



Promoting access to  
employment for migrants and  
refugees

**Eurodiaconia** is a European network of churches and Christian NGOs providing social and healthcare services and advocating social justice.

## Mission

Eurodiaconia is a network of churches and Christian organizations that provide social and health care services and advocate for social justice. Together we work for just and transformative social change across Europe, leaving no-one behind.

## Vision

Driven by our Christian faith, our vision is of a Europe where each person is valued for their inherent God-given worth and dignity and where our societies guarantee social justice for all people, including the most vulnerable and marginalized.

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# Table of contents

<b>Policy Snapshot</b>	4
<b>About this publication</b>	5
<b>Why this publication</b>	8
Labour market characteristics of migrants and refugees	9
<b>Who are we talking to</b>	12
Eurodiaconia's priorities: Targeted and skills-based support making use of the European Pillar of Social Rights	13
Background: The role of the EU in the labour market inclusion of TCNs	23
<b>Case studies</b>	27
MARY – Sammenhang och Egenmakt, Svenska Kyrkan, Sweden	28
Crea Tu Futuro – Diaconía España and Asociación Evangélica Nueva Vida, Spain	30
Bewerber Café – Diakonie Gießen, Germany	31
<b>Conclusions</b>	33
<b>Recommendations at a glance</b>	35

# POLICY SNAPSHOT



This policy paper promotes ideas on how to improve future EU and national efforts related to the labour market inclusion of migrants and refugees, based on an overview of recent policy developments.



Challenges encountered by migrants often relate to the lack of language skills, formal qualifications as well as social and professional networks. Employers, for their part, sometimes lack capacities and knowledge to attain migrants.



Eurodiaconia members have extensive experience in bridging the needs of migrants and employers and supporting the overall inclusion of migrants in European societies through tailored services.



There are significant gaps between EU and third country nationals in labour market outcomes: The employment rate of migrants and refugees is at 67% compared to 73% of native-born. High educated migrant workers are very likely to be overqualified for their jobs. Female migrants, particularly refugee women, have lower employment rates than other groups.



This paper promotes inclusive labour market integration strategies that work for migrants and host communities. Policy makers should address labour market integration of migrants around four principles: Skills assessment starting from the individual talents; targeted support benefiting everyone; strengthened cross-sectoral cooperation and the adequate use of funding.



# About this publication



Eurodiaconia is a dynamic federation of 51 organisations in 32 European countries providing social and health services. Founded in the Christian faith and working in the tradition of diaconal service, Eurodiaconia is committed to inclusive societies, ensuring social protection and quality employment allowing everyone to fulfil their potential. As part of this commitment, the network promotes access to employment for individuals who are perceived to have a lower employability and potentially disadvantaged groups.<sup>1</sup> Regarding third-country nationals (TCNs)<sup>2</sup>, Eurodiaconia has repeatedly advocated for inclusive labour market integration policies alongside access to education for children and adults, and universal access to health, social services and housing support.<sup>3</sup>

*The successful labour market integration is one of the key aspects of the inclusion of migrants and refugees in European societies.*

The successful labour market integration of TCNs is key to achieve their inclusion in European societies, as employment enables them to become economically independent and, therefore, allows them to participate in European societies as self-confident actors. Fast access to employment

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<sup>1</sup> Eurodiaconia, [Strategies to promote access to employment for all people](#), 2018

<sup>2</sup> The term “third-country national” is used following the definition of the European Migration Network and refers to a person who is not a citizen of the EU and not enjoying the right to free movement, European Migration Network Glossary, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european\\_migration\\_network/glossary\\_search/third-country-national\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/glossary_search/third-country-national_en)

<sup>3</sup> Eurodiaconia, [Towards an Effective Integration of Third Country Nationals](#), 2017

and training is an important means to avoid marginalisation and social exclusion. Moreover, the workplace is a particularly favourable environment for integration as it allows for positive encounters between migrants and native-born colleagues, reducing cultural differences and prejudices.

