



**PES**

SOCIALISTS &  
DEMOCRATS

# **PES vision for an inclusive European society**

Conclusions of the PES Migration and Integration Network, 24 March 2022

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## FOREWORDS

**Sergei Stanishev**

PES President

"It is up to all of us to really transform migration – often perceived as a problem – into an opportunity for all involved"

The European Union is facing challenging times. In the recent years we lived through the refugee crisis of 2015, the Covid-19 pandemic and now the war in Ukraine with all its consequences. As progressives, we realise that today more than ever we have to stand united, promote our values and lead by example.

Integration and inclusion are all about living together, sharing public spaces and public services, actively participating in society. Inclusion entails rights and reciprocal obligations.

Migration has always existed, and with the right policies, it is a great source of diversity and opportunities for all. Europe especially is a continent of migration, within our premises as from other continents. Everywhere, successful integration and inclusion have made our societies blossom. Diversity enriches the EU, culturally and socially. Cultural diversity brings new perspectives and experiences, it allows for creativity to emerge and for progress. Economically, Europe is an ageing continent. People with a migration background play a key role in reinforcing our economies. Diversity and inclusion make societies more open and resilient to change.



Integration and inclusion are an investment. As social democrats, we stand for empowering integration and inclusion policies, which benefit both people with a migration background and the welcoming societies. We address the challenges and built on the benefits. Integration and inclusion mean engaging the whole of society. Together, with all levels of government, civil society, social partners and citizens, we can create the best conditions to facilitate the full and active participation of every member of society. As progressives, we value diversity and participation is at the centre of our family's principles.

Inclusion also implies the protection of rights, equal opportunities, reciprocal obligations and mutual respect. The European Union was born with the idea of unity and inclusion and founded on the values of freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human dignity and human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These fundamental values are the cornerstone of our progressive narrative on inclusion. They are both rights and duties for all parties involved.

As progressives, we look at the future. Societies where everyone can enjoy the same rights and can actively participate. Our final goal is to create a sense of belonging for all. Together we can do more.



## **Carina Ohlsson**

Chair of the PES Migration and Integration Network,  
former President of Social Democratic Women

As chair of PES Migration and Integration Network (MIN), I had the privilege to witness the ambition with which the members of the Network, members of our political family, and civil society organisations engaged to discuss and develop new ideas to make our societies more inclusive and increase the wellbeing of all residents. I want to thank all the people involved in this common endeavour for their excellent and hard work on this publication. The many discussions within the PES MIN Network fed into the formulation of stronger and more progressive policy proposals on inclusion.

We started the process during the Covid-19 pandemic which highlighted the barriers many people with a migration background face. But the health crisis also revealed another truth, the fact that the contributions of migrant workers are vital to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. We must keep informing our citizens how much Europe depends on migration, and the contributions of people with a migration background.

During the process of working on the publication, the war in Ukraine broke out. Our work and this publication became all the more relevant. The sudden arrival of a large number of newcomers can put an additional strain

on public spaces and public services. This is why we invest in strong public services and policies, to support and promote a long-term solidarity approach. Our progressive family always have been at the forefront fighting xenophobia, racism and discrimination. As socialists and democrats, we work hard to further develop a European Union that is fit for today's world, one that strengthens social cohesion, where diversity becomes a source of mutual enrichment rather than a factor of division.

Learning the local language and finding a job are key steps in the inclusion in a new society. We must strengthen and continuously support programmes and measures related to education, skills and language training, in accordance with the needs of specific groups. As a woman and former President of the Social Democratic Women in Sweden, I would like to underline the importance of the engagement of women with a migration background. The ability of women to fully participate in social, economic and political life makes societies more cohesive and resilient.

I strongly believe that the readers will find tools in this publication to strengthen their policies on inclusion that will help built participative, vibrant and resilient societies.

## Yonnec Polet

PES Deputy Secretary General

For us, Party of European Socialists, inclusion is the foundation of a resilient society and diversity the engine of progress. As a political family, we all share the same ambition. Through our commissioners, our elected representatives in the S&D Group, our governments in the European Council, trade unions, members in the CoR and local representatives, we work hard to implement policies that improve the lives of all Europeans, including people belonging to minorities. Our policies are reflected in our actions. Our representatives in the S&D Group have called for a Child Protection Package to support the integration of the millions of children fleeing Ukraine. Our colleagues in the PES Group in the European Committee of the Region's European called for an EU Deal for Housing to support inclusive housing and fight segregation. The Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE) initiative launched by PES Commissioners Elisa Ferreira and Nicolas Schmit helps Member States financially in welcoming people fleeing the war in Ukraine. Our local representatives work hard every day in all areas of civic life to improve the wellbeing of all citizens. With the Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 of our progressive Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, the PES family has additional tools to take concrete steps towards an inclusive and resilient EU society.

People arrive and build their lives in cities and villages. We can all see the day-to-day challenges and the relevance and necessity of our work. Social cohesion is not



only combating social exclusion but is also about building trust between and within different groups of society, investing in and engaging communities, building partnerships and finally define a new inclusive identity. Already in 2018 with our PES Resolution “Equal societies: For fair and progressive asylum and migration policies that work for all”, we proposed a European integration fund which local authorities could apply for directly and that benefits both newcomers and the welcoming communities.

This publication reflects the many exchanges we have had in the PES Migration and Integration Network. Thanks to the work of the chair and all the participants, we contribute to pushing forward the policies and achievements of our political family. The diverse group of participants and experts, from the European level, represented by our commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson, the elected representatives of the S&D Group in the European Parliament and the PES Group in the European Committee of the Regions, to the local level, represented by many of our mayors, brought new perspectives and insights to the document. The knowledge and experiences shared by the civil society organisations and trade union were of crucial value. We invite the readers of this document to join forces. We all have a role to play.



# 1 Introduction

Inclusion and participation are crucial factors for the wellbeing of each resident. Inclusion is about all of us, it is about being part of a community. It is about empowering each citizen, regardless of their socio-economic background, geographical location or origin, to be able to effectively exercise their rights, have access to equal opportunities and security, contribute to society and at the same time respecting fundamental European values. As Socialists and Democrats, we are leading the fight for equality for all. Fundamental values such as respect for human rights, human dignity, the rule of law and democracy are the cornerstone of our progressive narrative on inclusion. In this process, these values are both rights and duties for all parties involved.

Inclusion is a dynamic and collective endeavour, in which all of us have a role to play. An inclusive society where everyone can participate makes our societies thrive.

Globalisation can bring people closer, but it also strengthens the need for inclusive societies. An inclusive, cohesive and welcoming society strengthens social cohesion and is crucial for the successful inclusion of third country nationals. Successful integration and inclusion can potentially help strengthen the economy, generate new jobs and help maintain our welfare system, while diversity can spark social innovation and growth. However, if migration is not well-managed and third country nationals are not included, this could lead to a series of difficulties. This means everyone should be given the opportunity to participate. Persisting challenges remain concerning access to basic services, education, employment and social inclusion. Questions arise on how to address the rights and duties of all residents; access to services, to social security, to education and the labour market, redistributive policies, civic and political participation

and citizenship. Racism, discrimination and gender inequality continue to plague our societies, urging us to reach a synthesis by defining a new inclusive identity.

The Covid-19 pandemic cruelly revealed major gaps in how some of our societies are organised, in how they care and provide or not for their most vulnerable residents, and how conservative forces are exploiting a global crisis to backtrack on inclusion, solidarity, gender equality and fundamental rights<sup>1</sup>. Migrant and other minority groups were disproportionately represented in employment sectors hardest hit by the sanitary crisis and the successive lockdowns, either due to closures or because they worked on the frontlines in perilous conditions. Outside of the labour market too, existing structural and institutional barriers have led to a disproportionate impact of the crisis on migrants and minority groups. This underlines the urgent need for more inclusion and less segregation. Inclusion is crucial in order to prevent inequalities among communities and the ghettoisation and exclusion of specific groups from the rest of society.

