

## EFEE statement on the Commission 's proposal for a New Pact on Migration and Asylum

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### Introduction

Migration does not represent a new phenomenon in European history: As a catalyst for development, for centuries, it has shaped European societies in many ways profoundly, such as regarding collective identities, ideas and economic activities. Yet, since 2015, Member States have been struggling to cope with large migratory influxes triggered by the politically instable situation in mainly Middle East countries such as Syria. Consequentially, this so-called refugee crisis has slowly but surely resulted in a European one, with Member States losing trust in the EU's values and capability to manage migration and eventually becoming more restrictive towards the reception and integration of refugees. As a response, the Commission now has launched a new proposal for a New Pact on Migration and Asylum on 23 September 2020. The objective of this Pact is to restore trust in the management competences of the EU among Member State and to highlight the value of migrants for the future of Europe's social and economic success on the international forum. In this regard, the Pact introduces a new legislative European framework. Building upon reforms from 2016 and 2018, the framework introduces new regulations also with regards to the internal dimension on migration policies, targeting the integration of migrants into the host society and economy.

We, the European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE) believe that the key to successful integration and social participation is the access to a qualitative and inclusive education from an early start. In this respect, EFEE wishes to provide insights into our position to the Commission's initiative with regards to legal migration in the following. Respecting the Member States' competence towards education and integration, with this statement, we build on our [Vision Statement](#) as well as our [Practical Guidelines](#) jointly developed with ETUCE in December 2019. Furthermore, this statement grounds on the findings retrieved from the evidence-based study "[Promoting effective integration of migrants and refugees in education](#)", published, in cooperation with the social partners, by Professor Nihad Bunar from Stockholm University.

Considering the challenges related to the integration of migrants mentioned in the Communication plan, EFEE is convinced that more educational aspects need to be stressed in the Pact.

First of all, when talking about education contributing to integration, it is crucial to take into account all four key issues, which are:

i. Support-based inclusion

Statistics show that persons born outside of the EU are more likely to be unemployed than those native-born. According to, for instance, a statistic published by Eurostat in 2020, unemployment rates for foreign-born persons aged 20-64 were twice as high as those of the native-born population in 2019. With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and therewith bound additional socio-economic burden on European societies, newcomers see themselves confronted with an even greater risk to be long-term unemployed and socially marginalized from an early start. As a social partner in education, EFEE has committed itself

to breaking such circles of disadvantage and social exclusion by facilitating access to qualitative learning opportunities for all learners at all stages of lifelong learning.

As a strong supporter of the new Child Guarantee and the UN Convention on the rights of the child, EFEE believes that the basis for a fulfilling lifelong learning experience is laid in early childhood. Hence, we stand in for promoting scholarly inclusion from an early age. So that no child is hindered in its cognitive and social development towards becoming not only a skilled future worker but also a responsible citizen. Therefore, we warmly welcome that the Pact recognizes the special vulnerability and therewith bound needs of (unaccompanied) refugee children and aims to provide early assistance to these children to guarantee a swift inclusion into the host society. In order to make this inclusion effective with regards to the future role in society these children will take as citizens and skilled work forces, it is essential to engage these children as individuals with talents, skills and knowledge. Given the traumatic experiences and different scholarly and cultural backgrounds of refugee children, the creation of a welcoming learning atmosphere becomes an essential prerequisite for learning. In this regard, we recommend that temporary scholarly assistance in the form of catch-up classes and after-school programs to these children is performed in their native language by teaching staff such as migrant teachers. We consider this assistance to be a crucial precondition for the child to be introduced to the host society's language which later becomes essential for the later access to the job market. Also, it represents a vital means to prevent a continuation of the disadvantaged situation of refugee children towards their native-born peers and consequentially, reduce the likelihood of future drop-outs and underperformances. Furthermore, the incorporation of migrant children's native language into teaching helps highlighting the value of multilingual competences being beneficial for the host society. Studies show that multilingual people are appreciated for companies especially for their "out of the box" thinking, logical decision-making and effective multitasking skills.