At the same time, effective labour market integration of migrants is perceived to have many positive impacts on European societies. Unlocking their unused potential is one crucial component to tackle labour supply shortages. Effective labour market integration can, therefore, make a substantial contribution to the performance of European economies and the sustainability of social welfare systems in the long term. Particularly in the context of demographic change, the inclusion of migrants into social protection schemes will be important to sustain pension systems in Europe, as the ratio of workers to retirees continues to decline.<sup>4</sup> Overall, Eurodiaconia believes that the benefits of investing in integration of migrants outweigh the short term economic costs.

While there is strong evidence for the benefits of inclusive labour market integration strategies for both migrants and host societies, further action will be required from policy makers, civil society and social partners to connect labour demand to migrant workers. As recent OECD findings<sup>5</sup> suggest that inactive migrants and refugees find it harder to become economically active compared to the native-born, more targeted measures are needed.

Eurodiaconia members, including churches, not for profit welfare organisations and NGOs are engaged in all facets of integration, including the provision of work integration and related social services. Based on their

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<sup>4</sup> Publications Office of the European Union, [Sustainable inclusion of migrants into society and labour market](#), 2019, p.6.

<sup>5</sup> OECD/EU, *Settling In 2018, Main Indicators of Immigrant Integration*, 2018, p.12.



experience, this policy paper takes stock of recent EU policy developments related to labour market inclusion and promotes a set of recommendations on how to improve the labour market integration of TCNs, with a focus on refugees.

The paper is structured into four sections. The following section “Why this publication?” explores the labour market characteristics of migrants and refugees and highlights some reasons behind their disadvantage in the labour market. The section “Who are we talking to?” presents Eurodiaconia policy recommendations to foster the labour market inclusion of TCNs through skills promotion, individual support, cooperation between social partners and civil society as well as the adequate design and use of EU funding in the budget period of 2021-2027.

## Why this publication



In 2020, the conditions to address the labour market integration of TCNs are generally favourable, as European economies have largely turned the page on the 2008 economic and financial crises.<sup>6</sup> However, some of its consequences are still felt on the social front in terms of unemployment and in-work poverty. The European Commission has therefore urged member states to link the upturn to measures ensuring inclusiveness.<sup>7</sup>

European and national efforts for sustainable labour market integration strategies for migrants and refugees should therefore be strengthened. Such efforts should be part of an approach that promotes inclusive societies and allows for tailored support to vulnerable migrants and refugees where needed. Based on an understanding of integration as a two-way process involving migrant and host communities, a framework for labour market integration should allow the migrants themselves, employers and civil society actors to be actively involved and take ownership and agency.

*Eurodiaconia members have a long experience in bridging potential gaps between migrants in search for work and public employment services and employers.*

The next section gives an overview of the labour market characteristics of migrants and refugees, and explores the reasons behind their higher unemployment rates.

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<sup>6</sup> European Commission, [Annual Growth Survey](#) 2019, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 11.



## Labour market characteristics of migrants and refugees

Labour market participation statistics reveal significant gaps between EU nationals and TCNs. According to Eurostat,<sup>8</sup> the employment rate of TCNs is at 67%, compared to 73% for the native-born population and has decreased by 3% over the last decade.<sup>9</sup> When employed, there also is a gap between educational outcomes and the jobs migrants have. In 2017, 34% of tertiary educated third country nationals worked in jobs for which they were overqualified.<sup>10</sup> Foreign-educated migrants are more likely to be affected from over-qualification than migrants who obtained their qualifications in the EU.<sup>11</sup> High-educated refugees might spend a certain time unemployed before finding a job that matches their education, unless they accept overqualification.

Statistics also reveal a gender bias in employment rates of TCNs. Female migrants have lower employment outcomes compared to native-born women and male third country nationals. In relative numbers, this “double disadvantage” of discrimination based on gender and origin means that 54% of women born outside the EU are employed, which is 14% less than

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<sup>8</sup> Publications Office of the European Union, p.5. op cit. note 4.

<sup>9</sup> OECD/EU, 2018, p.10. op cit. note 5.

<sup>10</sup> Publications Office of the European Union, p.16. op cit. note 4.

<sup>11</sup> OECD/EU, 2018, p.12. op cit. note 5.