At the time of writing, we are witnessing an unprecedented aggression and military invasion from Russia in Ukraine. The crisis is unfolding with unforeseeable consequences. It is however already clear that it is the largest military conflict in Europe since World War II. Several consequences of the war in Ukraine are mentioned in this paper, especially in light of the humanitarian crisis. This publication is all the more relevant for the short- and long-term inclusion of refugees fleeing the conflict in Ukraine, that will depend of the duration of the conflict.

Since the end of February 2022, the escalation of conflict in Ukraine has caused destruction of civilian infrastructure, many civilian casualties and has forced

# THE INCLUSION OF PEOPLE FLEEING FROM UKRAINE

people to flee their homes seeking safety. According to UNHCR<sup>2</sup> in three weeks, more than 3.2 million refugees from Ukraine crossed borders into neighbouring countries, more than half of them are children. An additional 6.5 million people have been displaced internally within the country. Over 12 million people have been affected in the areas hardest hit by the war within Ukraine. The United Nations estimates that more than four million Ukrainian refugees may need protection and assistance in the coming months. Moreover, the background of people coming to the EU is changing. The first people arriving were those who had relatives or friends, now more people are coming who have fewer pre-existing contacts and less resources.

The solidarity of Member States and their residents towards those fleeing Ukraine is unprecedented. We salute Commissioner Johansson's efforts and the implementation of the Temporary Protection Directive which is an important first step for refugees to access integration services. The mobilisation of aid from citizens, civil society and the private sector is remarkable but we do not know how many people still will come to the EU and how long they will stay. Member States will face challenges in housing, health care, education and labour market integration etc. Poland alone has received 2.1 million of Ukraine refugees in 3 weeks; 1 million of them are children. We must make sure that the European hospitality does not decrease over time but instead becomes the first concrete step towards the implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum based on solidarity and responsibility sharing.

**The EU unanimously condemned in the strongest possible terms Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine. The condemnation was echoed by our comrade, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs, Josep Borrell, who strongly denounced the war crimes committed in Ukraine by the Russian armed forces. Our political family strongly support the EU's unprecedented sanctions on Russia.**

**Europe is facing its fastest refugee crisis since WWII. The EU is helping people through humanitarian aid, emergency civil protection assistance, support at the border, as well as a clear legal status allowing those fleeing the war to receive immediate protection in the EU through the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) proposed by our progressive EU Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson. To ensure national asylum systems do not become overwhelmed and that people enjoy the protection they deserve, the EU unanimously and in record time agreed to activate the Temporary Protection Directive that offers immediate, temporary protection and a clear legal status to millions of displaced persons from non-EU countries and those unable to return to their country of origin. The TPD offers rights to welfare support, access to the job market and education. It is a strong example of European solidarity put in practise. We should continue on this path and move towards an EU common asylum and migration policy based on solidarity and responsibility sharing as proposed by Commissioner Johansson in the Pact on Migration and Asylum. The Commissioner furthermore initiated**



a 'Solidarity Platform', where Member States can exchange information about reception capacity. The platform also provides a dedicated coordination platform for transfers to third countries and EU Agencies are supporting Member States on the ground. We reiterate that all people fleeing the conflict in Ukraine must be allowed to cross the border, regardless of their nationality. According to the Commission, more than 160 000 third country national have been evacuated and fled from Ukraine to EU Member States. The EC is cooperating with the countries of origin and Frontex is assisting people to go back to their home countries.

On behalf of Commissioner Johansson, the European Commission has presented operational guidelines to help those arriving to have consistent and effective level of rights and support the Member States to assume their new responsibilities. The operational guidelines further include a specific chapter on children.

The protection and wellbeing of children has always been a top priority for our family. Russia's brutal attack on Ukraine has a devastating impact on children's lives. We need to protect children from exploitation, abuse and human trafficking. As mentioned in the publication, we must provide a continuum of protection, care and support for all children, safe and suitable housing and enhance early integration through swift access to education and adequate healthcare, including psychosocial care. Thanks to the call of the S&D Group, the Commission has presented a new package dedicated to the protection of children fleeing the Ukraine war. Amongst others the Commission is supporting and funding access to psychosocial care and basic services, supporting the appropriate reception and care for orphans and children with disabilities and setting up an EU Education

Solidarity Group for Ukraine to identify the needs of Ukrainian children and to support Member States who host them, including peer learning and policy guidance<sup>3</sup>.

Our comrades in the S&D Group have called for a Child Protection Package<sup>4</sup> to support the millions of children fleeing Ukraine and in Ukraine. The package is based on the UNCRC, the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child and the European Child Guarantee to ensure that a children's rights perspective is mainstreamed in all relevant policies and funding connected to the war in Ukraine.

Regions and cities all over Europe are mobilising themselves to help refugees. The PES Group in the European Committee of the Regions started a collection of best practices of its members, cities and regions on actions of solidarity (showing of flags, illuminating of buildings in Ukrainian colours, free public transport, etc.), the welcoming of refugees and other support actions on the ground<sup>5</sup>.

Our friends from SOLIDAR have called upon the European Commission, the European Council and all Member States to, amongst others, continue to show united and coordinated solidarity with all refugees arriving and avail the resources necessary for a dignified reception defined by rights to all refugees<sup>6</sup>.

All these inclusion measures need appropriate funding. The European Council endorsed a legislative proposal on Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE) put forward by PES Commissioners Elisa Ferreira and Nicolas Schmit. The proposal will allow a swift release of cohesion policy funding which can be spent on inclusion investments in education, employment, housing, health and childcare services, and on basic material assistance like food and clothing.

Furthermore, Member States will be able to use €10 billion under the Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe (REACT-EU), one of the largest post-pandemic EU public investment programmes. Additionally, €420 million under the home affairs funds will be made available to support Member States<sup>7</sup>.

It is still a long way ahead, we must prepare for the long-term consequences this war will have on the people of Ukraine, on the country, on the EU and its citizens. Our political family is doing its utmost to protect the Ukraine people, assist refugees fleeing Ukraine and support Member States and local authorities in receiving and welcoming refugees in our communities. We strongly reiterate the call from our comrade António Guterres, Secretary General of the UN, to end the war and find a diplomatic solution to the "unwinnable" and "indefensible" war.

### Proposals:

- We call on all Members States to allow all people fleeing the conflict in Ukraine to cross the border, regardless of their nationality.
- Member States should consistently implement the Temporary Protection Directive and inform people about their rights under the TPD.
- The Commission and Members States must find more funding for the mid-and long term needs.



A PES delegation led by president Sergei Stanishev (third from right), at the Polish-Ukrainian border on 12 April, 2022

Fresh impetus on inclusion and integration policy is needed, working on long-term responses and taking a whole-of-government- and multi-stakeholder approach. Such new governance approaches, fully involving all levels of government, from European to local, and all possible stakeholders, including from civil society and the social partners, will help build more social cohesion and resilient communities. We must turn inclusion into a genuine win-win for both third country nationals and nationals alike by insisting on its benefits while addressing its challenging effects, benefitting for the whole society. Ultimately, the objective should be to ensure that everyone can enjoy the same rights, is included in- and can actively participate in society. Inclusive societies create a sense of belonging for all, including migrants, or people with a migrant background.

The EU is founded on the values of freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human dignity and human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. An effective policy on integration and inclusion must be at the heart of a comprehensive European migration policy. Integration and inclusion policies, however, still largely remain competences of the Member States, whereas inclusion mostly happens on a local level, where people live, work and meet. Hence there is a need to create a stronger link between all levels of governance, from the European to the local level. The EU can play an important role in supporting Member States as well as regional and local authorities to address the challenges and promote inclusive solutions. With the new **Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027<sup>8</sup>** of our progressive Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, the PES family has an additional tool to take concrete steps towards a resilient EU society with more social progress, inclusion and shared prosperity for all.

