inclusion helps to reduce congestions of national reception systems and would further contribute to reduce drivers of secondary movement. Some of the associated implementation measures are set out in the **Common implementation plan**[14] which sets out key milestones for Member States to prepare for the full application of the Pact. In this context, this review aims to provide insights and tools to assist Member States in preparing and refining their National Strategies, ensuring alignment with the objectives of the Pact and identifying successful practices.

[8] The Commission consulted Member States through the European Integration Network (EIN), the members the Urban Agenda Inclusion Partnership, the European Partnership for Integration with social and economic partners, the Migrant Integration Hub country correspondents, and other stakeholders involved in the consultations for the adoption of the Action Plan in 2020 including civil society organisations. A survey was also published on the migrant integration hub (former European Web Site on Integration) and open for contributions from the general public. The survey gathered 30 replies from civil societies, international organisations and local and regional authorities.

[9] See an overview of actions to welcome displaced persons from Ukraine: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/migration-management/migration-management-welcoming-refugees-ukraine_en.

[10] See for instance the Safe Homes initiative: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/safe-and-suitable-homes-people-fleeing-war-ukraine-2022-07-06_en, the Talent Pool pilot: https://eures.europa.eu/eu-talent-pool-pilot_en.

[11] Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof, OJ L 212, 7.8.2001, p. 12, available at https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2001/55/oj.

[12] Directive (EU) 2024/1346 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection, OJ L, 2024/1346, 22.5.2024, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AL_202401346.

[13] Regulation (EU) 2024/1347 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, OJ L, 2024/1346, 22.5.2024, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:L_202401347.

[14] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Common Implementation Plan for the Pact on Migration and Asylum, COM/2024/251 final, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2024%3A251%3AFIN

1. EU integration policy: underlying key principles and general trends

Integration policies are crucial for fostering social cohesion, as they help bridge cultural gaps and ensure that all individuals can contribute to and benefit from the host society. The EU integration policy is guided by **key principles and values** that have been set by the Action Plan. These key principles and values are grounded in the European Pillar of Social Rights and fundamental rights enshrined in the Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. They aim at directing all the Commission and the Member States' efforts in designing, implementing, and reviewing their integration policies.

These principles and values set in the Action Plan are:

- **All policies should be inclusive and work for everyone**, including for migrants legally residing in the EU and EU citizens with migrant background. For example, the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) has funded several projects to enhance digital skills targeting both EU citizens and third-country nationals. Third-country nationals are a priority group as part of efforts to support the activation of underrepresented people in the EU labour market.
- To be successful, integration should function as a **two-way process**, where migrants make an active effort to integrate and host communities create the conditions for migrants' full participation in society.
- Where necessary, **targeted support** should be provided, as it is done in the case of healthcare needs for migrant women or adapted mental healthcare.
- **Early action and long-term investment** should be put in place to ensure effective integration**,** for example as done by the Commission with its toolkit[15] with practical guidance on inclusion within early childhood education and care or with the promotion of early labour market integration for applicants for international protection.
- **Multi-stakeholder partnerships** should be put in place, involving national governments, local authorities, civil society, and EU institutions, as done for example within the Urban Agenda for the EU Partnership on the inclusion of migrants and refugees[16].

On top of these principles and values, the Action Plan supports an **intersectional perspective on integration challenges,** takes a **mainstreaming approach to gender and anti-discrimination priorities** and complements EU equality strategies, such as the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025[17] and the EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025[18], the EU Roma Strategic Framework for

[15] Available at: https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en/discover/toolkit-school-success.

[16] The Urban Agenda for the EU is supported by the Commission and in 2021-2027 provided under the European Urban Initiative. The Thematic Partnership on the Inclusion of migrants and refugees is co-led by the European Commission (DG HOME) and the City of Amsterdam bringing together, since 2016, cities, national authorities, regions, civil society organisations and EU institutions to exchange best practices and develop joint actions on integration: https://www.urbanagenda.urban-initiative.eu/partnerships/inclusion-migrants-refugees.

[17] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions a Union of Esuality: Gender equality strategy, COM/2020/152 final, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en., a new post-2025 Gender Equality strategy is planned according to the communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a Roadmap for Women's Rights, COM/2025/97 final https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025DC0097

[18] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions A union of equality: EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025, COM(2020) 565 final https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/eu-anti-racism-action-plan-2020-2025_en. A new Anti-racism strategy will be adopted by the end of 2025.

equality, inclusion and participation[19], the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy[20] and the Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030[21]. Furthermore, the Action Plan works in synergy with other frameworks and strategies, such as the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027[22] which promotes inclusion and provides opportunities for young people at risk of exclusion.

Data shows an overall improvement in legally staying migrants' integration outcomes. However, **considerable disparities in their integration persist alongside enduring challenges.**

In addition to the challenges migrants face in areas such as education, employment, poverty, social exclusion, and housing (*see Figure 1.*), they continue to encounter disadvantages in several other areas. Migrants and people with migrant background continue to be at a higher risk of poverty and face disproportional difficulties to access employment, education, and essential services, which hinders their social inclusion and overall well-being and reduces their capacity to contribute to their host society [23]. However, considering comparison of integration outcomes in the long term, significant progress has been made in recent years. This is particularly the case in the labour market integration of migrants, with an overall growth of 4 percentage points in the employment rate of migrants in the EU in the last decade[24].

[19] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions a Union of Equality: EU Roma Strategic Framework for equality, inclusion and participation, COM(2020) 620 final https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/roma-eu/roma-equality-inclusion-and-participation-eu_en.

[20] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions a Union of Equality: LGBTIQ Equality Strategy, COM/2020/698 final https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy/equality-and-inclusion/actions-lgbtiq-equality_en.A new LGBTIQ strategy will be adopted by the end of 2025.

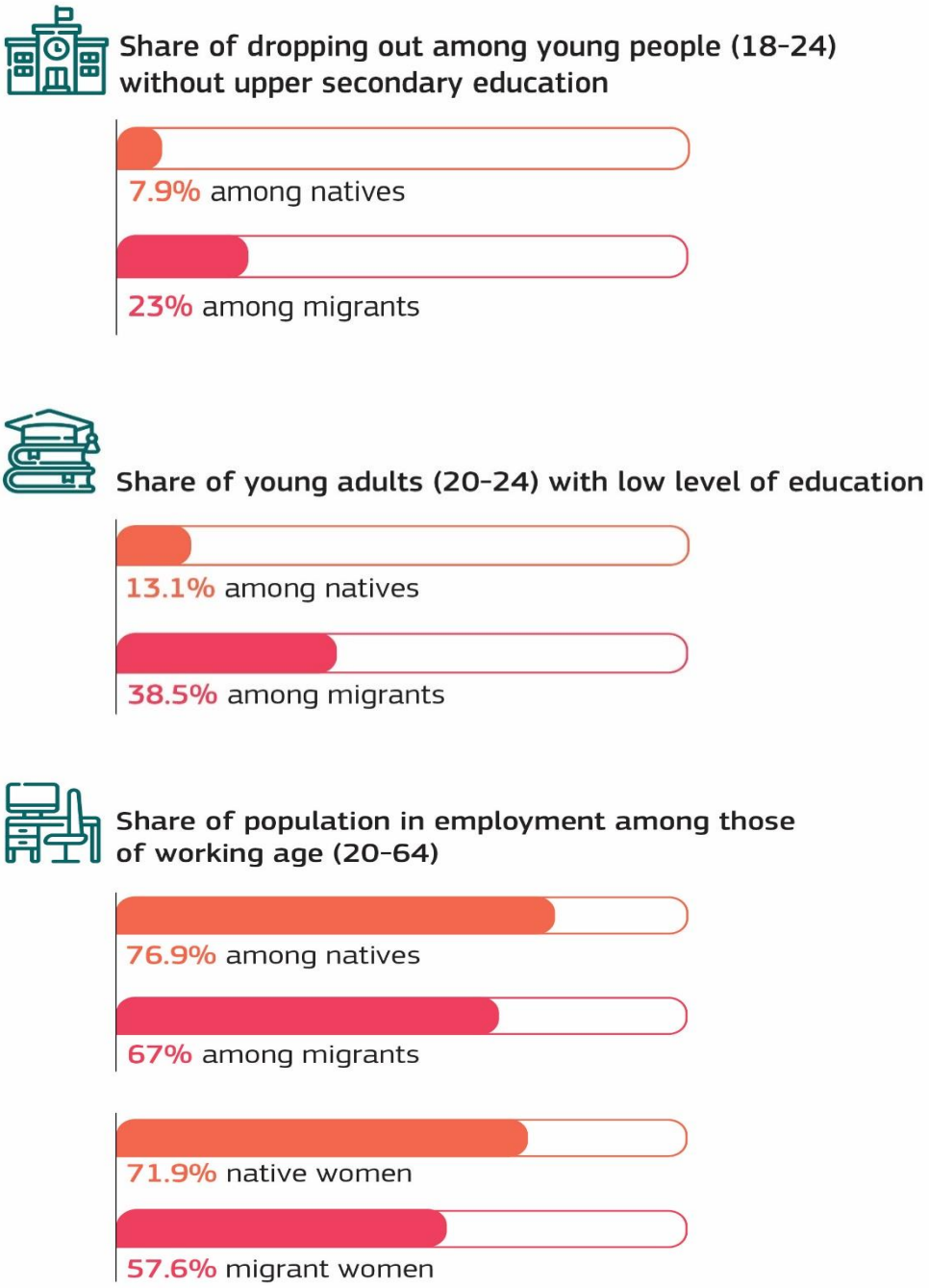
[21] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions a Union of Equality: Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030, COM/2021/101 final https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/social-protection-social-inclusion/persons-disabilities/union-equality-strategy-rights-persons-disabilities-2021-2030_en.

[22] Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027, OJ 2018/C 456/01, p. 1 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C:2018:456:FULL.

[23] OECD/European Commission (2023), *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2023: Settling In*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/1d5020a6-en.

[24] OECD/European Commission (2023), *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2023: Settling In*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/1d5020a6-en.

Key facts and figures on integration and inclusion (EU-27, 2023)[25]



[25] Eurostat data, 2023, published in 2024 and *Eurostat (EU Labour Force Survey).* Migrant population in this graph corresponds to population born outside the EU whose parents were also born outside the EU (first generation migrants), whereas native population corresponds to population born in the country whose parents were born also in the country.