<sup>12</sup> European Website on Integration, [Integration of Migrant Women. A key challenge with limited policy resources](#), 2018

native-born women and 19% less than male TCNs.<sup>12</sup> Refugee women, for their part, have a particularly low employment rate of 45% and, when employed, are more likely to work part time compared to female EU migrants or native-born women.<sup>13</sup>

There are various reasons behind these figures, both on the supply and the demand side of labour markets. On the supply side, 20% of migrants lack qualifications,<sup>14</sup> in part because they have problems related to the validation of skills. Depending on the economic situation and legislation in the host country, this group may find unskilled or informal jobs relatively quickly. Moreover, refugees may not be able to present the proper identity documents or permits required for starting formal employment and often have only completed interrupted periods of education. Cultural barriers and the lack of social and economic networks may also explain their poor labour market performance. Often the challenges are as simple as being unfamiliar with writing CVs and the job interview process, or concern other practicalities such as dealing with the bureaucracy of opening a bank account. Looking beyond individual skills, good physical and mental health condition and adequate housing conditions are equally important for employability. However, migrants are more likely to suffer from shortcomings in these areas. For refugees, the path to successful labour market integration can be particularly long and result in deskilling due to exhaustive waiting periods and legal insecurity. Given these challenges, the German *Institute for Employment and Research* estimates that the employment rate of refugees increases at half the rate of other migrants.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Liebig, T. and K. Tronstad, [Triple Disadvantage? A first overview of the integration of refugee women](#), OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No.216, OECD publishing, Paris, 2018. pp. 19-23.

<sup>14</sup> Publications Office of the European Union, p.5. op cit. note 4.

<sup>15</sup> Die Zeit, [Flüchtlinge und Arbeitsmarkt](#), 2018

On the demand side, the labour market integration of migrants requires commitment of employers and, sometimes, particular strategies and efforts to recruit and attain third country nationals. The success of labour market integration strategies of migrants and refugees also depends on the economic situation in countries and therefore differs across EU Member States. Notably, European countries have different traditions in welcoming migrants as well as different approaches to service provision that may impact the employment chances of migrants.

## Who are we talking to



The abovementioned figures underscore that third country nationals continue to face obstacles in finding employment and that policy choices are needed to create inclusive labour markets. In this context, this section provides recommendations to policy makers at the European and Member States level to strengthen existing efforts and to update integration strategies where needed. The recommendations are based on the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and reflect the opportunity to substantially increase the access to quality and well-paid employment for TCNs – through the proposed Action Plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights and programmes such as AMF and ESF+. In order to ensure sustainable employment support, emphasis is placed on measures reflecting individual needs and skills promotion. Eurodiaconia and its members believe that it is crucial to maintain and strengthen dialogue and cooperation across all levels of policy making and that the EU upholds its commitment to guide common approaches to labour market integration.

*This paper provides recommendations to policy makers at the EU and Member States level to strengthen existing efforts and to update integration strategies*

The purpose of this policy paper is also to enhance knowledge and understanding among services providers and organisations working with migrants, including the members of Eurodiaconia, on how European and national integration strategies can best ensure the labour market integration of TCNs. Therefore, this section also provides a short overview of the legal framework regarding employment for TCNs and soft power action taken by the EU to foster labour market integration in the context of the increased influx of migrants since 2015.



## Eurodiaconia's priorities regarding labour market inclusion: Targeted and skills-based support making use of the European Pillar of Social Rights

### Foster the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Action Plan for Integration

The European Pillar of Social Rights recalls that everyone regardless of ethnicity has the right to equal treatment regarding employment, and promotes a set of employment related rights that are highly relevant for migrant workers. Moreover, the Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals brought the topic of migrant integration high on the political agenda in 2016. It proposed a set of ambitious actions to be taken by the European Commission and Member States to improve the labour market access for TCNs, such as skills and qualification recognition and “fast track insertion” into labour markets. As new arrivals of asylum seekers have decreased and the focus has shifted from short-term support to sustainable integration, it is time to assess progress made over the last three years and re-boost the ambitions expressed in both policy documents. Against this background, Eurodiaconia calls on the European Commission to:

- Systematically **make use of the mainstreaming goals of the European Pillar of Social Rights** and ensure that its principles become a reality for migrant workers and job seekers. A **potential action plan on the implementation of the Pillar**, as announced in the priorities of the new President of the Commission,<sup>16</sup> should pay attention to supporting TCNs into employment and promote support

for job search and training, as outlined in principle 4. As TCNs are disproportionately affected by low quality jobs and in-work poverty, principle 5 on fair and equal treatment regarding working conditions, principle 6 on fair wages and principle 10 on healthy and safe work environments will be important to promote their inclusion.

- **Continue to monitor and promote balanced economic and social reforms in the context of the European Semester**, consistently promoting the labour market integration of third country nationals adjusted to the socio-economic reality in the respective Member States.
- **Take stock of the progress made under the Action Plan on Integration and develop a potential follow up framework regarding labour market inclusion of third country nationals** focusing on sustainable long-term strategies that assist Member States in strengthening their national integration strategies. Based on an evaluation of integration projects and strategies at local and national levels, a follow up framework should allow for the upscaling and the replication of promising approaches to integration.

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<sup>16</sup> Candidate for the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, [A Union that strives for more. My agenda for Europe. Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2019 – 2024](#), 2019, p.9

## Ensure targeted support according to individual needs

According to the European Migration Network, most Member states had labour market integration strategies in place that target migrants or follow a mainstreaming approach to integration with specific tailored objectives.<sup>17</sup> In general, Eurodiaconia welcomes the increased awareness that is paid to labour market inclusion. However, migrant groups with lower employability are less likely to be among the beneficiaries of mainstreaming approaches. This holds particularly true for some groups of refugees who lack years of formal education and skills, face long asylum- decision waiting periods and suffer from mental health problems. Refugee women were found to have the poorest labour market outcomes, in part because they are not eligible for integration support as family migrants and because of low educational attainments in the countries of origins.

Eurodiaconia calls on the European Commission to:

- **Mainstream the integration of TCNs** throughout all EU policies. In addition, the European Commission should **continue to promote and support Member States in following integrated approaches** to labour market integration, taking into account group- and policy-specific challenges as well as the broader context relevant for social inclusion.

Member States should:

- **Assess whether approaches to labour market integration policies are in fact inclusive for migrants** and remove potential barriers for the access of TCNs. Mainstreaming migrant integration into all social and

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<sup>17</sup> European Migration Network, [Labour Market integration of Third-Country Nationals in Member States, Synthesis Report for the EMN study](#), 2019, p.17.

economic policies will remain crucial to create favourable conditions for the social and economic inclusion of migrants. Where needed, mainstreaming approaches should be complemented by **targeted measures**, especially for TCNs with a particularly low employability, such as some groups among refugees.

- Ensure that national labour market integration as well as migrant integration strategies **mainstream a gender perspective** in order to address the intersectionality of problems experienced by migrant and refugee women. It is particularly important to ensure timely and equal access to integration measures for refugee women and provide affordable and accessible childcare.
- Raise **cultural sensibility** among public employment services and increase their capacities to provide services for all TCNs. Information about migration related issues should be provided in multiple languages to ensure effectiveness.
- Encourage and support employers to **invest in employing and retaining migrants and refugees** and promote existing promising practices.
- Promote **one-stop shop integration models** that allow for the provision of multiple services related to labour market integration through CSOs and other service providers in one single hub.



## Promote skills for migrants and refugees

Job seekers face increased polarisation at European labour markets, which is also a challenge for migrants and refugees. The statistics above showed, that a significant number of TCNs are low skilled or face problems in validating skills and acquiring language skills. While highly qualified migrants are likely to be overqualified for the jobs they perform, unqualified migrants and refugees are likely to be pushed into unstable work or informal work and are insufficiently protected from exploitation. Work in the low-wage sector can be a good opportunity for migrants and refugees to become financially independent; however, this should not impede upward mobility. Refugees, for their part, are affected by deskilling during long asylum procedures and typically possess limited knowledge of the functioning of the European labour market. As a consequence of long journeys and country of origin effects, refugees may lack years of schooling or training, which decreases their chance to find quality employment.