Regarding the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, we welcome the initiative of our progressive Commissioners Elisa Ferreira and Nicolas Schmit to present new proposals to adapt the cohesion rules to allow Member States and local and regional authorities to support the incoming Ukrainian refugees fleeing the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Inclusion and participation have always been cornerstones of our family's values. The fight against inequality is in the very DNA of social democracy. As mentioned in our PES Presidency declaration **"Towards a society of wellbeing"** - Our proposal for a post-Covid-19 agenda": It is urgent for the EU and Member States to introduce policies and initiatives that increase people's wellbeing and that make quality life possible for all in Europe.[...] The wellbeing of each citizen and social cohesion must become the new indicators for the success of policies<sup>9</sup>." PES member parties, the S&D Group and our wider progressive family always have been at the forefront fighting xenophobia, racism, any kind of discrimination, including gender-based discrimination and inequalities faced by LGBTI communities. We act against the promotion of misinformation, disinformation and fake news, all of which fuels mistrust and feeds segregation among citizens. Yet, we are all part of society, together we can eliminate inequality and set the tone in the public debate for a respectful, nuanced, transparent and progressive narrative on integration, founded on inclusion, equal opportunities and mutual respect.

We must fully implement, strengthen and complement the already available strategies such as; the European Pillar of Social Rights, the EU Gender Equality Strategy, the EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025, the EU Roma Strategic Framework for equality, inclusion and participation, the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy and the forthcoming Strategy on the rights of persons with

disabilities to realise inclusion and wellbeing for all. Our family has ceaselessly fought for a more social Europe. Combatting inequality and fighting for more solidarity and inclusive societies must be an institutional priority, placed at the top of the EU's political agenda. As PES we will keep on fighting for it.<sup>10</sup>

PES-led governments in Finland, Sweden and Portugal, are at the top of the ranking in the latest Migrant Integration Policy Index, which compares integration policy in 38 countries<sup>11</sup>, but we still have a long route ahead of us.

Integration policy is primarily a competence of the Member States as laid down in the Treaties, therefore a strong engagement of the Council with periodical dedicated ministerial discussions could contribute to promoting strong integration policies.

This PES publication on migration and inclusion aims at encouraging cooperation, sharing and strengthening of best practices within our progressive family. We want to work in partnership with all levels of government, civil society and other relevant stakeholders to put forward a vision for our collective future, a vision for an inclusive, prosperous society. A European society that flourishes through the active engagement of all of us.

We start from an approach for inclusion based on rights and duties. A comprehensive policy on integration and inclusion leaves no one behind, meanwhile underlining the importance of reciprocal obligation. Mainstream social policies must be open for all, remodelled to the challenges and opportunities of a diverse society, taking into account the specific needs of different groups.

In this paper we identify the main challenges and

formulate our policy proposals. Our policy proposals build on previous work undertaken by PES, S&D Group in the European Parliament, the PES Group in the European Committee of the Regions, and discussions held in the PES Migration & Integration Network.

The realisation of the publication is a common endeavour of the members of the PES Migration & Integration Network and the engagement of several civil society organisations and trade unions.



Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson visits  
Polish-Ukrainian border post of Medyka on 2 March 2022



Jo Cox (1974 - 2016), a pro-European British Labour MP, murdered by a far-right aggressor, in the run-up to the Brexit referendum.

## 2 Challenges & opportunities: a new approach

Due to the complexity of its social, political and economic implications, the question of integration policy and inclusion is especially challenging. It touches upon all aspects of our daily lives and involves a web of key rights and duties. Our policies and measures must be dynamic, flexible, comprehensive, inclusive, rights-based and gender-responsive to turn the challenges into a resource for the social, economic and cultural development of our societies.

## 2.1 CHANGE THE NARRATIVE

**“We are far more united and have far more in common with each other than things that divide us.” – Jo Cox**

**E**xtrême right and populist parties all over Europe use fake news to provoke fear and distrust in our societies. Part of the media is complicit with this process when it, intentionally or not, selects and frames news in ways that misrepresent minorities and are dis-favourable to them. This feeds tensions, threatens the whole process of inclusion and leads to the criminalisation and dehumanisation of migrants. It also hinders the work of civil society organisations working to support migrants, with the same outcomes. Those that seek to divide our communities must not be allowed to succeed. We must fight against misinformation, dis-information and populist rhetoric. We are all part of society, together we can set the tone in the public debate for a new progressive narrative.

Our progressive narrative on inclusion must be built on our fundamental values of respect for human rights (including economic and social rights) and human dignity, the rule of law, democracy and the principles of equality, solidarity and mutual respect. Inclusion must

imply the protection of the rights and well-being of all, regardless of status, gender, race, religion, condition, country of origin or age.

Alongside insisting on the rights and obligations of third country nationals, we must show how much Europe depends on migration, and the contribution of third country nationals. We must reach out to minorities and listen to the concerns of all citizens and include their voices. We must raise awareness in the broader public about the importance of effective and comprehensive integration and inclusion policies as well-managed and real inclusion makes societies more prosperous. We must promote evidence-based information, combat polarisation by showing empathy and listening to the arguments of others before formulating our position, so that the debate on migration becomes less emotional and the substantive side of the arguments is again listened too. This should benefit the democratic debate on the topic<sup>12</sup>.

### Proposals:

- **We must strengthen and promote our progressive narrative on migration and inclusion, which is built on fundamental values, is evidence-based, combats polarisation and shows empathy.**

## 2.2 WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT & MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH

**W**e must put inclusion at the heart of our policies. Due to a lack of mainstreaming and of coordination among policies across different sectors, across levels of government, minority groups still face structural and institutional barriers.

Integration policy is a competence of the Member States but inclusion happens on the local level, touches upon all aspects of our lives and by definition various policy areas. To be comprehensive and effective, it must be mainstreamed in other policy areas, across sectors but also across all policy levels. In addition, it requires concrete efforts to ensure inclusion in mainstream public services. Inclusion measures must reach the widest target group possible, regardless of residence status as resident's status varies over time. It furthermore asks for measures to be flexible, to allow group-specific and tailor-made actions throughout mainstream socio-economic policy measures.

More investments are needed along the whole integration route, starting prior the arrival, immigration procedures and reception should be recognised as an integral part of the integration process. We must increase the democratic political participation of different stakeholders - local authorities, the private sector, NGOs and third country nationals - in order to strengthen the inclusion of people with a migration

background. Migrants of all backgrounds and origins should be involved in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of integration measures. Each policy level, from national to local level, has the responsibility to ensure that the welcoming society is prepared for the arrival of third country nationals and must promote inclusion and provide evidence-based information to the community. Integration and inclusion policy should be integrated in various levels of authority and policy competences, and budgetary resources should be distributed across these levels of government.

Cities and regions are at the forefront of the inclusion challenge but sometimes lack ownership and means. Local authorities have a responsibility to ensure that public places are inclusive to people from diverse backgrounds, including ethnic and religious minorities and members of the LGBTI community.

There can be no one-size-fits-all approach to inclusion, depending on the size of the city and the specificities of its jobs market. This is why cities should be empowered to devise their own strategies, so long as they are committed to the long-term welfare and inclusion of those who come from a migration background, conveying a positive narrative about migrant inclusion and consolidating citizens' support<sup>13</sup>.



Integration project in Germany

Inclusive cities are cities that reach out to disadvantaged groups such as recent or marginalised migrants and asylum seekers, who often struggle with access to education, training, the jobs market, health services (including mental health) housing and active civic participation, all areas where cities are best placed to respond.

Many local authorities, like Palermo and the network of German “harbour cities”<sup>14</sup> led by Potsdam, are working hard with specific programs to care for refugees and migrants and integrate those that remain in the EU. Cities should seize the opportunity to build upon these structures and broaden the scope of engagement to other areas of civic life. Public services and measures to support community initiatives and non-profit organisations must be designed with intergenerational outreach in mind, notably access to culture and sports in all their forms. These offer ways in which to build bridges across gender, ethnicity, class and sexual orientation,

putting into practice the values of tolerance and inclusion that should be central to national curricula<sup>15</sup>.

We must be ambitious on the implementation of integration & inclusion policies. Although each objective of the EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion includes recommendations for EU Member States, such recommendations risk to be implemented to very different degrees across the EU. The establishment of a joint scoreboard on integration policies – proposed as a support to compare countries’ achievements and identify the areas which need more progress – could constitute a positive change towards a better involvement of national policies.<sup>16</sup> In addition, national action plans for integration should be monitored to ensure consistency.