Risk of poverty or social exclusion
18.3% among natives
39.2% among migrants
Rate of overcrowding
13.6% among natives
27.3% among migrants
Housing costs overburden
8% among natives
17.9% among migrants

2. Education and Training

2.1. State of play on the implementation of the Action Plan

Creating an inclusive and equitable education system is key to the development and cohesion of European societies, especially in a context of decline in basic skills of young people in the EU and an urgent need to attract teachers[26]. If access to quality education is important for all young people, it is particularly the case for disadvantaged ones, such as migrants, and education plays an important role in social mobility and participation in civic life. The **European Education Area (EEA)**[27] seeks to remove barriers to learning and enhance education quality across Member States for all and particularly for disadvantaged learners, through actions that address disparities and promote inclusion. To achieve this key objective, the Commission published different tools, such as the **Toolkit for school success**[28]. This toolkit includes specific relevant sections on migrant learners and was complemented with an updated self-assessment tool[29] on inclusion and wellbeing in May 2025. The Commission also drafted a proposal that led to the adoption in 2022 of the Council Recommendation on Pathways to School Success[30], with a focus on groups at risk, which includes migrant children. The Commission has been supporting the implementation of this Council Recommendation by promoting mutual learning and exchange of practices through the dedicated Pathways to School Success sub-group of the EEA strategic framework Working Group on Schools. The EEA strategic framework Working Group on Equality and Values in Education and Training[31] has organised a range of mutual learning activities on inclusive education and published papers addressing topics related to citizenship education and discrimination. Additionally, the Commission and the Belgian Presidency organised in May 2024 a meeting of the European Integration Network (EIN)[32] focused on inclusive education where a number of Member States' representatives and other stakeholders showcased good practices. The Commission also launched Erasmus+ Teacher Academies[33] in February 2022. These academies create European partnerships to offer support for teachers, including on encouraging **multilingualism, language awareness and cultural diversity**. By 2025, 27 Teacher Academies had been set up, and 17 new academies were launched in 2025. Also, as part of the cooperation between the Commission and

[26] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic And Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, The Union of Skills, COM(2025) 90 final, https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/915b147d-c5af-44bb-9820-c252d872fd31_en; an EU comparative analysis of the PISA 2022 results, https://education.ec.europa.eu/nl/news/report-of-pisa-2022-study-outlines-worsening-educational-performance-and-deeper-inequality

[27] Communication from the Commission to the European parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on achieving the European Education Area by 2025, COM/2020/625 final, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0625. Council Resolution on the governance structure of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030), OJ C 497, 10.12.2021, p.1

[28] Available at: https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en/discover/toolkit-school-success?overridden_route_name=entity.taxonomy_term.canonical&amp%3Bbase_route_name=entity.taxonomy_term.canonical&amp%3Bpage_manager_page=taxonomy_term_pages&amp%3Bpage_manager_page_variant=taxonomy_term_pages-layout_builder-2&amp%3Bpage_manager_page_variant_weight=-8.

[29] Professional development - Self-assessment tools | European School Education Platform https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en/learn/self-assessment-tools

[30] European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *Pathways to school success*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/193975.

[31] Working Group on Equality and Values in Education and Training https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/expert-groups-register/screen/expert-groups/consult?lang=en&groupID=3778.

[32] Minutes available on the Register of Commission Expert Groups and Other Similar Entities https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/expert-groups-register/screen/expert-groups/consult?lang=en&groupID=602.

[33] More information available at https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/school-education/erasmus-teacher-academies.

the European Centre for modern languages of the Council of Europe, many trainings for teachers have been organised in Member States on how best to develop learners' competences in the language/s of schooling, whilst valuing all children's home languages and drawing on these languages as a rich resource for learning[34]. As part of the Union of Skills[35], the Commission adopted an Action Plan on Basic Skills[36] in March 2025, to ensure that all learners, including migrants leave school with sufficient basic skills[37] and that adults reach an adequate level of proficiency[38].

In the context of **forced displacement from Ukraine**, the Commission mobilised all available instruments ranging from peer learning to policy guidance, data collection, online platforms, and funding to ensuring access to high-quality education for displaced children from Ukraine and support Member States' efforts in this area. The EEA strategic framework Working Groups provided a forum for peer learning in support of the inclusion of these children. With a major contribution of the Working Group on Schools, the Commission adopted on 30 June 2022 a practical manual outlining considerations, key principles and practices on the inclusion of displaced children from Ukraine[39]. A dedicated resource site[40] for education and support for Ukrainian was created on the European School Education Platform. Following interest expressed by Ukraine, exceptional Erasmus+ opportunities have been introduced since March 2022 and EUR 100 million was frontloaded to support the integration of learners displaced by the war in their new learning environments. Furthermore, the Commission published in June 2024 a report on the inclusion of displaced children from Ukraine in EU education systems 2023-2024[41]. This data was incorporated into an inter-agency dashboard[42] on education for Ukrainian refugee learners in European host countries, launched in May 2025 by UNESCO and built in cooperation with the Commission, UNHCR, UNICEF, OECD and the Council of Europe.

Several Member States reported providing schools with teaching material, handbooks and guides related to multicultural, intercultural and linguistic diversity issues. Some Member States also declared providing teachers with **adequate training for teaching** multilingual classrooms, while

[34] A report prepared for the Commission in 2022 showed emerging practices supporting newly arrived migrant and displaced children in their language learning needs. Siarova, H. (2022). 'Education interventions supporting newly arrived migrant and displaced children in their language learning needs, NESET Ad hoc report no. 2/2022.

[35] The Union of Skills (COM(2025) 90 final) https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/915b147d-c5af-44bb-9820-c252d872fd31_en

[36] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the Action Plan on Basic Skills, COM/2025/88 final https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025DC0088

[37] The basic skills set is widened and includes literacy, mathematical, science, digital and citizenship skills, to address the challenges of our rapidly evolving societies and economies.

[38] The Commission also adopted a STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) Education Strategic Plan to reverse the trend of declining performance in STEM skills at school and to attract more students in STEM tracks and careers. Lack of access to high-quality STEM education particularly impacts students from disadvantaged socio-economic or migration background. https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2025-03/STEM_Education_Strategic_Plan_COM_2025_89_1_EN_0.pdf

[39] Supporting the inclusion of displaced children from Ukraine in education: https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en/discover/publications/supporting-inclusion-displaced-children-ukraine-education-considerations-key

[40] The inclusion of displaced children from Ukraine in EU education systems: https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en/discover/news/education-support-ukrainian-refugees

[41] The inclusion of displaced children from Ukraine in EU education systems https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/224f94b0-32a8-11ef-a61b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en The inclusion of displaced children from Ukraine in EU education systems 2023 - 2024 https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/224f94b0-32a8-11ef-a61b-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

[42] https://www.unesco.org/en/ukraine-war/education

some Member States have opened specific **classes** for children not yet speaking the national language of the hosting Member State.

To **improve the quality of early childhood education and care**, the Commission published a toolkit[43] with practical guidance on inclusion within early childhood education and care in February 2021. The Commission coordinates the working group on early childhood education and care which supports Member States in implementing the European Quality Framework for early childhood education and care[44]. Several Member States reported having support programmes assisting culturally diverse children at early childhood education and care level which **provide staff with adapted materials and training**. Other Member States mentioned initiating **new projects** to improve access of culturally and linguistically diverse children in early childhood education and care by targeting **parents**.

As part of the EU Digital Education Action Plan 2021-27[45], the EC has worked on related Council Recommendation proposals[46] to make the most of EU support for internet access, purchase of digital equipment and e-learning applications and platforms for schools, in particular for students from disadvantaged groups such as migrants.

A Mutual Assistance Project (MAP[47]) organised between Belgium and Sweden in the framework of the EIN, has supported exchanges between Member States on successful approaches to **civic orientation courses** in 2021 (in addition to other topics). Several Member States have adopted measures to support **language learning of migrant children beyond initial proficiency level**, while others reported also supporting **proficiency language acquisition for adults**. To fund these initiatives, many Member States reported using European funds for language courses that target both children and adults, with a majority of Member States using AMIF. The Commission also funded 5 new transnational projects in 2024, under AMIF Thematic Facility[48], aiming to improve the effectiveness of language learning for migrant children. Regarding the need for specific integration support towards **unaccompanied minors**, the European Migration Network (EMN) produced a relevant mapping of the challenges and good practices on **transition to adulthood** for unaccompanied minors[49]. Aspects related to vocational education and training are covered in the next section on employment and skills.

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[43] Toolkit for inclusive early childhood education and care, available at https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/4c526047-6f3c-11eb-aeb5-01aa75ed71a1.

[44] Council Recommendation of 22 May 2019 on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems, OJ C 189, 5.6.2019, p. 4, available at https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32019H0605%2801%29.

[45] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 Resetting education and training for the digital age, COM/2020/624 final, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52020DC0624

[46] Such as the Council Recommendation on blended learning approaches for high-quality and inclusive primary and secondary education, OJ C 504, 14.12.2021, p. 21, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021H1214%2801%29 and Council Recommendation of 23 November 2023 on the key enabling factors for successful digital education and training, OJ C/2021/1115, 24.1.2024 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C_202401115

[47] Mutual Assistance Projects are aimed to facilitate reciprocal learning and support the design of national integration strategies and programmes. The system promotes the collaboration between Member States, by matching those willing to improve integration aspects in specific sectors with others keen to share their experiences.

[48] Call for proposals Transnational actions on asylum, migration and integration: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/amif/wp-call/2023/call-fiche_amif-2023-tf2-ag_en.pdf.

[49] EMN inform Transition of unaccompanied minors to adulthood https:home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-11/EMN_INFORM_Transition-minors-adulthood_final.pdf, November 2022.

2.2. Remaining challenges

Overall, socio-economic backgrounds continue to strongly affect pupils' educational outcomes, as evidenced by basic skills deficiencies, early leaving from education and training for children at school. The Education and Training Monitor's comparative report also highlights how a different home language widens inequalities further in some Member States[50]. In 2023, young migrants were three times more likely to be early leavers[51] from education and training (25.3% compared to 8.2% for native-born children), and twice more exposed to being neither in employment nor in education or training, compared to native-born children[52]. Similarly, a gap exists for basic reading skills in the EU regarding migrant children or children with migrant background compared to native pupils[53], putting Member State' education systems under pressure as they have to teach heterogenous groups of pupils with divergent language and skill levels. Native-born pupils with foreign-born parents also report both a weaker sense of belonging and a lower well-being at school than their peers with native-born parents in most European countries, showing that national school systems face significant challenges in contributing to societal cohesion. Nearly one in four native-born young people with foreign-born parents reports feeling part of a group that is discriminated against on the grounds of ethnicity, nationality and race[54]. The gap between migrants and nationals living in their country is also reflected in terms of tertiary educational attainment. Young adults born outside the EU from foreign born parents are the least likely to have obtained a tertiary degree (37.1% in 2023) compared to 42.9% young adults born in the reporting country from foreign born parents and to 44.6% for young adults born in the reporting country whose parents were also born there[55]. In 2023, 35.5% of non-EU citizens aged 25-34 years living in the EU had a tertiary educational attainment compared with 44.2% of nationals living in their own country[56].