For this reason, we encourage the Commission to promote multilingual education and the use of the native language in primary and secondary education. The success of such programs could be monitored in the framework of local projects as a collaboration work among migrant pupils, their parents, educational staff personnel as well as researchers and policy-makers. What makes such projects valuable for the success of migrant children's scholarly integration is that it puts migrant children and their parents in the role of equal, autonomous actors, actively shaping their inclusion process together with other stakeholders. This therewith implied social recognition represents a crucial feature in the building of mutual trust, being decisive for all future to be taken with regards to integration. Furthermore, in addition to this, such projects help highlighting what integration is about at its core: It is about human bonding and creating mutual understanding on the individual level. In doing so, they make a significant contribution in overcoming xenophobia and discrimination and consequentially, help building more inclusive and open societies with regards to their mindsets.

Also for (young) adult migrants and refugee learners a facilitated access to qualitative education and training opportunities is crucial for a later faster inclusion into the job market. As stated in the Communication plan, this is beneficial for both parties: The migrant as his personal development and well-being is fostered as well as the society's economy as it can make use of the skills and competences the migrant as a work force

brings along. Thus, a fast and effective integration of newly arriving migrants represents a valuable collective investment, strengthening social cohesion. For this reason, it is vital to further remove barriers which hinder migrants and refugee learners to access higher education and vocational training opportunities. One of the greatest barriers in this respect is the still lacking valorization of formal and informal competences of migrants and, in particular, refugees. EFEE highly values the Commission's efforts undertaken in this regard so far, for instance in the form of the EU measures taken such as in the form of the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals and the European Qualifications Passport of Refugees. However, still, many highly skills refugees, including those having enjoyed tertiary education in their home countries, find themselves trapped in jobs for which they are overqualified. This mismatching brings along loss for the individuals affected as well as for host societies and their economies themselves. A major reason for this mismatching is that refugees often cannot access higher educational programs due to a lacking of diplomas or certificates, which document their scholarly achievements in their home countries.

As a consequence, EFEE encourages the Commission to expand their efforts in assessing the skills and competences refugees bring along. Both with regards to formal but also informal education. Especially regarding the latter, the Action Plan should highlight the need to improve the evaluation of informal skills by, for instance, fostering the dialogue of best practices among national stakeholders. In this regard, also the strengthening of the collaborative dialogue between educational institutions of EU member states and developing countries could play a crucial role. We regard this to be vital since, although education is a fundamental global human right, the way educational content is taught is strongly interlinked with the respective cultural and social context. Consequentially, in most cases, the educational backgrounds refugees bring along does not match the expectations higher educations set for accessing their diploma programs. In order to close such scholarly gaps the fastest way possible, the Action Plan should also emphasize the importance of providing qualitative scholarly assistance to migrants. In this regard, the Action Plan should highlight the importance of facilitating access to such assistance especially to female refugees, finding themselves often underrepresented in the scholarly context. Being utterly in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights, the Action Plan, therefore, needs to empower this group of learners too. An example for additional scholarly assistance provided to migrants are language classes which not only foster language but also (digital) literacy skills tailored to the individual learner's needs. As in the case of migrant children, such classes should be taught in the native-language of the migrant learner so that they get access more easily to the cultural and linguistic mindset of the respective host society. Also, the incorporation of their language, representing an important part of the culture of migrants' country of origin, helps migrants in communicating their experiences and skills acquired in a more free and open way. This, as a consequence, does not only foster the learning progress of migrant learners but also the building of understanding and trust between migrants and members of the host society. In this regard, the Action Plan should support educational and vocational training institutions in offering such classes. It ought to do so by, for instance, strengthening the cohesion of existing initiatives that include language training such as the Youth Guarantee. However, in order to ensure effective integration, language training is not enough.

Refugees should not only be regarded as temporary language learners but also be empowered to become future active and responsible citizens of the host society. In this regard, citizenship education becomes of crucial importance. Identities, in general, are complex. This is also true of those of refugees being shaped by the culture, language and experience made in their home countries. Thus, understanding their identity as well as the one of the host society represents a crucial precondition for refugees to succeed in interacting with their new surroundings. In the light of this, the Action Plan should highlight the importance of citizen education and the promotion of therewith bound social dialogue projects, establishing an invaluable link between the host society and refugees. Additionally, assistance with regards to adequate career guidance, taking individual skills, talents and vocational aspirations of the refugee learner into account, should be further strengthened. Preventing mismatching and therewith bound personal dissatisfaction, adequate career guidance is vital to shape inclusive and economically successful societies. In the light of this, we encourage the Commission to highlight the relevance of career counselling for the integration process in its Action Plan. In this connection, the Action Plan should also emphasize the importance of further facilitating the access to such career support opportunities in the form of counselling sessions or internships for migrants.

ii. Professional development of school staff

European societies are becoming more diverse due to the influx of migrants from different cultural backgrounds. Consequently, also the educational system needs to undergo fundamental changes in order to be able to guarantee a high standard of qualitative education for their learners in the future.