### Proposals:

We stand for an inclusion policy that is mainstreamed in other policy areas, across sectors and all policy levels.

- Authorities must increase the democratic political participation of different stakeholders. They should involve migrants and migrant organisations in the design, implementation and evaluation of integration and inclusion policies and programmes, including when EU-funded<sup>17</sup>.
- Cities and regions are at the forefront of the inclusion challenge but sometimes lack ownership and means. The PES Congress has called for the establishment of a fund to which municipalities could apply to directly receive support for integrating refugees, while also funding projects for local communities. “We propose a European integration fund which local authorities could apply for directly and that benefits both the host and refugee communities”<sup>18</sup>. As a first step in this direction, the new Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund has a dedicated component within its thematic facility for the implementation of integration measures by local and regional authorities.
- We support the European Commission’s partnership with the European Committee of the Regions on a political dialogue and promotion and exchanges of experiences on integration for local and regional authorities.
- Member States should make full use of EU funds to promote inclusion.
- The European Commission should launch a Eurobarometer on inclusion and to ensure good implementation, we support a joint scoreboard for inclusion and integration policies.

## 2.3 THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

**T**he socio-economic and cultural impact of Covid-19 is tremendous and it has increased the inequalities of some of our societies. Migrants and refugees, especially women and those who have an irregular or precarious status- are often hit hard by the virus. They face a higher risk of Covid-19 infection because of precarious living conditions and limited access to health services. Moreover, there is emerging evidence of low Covid-19 vaccination rates in some migrant and ethnic minority groups in the EU<sup>19</sup>. They face challenges in accessing vaccination systems when national health insurance schemes do not cover them.

Jobs and livelihoods have been severely affected by the pandemic. The impact is immediately felt by migrants and their households. Many migrants are twice as vulnerable as they are disproportionately employed in precarious work and employment conditions, have irregular statuses, work informally or live segregated from the rest of society. Their right to stay in the country where they live and work often depends on their job. Child poverty, lack of nutrition and decent accommodation will rise due to migrant workers losing their already precarious jobs. School closures have a disproportionate impact on migrant and refugee children due to their living conditions, language and lack of parental support. Furthermore, acts of racism and xenophobia are rising<sup>20</sup>.

Nevertheless, the pandemic has also shown that a different approach is possible. Migrant workers play a

crucial role in mitigating the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Refugees and third country nationals across the EU came forward to help in needed services. Some Member States set up mechanisms allowing health professionals with refugee status to practice in healthcare institutions despite the lack of formal recognition of their diplomas<sup>21</sup>.

We welcome notably the initiative of Prime Minister António Costa to temporary grant residence status to everyone with a pending residence application during the pandemic. The Portuguese government also ensured that all migrants had access to healthcare and other necessary services during the state of emergency. Our progressive governments in Portugal and Luxembourg made vaccinations available for everyone regardless of health insurance status.

Considering that many migrant workers have lost their jobs due to the pandemic or may still lose them during the recovery phase, some governments such as those in Portugal and Spain<sup>22</sup> have taken the steps to renew permits regardless of whether or not they are employed, giving access to social protection and the labour market.

Furthermore, we congratulate the initiative of former Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven who extended various labour market integration programmes for twelve months, allowing people whose subsidies would expire in the near future to remain employed.

### Proposals:

- Member States must guarantee equitable access to vaccines throughout all stages of national campaigns.
- Considering the difficult recovery phase after the pandemic, Member States should take the example of progressive governments such as Spain and Portugal and consider renewing migrant's permits to ensure access to the labour market and social protection<sup>23</sup>.
- Migrant women are leading with resilience to engage in mutual aid and front-line emergency responses, creating models of solidarity that hold important lessons for societies more broadly. We must empower and assist women in migration in this endeavour.



# 3 DEVELOPING A SHARED CITIZENSHIP

Integration measures help build the social and economic inclusion of people with a migration background and marginalised groups.

Targeted measures for third country nationals should act as "bridges" to mainstream policies<sup>24</sup>. These measures address specific needs of third country nationals and marginalised residents and pave the way to more general and inclusive social policies, social security access and citizenship.

Inclusions ask for adaptation from both newcomers and from receiving communities. Inclusive policies must empower people to fulfil their potential as equal participants in society and foster the resilience of the receiving society. An inclusive society values diversity and emphasises shared values (including human rights and rule of law) and allows individuals to develop their personal identity in the country based on their experience of various national cultures<sup>25</sup>. It should accept diverse peoples as part of their community by lifting barriers for third country nationals and other marginalised groups to access to services and engage in public life. Integration and inclusion measures should build bridges between all residents to enhance dialogue and mutual understanding and shared responsibility. This should encourage self-determination and sustainable self-sufficiency for newcomers and marginalised people while at the same time promoting positive action in the public and government domain<sup>26</sup>.

At the initiative of our progressive former mayor of Athens, Giorgios Kaminis, the City of Athens implemented "Curing the Limbo" a program aiming to

implement a dynamic and innovative model for inclusion that allows refugees to become socially active<sup>27</sup>.

Various progressive cities<sup>28</sup> in Flanders introduced the buddy project, in cooperation with the AMIF (Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund)<sup>29</sup>. A buddy introduces newcomers to society, lets them practice Dutch and helps them build a network. In this method, a newcomer is linked to a buddy. The buddy methodology has been a successful initiative to familiarize newcomers with Flemish society, to let them practice Dutch and to build up their network. For natives is it an awareness of what it means to be new in Flanders, an introduction to the newcomers in their municipality and an enrichment of their view on diversity. According to research, linking two citizens one-to-one in a buddy system can offer many possibilities. The newcomer's mental well-being would improve, his social network may expand and he becomes familiar with institutions, services and social manners. Studies have shown that people's chances in education double if they know a buddy who has received professional training outside their own ethnic-cultural circle.

Community-based sponsorship programs allow individuals to directly engage in refugee resettlement efforts. Sponsors commit to providing financial, emotional and resettlement support to help newly-arrived refugees integrate into life in a new country.<sup>30</sup>

There is a need to give a clear sense of a path to inclusion, social security access and citizenship that is transparent and trusted by both EU nationals and third country nationals. We must promote the benefits of migration. Long-term fiscal benefits of inclusion

should be put into context. We must empower those who will mostly feel the impact of migration on a limited set of services by expanding and improving welfare targeting the most vulnerable of society.

The migration experience and procedures that an individual goes through, have a substantial impact on their chances to integrate successfully. Therefore, the two should not be seen as separate. Creating the right conditions for a smooth beginning, leads to better inclusion results down the line. According to a study by FEPS<sup>31</sup> those who have citizenship are more positive about virtually every aspect of life in their country. Citizenship should not be considered as the final goal, the completion of the inclusion process, but as a crucial instrument to be able to fully integrate in society itself.

Under the Long-term residents Directive, third-country nationals who have legally and continuously resided in an EU Member State for at least five years can obtain the status of 'EU long-term resident'. This status grants them equal rights to EU nationals in a number of areas such as education, work or social security, as well as intra-EU mobility and residence rights. Member States authorities being the ones delivering the status, they should raise awareness and provide clear information on the possibility and conditions to get this status.

Regularisation is at the discretion of the Member States and it can serve as an element of inclusion policy. In many countries, integration is a key criterion for undocumented migrants to be regularised if they have been living for a certain time in a Member State with irregular status. Due to various circumstances, such as accessibility and affordability, third country nationals tend to find housing in low-income neighbourhoods

and have low-income jobs. The arrival of third country nationals is carried by certain segments of the labour market and low-income neighbourhoods. We must challenge the narrative perpetrated by right and far-right movements that third country nationals and local populations are competing for limited resources, whether they are jobs, services, housing, benefits, or wealth. In our view, both newcomers and local populations share the same interest in overcoming inequalities<sup>32</sup>. Inequality is part of the problem. The share of profits of our economy must be more equally distributed between the many, not the few. Progress must benefit all, so we can develop fairer societies, with access to decent housing, medical support and education for all residents, natives and newcomers alike<sup>33</sup>.