According to stakeholders[57], access to higher education and transition from school to work is still not supported enough for migrants. The situation varies between Member States with several administrative, legal, or capacity barriers together with issues to access information still present in many cases. Stakeholders also report that additional challenges remain for migrants and EU nationals with migrant background who do not manage to learn the local language. This is partly due to the significant number of migrants to which some Member States have to offer language

[50] Education and Training Monitor 2024: https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eac/education-and-training-monitor-2022/en/comparative-report/chapter-1.html#complementary-evidence section 3.2.

[51] The share of early leavers from education and training is calculated for persons aged 18–24 years. A person in this age group is considered to be an early leaver if their highest level of educational attainment is at most lower secondary education and they have not received any formal nor non-formal education or training in the 4 weeks preceding the survey. Migrant integration statistics - education - Statistics Explained: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migrant_integration_statistics_-_education#Early_leavers_from_education_and_training.

[52] The gap between nationals and third-country nationals in terms of share of early leavers from education and training only decreased slightly since 2014 (from 18,5% points to 17.1%).

[53] In the EU, 38% of migrant pupils (and 29% of pupils native-born from foreign-born parents) lack basic reading skills (compared to 18% for pupils with native-born parents). OECD/European Commission (2023), *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2023: Settling In*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/1d5020a6-en.

[54] OECD/European Commission (2023), *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2023: Settling In*, Section, 7.8, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/1d5020a6-en.

[55] Education and Training Monitor 2024 To be noted as well that, in 2023, 35.5% of non-EU citizens aged 25-34 years living in the EU had a tertiary educational attainment compared with 44.2% of nationals living in their own country, cf. 2023 Migrant integration statistics - education - Statistics Explained: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migrant_integration_statistics_-_education.

[56] 2023 Migrant integration statistics - education - Statistics Explained: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migrant_integration_statistics_-_education.

[57] For details about the stakeholders consulted see footnote 8.

trainings. In view of these high numbers, Member States face hurdles to offer sufficient and well-designed language courses, especially in rural areas, which strongly hinders migrants' integration. Pressure on the national resources leads to language classes often being available only for beginners, which delays migrant's full participation in education or in the labour market, thereby also impacting Member States' economies and social cohesion. Several stakeholders highlighted how civic orientation and language learning courses often remain insufficient or not fully adapted to the needs of migrants. They suggested to look at community sponsorship as a source of inspiration for more effective language learning.

Regarding unaccompanied minors, in a quarter of EU Member States, support and services for education end on their 18th birthday**,** and the majority of Member States do not have a specific strategy in place to support the transition of unaccompanied minors to adulthood, in part due to their high number. However, it is noteworthy that half of the Member States reported offering some type of continued assistance after they have turned 18.

2.3. Way forward in implementing the Action Plan

The Commission, together with Member States and other stakeholders, has funded and developed relevant tools and guidance aiming at improving access to education and making education more inclusive. Member States are encouraged to use the comprehensive guidance provided by the Commission to implement, including with EU funding support, the relevant measures to make their education systems more inclusive. Those efforts should target all migrants and take into account the specific needs of migrants in need of protection, especially in light of the work to be done on the implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, for example on access to adapted education for children who are applicants and beneficiaries of international protection (Article 16 of the Reception Conditions Directive and Article 29 of the Qualification Regulation). Member States should make full use of EU funding available such as AMIF, ESF+ or Erasmus+.

Given that the early years set the foundations for children's development and learning trajectories in life, Member States should work towards removing administrative, legal and capacity obstacles to access to **early childhood education and care** for migrant children. Additional adapted and flexible support should be given to **refugee** and asylum-seeking children, especially in terms of language learning. Implementing the good practices related to **teacher support** that already exist is also necessary to remove barriers such as staff shortages and inadequate training. The Commission and the Member States should continue building on successful approaches to civic orientation courses and **language learning** adapted to the needs of migrants, including by promoting their dissemination through digital tools. A dedicated session on this topic took place at the latest EIN meeting in May 2025. Additionally, emphasis should be put on supporting **unaccompanied minors** in their transition to adulthood, in addition to the necessary investment to be made on guardianship and adapted reception conditions as required by the revised Reception Conditions Directive. Finally, additional support on higher education and transition to work should be provided by linking education and employment policies and setting support for young adults. The Union of Skills as well as the European Education Area provides a relevant framework for actions regarding inclusive education. This also includes tapping into the potential of non-formal education and training which can effectively support the transition from education to work, particularly for disadvantaged young people lacking necessary skills and risking facing prolonged periods of unemployment or precarious employment.

3. Employment and skills

3.1. State of play on the implementation of the Action Plan

Europe is undergoing a profound demographic transformation. The EU's working-age population is projected to decline by 57.4 million until 2100 (or 21.7%) and the old-age dependency ratio to increase from 33% in 2023 to 60% by 2100[58]. Skills shortages are increasingly acute across key sectors – from health[59] to construction to digital and green technologies. Nearly 4 in 5 of SMEs in the EU, which represent 99% of all enterprises, have difficulties in finding workers with the right skills[60]. As set out in the Union of Skills, the Commission is working to promote greater participation in the labour market by as many working-age individuals as possible, including by removing existing barriers and reaching out to groups with fewer opportunities[61]. In this context, it is important to recognise the contribution of migrants to the EU economy as well as their significant untapped potential. Integrating migrants into the labour market sustainably – at an early stage and in line with their skills and qualifications – is essential both for the persons concerned and for fostering economic growth and social cohesion in the host societies.

The Action Plan emphasises that effective **cooperation between labour market actors**, such as public authorities, economic and social partners, employers, training providers, social economy actors and civil society organisations, at local, regional, national, and European level is essential to achieve a sustainable labour market integration. Since the adoption of the Action Plan, the Commission promoted multi-stakeholder partnerships through funding, advocacy and facilitating the sharing of experience. In many Member States, **public employment services** (PES) play a primordial role in assisting migrants to find employment at a level corresponding to their skills and qualifications. The Commission supports the European Network of Public Employment Services (PES)[62] thus enabling mutual learning and exchange of best practices in this area. To help beneficiaries of temporary protection making use of their right of immediate labour market access, the PES Network monitored their labour market integration and issued guidance that helped to scale up good practices by PES across the EU.

Through the **European Partnership for Integration**[63], the Commission and European social and economic partners continued efforts to include refugees and other migrants more sustainably in EU labour markets. They strengthened the linkages between, on the one hand, employer organisations, trade unions and chambers of commerce at the local and national levels and, on the other hand, policy developments at EU-level, such as specific measures for displaced people from Ukraine and initiatives under the European Year of Skills[64].

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[58] Eurostat, Population projection in the EU: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Population_projections_in_the_EU

[59] The Commission/OECD 2024 Health at a Glance Report estimates a shortage of 2,1 million health workers in EU Member States. Health at a Glance: Europe - European Commission, https://health.ec.europa.eu/state-health-eu/health-glance-europe_en

[60] Eurobarometer, SMEs and skills shortages: https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2961

[61] The Union of Skills: : https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/915b147d-c5af-44bb-9820-c252d872fd31_en .

[62] PES Network: https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=105&langId=en

[63] Under the European Partnership for Integration, the Commission and European Social and Economic Partners (ETUC, BusinessEurope, SGI Europe, SMEUnited, Eurochambres) have worked together since 2017 to create opportunities for integrating refugees and other migrants into the EU labour market: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/migrant-integration/eu-integration-policy/cooperation-integration-actors_en#social-and-economic-partners-the-european-partnership-for-integration.

[64] European Year of Skills: https://year-of-skills.europa.eu/index_en.

Following the 2023 **call for proposals on** '**Multi-stakeholder initiatives for migrant integration into the labour market**' under the AMIF thematic facility, eight transnational projects kicked off in spring 2024 and are under implementation. The projects, which involve social partners, civil society and migrant organisations, training providers, PES and other actors from across the EU, aim to strengthen multi-stakeholder partnerships, test innovative approaches and promote good practices on job matching, sustainable employment conditions, inclusive workplaces and entrepreneurship in various sectors including agriculture and renewable energy.

The Commission also promoted **multi-stakeholder cooperation structures** at national, regional and local levels by creating opportunities for exchange between various EU-level networks, as was done, for example, at the EIN meeting in November 2023 in Madrid, which focused on labour market integration[65]. Most **stakeholders** agreed that multi-stakeholder cooperation has become stronger, although not in all Member States.

The Action Plan calls on Member States to make full use of **EU funding to support labour market integration.** The vast majority of Member States reported doing so by using mostly the ESF+, but also the AMIF, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Technical Support Instruments (TSI). Member States also increasingly aim to create synergies between the funds, for example by using AMIF for early integration measures and ESF+ for measures with longer term orientation. The scope of measures is vast, including both active labour market policies to which migrants have access together with other parts of the EU labour force, or specific programmes targeted at applicants and beneficiaries of international protection, or migrant mothers for example.

Progress was made towards **assessing and validating migrants' skills** more effectively, as well as **facilitating the recognition of qualifications** obtained in third countries and **providing access to training, up- and reskilling**. The multilingual EU Skills Profile Tool for Third-Country Nationals[66], which supports early profiling of skills, is predominantly used by organisations in reception centres. Since 2023, it is interoperable with the Europass platform, which helps jobseekers showcase their skills and qualifications. The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) produced materials to facilitate the validation of informally acquired skills – important for migrants with work experience but without formal qualifications – and increase the participation of migrants in high-quality vocational education and training.[67]

The arrival of large numbers of displaced people from Ukraine, many of them with a high level of qualifications, prompted various initiatives to help them apply their skills and qualifications. The EU Skills Profile Tool was translated to Ukrainian in early 2022. The European Training Foundation (ETF) published information material, e.g. a report comparing the European Qualification Framework (EQF) with the Ukrainian National Qualification Framework, on a dedicated information hub[68]. Through the EU Talent Pool Pilot, launched by the Commission and the European Labour Authority in October 2022, beneficiaries of temporary protection seeking

[65] Representatives of the European Partnership for Integration and the Commission Expert Group on the Views of Migrants participated in that EIN meeting.
[66] EU Skills profile tool for third-country nationals: https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/skills-and-qualifications/skills-jobs/eu-skills-profile-tool-third-country-nationals_en.
[67] CEDEFOP (2023): European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning, 3rd edition, https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/3093.
[68] Education and work information for Ukrainians and EU countries: https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/education-and-work-information-ukrainians-and-eu-countries.

jobs in a Member State could make available their profiles and skills with employers registered on EURES (European network of employment services).