Eurodiaconia calls on the European Commission and National Governments to:

- Continue and scale up efforts to **assess and validate skills**, such as through the promotion of the *EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals*.
- Increase efforts to **improve the assessment of informal skills** and promote best practices for skills assessment. Migrants may be unaware of the skills and talents needed in Europe and therefore skills assessment tools should start from identifying talents and then move on to their recognition and validation.<sup>18</sup>
- **Promote upskilling and language learning on the job**. Often, the relatively small yet specific vocabulary that may be required to perform certain tasks can be taught in a training period, while more

comprehensive language skills will be learned during the job.

- Promote **active support to employment** in line with principle 4 of the Pillar of Social Rights. Ensure that job placements facilitated by public employment services provide **tailor-made support pathways** that are **based on the individual's needs, experiences and expectations**. In order to be sustainable, services should accompany the individuals over time and include **psychological support** to mitigate trauma, if needed.
- Promote **apprenticeships and internships** as a promising practice to boost the self-confidence and skills of TCNs who have little experience in the labour market. **Pre-training programmes** that prepare refugees and asylum seekers for mainstream vocational training are likely to increase their labour market outcomes later.

National Governments should:

- **Promote training for asylum seekers and allow them to work**, especially those who are likely to receive protection, in order to prevent a loss of skills and to prepare them for an independent life.
- **Revise residence rights of asylum seekers who started a training or apprenticeship**, including the possibility to change status and refrain from deporting asylum seekers in training.
- Offer incentives to employers to hire migrants.

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<sup>18</sup> European Commission, European Economic and Social Committee, [4th meeting of the European Migration Forum](#). Summary Report, 2018, p. 6.

## Support cross sectoral cooperation and civil society involvement

The successful implementation of labour market inclusion policies requires commitment of a multitude of stakeholders, such as local, regional and national authorities, employee organisations and trade unions, employer organisations, public employment services (PES), civil society organisations (CSOs) and the migrant communities themselves. Civil society organisations have a particularly close ear to the needs of migrants and, based on this expertise, are well suited to perform a pivotal task in bringing the various actors and perspectives together.

Knowledge sharing and mutual learning among business and employee organisations are needed to improve integration outcomes of third country nationals for various reasons, such as improving skills and qualification assessments, strengthening knowledge on how to attain third country national staff and on how to ensure inclusive professional environments.

Against this background, the European Commission should:

- Maintain close **cooperation with civil society as well as EU economic and social partners.**
- Reinforce the commitment of the 2017 European Partnership for Integration, which include early support, multi stakeholder approaches and ensuring that integration benefits everyone.

These efforts should be paralleled in Member States who should:

- Strengthen **cross-sectoral cooperation across all levels** through institutionalised platforms and ad-hoc partnerships, as this is considered crucial to match skills with labour market needs.

- Support initiatives such as **mentoring or buddy programmes** as one concrete outcome of such partnerships. Mentoring provides TCNs with low threshold information about the functioning of labour markets, creates social bonds and allows for the involvement of locals and fellow TCNs and strengthens intercultural skills of all participants.
- Encourage authorities to foster **cooperation with civil society organisations** in the design of integration strategies. Multi stakeholder involvement is important to ensure the right level of support and civil society organisations can act as bridges between migrants and employers and often supplement the efforts of Public Employment Services.<sup>19</sup>
- **Ensure an environment that allows civil society actors to fully utilise their potential** in assisting migrants, including through dialogue and transparent contracting.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 7.



## Ensure the adequate use of EU funding

The importance of EU funding as an additional tool to implement EU and national integration strategies has grown in recent years. The available funding on migration has been increased remarkably for the post 2020 funding period; notably the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) is to increase by 36% compared to the previous funding period.<sup>20</sup> To deliver for the integration of migrants and refugees, it will be crucial to avoid gaps and overlaps in the design of AMIF (which will possibly be shortened to AMF) and the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and to ensure the adequate use of EU funding by members states. Therefore, Eurodiaconia calls on the EU to:

- Ensure **complementarity between the two major integration funds**, AMIF and ESF+, for example by implementing coordination mechanisms at a national level.<sup>21</sup>
- Ensure that the **social inclusion component of the ESF+ programmes is accessible for migrants and refugees**, as Member States are not obliged to allocate any of the 25% earmarked for social inclusion to TCNs.
- Ensure that the **AMF is foremost dedicated to the development of a coherent EU migration policy**, including the integration of TCNs in Europe at early stages.