Studies released by the OECD<sup>34</sup>, ILO and the European Commission<sup>35</sup> highlight the long-term economic benefits of inclusion. The annual long-run GDP effect would be 0.2% to 1.4% above the baseline growth. Third country nationals represent a great benefit when populations are ageing. Their skills and talents can help fill the labour skills shortages and help maintain our European welfare systems. A study by the Belgian FPS Economy<sup>36</sup> mentions that recent immigration led to a population growth of 2.7%. The influx consisted mainly of young and higher educated people. Migrants and refugees contribute to economies both as employees and as entrepreneurs, working in public services and creating new businesses. 11% of the self-employed and entrepreneurs in Belgium in 2017 were non-Belgian with numbers as high as one on three in Brussels<sup>37</sup>. The OECD<sup>38</sup> reports that migrants generally pay more in taxes and social security contributions (e.g. healthcare and pensions) than they receive in benefits.

### Proposals:

- Member States should expand and improve social security measures targeting the most vulnerable in society.
- Citizenship can be used as a tool for inclusion. Member States must be clear as to the criteria that have to be met to become a citizen.
- Authorities should make use of the AMIF to introduce the buddy system and support the development of community sponsorship programmes for beneficiaries of international protection.
- Given the effects of the limited legal pathways to migrate to the EU, regularisation campaigns can constitute an effective means to reduce irregular migration and effectively tackle unreported employment and socio-economic exclusion<sup>39</sup>.
- Member States should encourage entrepreneurship among migrants through tailored training and mentoring programmes, by opening up mainstream entrepreneurship support structures to migrants and including entrepreneurship in integration programmes<sup>40</sup>.



"Buddy Project" in Flanders, Belgium

### 3.1 INCLUSIVE PUBLIC SERVICES

Inclusive public services are essential for a well-functioning society. As socialists we have always been advocates of strong welfare states that provide quality, accessible and affordable public services, of collective answers to the challenges our societies face.

Strong and inclusive welfare systems and social protection are crucial for fighting inequality and strengthening welcoming and resilient societies. Simultaneously, inclusive welfare societies require successful inclusion, where everyone can participate, and everyone respects fundamental values. Everyone should thus be able to access and benefit from solid social protection and public services. Governments are the most efficient and effective provider of many public services, especially those with natural monopolies or those that involve values that are not adequately reflected by price.

The **European Pillar of Social Rights**<sup>41</sup> proclaimed in November 2017 acknowledges amongst others the rights to quality health care (principle 16), to education (principle 1), to equal opportunities (Principle 3) to active support to employment (principle 4) minimum income benefits (principle 14), which are all very relevant for people with a migration background in our society. Yet, while a very comprehensive document, The European Pillar of Social Rights does not explicitly address challenges specifically faced by migrants. We must promote an inclusive implementation of the

20 principles at European and national level, making sure economic and social rights are a reality for all in the EU.

Social protection floors at the national level should comprise at least four social security guarantees: access to essential health care, including maternity care; basic income security for children, for older persons and for persons in active age who are unable to earn sufficient income, in particular in cases of sickness, unemployment, maternity and disability providing access to nutrition, education, care and any other necessary goods and services<sup>42</sup> and be made accessible to migrants.

In addition, the **European Poverty Reduction Strategy** should be adopted, linked to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and including binding quantitative targets on poverty reduction, rough sleeping, energy poverty etc. The strategy should be integrated in the European Semester to track its implementation. It should be designed to take into account five policy areas: children, housing, minimum income, basic social protection and social inclusion of migrants.<sup>43</sup> SOLIDAR's Italian member ARCI operates an online map of Italian services and initiatives to support refugees, JUMAMAP<sup>44</sup>. The overall objective is to make services accessible to asylum-seekers and holders of international and humanitarian protection.



### Proposals:

- Public services, in healthcare, education, social protection, etc, are the pillars of our society, and they must get the attention and support they deserve. They constitute the capital of those who have none and should be considered a common good<sup>45</sup>.
- Defending public services and the role of the state is at the heart of our political position. The Covid-19 crisis has only reinforced our conviction<sup>46</sup>.
- The European Union must support Member States in strengthening their social security systems ensuring a more effective redistribution and fairer distribution, taking into account new social risks and vulnerable groups, including people with a migration background<sup>47</sup>.
- As social democrats we stand for an inclusive implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.
- European welfare states should guarantee to European citizens public services and economic benefits for a decent life in different areas: healthcare, education, housing, employment, social security, justice and social services<sup>48</sup>.
- Members States must adopt the European Poverty Reduction Strategy and its implementation should be monitored.

## 3.2 EDUCATION

**I**ncrease people's access to quality public education as a tool against inequalities and more inclusion.

The educational situation of refugees and other migrants is still precarious. Many face multiple difficulties accessing high quality education or training. Access to (higher) education, apprenticeships, traineeships, vocational education reskilling and upskilling opportunities needs to be a reality for everyone. Member States must make an effort to ensure more third country nationals, regardless of their residency status, are able to participate in language training, civic orientation courses based on need.

Migrant children or children with a migration background should have access to inclusive early childhood education and care. Research<sup>49</sup> has shown that providing quality childcare is key reducing socio-economic gaps in educational achievements. Member States should promote family participation and involvement of migrant children in post-school programmes. The **European Child Guarantee** commits Member States to providing free access to early childhood education and care, education and school-based activities, at least one healthy meal each school day to children in need. Children with a migrant background are identified as a specific target group for this initiative<sup>50</sup>.

Our PES Mayor from Leuven (BE) Mohammed Ridouani introduced the initiative "SOM<sup>51</sup>", a network

of educational makers, educational support staff and the city of Leuven, with the aim to innovate in education together so that every learner has a place and is challenged to develop and deploy his/her own talents to the maximum.

We need comprehensive actions on the topic of validation and recognition of prior learning and of competences for migrants. The lack of or insufficient recognition of non-EU diplomas hinder access to third-level education and employment in many Member States. We must strengthen and harmonise the existing instruments, in addition new tools should be created to ensure that foreign qualifications of equivalent level are properly recognised and valued.

In addition, many third country nationals develop competences in non-formal and informal learning settings upon and after arrival, as they are supported by civil society organisations, such as SOLIDAR members. However, the effective validation of non-formal and informal learning is still highly problematic, leading to cancelling another opportunity for validation for third country nationals.

The knowledge of the language is key for successful inclusion. We must strengthen language learning with the development and improvement of existing tools. Member States should develop comprehensive language programmes also for intermediate and



### Proposals:

advanced courses and tailored to the needs of different groups. It should be possible to learn the language among families outside school hours or in combination with other accompanying measures like childcare. We must make an effort to promote multilingualism and intercultural education, recognising the linguistic and cultural diversity. Authorities should foster multilingualism. Learning to write in their own language is a way to support their own self-confidence and sense of belonging. There is a body of evidence demonstrating that these measures are crucial for integration into mainstream schooling<sup>51</sup>. Schools and cities that support multilingual education and cultural diversity, involve communities and provide support services can be particularly beneficial for children with a migrant background and for their parents.

More efforts must be done to improve women's access to education and upskilling to encourage their social inclusion and economic independence. A residency status independent of their partner is an important first step in this inclusion process.

- To ensure inclusive access to childhood education and care from an early age, PES has fought for an European Child Guarantee, Member States must implement it effectively.
- The EU should inform about and support transparent recognition practices of qualifications and skills assessment, through the European Qualifications Framework and the European Integration Network<sup>52</sup>.
- Member States must effectively implement the 2012 Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (NFIL) and invest in procedures for recognising foreign qualifications which are quick, fair, transparent and affordable EC.
- We must improve women's access to education and upskilling.
- Member States should make full use of EU funding, in particular the European Social Fund Plus, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the European Regional Development Fund, to support programmes and measures related to education, skills and language training, in accordance with identified needs at national and regional level<sup>53</sup>.

### 3.3 ACCESS TO ADEQUATE HOUSING & NEIGHBOURHOOD

**H**ousing is a human right, recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and enshrined as Principle 19 of the European Declaration of Social Rights.