Based on the 2022 **Commission Recommendation on recognition of qualifications of people fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine**[69], Member States took a range of measures to speed up access to practising in regulated professions, such as waivers for certain requirements, practising under supervision etc. Building on this approach, in 2023, the Commission issued a **Recommendation on the recognition of qualifications of third-country nationals in general**, as part of the 'Skills and Talent Mobility package'[70]. A series of webinars organised by the Commission in 2024 followed up on the recommendations relating to i) information, ii) simplification and iii) cooperation with third countries regarding recognition procedures. The webinars also showcased good practices applied by Member States in these areas. To follow up on the package, the Commission is also taking steps to boost information on recognition procedures (e.g. by supporting Member States to develop interoperable databases on recognition) and developing an improved understanding of qualification frameworks of key countries or origin.

A growing number of Member States use tools developed under a series of ERASMUS+ funded projects, the European Qualification Passport for Refugees[71] or other methods to recognise **qualifications of beneficiaries of international protection**, even where they cannot document their qualifications. In March 2022, the Commission fostered cooperation between public authorities in charge of integration and national centres for recognition of qualifications through a joint meeting of the EIN and the ENIC-NARIC network[72]. An analysis of Member States' different practices to provide **bridging courses**[73] for migrants whose qualifications are not (or not fully) recognised, highlighted good practices but also the fact that such courses are not systematically available and are often hard to access. That analysis also informed EIN discussions.

A key objective of the **European Year of Skills** (9 May 2023-9 May 2024) was to promote a mindset of up- and reskilling. The Year brought skills to the forefront of the EU's political agenda and allowed advancing and raising awareness among stakeholders and the general public about the EU's skills-related initiatives and policies, including those that target vulnerable parts of the EU workforce. In March 2024, the Commission adopted an Action Plan on Labour and Skills Shortages in the EU, which highlighted the importance of increasing the labour market participation of migrants[74].

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[69] Commission Recommendation (EU) 2022/554 of 5 April 2022 on the recognition of qualifications for people fleeing Russia's invasion of Ukraine, OJ L 107I, 6.4.2022, p. 1, available at https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32022H0554.

[70] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Skills and Talent Mobility, COM(2023) 715 final https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52023DC0715 ; Commission Recommendation (EU) 2023/2611 of 15 November 2023 on the recognition of qualifications of third-country nationals, OJ L, 2023/2611, 24.11.2023, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reco/2023/2611/oj

[71] The European Qualifications Passport for Refugees is a standardized document issued in a project carried out by the Council of Europe and partners. See European Qualification Passport for Refugees (EQPR): https://ec.europa.eu/digital-building-blocks/sites/display/EBSI/European+Qualification+Passport+for+Refugees.

[72] ENIC-NARIC - gateway to recognition of qualifications: https://www.enic-naric.net/page-homepage.

[73] https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/whats-new/publications/bridging-courses-migrants-complement-qualifications-acquired-third-countries-approaches-and_en

[74] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Labour and skills shortages in the EU: an action plan, COM(2024) 131 final, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52024DC0131

Aiming to improve the labour market inclusion of **migrant women** and following the gender mainstreaming approach of the Action Plan, the Commission pursued the objective of gender equality in its work on integration horizontally. The large-scale displacement of people from Ukraine focused public attention on the specific needs of women fleeing with children. In its **2022 guidance for access to the labour market**, the Commission called on national authorities and PES to *'address the needs of women with children, also in relation to their rights to access early childhood education and care and school education as this can help them take up employment opportunities*[75] *'.* An **EMN study on the integration of migrant women**[76] showcased good integration practices at national and local levels on labour market integration as well as other priorities of the Action Plan. The fact that women facing multiple obstacles to employment need tailor-made support in line with their needs, and that such support is possible and effective if labour market and other relevant actors cooperate effectively at the local level, was confirmed in the five projects resulting from the 2019 **call for proposals to support social and economic integration of migrant women** under the AMIF thematic facility. The lessons learnt were disseminated to EIN members.

In order to better support **migrant entrepreneurs** through easier access to financing, training and advice, the Commission promoted innovative financing mechanisms and facilitated capacity building and experience sharing through initiatives and programmes such as InvestEU, the Financial Instrument Compass, the Youth Entrepreneurship Policy Academy and others. Several Member States reported opening their mainstream entrepreneurship support services to migrants and many also developed dedicated support programmes.

3.2. Remaining challenges

In line with the positive evolution of the overall EU **employment rate**, the employment rate of third-country nationals increased from 55% in 2013 to 63% in 2023 (compared to 68% in 2013 and 76.2% in 2023 for nationals)[77]. Workers born outside the EU are overrepresented in occupations facing persistent labour shortages, showing their importance for the EU economy[78]. Nevertheless, challenges remain regarding migrants' full inclusion into the EU labour markets, particularly for migrants with respectively a high or very low level of education, migrant women and recently arrived persons (other than labour migrants). The **unemployment rate** of third-country nationals is over twice that of EU nationals[79] (12.2% vs. 5.4% in 2023), with recently arrived and low-educated migrants more likely to be unemployed. Migrants seeking international protection or arriving to join family members have lower employment rates than labour migrants, as they tend to have weaker attachments to the labour market. On average, they achieve labour

[75] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Guidance for access to the labour market, vocational education and training and adult learning of people fleeing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, C(2022) 4050 final, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_3620.

[76] EMN Integration of Migrant Women: https://www.emnbelgium.be/publication/integration-migrant-women.

[77] Eurostat (2024): https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migrant_integration_statistics_%E2%80%93_labour_market_indicators#Employment_rate.

[78] European Commission, Report on Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2023: https://op.europa.eu/webpub/empl/esde-2023/executive-summary.html.

[79] Eurostat (2024): https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migrant_integration_statistics_%E2%80%93_labour_market_indicators#Employment_rate .

market outcomes comparable to nationals after 10 years of residence[80], even though evidence indicates that displaced people from Ukraine enjoy better labour market outcomes than other refugee groups[81]. This delay in entering the national labour markets creates challenges for Member States, in particular the actors that support their integration (employment services, adult education institutions, municipalities etc.). It also puts additional pressure on social protection systems.

While migrants bring motivation and skills to the EU, the economy is missing out on part of this potential. As highlighted in the Draghi report, migration can significantly contribute to reducing labour shortages. In particular, Europe faces challenges in attracting and retaining skilled talent, and despite being more likely to work in shortage occupations, migrant workers are often employed in low-skilled jobs[82]. According to the OECD, if highly educated migrants had the same employment rate as their native-born counterparts, the EU would have around 760 000 more highly educated people working[83]. Migrants with a university degree are almost twice as likely to be **overqualified** for their jobs (i.e. work in low- or medium-skilled occupations) than the local population: in 2023, the EU over-qualification rate was 39.4% for migrants compared to 20.8% for nationals (31.3% for citizens of other Member States)[84]. Migrants also tend to work more in temporary arrangements and involuntary part-time work. The majority of **stakeholders** flagged a lack of progress on qualification recognition, skills validation and access to training, even though they acknowledged improvements in some Member States. Specifically, stakeholders highlighted that efforts were still necessary regarding overqualification and the provision of bridging courses, including in combination with language support, as well as better adapted access opportunities to vocational education and training. Some stakeholders recommended that innovative measures for support people fleeing the war in Ukraine should be extended to all beneficiaries of international protection.

A persistent issue of concern is the **gender gap**. The employment rate for migrant women was 20 percentage points lower than for female nationals in the EU in 2023, in contrast to a gap of only 5.7 percentage points for migrant men[85]. The overqualification rate for migrant women is also higher than for migrant men. The OECD finds that the effect of having children, also referred to as 'motherhood penalty', tends to be more pronounced for migrant women and largely accounts for the gender gap. This is due to limited access to integration support, childcare, and family networks among others[86]. Despite the efforts, the majority of external **stakeholders** did not consider that the labour market inclusion of migrant women had improved, citing the lack of access to childcare and overqualification as some of the key issues. Some, however, pointed to the faster integration of displaced women from Ukraine compared to other groups in refugee-type situations.

[80] OECD/European Commission (2023), *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2023: Settling In*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/1d5020a6-en.
[81] European Commission, Labour Market and Wage Developments in Europe 2024: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/057f23e9-bdc5-11ef-91ed-01aa75ed71a1/language-en
[82] The future of European Competitiveness – Part B: ec1409c1-d4b4-4882-8bdd-3519f86bbb92_en.
[83] Calculations adapted from OECD/European Commission (2023), *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2023: Settling In*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/1d5020a6-en.
[84] Eurostat (2024), Migrant integration statistics - over-qualification: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?oldid=536540
[85] Eurostat (2024): Labour market: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migrant_integration_statistics_%E2%80%93_labour_market_indicators#Employment_rate
[86] OECD (2023): *International Migration Outlook 2023*, https://doi.org/10.1787/b0f40584-en.

While the Action Plan acknowledges the contribution of migrant **entrepreneurs** to economic growth and job creation, research by the OECD[87] confirms that migrants choose self-employment more often as a fallback option than locals, due to difficulties to enter paid employment. In addition, statistics about self-employment also reflect bogus self-employment, such as platform work, where migrants are overrepresented. The majority of **stakeholders** consulted for this review, also considered support to migrant entrepreneurs as insufficient, particularly regarding access to financial services and availability of training and mentoring programmes. Stakeholders with a more positive perception usually referred to cases in a specific local area.

