

The EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 – Policy Brief

On 24 November 2020, the European Commission published its “Action Plan on the Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027” which outlines objectives and actions to foster integration and inclusion. The package includes the following documents:

- [Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027](#)
- [Staff Working Document](#)
- [Press release](#): Inclusion for all: Commission presents Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027
- [MEMO](#): Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027: Questions and Answers
- [Factsheet](#): EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion
- [European Website on Integration](#)
- [Testimonials from AMIF-funded integration projects](#)
- [Views of migrant experts](#)

Clear recognition of cities as key stakeholders

In October we submitted our [key points](#) on behalf of the WG Migration & Integration to the Commission’s [public consultation](#) in the preparation of the Action Plan. The EU Action Plan reflects many of our key advocacy points, such as:

- Easier access for cities to EU funding through increasing involvement in national programmes and specific national funding calls for cities
- Strong involvement of cities in multi-governance partnerships
- Clear recognition that cities play a key role in welcoming and integrating newcomers.

More generally, the document is outspoken about fostering social cohesion and building inclusive societies with migrants and EU citizens with a migrant background playing a key role in the European economy and society. It characterises integration as a two-way process that relies both on the host society creating opportunities for economic, social, cultural, and political participation; and on migrants that have rights and responsibilities in their new country of residence.

The following key principles of the Action Plan provide the backbone to its initiatives and actions:

- Inclusion for all
- Targeted support where needed
- Mainstreaming gender and anti-discrimination priorities
- Support at all stages of the integration process
- Multi-stakeholder partnerships

The Action Plan is divided into actions on four topical areas (education, employment, health and housing) and five cross-topical areas (partnerships, EU funding, host society participation, new technologies and digital tools, and monitoring).

Sectoral areas and actions

Education and training

The Commission sees education at all levels and ages as a foundation for successful integration and the school environment as a potentially inclusive context to support migrant children and fight segregation. This will also be picked up again in the upcoming EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child which wants to ensure that all children, regardless of origin, ability, socio-economic background, legal and residence status have equal access to rights and protection. The following actions are amongst those mentioned:

- A new toolkit with practical guidance on inclusion in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in the beginning of 2021
- Targeted support for teachers and youth workers to deal with diversity in classrooms and support the integration of young migrants
- More cooperation between national authorities in charge of integration and national centres for the recognition of qualifications
- Support transparent recognition practices of qualifications of refugees through the [Erasmus Programme](#), the [Europass](#) portal and through the [European Qualifications Framework](#)
- Funding and exchange of practices with member states to develop accessible language learning programmes

Employment and skills

The Commission recognises that migrants make up a significant part of the EU's workforce, and have highly needed skills but often face difficulties in finding jobs according to their skills level. To address these issues, the Commission wants to:

- Strengthen cooperation at EU, national and local level between labour market actors and migrants through exchanges and peer-to-peer learning
- Provide more support, easier access to financing, training and advice to migrant entrepreneurs through inclusive entrepreneurship under [InvestEU](#)

- Increase the participation of migrant women in the labour market
- Accelerate the assessment of migrants' skills, and support upskilling and reskilling, also through the [EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals](#)

Health

The Commission highlights insufficient access to healthcare as a major obstacle to integration and inclusion and names the COVID-19 pandemic as a key factor in shedding light on inequalities in this area. To tackle this, the Commission wants to:

- Promote access to health care services for migrants through funding dedicated projects under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and inclusion actions under the upcoming Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme
- Work with member states via the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)
- Support exchanges between member states on prevention and health promotion programmes specifically targeting migrants and access to mental health and rehabilitation services

Housing

The Commission clearly recognises the important role local authorities play in promoting inclusive housing solutions that are a key determinant of successful integration and foster interactions between migrants and host communities. It also underlines that autonomous housing for asylum applicants with a high likelihood to be granted protection can speed up their integration process. The following actions are amongst those mentioned:

- Together with member states promote adequate and affordable housing through EU funds such as the ERDF, the ESF+, the AMIF and InvestEU
- Promote mutual learning between member states, cities, villages and regions on fighting discrimination on the housing market and reducing residential segregation through the European Integration Network, the Urban academy for integration and the AMIF
- Promote models of autonomous housing for asylum applicants

Cross-sectoral areas and actions

Strong partnerships for a more effective integration process

The Action Plan acknowledges that integration involves many stakeholders and requires an empowerment of both migrants and the host communities. The Commission wants to create strong and long-term multi-stakeholder partnerships at various levels of governance, building on, for instance, the [Urban Partnership](#) on the inclusion of migrants and refugees, in which Eurocities and several of our member cities are partners. Moreover, it also underlines the need to ensure that all levels of governance, including the local level, are fully involved in designing and implementing integration strategies. To this end, the Commission wants to support local authorities through:

- Providing targeted funding and capacity building to Member States to promote coordination between key integration stakeholders at national, regional or local levels
- Including local authorities in a new partnership with the Committee of the Regions for political dialogue and learning exchanges
- Expand the [Urban academy](#) (proposed by the Urban Partnership) on integration into a capacity-building programme for policy makers and practitioners
- Strengthening inter-religious dialogue and supporting cities in preventing radicalisation
- Capacity building to involve local communities more in designing and implementing integration measures

Funding opportunities under the 2021-2027 Multi-annual Financial Framework

Several EU funds support integration and inclusion actions at the local level. The Commission recognises that local authorities play a crucial role, but often lack resources for integration measures or have difficulties accessing EU funding. The Commission therefore wants easier access to EU funding for cities through better information and an increased involvement in the preparation, implementation and revision of the relevant national programmes under shared management. Amongst other things, the Commission will:

- Propose an [EU Child Guarantee](#) to fight poverty and social exclusion among the EU's most disadvantaged children, including children with a migrant background
- Develop a series of webinars targeting public authorities and civil society organisations and a toolkit on the use EU funds for integration in the 2021-2027 programming period
- Encourage member states to use EU funds to promote integration, according to identified needs at national and local level
- Encourage member states to ensure a coordinated approach at national, macro-regional, regional and local level in the programming and implementation of EU funds contributing to integration and inclusion
- Encourage member states to facilitate access to EU funding for local and regional authorities through specific calls for proposals for local and regional authorities.

Fostering participation and encounters with the host society

The Action Plan underlines that both migrants and the receiving society need to be involved to develop welcoming, diverse, and inclusive societies. This also applies to involving them in decision-making processes to ensure that integration policies are more effective. Among other things, the Commission wants to support the following:

- Finance projects to increase the capacity of national, regional and local authorities to involve migrants and migrant organisations in decision-making processes
- Support the development of community sponsorship programmes for beneficiaries of international protection across the EU

- Launch an integration award for schools, local communities, artistic and cultural organisations, and sports and youth clubs to recognise their contribution to integration and inclusion

New technologies and digital tools for integration and inclusion

The Commission acknowledges that technological innovation can facilitate access to integration but also widen inequalities if, for instance, digital public services are not accessible or inclusive. The following actions are amongst those mentioned to tackle this:

- Promote and finance projects on improving digital skills among migrants and EU citizens with a migrant background
- Encourage member states to ensure digital public services are inclusive by design, easily accessible and adapted to a diverse population and that migrants are consulted in their creation and further development

Monitoring

The EU also wants to introduce several monitoring initiatives to gather evidence about integration outcomes and policies. Among these are a new Eurobarometer on integration and regular progress reports. The Commission also wants to improve data gathering on integration outcomes, including at the local level.

What is next?

The Commission will monitor the implementation of the actions put forward in the plan and conduct a mid-term review at the end of 2024. It also plans to develop an interactive online platform, which will be hosted on the European Website on Integration, to monitor progress and regularly report to the European Parliament and the Council.

Eurocities will continue to provide support and exchange of best practices between cities. We will continue to foster capacity building and highlight the key role and profile of cities in integrating migrants and creating inclusive societies with equal opportunities for all.



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