The 2019 PES European Parliament election manifesto called for a Plan for Affordable Housing in Europe, echoed by our colleagues in the PES Group in the European Committee of the Region's recent call for a **European Deal for Housing**<sup>54</sup> Such a plan should support the construction of new affordable housing and the renovation of the existing housing stock, community-led neighbourhood development, sustainable land use and the acquisition of land for social, public and affordable housing.

Access to affordable and adequate housing is key for successful inclusion as housing has an effect on people's health, employment options, education opportunities and participation in the community; poor housing conditions, segregation and issues such as intimidation, racism, and threats from other residents<sup>55</sup>, can undermine social cohesion.

The housing sector is often saturated in large cities and social housing is very limited. For everyone appropriate housing is a right, for third country nationals it is often a precondition for registering as a resident in the city. Migrants often find housing in neighbourhoods where large migrant communities already live, potentially creating segregation phenomena. The lack of available housing, adequate support and barriers to

exercising rights as tenants can lead to exploitative housing or homelessness, in particular, but not only, in countries that criminalise renting to undocumented migrants. Third country nationals or people with a migrant background often face discrimination and racism on the housing market.

Living conditions in many reception centers are deplorable and cause inter alia risk for violence and gender-based violence. We must promote safe, and non-segregated housing and shelters for survivors of domestic violence. Autonomous housing for asylum applicants with a high likelihood to be granted protection can speed up the inclusion process. The European Child Guarantee commits Member States to guaranteeing adequate housing for vulnerable children.

We must tackle discrimination in the private rental market and the decision to prioritise housing solutions for refugees needs to be carefully explained to the public to avoid the perception that different treatments apply to different groups. We must promote and implement projects assisting in house searching and informing on tenants' rights.

The role of the state is to provide safe, decent and affordable housing for all. Innovative housing solutions can be part of the solution for houses shortage. This can be social, public, cooperative, for limited profit, affordable rental and affordable home ownership.



Co-housing, host family schemes involving natives can foster community building. Labour migrants should not be dependent on their employer for their housing, since this increases the number of cases of exploitation.

To promote adequate and affordable housing, including social housing, Member States should make use of the European Regional Development Fund, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and InvestEU.

Sustainable cities are inclusive cities, cities that reach out to the young, the old, to those that face discrimination because they are of a different ethnic background or religion, or because of their gender or sexual identity.

The creation of well-functioning urban recreational spaces is key. Green spaces, especially in urban areas, can act as places of refuge, both from an environmental (heat, pollution...) and social point of view (stress, loneliness...). This particularly affects poorer residents. Yet, access to green space is unequally available to the population, largely correlating with the socio-economic

status of citizens and the overall economic performance of the member states citizens are living in, making the topic of access to nature an issue of equality within our societies. When opportunities emerge, local authorities should endeavour to buy back private land to convert it into additional green spaces, either open to the public.

Feeling safe should not be the privilege of those who can afford it. Petty criminality continues to damage the quality of life of many city residents, and restricts their access to public spaces, in particular for women. Repression has its limits, and effective policing should be based on trust and the promotion of equal opportunities in every part of the city.

Public transport infrastructure must be accessible to all. Affordability must be our watchword. City planning and development must take connection to public transport and the possibility to solely rely on public transportation options into consideration when planning new neighbourhoods and re-developing existing ones<sup>56</sup>.

### Proposals:

- The European Commission should develop an EU Plan for Affordable Housing that better coordinates EU policies and funding opportunities. EU state aid rules should be reformed and clarified in order not to hinder social housing. The definition should be broadened so as to enable the implementation of sustainability goals such as “social mix” and “social cohesion”<sup>57</sup>
- Rules ensuring access to social housing should be such that they support those who need it while also promoting socially mixed neighbourhoods. The ambition should be to cover the housing needs of the three lowest income quintiles and reduce by half housing cost overburdening among this group by 2030<sup>58</sup>.
- We must promote and invest in safe, non-segregated and autonomous housing for refugees.
- Cities should learn from the examples of our progressive governments in Denmark and Finland and adopt the “Housing First” approach to homelessness. Housing First works by quickly providing a permanent housing solution before accompanying the homeless with social support programmes, leaving them with a high degree of choice and control. Member States should give cities the powers to use their European Social Fund Plus budgets to effectively combat the most severe forms of poverty with the greatest social exclusion impact, such as homelessness<sup>59</sup>.
- The representation of women and minorities in public spaces should be improved by proactively naming and renaming streets and public infrastructure after notable women and members of minority groups<sup>60</sup>.
- We support the European Commission in promoting 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 dedicated funding under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund<sup>61</sup>.
- At regional and national level, building codes and traffic management must be adapted to ensure that minimum proximity to green spaces and low levels of noise and air pollution are guaranteed to all citizens, but especially to the most vulnerable who have been affected disproportionately by the lack of it<sup>62</sup>.



## 3.4 ACCESS TO INCLUSIVE HEALTH CARE

**T**he Covid-19 pandemic has shown us no one is safe until everyone is safe, it also highlighted the great inequality in accessing adequate healthcare in some countries.

Migrants face multiple barriers such as language, administrative hurdles, waiting periods, reluctance to share information with authorities, lack of information, cultural differences and understanding of healthcare systems, discrimination<sup>63</sup> in accessing adequate healthcare- including mental health care-, which can be particularly important for refugees who have experienced torture or other trauma. Access for migrant women is even more difficult, especially looking at period poverty and access to sexual and reproductive health and rights services.

In order to reduce inequalities based on socio-economic factors, we call for national governments to

prioritise the financing of their health institutions. They must ensure that public health services are strengthened and equipped accordingly, allowing even the most vulnerable groups to benefit from quality care<sup>64</sup> including health services. The European Child Guarantee commits Member States to guaranteeing free healthcare for vulnerable children. Migrants and EU citizens with a migrant background should be informed about their rights. Member States must provide services adapted to people's needs. Authorities should remove barriers to accessing health services by improving communication, tackling discrimination, being aware of cultural differences, enhance support structures, look into tools to reach the most. Third country nationals should have the right to interpretation and same-sex health care providers. 'Firewalls' should be installed that safeguard undocumented migrants from the possible transfer of their personal data from health services to immigration authorities.



Vocational training for migrants in Germany

### Proposals:

- A strong national health care system is crucial. Member States must facilitate access to quality and affordable healthcare services for the benefit of all.
- Member States must reduce out-of-pocket payments to the minimum for patients.
- Migrant groups can have specific needs, health care workers should be provided training on diversity management.

## 3.5 LABOUR MARKET INCLUSION

**L**abour market inclusion is crucial to ensure third country nationals' effective inclusion and participation into societies.

Migrant workers play a crucial role in many formal and informal economic sectors in the EU. Europe's population is ageing. In a number of Member States, the workforce is starting to shrink, there are many unfilled vacancies, in both qualified and unqualified functions. The Covid-19 crisis has made migrants' contribution to European economies and labour markets all the more evident<sup>65</sup> Their contribution (across all sectors and skills levels) to the economic recovery will be vital and will also strengthen the cohesion of our communities.

Matching skills, aspirations and workplaces still remain a challenge due to a number of obstacles. People with a migration background, especially women, often work in lower-qualified jobs while their skills and capacities are not recognised. The employment rate of third country nationals, particularly women, is significantly lower compared to that of people born in the (host) country<sup>66</sup>. Young people born in another country are

overrepresented among "NEETs" (not in employment, education or training)<sup>67</sup>. Inequalities persist across generations: evidence suggests that young people born in their current member state of immigrant parents face higher NEET rates than the average population, despite their local education and mastery of the language. In total, 30 % of the NEET population is made up of young people with some form of migrant background.

### Proposals:

- **The European Youth Guarantee should be implemented in a way that also benefits fully migrants, as called for by Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights Nicolas Schmit<sup>68</sup>. It can provide long-term, quality, durable solutions for young people and offer these adolescent refugees and migrants access to traineeships, labour and educational schemes, tailored to market needs and essential sectors supporting the recovery of Europe from the Covid-19 crisis<sup>69</sup>.**

Migrants can contribute economically in many ways: as workers of all skill levels, entrepreneurs, innovators, taxpayers, consumers and investors. Targeted economic labour migration can help meet the challenges posed by an ageing workforce, the need for workers across skills levels and the pressure on our social security systems.