3.3. Way forward in implementing the Action Plan

In order to achieve the objectives set by the Action Plan, the Commission, the Member States and the labour market actors have to continue strengthening multistakeholder cooperation structures at all government levels. In the context of **implementing the Pact on Migration and Asylum**, they should pay particular attention to creating opportunities for the sustainable labour market integration of beneficiaries of international protection and applicants who have the right to work. The Reception Conditions Directive (Article 17) and the Qualification Regulation (Article 30) clarify and strengthen key employment-related rights of applicants and beneficiaries of international protection, respectively. These legislative acts provide that both categories must be treated equally as nationals in terms of working conditions and labour rights; access to training and employment guidance services; as well as access to recognition of formal qualifications and validation of prior learning outcomes. The Qualification Regulation highlights the importance of information and counselling services offered by the public employment services. As several Member States already have programmes and measures in place for these target groups, the Commission will continue to facilitate the sharing of experience and good practices through the EIN and other networks. In addition to immigration procedures, in line with the indications in the Draghi report, Member States should provide appealing job opportunities for highly skilled professionals and support EU schemes like the Blue Card[88], which simplifies the entry and residence of highly qualified non-EU nationals for employment purposes.

As set out in the Communication "A predictable and common European way forward for Ukrainians in the EU"[89], the Commission will support the setting-up of Unity Hubs in those interested Member States. These will serve as multipurpose information centres to foster both the integration of displaced people in EU labour markets and host societies and for going back home to Ukraine.

It will also be important to consolidate and upscale recent initiatives to support **skills validation and recognition of qualifications** of migrants. Member States are encouraged to take forward implementation of the Commission Recommendation on the recognition of qualifications obtained in third countries, including by investing in training provision and streamlining recognition procedures. The Union of Skills includes a focus on addressing barriers that hinder the portability and recognition of people's skills and qualifications, and announces a Skills Portability Initiative

[87] OECD (2024): *International Migration Outlook 2024*, https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/international-migration-outlook-2024_50b0353e-en.html.

[88] Blue Card: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/legal-migration-resettlement-and-integration/work/eu-blue-card_en.

[89] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, A predictable and common European way forward for Ukrainians in the EU, COM (2025)649 final, eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52025DC0649

to be adopted in 2026. As part of this, the Commission will explore whether to propose common rules for simpler procedures for handling the recognition and validation of qualifications and skills of third-country nationals.

All actors are also encouraged to provide more and better targeted support to reduce the gender gap in employment and help **migrant women**, and migrant mothers in particular, find adequate work and professional training. This is essential also because working mothers are role models for their children[90]. As part of the 2025 AMIF Call for proposals for transnational projects on the integration of migrants and protection of children, the Commission will support projects on the socio-economic integration of migrant women and will continue to disseminate good practices to Member States and other stakeholders. By taking a **whole-of-family perspective** to integration, Member States authorities in charge of integration programmes could make it easier for migrant mothers to participate in such programmes by making them more flexible, for example by extending mandatory timelines, adapting schedules and facilitating childcare provision. Finally, regarding support for **entrepreneurship**, the Commission will continue to work on making support for migrant entrepreneurs better targeted and more accessible.

4. Health

4.1. State of play on the implementation of the Action Plan

Healthcare systems in the EU faces several challenges due to the ageing populations, increasing needs, budgetary constraints and medical staff shortages. Additional challenges exist regarding mental health care, as highlighted in the **communication on a Comprehensive Approach to Mental health[91]** adopted on 7 June 2023. Effective healthcare integration is a cornerstone for addressing the social determinants of health among migrants and reducing health disparities. Migrants often face unique barriers to accessing healthcare, including language and cultural differences, legal status in addition to financial constraints. Addressing these issues is critical not only for improving health equity but also for fostering social cohesion and stability within the EU. The Action Plan calls on Member States and the Commission to **improve access to healthcare for migrants**. In that regard, Member States –and the European Commission- have developed multiple **training programmes for people working in the healthcare sector** aimed at improving awareness of needs of specific migrant groups (migrants with trauma, victims of trafficking in human beings or gender based violence, unaccompanied minors, older people, people with disabilities etc.) and facilitate the dissemination of information on access to healthcare services and their rights, including access to **mental health services**. In that regard, the **communication on a Comprehensive Approach to Mental health** highlights the specific situation of vulnerable groups such as refugees, migrants and persons with migrant background. In line with this broader framework, the EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings (2021-2025) [92] emphasises the importance of providing comprehensive support to victims of trafficking in human beings and invites Member States to provide training to healthcare workers on diversity

[90] This is the case especially for daughters: In its International Migration Outlook 2023, the OECD reports that having a working mother during adolescence is associated with an increase of 13 percentage points in the employment rate of women born in the EU with at least one parent born in a third country.

[91] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a comprehensive approach to mental health, COM/2023/298 final, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2023%3A298%3AFIN

[92] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the EU Strategy on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings 2021- 2025, COM(2021) 171 final eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0171&from=EN.

management and on the needs of victims of trafficking in human beings who are migrants, using the EU health programmes.

The EMN also produced in July 2022 a report entitled '**Mapping mental health policies for third-country nationals**'[93] whose main objective was to identify the underlying challenges to access healthcare services and the responses by Member States. The Commission also organised multiple conferences with different stakeholders at national, local, and regional level to encourage the sharing of good practices on accessing healthcare services among Member States. Within the framework of the **EU4Health Work Programme** 2022 and 2023, several projects were funded to enhance access to mental health services and increase the literacy on mental health issues of migrants in the European healthcare workforce as well as in the migrant population themselves. Furthermore, since 2021 the Commission is funding a project to enhance **universal access to vaccination** for newly arrived migrants (AcToVax4NAM)[94] and signed a contribution agreement with the World Health Organisation (WHO), under the EU4Health Work Programme 2023, to **increase vaccination coverage**, including in the migrant population.

Access to healthcare also requires migrants to receive proper information about their rights **via appropriate outreach tools**. The Commission worked with Member States to create new partnerships aimed at improving such tools, notably within the framework of the **Urban Agenda for the EU Partnership** on the inclusion of migrants and refugees. In October 2022, the Commission organised, along with the European Committee of the Regions and the Council of Europe Development Bank, a **conference on the access of third-country nationals to healthcare in the EU** with the objective to explore evidence-based approaches to minimise existing barriers to healthcare, identify best practices and potential solutions, and develop recommendations on how these challenges can be addressed. Member States have also developed **resources to support healthcare professionals working with migrants** in detecting psychological suffering and adopting best practices.

When it comes to Member States' efforts to **improve the availability of information to migrants** on their right to access healthcare and the different services available to them, further work is still needed**.** Some Member States have made considerable efforts to create tools **to help overcome language and cultural barriers** for migrants, assisting them in getting information and access to medical care via the use of web portals in multiple languages and booklets. However, important disparities still exist in that regard between the different Member States. Most Member States have also adopted **legal frameworks to ensure that refugees and migrants can access at least basic healthcare services,** which is in line with the rules of the Reception Conditions Directive (Article 19).

For both access to healthcare and the development of outreach tools, the Commission has made available several funding sources such as the **AMIF, ERDF, ESF+, RRF and EU4Health funding programmes** to finance projects aimed at facilitating access to healthcare services, as well as promote exchanges between Member States through the formation of new partnerships and the setup of suitable outreach tools. In addition, Member States have created **specific supporting services for migrant women** targeted at raising professionals' awareness on the specific challenges they face, such as female genital mutilation and reproductive health, and put in place

[93] EMN, June 2022, Mapping mental health policies for third-country nationals: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-07/EMN_Mental-health_INFORM_20072022.pdf.
[94] Access to Vaccination for Newly Arrived Migrants: https://www.accesstovaccination4nam.eu/about/.

specific centres to provide **individual support for women** travelling alone or in a vulnerable situation.

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Commission signed two contribution agreements with the WHO and the International Organization for Migration to reinforce the EU health systems, support Member States to ensure **access to services for displaced persons from Ukraine** and support the integration of Ukrainian healthcare workers into the national healthcare systems. The Commission concluded another contribution agreement with the International Federation of the Red Cross Societies aimed at implementing specific interventions to **increase access to mental health care services for the displaced population from Ukraine**[95]. Member States have also put in place special separate psychological support services for displaced people from Ukraine.

Member States have made efforts to **improve the availability of information to migrants** on their right to access healthcare and the different services available to them, however further work is needed**.** Some Member States have made considerable efforts to facilitate access to information via the use of web portals in multiple languages and booklets. However, important disparities still exist in that regard between the different Member States. Most Member States have also adopted **legal frameworks to ensure that refugees and migrants can access at least basic healthcare services,** which is in line with the rules of the Reception Conditions Directive (Article 19).

4.2. Remaining challenges

Over the past years, the obstacles faced by the national health systems have been multiplying, ranging from health crises, to ageing populations, staff-shortages and budgetary limitations. The situation has led Member States to face serious challenges in granting effective access to healthcare to their nationals. In spite of this situation, most Member States have managed to offer the same level of access to both nationals and migrants since 2017, except for the dental care[96], even though migrant households (where all responsible persons of household are foreign-born) **are less likely to use healthcare services** (77% versus 83% EU-wide)[97]. Indeed, despite the efforts put forward by Member States, the stakeholders consulted still report persistent barriers faced by migrants to accessing healthcare services such as **administrative hurdles, lack of information about the healthcare system, linguistic and intercultural obstacles such as the lack of trained personnel, a lack of financial resources to pay for social health insurance or treatments, or a lack of formal healthcare rights** in the case of certain migrant statuses. In addition, migrants are also more likely to struggle to afford healthcare services compared to the native population in nearly all Member States (36% vs 30% EU-wide)[98].

According to the stakeholders consulted, healthcare facilities often lack culturally sensitive approaches and special trainings for addressing migrants, including regarding the diversity of their situations, which leads to mistrust and discomfort from migrants and refugees. Several Member States have put in place specific mechanisms to assist migrants, such as mediators and interpreters, however their scarcity and the additional costs linked to their services also put additional pressure

[95] More information available at https://www.ifrc.org/our-work/health-and-care/community-health/mental-health-and-psychosocial-support/eu4health-and-ifrc

[96] Eurostat, Migrant integration statistics - health - Statistics Explained: Migrant integration statistics - health - Statistics Explained

[97] Eurostat, Migrant integration statistics - health - Statistics Explained: Migrant integration statistics - health - Statistics Explained

[98] OECD/European Commission (2023), Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2023: Settling In, OECD Publishing, Paris, p. 123 https://doi.org/10.1787/1d5020a6-en.

on national health systems. Most stakeholders consider that access to healthcare is still problematic, although the situation varies between Member States.

The barriers described above are also present when it comes to mental health where they contribute, together with additional factors such as high costs, lack of awareness and reservations, to even bigger difficulties in accessing mental health care. This is particularly relevant for some migrants as they are **at a particular risk of developing mental health conditions** due to the severe stress and trauma they often experience before, during, and after the migration process. Notably, migrants exposed to adversity and refugees are more susceptible to mental health disorders such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder compared to native populations[99]. Stakeholders also underlined the importance of going beyond the essential provision of trauma-related services and approaching mental health and psycho-social support in all elements of integration work. Overall, Europe is witnessing a worsening of the mental health of its younger generations with forcibly displaced and migrant children particularly at risk[100].