The previous chapter point illustrated that shifts in societal mindsets are crucial for the integration of refugee and migrant learners. With regards to triggering such shifts, educational staff and their training play a crucial role. Teachers, trainers, school leaders and other educational personnel do not only convey knowledge. They are also as a daily direct contact person for their students and consequently, have an impact on for their students' well-being and individual development towards future responsible citizen in society. As aforementioned, newly arriving migrant learners bring along a package of different scholarly and cultural backgrounds, traumatic experiences but also a lot of potential regarding skills and competences. In order to be able to foster the learning process of refugee learners as a whole in the best way, school staff needs to receive an adequate special training beforehand. Hence, the Action Plan needs to highlight the importance of further strengthening the aspect of multicultural sensitization with regards to refugee learners in the curriculum of both initial and further training of school staff.

Another significant point to be emphasized in the Action Plan is the faster and stronger integration of newly arrived migrant teachers in the host society's education system while also maintaining the agreed EU standards of best practice for registration. Migrant teachers represent a mostly untouched source for host societies of which school staff as well as migrant and non-migrant students benefit in two ways. First, they are familiar with the native language and cultural knowledge of refugee students as well as their parents. As such, they represent a valuable support for their students' integration process into society through formal and non-formal learning. Also, by introducing their culture, they foster multicultural understanding as well as non-discriminatory behavior of native-born

students towards their non-native peers. Secondly, as skilled and experienced professionals, the deployment of migrant teachers represents an opportunity to overcome teacher shortage in many European countries. Consequentially, this could lead to a further enhancement of the quality of teaching and learning for the benefit of both teachers and students. In the light of this, EFEE highlights the importance of attracting qualified non-EU educational and training personal to the EU. As such, we value the new sets of measures taken in the Pact, consisting of new instruments such as the EU Talent Pool but also revised ones such as the EU Blue Card Directive and the Directive on Students and Researchers. However, despite these reforms, major obstacles hindering migrant teachers or migrants aspiring to become teachers or trainers from accessing the educational system of the host society continue existing. Due to missing official documents or an existing gap between the training standards between the homeland and host society, the (teaching) qualification of migrants is often not recognized by the host society. In the light of this, we encourage the Commission to emphasize in its Action Plan the significance of strengthening the cooperation between homeland and host society educational institutions regarding the recognition of previous credentials and experiences of migrant teachers. Also, if needed, the Action Plan should support the provision of assistance to migrant teachers in order to close knowledge gaps with regards to both formal and informal education, hindering them to perform their profession in the host society. This includes trainings in the main language(s) spoken and written in the host society. Equally important to this are trainings in the framework of which migrant teachers or aspiring teachers in education and training familiarize themselves with the cultural mindset of the host society, being shaped by, for instance, customs, history and the rule of law.

iii. Strengthening of the social dialogue: encourage dialogue and promote greater synergies in governance related to integration

What makes integration complex and multidimensional is that it touches upon many different policy fields such as education, employment and asylum. Consequentially, it involves a wide range of different actors with needs and interests: EU institutions, regional and local governments, agencies, voluntary organizations and last but not least the migrants themselves. Therefore, actions aiming to make the integration of third-nationals more effective, require a people-centered approach. We need to empower people.