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<sup>20</sup> Parry, M. and M. Sapala, 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework and new own resources. Analysis of the Commission's proposal. European Parliamentary Research Service, 2018. p. 7

<sup>21</sup> Joint NGO statement, [The Asylum and Migration Fund: A tool for more humane, transparent and effective asylum and migration policies in the EU?](#)

- **Involve civil society organisations** in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of EU funded action on labour market integration of TCNs.<sup>22</sup>

Member states should:

- Ensure the **adequate use of EU funding** available for migration and integration, including the labour market integration of third country nationals.
- Make additional resources for labour market integration of TCNs available and **see how EU and national funding best match each other** in the long term.

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<sup>22</sup> UNHCR/ECRE, [Follow the Money. Assessing the use of EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund \(AMIF\) funding at the national level](#), 2018.

## Promote social inclusion beyond employment

This paper promotes employment as one of the most important components of migrant integration. However, any policy approach to the labour market inclusion of migrants and refugees should account for the fact that successful labour market integration cannot be isolated from other areas that ensure the wellbeing of migrants and refugees, such as health and social services, quality housing, and access to education. Moreover, community involvement and participation give local communities and individuals a sense of ownership and agency in the process of integration and social inclusion.

## Background: The role of the EU in the labour market inclusion of TCNs

The EU legal framework provides for employment of highly skilled migrants in niches with labour shortages and, on the other hand, allows Member States to regulate (short-term) employment in seasonal and low skilled jobs, including in agriculture and forestry as well as tourism. EU law ensures that TCNs have the same rights as EU citizens and provides for refugees to access labour markets. Directive 2013/33 on *Standards for the reception of applicants for international protection stipulates that asylum seekers should have access to the labour market within nine months after applying for protection*.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the *European Pillar of Social Rights*,

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<sup>23</sup> Official Journal of the European Union, [Directive 2013/33/EU](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection.

endorsed as a soft law in 2017, aims to make social rights and employment related rights more effective for all people legally residing in the EU. The successful implementation of the Pillar's principles in the three areas of equal opportunities, access to the labour market as well as fair working conditions and social protection will also depend on actions, taken with regards to migrants and refugees.

According to the Treaty of the Functioning of the EU (Art. 79), the EU is also entitled to support Member States in their national integration strategies, including through funding, and to support consistency across Member States. In light of the relatively high number of newly settled migrants since 2015, the EU also put forward specific measures to improve the labour market inclusion of migrants. The 2016 Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals promoted integration as a common interest to all Member States and encouraged them to develop or update national integration strategies accordingly.<sup>24</sup> Labour market integration was among the document's five priority areas and the Commission proposed a set of actions, such as a Skills and Qualification Toolkit, which was implemented in 2017 to help national authorities and any potential stakeholder involved in integration to analyse skills and work experience of TCNs. In addition, the plan launched "fast track" labour market integration projects and a special support focus on migrant women. It called on Member States to facilitate access to labour market and vocational training for newly arrived TCNs, including asylum seekers with good prospects of granting them protection.

Member States can make use of several EU funding tools to improve the labour market integration of migrants and refugees, most importantly of

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<sup>24</sup> European Commission, [Action Plan on the integration of third country nationals](#), 2016.





the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the European Social Fund (ESF). Under the proposal for the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021 – 2027, it is envisaged that the AMIF, which will possibly be shortened to AMF, will focus on early integration measures implemented in the first five years after settlement and the ESF, renamed ESF+, should cover funding for long term integration. Thus, both funds are supposed to work in complementarity to ensure labour market integration of TCNs in the long run. In addition, the ESF+ earmarking for social inclusion should allow for a general approach to labour market inclusion, that also benefits TCNs.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Publications Office of the European Union, 2019, p.13. op cit. note 4.