These issues are further accentuated for **migrant women who face additional challenges** as they tend to have lower proficiency in the host country language, weaker social networks, lower educational and economic levels, and greater responsibilities for childcare and family. Despite the efforts made by Member States, the stakeholders consulted underline that migrant women are still facing significant challenges when accessing healthcare depending on their residency status and access to medical insurance. As highlighted by stakeholders, **prenatal, delivery and post-natal healthcare for migrant mothers** is still problematic and require immediate attention, as evidenced by various studies which show that **women with migrant background are more likely to experience discrimination when accessing healthcare.** This, in addition to the barriers mentioned above (lack of language proficiency, awareness about their health rights, etc.) could imply they receive lower quality perinatal care. Furthermore, health needs of migrant women go far beyond sexual and reproductive health and involve especially preventive healthcare, screening and management of non-communicable diseases[101].

4.3. Way forward in implementing the Action Plan

It remains necessary to keep improving access of migrants to healthcare and make it as effective as possible for all migrants. For Member States, this means continuing the work on **removing administrative hurdles**, for example for beneficiaries of international protection in the context of the implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum and the related provisions under the Qualification Regulation (Article 32), which requires beneficiaries of international protection to receive the same access to healthcare services as nationals.

In addition, more Member States should devote additional efforts and place specific attention on access to mental health, in line with the **comprehensive approach** to mental health adopted by the Commission, including by ensuring access as **early as possible for all migrants to adapted**

[99] World Health Organisation, https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-and-forced-displacement (2021) and https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240081840 (2023) as well as Commission communication on a Comprehensive Approach to Mental health, p. 14 https://health.ec.europa.eu/document/download/cef45b6d-a871-44d5-9d62-3cecc47eda89_en?filename=com_2023_298_1_act_en.pdf .

[100] Commission communication on a Comprehensive Approach to Mental health, p. 8 https://health.ec.europa.eu/document/download/cef45b6d-a871-44d5-9d62-3cecc47eda89_en?filename=com_2023_298_1_act_en.pdf.

[101] Non-communicable disease includes for instance cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases, mental disorders, neurological disorders, or cancer: https://health.ec.europa.eu/non-communicable-diseases/overview_en

healthcare, and ensuring that applicants of international protection receive appropriate mental health care support as required by the Reception Condition Directive (Article 19), especially for minors (Article 23(4)). Member States are also encouraged to link work on mental health priorities with provisions of inclusive education by ensuring understanding and awareness of mental health issues in school environment and with education staff. Psychosocial support in the education context must also be reinforced and the **impact of discrimination** that migrants might face must be taken into consideration, with relevant trainings provided to the education community. There is a strong need to continue to work on **specific support for migrant women to access the general healthcare system**, to dismantle the additional hurdles they face, as well as on less visible categories of migrants like migrant elderly. The **special needs of pregnant women, together with victims of physical or sexual violence**, are an important element of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, and the Qualification Regulation (Article 32(2)) requires Member States to provide them with adequate healthcare. In general, only a handful of activities have focused on the specific needs of migrant women and there is a need to step up efforts and increase the number of projects targeting health challenges faced by migrant women. As part of the 2025 AMIF Call for proposals for transnational projects on the integration of migrants and protection of children, the Commission will support projects in the area of migrants' access to healthcare, including mental health services and psychological support, and continue to disseminate good practices to Member States and other stakeholders.

5. Housing

5.1. State of play on the implementation of the Action Plan

The EU is facing a housing crisis, with millions of families and young people struggling to find affordable housing. Rents and house prices are soaring. In several Member States, there is also a significant and growing investment gap by public authorities in social and affordable housing[102]. To support Member States in addressing these issues, the Commission will put forward a first-ever European Affordable Housing Plan that will aim at improving the housing situation of all, including but not only migrants'.

Since 2021, the Commission has made available **several sources of funding to support migrants' access to housing**. Under the 2023 AMIF Call for transnational projects on integration, 4 projects focusing on community-sponsorship and housing support were awarded. The Commission also explored the use of financial instruments to cover housing access and tried, together with the European Investment Bank, to identify the possible areas where loans and guarantees could be used to facilitate migrant's access to the housing market[103]. The TSI[104] has also offered technical support to Member States' reception and accommodation capacity for migrants. In 2023, via the ESF+, the Commission published a EUR 15 million call to support innovative projects and policy measures addressing **homelessness and housing exclusion**[105]. Cohesion policy continues to put a strong emphasis on housing investments. As of the end of 2024, the planned support of cohesion policy funds to housing for the 2021-2027 period amounts to EUR 7.5 billion over the period.

[102] Rising housing costs in the EU: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20241014STO24542/rising-housing-costs-in-the-eu-the-facts-infographics

[103] Fi-Compass, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF): https://www.fi-compass.eu/funds/amif#publications.

[104] TSI 2024 Flagship Technical Support Project: https://reform-support.ec.europa.eu/tsi-2024-flagship-enhancing-reception-and-accommodation-capacity-migrants-0_en.

[105] Social innovation practices to combat homelessness, ESF-2023-HOMELESS: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/esf-2023-homeless?tenders=false&frameworkProgramme=43254019.

Together with the national allocations, the total planned support to housing is EUR 10.4 billion. In April 2025, the Commission proposed to double the EU allocations to secure more investments in the area of affordable housing[106]. Part of these investments will also contribute to housing infrastructure and services for migrants and refugees. InvestEU, and Horizon Europe also supported projects targeting affordable and social housing development. Furthermore, the Commission published a Toolkit on EU funds for social housing investment in March 2024[107], which provides case studies on how to use EU funding to improve access to housing for migrants. Some Member States also adopted integrated housing approaches linking policies with other integration actions, especially for those fleeing the war in Ukraine.

Given the magnitude and the importance of the challenges, the Commission committed in its Political guidelines for the next European Commission 2024-2029[108] to enable Member States to double the planned cohesion policy investments in affordable housing. To this end, as part of the Communication on "A modernised Cohesion policy: The mid-term review"[109], the Commission proposed legislative changes to address the growing investment gap by widening the possibilities for Member States to reprogramme under their 2021-2027 programmes towards investments that promote access to affordable housing.

The Commission and Member States have also continued to cooperate and promote mutual learning on **fighting discrimination on the housing market** and **reducing residential segregation**, as well as on **exploring innovative practices to foster inclusion**. In 2022, the Commission promoted mutual learning among central government and local authorities **through a Mutual Assistance Project**. Through the MAP, Austrian and Greek representatives visited non-segregated housing solutions for vulnerable migrants set up by Italy. The **Urban Agenda for the EU Partnership on Inclusion of migrants and refugees** organised study visits[110] and thematic sessions on the reception and accommodation of migrants, with a focus on vulnerable migrants and people fleeing the war in Ukraine. At the February 2023 European Integration Network meeting, co-hosted by the Commission and the Swedish Presidency, Member States discussed housing market discrimination and residential segregation together with lessons learned from housing displaced people from Ukraine and sustainable housing solutions. The Commission has also supported **efforts to promote innovative community engagement towards autonomous housing solutions**, encouraging Member States to promote so-called '**community sponsorship**' programmes[111]. In 2024, the EU Asylum Agency published 'guidelines on the EU approach to

[106] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, A modernised Cohesion policy: The mid-term review, COM(2025)163, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025DC0163

[107] Toolkit on the use of EU funds for investment in social housing and associated services https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8607&furtherPubs=yes.

[108] European Commission Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission 2024-2029 https://commission.europa.eu/priorities-2024-2029_en.

[109] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council - A modernised Cohesion policy: The mid-term review, COM(2025) 163, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025DC0163

[110] The Commission funded two study visits in Berlin and Amsterdam and an expert meeting in Mechelen (Belgium) focusing on reception and accommodation of LGBTQI+ migrants. Members from local and regional authorities visited the Queer Shelter of the State of Berlin, which offers independent housing (flats) to the migrant LGBTQI+ community that faces segregation in the housing market. In Amsterdam, members visited hotels that offer accommodation and social services to Ukrainian LGBTQI+ migrants. In March 2023, a dedicated session of the Urban Agenda was held on 'Building a Sense of Home: Towards Sustainable Housing for Displaced Ukrainians and Other Refugees ' addressing the issues of discrimination and segregation.

[111] Community Sponsorship are public–private partnerships between governments that facilitate legal admission for refugees. Sponsor groups can support the newcomers regarding housing and access to other services.

community sponsorship'[112] that aim to establish minimum quality standards for the different phases of community sponsorship across the EU, thus including recommendations for the provision of suitable accommodation for beneficiaries of international protection. In 2023, the Commission launched the affordable housing initiative[113] as part of the **New European Bauhaus initiative**[114] to ensure social and affordable housing also benefit from the Commission's renovation wave for Europe [115], thereby improving the migrants' living conditions. In response to accommodation needs of people fleeing the invasion of Ukraine, the Commission and the Council presented a 10-points plan[116] on 28 March 2022 to enhance coordination for welcoming refugees and launched the Safe Homes initiative to support private hosting efforts. The **Safe Homes guidance**[117] outlined principles for matching refugees with safe housing and explores sustainable housing solutions like community sponsorship programmes. The 2022 EMN inform on '**Arrangements for accommodation and housing for beneficiaries of temporary protection**'[118] and the 2023 EMN inform on '**Organising flexible housing in the context of international protection**'[119] assess the practices of national authorities to upscale their capacity to provide accommodation whilst anticipating further challenging arrivals of people in need in the future.

To support the **transition toward autonomous housing**, several Member States provided **counselling services** to applicants and beneficiaries of international protection on how to access the private or social housing sectors for autonomous accommodation. Some Member States also reported providing **tailored support to ensure smooth transition to autonomous housing**. In several Member States, including at regional and local levels, opportunities to improve equal access to housing also emerged in connection with antidiscrimination efforts, for instance following the adoption of anti-discrimination or anti-racism plans (Ireland), or through dedicated plans to combat discrimination in housing (Wallonia).