As a social partner, we, therefore, would like to highlight the role of the social dialogue in this regard. Through the direct exchange of information and best practices, the social dialogue creates collective understanding and trust among involved stakeholders. Moreover, as a problem-solving approach, it triggers a constantly ongoing process of mutual learning with new ideas and approaches. In the light of this, we warmly welcome the Commission's commitment in the Pact towards the social dialogue. As an example, the Commission highlighted in its paper the role of already existing social dialogue platforms foreseen by the Action Plan on Integration 2016 such as the European Integration Network (EIN) as well as the European Partnership for Integration. However, in order to guarantee effective integration of migrants in the future a further strengthening of the social dialogue in the form of new projects is necessary. Whether integration turns out to be effective or not in the end becomes visible especially on the regional and local level. However, still,

many European local authorities in especially rural areas, such as schools and other services, state that they feel still left alone when it comes to the integration of migrants. Consequentially, what is needed is a strengthening of vertical dimension of the social dialogue, for instance with regards to funding. We, therefore, call the Commission to highlight in its future Action Plan on Integration, the importance of the further extension of the cooperation of the European and national level with the regional and local level. Furthermore, integration is also a two-way process. In order to prevent social marginalization and foster personal thriving in a non-discriminatory atmosphere, the collaboration between migrants and the host society is essential from day one. In the scholarly context, an open and respectful dialogue is vital for the successful integration of both parents and students. For this reason, the Commission should encourage governments setting up such projects and ensure that recognition in the form of attention is given to participants.

iv. Greater synergies of European funds and more need-based approach with regards to their distribution

In order to be able to empower all stakeholders in education aiming for a successful integration of migrants into society, effective investment is an essential precondition. In this regard, we welcome that the MFF 2021- 2027 has included the integration of migrants as a focal point.

Summarizing the aforementioned points, we would like to define the term effective investment in more detail:

- **Effective integration through education is multidimensional**, being interconnected with other policy fields such employment, housing and asylum. In order to avoid duplications in spending, we, therefore, support the Commission in its effort to ensure better coordination and complementarity among the following EU-funds with regards to migrants early and long-term integration. This includes main instruments such as the Asylum and Migration Fund (AMIF), the European Social Fund Plus (ESF +), Erasmus + but also others such as the Child Guarantee and therewith following Youth Guarantee.
- **Effective and fair integration through education for all stakeholders involved requires cooperation and mutual learning through social dialogue at and among all levels of multi-governance.** In order to achieve efficient and inclusive integration through education, cooperation and therewith bound communication across all levels of governance is essential. Ranging from the international to the local level. As aforementioned, the international level, in the form of the communication with educational partners in developing countries, has a considerable impact on the success of the scholarly integration of migrants in host societies. Hence, EFEE welcomes the Commission's efforts to strengthen dialogue between the EU and international partners, such as the African Union with regards to attracting new skilled talents to Europe. However, as for every healthy partnership, a balance between given and take is crucial. With the influx of skilled migrants to Europe, simultaneously, most countries of origin experience a serious loss of workforce, putting an additional burden on their economic growth. We, therefore, acknowledge, the Commission's efforts to provide migrants' home countries

with assistance, for instance, in the framework of the intra-African mobility scheme. Nevertheless, what still is lacking is an efficient financial EU-support of VET related school projects in African countries, such as Cape-Verde, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique. We, therefore, encourage the Commission to design a funding model similar to the one for European VET schools, with local authorities and European companies actively being involved.

Regarding the national level, especially national governments play a leading role when it comes to promoting integration with the social dialogue. As a consequence, we would like to highlight once more the importance of a sufficient need-based financial support in order to empower national governments. In this regard, we, as social partners, encourage the Commission to emphasize in its Action Plan the need to continue providing substantial funding for projects promoting national peer national learning through the social dialogue.

- **Effective integration through education is, above all, local.** Responsibilities regarding educational matters are often shared between the regional governments and the cities in Europe. Yet, many European cities report that they have issues detecting sufficient funding opportunities for assistance services, such as additional language or vocational trainings for newly arrived migrant learners. One reason for this is, that cities do not have direct access to, for instance the AMIF fund. Another reason is that their needs often do not correlate with the priorities set by the government. Consequentially, what is needed is a greater involvement of cities into the funding process and evaluation. The access to funds needs to be facilitated according to the individual needs of European cities. Also, EFEE strongly support the implementation of an EU-wide quality monitoring mechanism of local educational projects. In this regard, representatives of the local (school) community could assess the effectiveness of such projects and provide feedback to the Commission themselves.