The Action Plan has been paralleled by various initiatives and conferences to foster dialogue between the Commission, civil society, and social partners on labour market related topics. Since 2015, the annual European Migration Forum serves as a platform for exchange between EU institutions and CSOs on migration and integration, including on labour market inclusion.

In 2016, the Commission launched the *European Dialogue on skills and migration* to provide a framework for exchange between economic and social partners on labour migration related topics. In 2017, this platform led to the creation of the initiative *Employers together for Integration*, which aims to highlight employers' actions in support of migrants. In the same year, the Commission and the EU Social and Economic partners signed a *Partnership for Integration* to support migrants and refugees in accessing labour markets through sharing best practices and knowledge. In 2019, the Commission together with Member States organised a Mutual Learning Conference on *Sustainable inclusion of migrants into society and labour market* to discuss promising initiatives related to the labour market inclusion. The event concluded that EU support has not been fully exhausted and that the inclusion of migrants remains a priority.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p.22.

## Case studies



Eurodiaconia members are well placed to provide integration services to migrants and refugees thanks to their historical experience in assisting vulnerable groups. Churches and faith-based organisations are communities in which migrants can be integrated into and find a large network of contacts, which is also relevant for gaining experiences in the labour market. The members of Eurodiaconia are committed to facilitate the labour market inclusion of migrants and refugees through various activities. Many operate social or health care services or social enterprises that constitute opportunities for training or work experience for migrant and refugees. Others operate counselling services with a focus on labour market related issues, and in doing so, are relevant bridges between refugees, employment services and employers.

*The members of Eurodiaconia facilitate the labour market inclusion of migrants and refugees e.g. through counselling services and trainings.*

The following are examples of projects from Eurodiaconia members which are successfully supporting the social inclusion of migrants with a special focus on the labour market inclusion of migrants and refugees.





## MARY – Sammenhang och Egenmakt, Svenska Kyrkan, Sweden

The project *MARY Sammanhang och Egenmakt* (Context and Empowerment) is a cooperation of three parishes in the Diocese of Luleå that targets the needs of long-term unemployed individuals, including both Swedish and third country nationals. The project is based on an agreement between the national employment service and the Swedish National Church and aims to realize and further promote the potential of local cooperation within the Swedish Church.

The MARY (*Meningsfullhet, Arbetsgemenskap, Rehabilitering och Yrkesstolthet*) method was developed by a local Swedish parish as a form of work training in permanent activities. It aims to fully integrate gender perspectives, equality and accessibility in its approach. Each person's individual and unique potential should be unlocked in meaningful employment and in a sustainable society. The participants who are referred to MARY, are individuals far from the labour market and have challenges finding suitable work or studies.

The project started in 2017 and has had a major impact within the church of Sweden. It offers participants a new social network and has delivered successful results, with 80% of 60 participants finding employment, internship or studies afterwards. The project is funded by the European Social Fund.

## Crea Tu Futuro – Diaconía España and Asociación Evangélica Nueva Vida, Spain

Diaconía España and Asociación Evangélica Nueva Vida have years of experience in supporting refugees towards making Spain their new home, including possibilities to find employment. *Crea Tu Futuro* (Create your future) is based on the idea that training and employment support are crucial to ensure the economic independence of refugees. It complements the housing programme *Un Nuevo Hogar* (A New Home) to foster social inclusion through holistic measures.

Both projects were designed by Diaconía España, Asociación Evangélica Nueva Vida and other local faith-based NGOs and churches. Nueva Vida operates *Crea tu Futuro* in the Region of Cantabria and recently opened a new service in Bilbao, Basque Country, in close cooperation with local municipalities and employment agencies. The project consists of weekly group sessions focussing on language learning, specific topics around employment and potential cultural barriers. In addition, individual sessions provide targeted solutions for each participant's needs.

*Un Nuevo Hogar* and *Crea Tu Futuro* were started in 2017 and since then assisted around 180 people in need, with currently 41 people under assistance for training and employment. The Spanish Ministry for Employment and Social Affairs and the European Social Fund financially support the implementation of the projects.