5.2. Remaining challenges

Despite progress in the implementation of the Action Plan, challenges persist in providing adequate housing for all migrants and refugees. Data show that migrants are more likely to live in **overcrowded and substandard housing** compared to native-born residents [120]: more than one in six migrants in the EU live in overcrowded accommodation (a rate that is 70 % higher than for the native-born population). Furthermore, 26 % of migrants live in substandard housing (compared with 20 % of the native-born population). One of the main challenges remains the ongoing **housing crisis and the lack of affordable housing in Europe,** particularly in urban areas and major

[112] EUAA, Guidelines on the EU approach to community sponsorship: https://euaa.europa.eu/publications/guidelines-eu-approach-community-sponsorship.
[113] Affordable Housing Initiative https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/proximity-and-social-economy/social-economy-eu/affordable-housing-initiative_en.
[114] European Bauhaus https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/about/about-initiative_en.
[115] Renovation wave: https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/energy-efficiency/energy-efficient-buildings/renovation-wave_en..
[116] The 10-Point Plan For stronger European coordination on welcoming people fleeing the war from Ukraine: the-10-point-plan-for-stronger-european-coordination-on-welcoming-people-fleeing-the-war-from-ukraine_en.pdf.
[117] Safe Homes guidance: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/safe-homes-guidance_en.
[118] Arrangements for accommodation and housing for beneficiaries of temporary protection: EMN Inform: https://emn.ie/publications/arrangements-for-accommodation-and-housing-for-beneficiaries-of-temporary-protection-emn-inform/.
[119] Organising flexible housing in the context of international protection: EMN Inform, Organising flexible housing in the context of international protection: EMN Inform - The European Migration Network.
[120] OECD/European Commission (2023), Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2023: Settling In, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/1d5020a6-en.

cities[121], that makes it difficult for Member States to guarantee access to housing even in some acute instances to their own population. Similarly, the limited stock of **social housing** leads to long waiting lists and leaves nationals and migrants without housing assistance. Furthermore, although a few Member States reported providing support and counselling services for migrants to find social and affordable housing, this support remains marginal and limited to beneficiaries of international protection. The housing shortage has increased the cost of accommodation in the private market, posing a significant challenge for applicants and beneficiaries of international protection who in many cases cannot afford rental prices or are unable to meet the deposit and guarantee requirements. **Discrimination and administrative challenges** remain in many Member States[122]. Despite the availability of tools and best practices to combat **housing discrimination**, such as non-segregated housing solutions and independent housing shelters, there is a persistent need to raise awareness about their benefits and ensure that these instruments are put into practice. Some local and regional authorities as well as civil society organisations have reported facing **administrative hurdles in accessing EU funds for housing**.

5.3. Way forward in implementing the Action Plan

As per the Political Guidelines 2024-2029[123], the Commission will put forward a **European Affordable Housing Plan** to address the housing crisis. To promote investments in affordable and sustainable housing, the Commission and the European Investment Bank are preparing a pan-European investment platform for affordable and sustainable housing [124]. In addition, the **Social Climate Fund** will be soon rolled-out, which will notably help with renovations and access to affordable and energy-efficient housing[125].

To advance on the implementation of the Action Plan and address existing issues, Member States could allocate more funds, notably through ESF+ and ERDF and efforts to increase affordable housing offers, providing support for transitioning to long-term housing, and offering support to a greater number of beneficiaries. Targeted funding should also aim to alleviate the pressure on vulnerable populations including migrants and people with a migrant background, as well as to expand the social housing stock in line with the Commission's affordable housing initiative.

In addition to this, the Commission will support Member States in improving their reception systems, in line with the **implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum**. The Reception Conditions Directive requires Member States to provide housing for applicants for international protection. However, challenges such as poor contingency planning and limited housing stocks can affect the transition from reception centres to autonomous housing and compliance with the Directive's housing requirements. In accordance with the Qualification Regulation, Member States must provide support and services to applicants even after they receive protection. This includes

[121] Access to autonomous housing in the context of international protection: EMN Inform https://emn.ie/publications/autonomous-housing-in-international-protection-context/.

[122] Access to autonomous housing in the context of international protection: EMN Inform https://emn.ie/publications/autonomous-housing-in-international-protection-context/.

[123] Political Guidelines For The Next European Commission 2024−2029: https://commission.europa.eu/document/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en.

[124] A framework for allowing combining grants and repayable financial support currently developed by the Commission in collaboration with the EIB which will be part of the Pan-European investment platform, will help managing authorities to set up financial instruments to help achieve the doubling of the allocation of Cohesion policy funds for housing: https://www.eib.org/en/press/all/2025-123-eib-group-and-european-commission-lay-foundations-for-a-new-pan-european-investment-platform-for-affordable-and-sustainable-housing

[125] Regulation (EU) 2023/955 establishing a Social Climate Fund and amending Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, OJ L 130, 16.5.2023, p. 1, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32023R0955

facilitating their exit from the reception system. Although there are existing measures to assist in moving towards independent housing, Member States should broaden support services to include those beyond individuals with international protection. In the context of implementing the Pact on Migration and Asylum, the Commission is monitoring the implementation of these legal obligations.

The Commission will renew its efforts to **facilitate access to tools and best practices for Member States, local, and regional authorities** and promote the widespread adoption of inclusive housing solutions and fight discrimination. The Commission and Member States should continue to explore the use of innovative housing solutions such as **community sponsorship programmes** across the EU, ensuring they are tailored to meet the specific needs of diverse communities and contribute to giving access to housing for all. Several Member States have proactively implemented new housing and reception models to welcome individuals fleeing the war in Ukraine. These innovative approaches present valuable opportunities for further exploration and expansion to improve integration outcomes for migrants and people with a migrant background.

6. Horizontal actions

6.1. State of play on the implementation of the Action Plan

The Action Plan includes a broad set of flanking measures that are vital for the success of the sectoral initiatives listed above, including **building strong partnerships, providing funding, fostering participation of the host society, enhancing the use of new technologies and effectively monitoring policies through data gathering.**

One of the priorities under the Action Plan is to finance projects that increase the capacity of national, regional and local authorities to involve migrants and migrant organisations in decision-making processes related to migrant integration. Nine projects started in 2021 and 2022 following the AMIF Union Actions 2020 call for proposals **on promoting the participation of migrants in the design and implementation of integration policies.**

When it comes to **building strong partnerships among various stakeholders**, including local governments, civil society, and the private sector, the Commission has reinforced its collaboration with the EIN, provided targeted funding and capacity building through the Technical Support Instrument, launched a partnership with the European Committee of the Regions for local action support, continued work with the Urban Agenda for the EU Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees, and engaged in regular consultations with civil society and diaspora organisations through the annual European Migration Forum. In 2021, the Commission and the Committee of the Regions established the Cities and Regions for Integration of Migrants Network[126] to support EU cities, regions and rural areas to work on good practices and capacity-building on the integration of migrants and refugees. In 2024 the Commission launched the Partnership of Cities of Equality[127], aiming at addressing specific issues related to equality within cities and taking into account the needs of vulnerable groups, including persons with a migrant background.

[126] Network of Cities and Regions for the integration of Migrants: https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/Pages/cities-and-regions-for-integration.aspx.
[127] Partnership of Cities of Equality https://www.urbanagenda.urban-initiative.eu/partnerships/cities-of-equality.

To include migrants and EU citizens with a migrant background in consultative and decision-making processes, the Commission supported actions to **foster participation and encounters with the host society**, including via the **Expert Group on the views of migrants** in the field of migration, asylum and integration[128], which the Commission consults regularly. Some Member States introduced or reinforced instruments to **involve migrants and migrant organisations in the design of integration and inclusion policies,** thereby supporting the multi-stakeholder approach advocated by the Action Plan**.**

In the view of a progressive transition towards **digitalised public services**, a specific analysis was carried out across Member States focused on the current level of digitalisation and accessibility of migrant integration services[129]. In particular, potential barriers such as language and digital skills, as well as potential lack of internet connection were examined, and good practices identified. Some Member States reported **targeting efforts on ensuring information is made accessible to all**, particularly on official administration websites and on asylum application portals, while including migrants in the process. The Commission has allocated different tools to promote and **finance projects aimed to improve digital skills among migrants and EU citizens** with a migrant background together with tackling potential barriers. The ESF+ has funded several projects to enhance digital skills among third-country nationals and EU citizens. The AMIF Thematic Facility (2023-2025)[130] includes the improvement of migrants' digital skill as one of the main priorities.

Lastly, actions to improve **monitoring progress through evidence-based policies** have been put forward. In 2022, the Commission published a Eurobarometer survey on immigrant integration[131]. The Horizon 2020 programme funded over 40 migration research projects with EUR 100 million. In 2023, the Commission and the OECD released the third edition of the statistical report 'Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2023 - Settling In'[132]. Several topical analyses were also issued through the EMN[133] and on the Migrant Integration Hub[134].

6.2. Remaining challenges

Whatever the level at which integration of migrants is managed, be it centrally or at sub-levels, it is in practice implemented locally. As a result, strong partnerships between national, regional, and local authorities but also with the host society and civil society organisations are paramount. However, there is often a **lack of coordination between the various levels of governance**. **Digital illiteracy** of some migrants, paired sometimes with their lack of knowledge of the host country language, can affect their integration process by preventing them from accessing online basic services, such as, education tools, health records, employment databases, banking. Enhancing the **use of new technologies and digital tools** remains largely an untapped area at EU level, often due to costs constraints faced by Member States, including to increase digital skills of their own

[128] Created in November 2020, the expert group advises the Commission on the design and implementation of migration-related policies. https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/news/ec-expert-group-views-migrants-useful-information-applicants_en.

[129] Digitalising migrant integration services during the Covid-19 pandemic: https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/index.php/special-feature/digitalising-migrant-integration-services-during-covid-19-pandemic-adaptation_en.

[130] Commission Implementing Decision of 23.11.2022 on the financing of components of the Thematic Facility under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and adoption of the Work Programme for 2023, 2024 and 2025, C(2022) 8340 final available at https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-12/AMIF-Work%20Programme%202023-2025_en.pdf.

[131] Integration of Immigrants in the European Union https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2276.