There are already many successful entrepreneurs with a migrant background in Europe. Their contribution to business creation and to employment cannot be underestimated. For cities and regions migrant entrepreneurship can be a strategic resource to foster economic activity and social inclusion<sup>70</sup>. MolenGeek is an IT startup incubator situated in Molenbeek (Brussels). The goal is to both bring external expertise to Molenbeek and bring talents from Molenbeek to Brussels. MolenGeek has helped improve the perception of Molenbeek and stimulates an entrepreneurial environment in the neighbourhood. The founder of MolenGeek Ibrahim Ouassari has been elected as "Brussels citizen of the Year"<sup>71</sup>.

In order to enhance the inclusion of third country nationals and EU citizens with a migrant background into the labour market, we must tackle discrimination and create partnerships between all relevant stakeholders, including public authorities at all levels, civil society organisations, economic and social partners and employers.

Discrimination is a crucial factor undermining migrants' inclusion in employment. We must develop actions against discrimination and put in place financial incentives for the recruitment of migrants as well as effective sanctions against employers who pursue discriminatory practices<sup>72</sup>.

We must facilitate a day one approach to people's labour market integration. Language and skills acquisition are measures that should happen simultaneously. We must ease constraints on language skills at the entry in the job market while adopting longer term accompanying measures to language acquisition on-the-job. Member States, in partnership with trade unions and civil society organisations, should establish programmes through social and civil dialogue to support third country nationals in developing flexible training and labour market participation targets, including job-specific language training, labour market orientation, career advice and job search skills' development<sup>73</sup>.

We must promote national policies to reduce waiting periods for accessing employment, reduce work permit restrictions and labour market tests. We should create opportunities for newcomers and to directly interact and exchange information with the private sector, business associations and union about available job opportunities. We note the positive steps taken in respect of these issues in the recently revised Blue Card Directive.



Migrant support in Sweden

## Proposals:

- Sweden introduced “Welcome to the Future” an innovative programme for the labour market integration of low-educated refugees, The purpose of the programme is to help newly arrived, low-skilled refugees into employment<sup>74</sup>.
- Progressive cities in Belgium work together with Refu Interim<sup>75</sup>. As a bridge builder, they bring newcomers and city organisations together through volunteer work.
- Furthermore, the MILMA<sup>76</sup> project in Fuenlabrada (ES) proposes labour integration throughout collaborative work and entrepreneurship using an

innovative methodology called BC Lab. This initiative looks for active participation from enterprises so the training can match with the real demands of the market.

Exclusion from the regular labour market has an impact on both personal level and on people’s capability to contribute to the economy and on society. It can also contribute to increased precarious work, undeclared work, social dumping and poverty, jeopardising the inclusion to societies<sup>77</sup>. According to a study 90 % of platform riders in Paris are foreigners, 40 % for France, according to UberEats<sup>78</sup>.

Migrant workers are highly dependent on their employers, particularly when residence status is tied to a particular job, when permits are very short, and also when housing is provided by employers.

Migrant workers face many barriers to exercising their labour rights due to a lack of information, language barriers, lack of union representation and risks of immigration enforcement. This can contribute to a race to the bottom, where employers are able to pay some workers an increasingly lower salary and worsen labour conditions<sup>79</sup>. Undocumented migrant workers do not qualify for any social protection or unemployment benefits. Repressive strategies largely target migrants instead of native employers benefitting from irregular labour and wage theft<sup>80</sup>.

Undocumented migrants' rights at work are protected by the law<sup>81</sup>. We must move towards strategies targeting employers benefitting from irregular labour and strategies that promote declared and decent work for all workers. This includes evaluating and improving the implementation of the rights provision in the **EU Employers' Sanctions Directive**<sup>82</sup>. We must investigate practices with the postings of third country nationals throughout Europe and act upon infringements of posted workers' rights, address with new European legislation the instances of bogus posting, bogus

self-employment, fraudulent subcontracting and recruiting agencies, letter-box companies and undeclared work. To uphold minimum labour standards, we must ensure accessible and effective complaint mechanisms making it possible to effectively claim back due wages and social security contributions for third-country nationals too, without risk of them facing immigration enforcement for exercising their rights. This means encouraging and supporting migrant workers in reporting abuse, and deploying firewall tools to ensure access to complaint mechanisms for undocumented workers.

Member States should allow change of employer, in-country applications to meet labour market demands and reduce dependence on employers and risks of exploitation.

We must invest in services and infrastructures that examine and tackle the connection between migration and human trafficking and forced labour and empower those migrants who are most vulnerable to exploitation, including trafficking for sexual exploitation.

The current fragmentated EU legislation regarding labour market integration affects the employment potential of third country nationals. Lower employment, lower earnings and poorer working conditions

have an impact in terms of tax revenue lost for Member States<sup>83</sup>. We as social democrats stand for equal pay for equal work, same access to social protection and same social contributions.

Every European citizen and all workers in all forms of employment and work arrangements, should benefit from a social protection floor, in full respect of national systems and specificities, with universal and equal access to social protection rights, benefits and entitlements, quality healthcare, minimum income security and access to the goods and services defined as necessary at national level — in line with the related ILO recommendation, providing an effective social security net which can be deployed in hard times<sup>84</sup>.

We must increase the capacity of labour inspectorates to the ILO norm of 1 inspector per 100.000 workers in all EU Member States, to guarantee proper enforcement and proper judiciary to follow up. The Temporary Works Agency Directive should become a tool to better protect cross-border, seasonal and third-country workers, requiring all temporary work agencies operating in the internal market to be listed on a European register and be certified to operate in the single market, to introduce sanctions on companies using fraudulent recruitment practices and trafficking people for labour exploitation, and access to information on

employment contracts and labour rights in a language that the worker can understand.



## Proposals:

- The assessment, upskilling and reskilling of people with a migration background' skills must become more effective and continuously supported. The European Skills Agenda<sup>85</sup> aims to support everyone, including migrants, in developing more and better skills and putting them to use. Member States should make use of the EU Skills Profile Tool for third country nationals at an early stage and strengthen procedures for validation of non-formal learning<sup>86</sup>.
- Member States should effectively implement the EU Employers' Sanctions Directive.
- We call for an effective implementation of the Temporary Works Agency Directive to better protect cross-border, seasonal and third-country workers.
- We must encourage entrepreneurship among migrants through tailored training and mentoring programmes, by opening up mainstream entrepreneurship support structures to migrants and including entrepreneurship in integration programmes.
- Within the EU, migrants represent an important pool of potential entrepreneurs. Migrant entrepreneurs, should receive more support in skills improvement, through easier access to financing, tailored business training, advice and greater support must be put in place for small businesses established in inner cities facing spiralling rents. The city of Paris offers vacant commercial property for small businesses and the self-employed to use as office or co-working space<sup>87</sup>.
- The Rainbow economy project is a Brussels based NGO-project that targets asylum seekers and other recent immigrants, providing them an experimental space to exploit their entrepreneurial skills from their home countries and develop these in the new context of Brussels.
- We must tackle discrimination on the labour market. The Anti-Rumor Strategy, introduced by our progressive mayor Javier Ayala of Fuenlabrada (Madrid Metropolitan area), aims at combating stereotypes and prejudices against newcomers<sup>88</sup>.
- We have to fight labour rights violations and the exploitation of third-country nationals on the labour markets of the EU, increase labour inspections that uphold the rights of all workers and ensure quality employment opportunities through new national and European legislation.
- Member States should make use of EU funding, in particular the European Social Fund Plus and the European Regional Development Fund, to support programmes and measures related to integration into the labour market, in accordance with identified needs at national and regional level<sup>89</sup>.