## Bewerber Café – Diakonie Gießen, Germany

The café for job applicants was designed as a meeting place for refugees and asylum seekers in search of employment. Once a week, professional staff and volunteers assist interested migrants with writing job applications and compiling application dossiers. Particular attention is given to the identification of skills and qualifications, providing information on the German labour market and cultural norms as well as preparing the newcomers for job interviews. The rationale behind the project is to empower refugees and asylum seekers to become self-reliant through employment and to reduce their dependency on public support.

The programme is needed due to the relatively high number of young asylum seekers and refugees in the region of Gießen. While many of them are eager to take up jobs and there are labour market shortages, many refugees have little knowledge about employment in Germany and often do not meet the requirements for formal employment. Therefore, the project aims to create a triple win situation, benefiting the migrants, the employers and the municipalities.

The project started in January 2018 and helped between 40 and 50 individuals by the end of 2018. The job café is funded by the Protestant Church in Hesse and Nassau and by the municipality.



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*“Training for employment is a critical competence for social integration in our country, Spain. For us, it is an important part of a process that aims to successfully integrate different languages, different visions of reality, different life stories, and transform all that into a positive force for our country,,*

**Antonia Agudo Gandarillas, Training and Employment Service Assistant, Asociación Evangélica Nueva Vida**

# Conclusions



This policy paper summarised some of the labour market challenges faced by third country nationals that explain their poorer outcomes compared to EU born citizens. Recent findings, however, suggest that the EU initiatives on labour market integration presented in this paper and parallel efforts at national levels have in part been successful. In Germany for example, 35% of the refugees arriving in 2015 had found employment by October 2018.<sup>27</sup> According to the Austrian Integration Report, the number of TCNs in employment increased by 6.6% in 2018, in part because the asylum seekers from 2014 to 2016 have received legal protection and have settled in the country.<sup>28</sup> This paper has developed a set of recommendations to build on these positive trends.

Eurodiaconia calls on the EU and Member States to foster the implementation of the *European Pillar of Social Rights* and its principles most relevant for TCNs, such as secure and adaptable employment, fair wages and safe work environments. In line with the objectives of the *Action Plan on the integration of third country nationals*, the paper promotes targeted support for marginalised groups, including refugees and asylum seekers, as well as active support to employment that is based on skills promotion.

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<sup>27</sup> Of Institute for Employment and Research, [Die Arbeitsmarktintegration von Geflüchteten läuft besser als erwartet](#), 2019

<sup>28</sup> Federal Ministry of the Republic of Austria, [Integration Report 2019](#), p.44

The post-2020 EU funding period will be crucial to continue and upscale existing efforts and, therefore, complementarity between the EU funds on integration and policy goals has to be ensured. The implementation of these goals should also correspond to general efforts related to social inclusion and rights-based approaches. To conclude, Eurodiaconia and its members strongly encourage horizontal and vertical cooperation among stakeholders involved in migrant inclusion in order to achieve outcomes that work for everyone.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AT A GLANCE

The EU should take stock of the progress made under the 2016 **Action Plan for the integration of third country nationals**, that proposed ambitious actions to improve the labour market integration of migrants and refugees.

In line with the **European Pillar of Social Rights**, integration should be mainstreamed throughout all social policies. This should be accompanied by measures to support vulnerable groups and to promote inclusive work environments.

**Active support to employment** should be promoted, including tailor-made support pathways based on the individual needs, skills and expectations. Inclusive Strategies should allow for learning and upskilling on the job.

The EU and Member States should foster **cross-sectoral cooperation** to match the potential of migrants with labour market needs and involve civil society as a pivotal actor between migrants and employers.

In light of the upcoming EU budget for 2021-2027, **complementarity between the EU integration funds** AMF and ESF+ as well as the adequate use of funding for the integration of migrants and refugees must be ensured.

Successful labour market integration cannot be isolated from efforts **supporting the overall wellbeing** of migrants and refugees as well as the active **involvement of local communities**.





WELCOME

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