[132] Integration of Immigrants in the European Union https: https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/library-document/settling-report-indicators-immigrant-integration-2023_en

[133] https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-publications/emn-informs_en

[134] https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/whats-new/publications_en

populations, even though a more widespread use of digital platforms could facilitate language learning, access to information, and virtual support networks, empowering migrants to navigate their new environments more effectively. Finally, the design and implementation of successful integration policies should be based on **evidence and collection of reliable data**, but these are often incomplete and not comparable as monitoring practices differ across the EU. Even though **availability of data and knowledge at EU, national, and local levels have improved,** many stakeholders emphasised that an **evidence-based debate on integration is still lacking.**

6.3. Way forward in implementing the Action Plan

Despite existing initiatives in this regard, Member States and the Commission should further extend and empower **multi-governance partnerships**. It is important for the Commission to continue supporting Member States through the **implementation of MAPs in areas identified as important for their integration policies**. The re-launched Urban Agenda for the EU Partnership on the inclusion of migrants and refugees, with an increased number of members reflects this approach, and its work plan will match and complement the actions of the Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion. In the future, the Commission and Member States should further reflect on effective mechanisms to **consult migrant-led organisations in designing and implementing integration-related policies** and put in place regular monitoring mechanisms. Migrants often lack digital skills to use online services. As part of the 2025 AMIF call for proposals for transnational projects on the integration of migrants and protection of children, the Commission will support projects aiming at improving digital skills among migrants and will continue to disseminate good practices to Member States and other stakeholders. Finally, more focus on **evidence-based programmes** could better support integration policies. The Commission already cooperates closely with the OECD and the Member States through the EIN and the EMN as well collects information used to produce EU-wide analyses[135] to provide evidence for policy making on integration. It is important to continue this cooperation. Member States could leverage AMIF and EU funding to enhance the availability of data and knowledge across EU, national, regional, and local levels, with a particular focus on addressing the challenges at the local level and developing expertise in this area. The Urban Agenda Partnership on the inclusion of migrants and refugees will work on collecting data and good practices in the fields of education and labour market integration.

7. Enhancing synergies on the use of EU funds on integration

7.1 State of play on the implementation of the Action Plan

Integration is a long-term process and given its crosscutting nature, it is supported through different EU funds in their respective areas. The Action Plan emphasises the need to provide **increased investments in migrant integration through EU funding under the 2021-2027 Multi-annual Financial Framework** and ensure **better access to EU funds**. In this context, it is useful to recall how different EU funds can contribute to the integration of migrants.

AMIF can be used to support integration measures tailored to the needs of third-country nationals and early integration programmes focusing on education, language and other training (such as civic orientation courses and professional guidance) to prepare their active participation in and their acceptance by the receiving society. The 2023 AMIF call funded 27 new transnational projects on

[135] Migrant integration publications https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/migrant-integration/migrant-integration-hub/migrant-integration-publications_en

migrant education and labour market integration, for a total of EUR 42.5 million. With the support of the EIB and the CEB, the Commission is assessing the potential of financial instruments (e.g., loans) to support the integration of third-country nationals. Such innovative financing methods could allow for a more effective use of public resources. Additionally, according to the data available on Member State programmes in January 2025, Member States have allocated about EUR 1.7 billion of AMIF 2021-2027 EU resources (about EUR 2.25 billion including national contribution) to integration measures, for victims of trafficking in human beings and vulnerable persons, including unaccompanied minors, within the scope of the AMIF specific objective 2 'strengthening and developing legal migration to the Member States in accordance with their economic and social needs, and promoting and contributing to the effective integration and social inclusion of third-country nationals'.

The **ERDF** supports measures for the integration and inclusion of people with a migrant background through investments in non-segregated education, housing, employment, health-, social- and child- care and by fostering access to services, infrastructure developments and equipment. Member States and regions have allocated **EUR 2.9 billion of ERDF EU resources** (**EUR 4 billion including national contributions**) to interventions directly focused on the **integration of marginalised communities and of third-country nationals under ERDF specific objectives 4.3 and 4.4**. Further indirect ERDF support is also available for access to quality and inclusive services. Under the **ESF+**, specific objective (i) is dedicated to promoting the socio-economic integration of third-country nationals, including migrants [136] . These investments notably encompass support for the participation of third country nationals in employment, and social integration, through access to services, housing, measures fighting poverty. To date, EUR 1.1 billion has been allocated to this specific objective, with 10 Member States that have made use of the ESF+ specific objective to program targeted measures for third-country nationals. Apart from that, over EUR 1.4 billion have been mobilised for accommodation, healthcare, employment orientation, medical, social and psychological support in the context of the so-called CARE (Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe) package under the 2014-2020 cohesion policy programmes, to address the situation of displaced people from Ukraine[137].

In addition, the **TSI** and the **Recovery and Resilience Fund (RRF)** disbursed via the Recovery and Resilience Plans (RRPs) also aid Member States in improving integration policies with dedicated calls, reforms and investments. Several RRPs contain measures to support integration of such groups in the labour market, including through active labour market policies, vocational education and training schemes, and incentives for female entrepreneurship. The **Erasmus+** program funds projects for migrant integration in education, while **Horizon 2020** and **Horizon Europe** have supported research on migration, particularly in social inclusion and education. **InvestEU**, with EUR 2.8 billion assigned to social investment, supports migrants and refugees through financial products for education, social infrastructure, and microfinance. Moreover, the 2021 Council recommendation establishing a **European Child Guarantee (ECG)** guides the Member States to provide children in need, including those with a migrant background, with free and effective access to key services, aiming to offset the impact of disadvantage and to prevent social exclusion. All Member States have adopted action plans for ECG implementation by 2030. **EU4Health** has also supported integration via the funding of projects on mental health and

[136] Article 4(1) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1057 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1296/2013, OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, pp. 21–59, http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1057/oj

[137] The so-called 'CARE package' is composed of CARE, CARE-PLUS and FAST-CARE (Flexible Assistance to Territories).

psychosocial support for migrants, access to health care for refugees, and trainings for health and other professionals working with migrants, and making sure the specific needs of vulnerable groups, including migrants, are considered when applying health policies.

To maximise the impact of EU funds on integration and support Member States in establishing synergies between the different source of funding, the Commission organised exchanges with relevant EU funds managing authorities and has provided webinars and toolkits to guide public authorities and civil society on using EU funds for integration. The need to further improve coordination between EU funds relevant for the integration of migrants is one of the points raised by the European Court of Auditors in its special report on integration of third-country nationals in the EU[138]. To support Member States and ensure synergies among the different funds (and namely **ESF+** and **ERDF)**, the Commission published a toolkit in November 2021 to guide stakeholders on using these funds for integration[139]. In March 2024, the ESF+ **Community of Practice on Migrant Integration** hosted an event exploring synergies between ESF+ and AMIF funding. In May 2025, it also organised a follow-up study visit in Italy to visit projects combining ESF+ and AMIF support[140].

The Commission also took steps to further facilitate access to EU funds for actors directly involved in setting up integration programmes and implementing integration measures, and namely local and regional authorities and civil societies organisations. To actively involve local actors in the use of EU funds, under AMIF, a minimum of 5% of the initial allocation to the Thematic Facility shall target the implementation of integration measures by local and regional authorities. In the context of the Member States' response to support people fleeing Ukraine, the Commission clarified that the funding for Emergency Assistance would be delivered 'based on results', including whether Member States channel at least 30% of their share of funding through civil society organisations and local or regional authorities.

Several Member States reported **using different EU funds to enhance the integration and inclusion of migrants**. For AMIF, many Member States have also reported preparing their national programmes in partnership with actors such as regional, local, urban and other public authorities, together with relevant international organisations, non-governmental organisations such as refugee organisations and migrant-led organisations, national human rights institutions and equality bodies, as well as economic and social partners. Some Member States have set up **structural exchanges and consultations** to facilitate collaboration among the managing authorities of different funding instruments at national level, which could be further replicated.

7.2 Remaining challenges

Despite these innovations, at the national level, a **lack of structural cooperation between managing authorities** of the different EU funds level persists in several Member State. In addition, several stakeholders, including civil society organisations, local and regional authorities, and migrant-lead organisations, **report difficulties in accessing EU funds**, despite their key role in the integration process. Such difficulties include bureaucratic burdens and red tape.

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[138] Special report 26/2024: Integration of third-country nationals in the EU | European Court of Auditors

[139] Toolkit on the use of EU funds for the integration of people with a migrant background: 2021–2027 programming period: https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/library-document/toolkit-use-eu-funds-integration-people-migrant-background-2021-2027-programming_en.

[140] https://socialinnovationplus.eu/event/labour-market-paths-synergic-use-of-funds-for-tackling-labour-exploitation-and-vulnerable-migrants-integration/

7.3 Way forward in implementing the Action Plan

To address these challenges, efforts should continue to improve information at national and EU level on the funding opportunities available through the different funds and the requirements to benefit from them and the projects and tools already available. In the future, the Commission should continue to actively promote and encourage Member States to **explore synergies among different EU funds**, namely on funds which are less commonly used in coordination with AMIF, ESF+ and ERDF. Member States should also explore further **synergies between their national programmes and transnational projects** selected by the Commission. An increased coordination between EU funds managing authorities and more cooperation between national governments and local authorities on funding could help local and regional authorities access funds which are crucial for them. Member States should also increase their efforts to make information on funding opportunities more accessible to small local authorities, social economy actors, civil society organisations and migrant-led organisations, who struggle to access funding and resources. Making further use of innovative financing instruments for integration such as community sponsorship schemes, could also facilitate access to funds for authorities that need them. Moreover, the Pact on Migration and Asylum includes links with integration policies (such as access to accommodation and housing, access to healthcare, and access to employment and education for asylum applicants and beneficiaries of international protection) and Member States could support its implementation by using AMIF and other funds. In preparation of the next programming period, the Commission is conducting a mid-term evaluation of the 2021-2027 AMIF, which will take into account early findings of the ex-post evaluation of the effects of the 2014-2020 AMIF, as well as the Impact Assessment carried out for the 2021-2027 AMIF. This evaluation will provide valuable insights on the effectiveness of past programs and guiding improvements, including for integration measures.

8. Conclusion and lessons learnt

Member States continue to face persistent challenges as they try to strike the right balance between the significant pressure on their public services and housing they are subject to, and the importance of supporting integration in order to invest in the long term cohesion of our societies, boost labour market participation which strengthens EU competitiveness, and reduce vulnerabilities in society and their associated costs. In that respect, since the adoption of the Action Plan in 2020, the number of residence permits delivered to non-EU citizens, in particular for employment reasons, has been increasing steadily. Although this requires additional efforts from Member States in ensuring that migrants become fully functional members of their societies, it will help, in the long term, to address labour market shortages and demographic pressures, thereby strengthening the EU competitiveness and making the EU more attractive to global talents.

To address the persistent challenges and maximise the impact of the integration measures put forward so far, the Commission will continue its cross-sectoral approach to supporting integration along the lines defined in the Action Plan and will continue to support Member States and the development of cohesive societies. Special attention will be paid to advance on the integration of applicants for and beneficiaries of international protection with a view to ensure a well-managed and effective migration and asylum policy and effective implementation of the Pact.