# 4 CHILDREN

Children in migration, especially unaccompanied and undocumented children, are particularly at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Inequality starts at a very young age and the opportunities enjoyed later in life are to a large extent determined by one's childhood. Many of these children may have no access to meals and clean water, no access to IT devices and/or internet connection to engage in online activities and miss out on additional support available through their schools such as language classes and psycho-social support. Children of disadvantaged background lack access to formal (mental) healthcare systems. There are additional risks for girls – including sexual, gender and other forms of violence, teen pregnancies, social control, early and/or forced marriages. Thousands of children in migration continue to go missing. Every day, children are detained, with considerable damage for their physical and mental health and their development and in clear breach of international law. UNHCR has warned once again against the rising risk of exploitation of children and women who constitute 90 % of those who have fled Ukraine. Together with UNICEF, they have established the so-called “Blue Dots” in 6 countries that are receiving massive refugee influxes.<sup>90</sup> The “Blue Dots” are “one-stop-shops, and safe spaces which provide a minimum set of protection services for children, families and others with specific needs”.<sup>91</sup>

Inclusion measures must be accessible for all children regardless of their status. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the right to specific measures to enhance equal opportunities. Portugal is taking the lead in making real progress on the European Child Guarantee. Member States should follow the example of our progressive government in Portugal where the socialist government has extended free access to early childhood education and care for vulnerable children<sup>92</sup>.

We must also recognise the connection between the child's interest and women's economic and social independence, as women are still the main caretaker for children.

The child's best interests must be assessed providing a central role to the child's views and taken into account as the primary consideration in all actions and decisions concerning children. This assessment should also lead to the development of an individual care plan. Moreover, we should invest in providing possibilities for children to participate in all decisions with an impact on their future, including policy and law-making.

Member States must ensure all children are able to access education as soon as possible after their arrival. We must establish efficient procedures, identify

unaccompanied minors and ensure residence status for children whose wellbeing and development would best be served through inclusion in the country of residence. Children should never be detained and should have access to care arrangement and community-based solutions.

Children turning 18 often fall into a gap as their status changes. They might have only a temporary permit, a pending return decision or lack proper documentation and many were not prepared to stand on their own two feet. Governments, and local authorities can play an important role in supporting children's transition to adulthood and integration into the community as an adult. The PES family campaigned for the creation of the Youth Guarantee, which can provide long-term, quality, durable solutions for young people, including young refugees and migrants.

Many refugee children reside for a long period of time in reception centres. Reception conditions must meet the rights and needs of all children, in line with their best interests. According to the results of the Child Move project<sup>93</sup>, relatively big facilities which allow for private personal accommodations are among the more appreciated options. They should include swift and child friendly registration and information, suitable accommodation, nutrition, access to health services, play facilities, psychosocial assistance, independent legal assistance and referral to specialised services where needed. Member States should invest in quality community-based foster care and extend the use of family-based care.

### Proposals:

- **Europe has a duty to support children and ensure equality of opportunity for all. This is why our political family has campaigned extensively for the European Child Guarantee, which was adopted in June 2021. It will ensure that children's rights to free and high-quality healthcare, education, early quality childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition are respected all over Europe<sup>94</sup>.**
- **The child best interests must be taken in account in all decisions relating to children. Children should never be detained and reception conditions must meet the rights and needs of all children, in line with their best interests.**
- **We call on the Council and the European Commission to urgently agree an EU Ukraine Child Protection Package to protect and assist the children in and from Ukraine who are impacted by the war.**



## 5 WOMEN

**M**igrant women are at greater risk of poverty and are facing more obstacles than migrant men as they are confronted with multiple forms of discrimination and lack access to essential support services in some countries. A European Parliament study from April 2021 reiterates that many women flee conflict zones where systemic gender-based violence, human rights violations and patriarchal oppression are added to general unrest, and the number of female refugees is rising.<sup>95</sup>

Migrant women are often overqualified for the jobs they get upon arrival<sup>96</sup>. Young women born in a third country face a NEET rate of 29.0 %<sup>97</sup>. They often have weak professional and social networks due to domestic responsibilities and or childcare. Moreover, migrant women are disproportionately affected by abusive employment conditions.

The **European Parliament's resolution from 6 January 2014 on the situation of undocumented migrant women in the EU**<sup>98</sup> highlights how migration laws and policies put migrant women at increased risk of losing their status and becoming irregular. Women's

residency status often dependent of their husband's status. Women may be forced to remain in violent or abusive relationships in order to retain their status, and may lack full access to sexual and reproductive health and rights<sup>99</sup>.

Policies on inclusion need to take into account these factors and develop tailor-made services with a strong gender perspective. That is why we need asylum policies and procedures that are gender-sensitive in order to help women and girls to escape violence, oppression and persecution but also to be able to assist them in the host countries in the best possible way and engage them as vital agents of change. Their immense potential must be recognized, supported and their voices need to be heard and included in decision making. We must ensure access to mental health and psychological help services as an essential part of inclusion. Undocumented women should have full access to services to ensure the prevention and prosecution of gender-based violence and protection of sexual and reproductive health and rights, which is one of the key objectives of the **EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025**.



Furthermore, gender equality should be mainstreamed across all relevant policies, and migrant women or women with a migrant background should be better included in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of integration policies and have full access to its related services and infrastructures, including the justice system. Bottom-up approaches are a vital component of sustainable solutions that take women's specific and cultural experiences into account. We must strengthen their access to healthcare, education, and employment, including through training in career planning, networking, legal support, information sharing and soft skill development. Gender-budgeting, targeted funding and the implementation of projects focused on empowering refugee and migrant women, including through increased access to affordable and quality childcare and access to information about social services is therefore paramount. Investment in sex-disaggregated data collection focusing on the specific situation and requirements of migrant women is of outmost importance.

#### Proposals:

- Gender equality should be mainstreamed across all relevant policies and asylum policies and procedures should be gender-sensitive.
- All EU Member States must ratify and implement the Istanbul Convention and the progress of implementation should be formally monitored.
- Women's residency status must be independent of their partners' and we must promote and implement actions to truly protect and integrate survivors of labour exploitation, gender-based violence and any form of human trafficking.
- To ensure our policies are inclusive to all, we must promote gender budgeting procedures and projects focused on empowering refugee and migrant women.



# 6 LGBTI

**L**GBTI migrants face multiple forms of discrimination. Authorities and procedures are often not equipped to deal with their particular situation. Under EU law, individuals persecuted based on their sexual orientation and gender identity qualify for refugee status<sup>100</sup>. The standard and burden of proof in national asylum procedures should be in accordance with international law and measures should be adopted to tackle the "culture of disbelief".

Hate speech and hate crimes against LGBTI people are rising<sup>101</sup>. We must tackle discrimination and ensure their safety. In most Member States there are no specific accommodation facilities for asylum seeking LGBTI persons, and sharing general accommodations leads sometimes to cases of abuse or harassment. Most incidents of violence or harassment motivated by bias against LGBTI asylum seekers are not reported and are not recorded as such. There are insufficient guidelines on the provision of specific healthcare (e.g. hormonal treatment) to transgender persons who already started treatment in their countries of origin. The interruption of treatment in such cases can have severe consequences. The Danish minister of integration has decided to establish a new asylum centre specifically for LGBTI persons seeking asylum in Denmark, in order to protect them and better meet their specific needs.

## Proposals:

- The EU Commission's LGBTIQ equality strategy 2020-2025 needs to be implemented effectively and will also benefit migrants and refugees who are concerned. Member States must adopt and implement comprehensive national action plans and strategies that promote respect for LGBTI rights in all areas of life. This would allow LGBTI persons to enjoy the same freedoms – particularly in public – as heterosexuals. In this context, Member States should engage all levels of government, in particular local authorities, as it is in daily interactions in public space, schools and the workplace that human rights are fulfilled in practice<sup>102</sup>.
- Municipal authorities should listen to community voices regarding the multidimensional discrimination experienced by members of minority communities, whether based on ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation, and respond with concrete steps to educate citizens and officials. Malmö is providing anti-discrimination training to all managers within the city administration, to ensure a discrimination-free workplace<sup>103</sup>.
- Member States should ensure that their laws explicitly recognise a well-founded fear of persecution on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics as valid grounds for recognition as a refugee.

# 7 DIGITAL ACCESS

**W**hile the digital revolution has great potential, it also risks opening the door to excluding large parts of society who are less familiar with information and communication technology, deterring them from equally participating in the digital economy, labour market and the information society at large<sup>104</sup> In particular, older people, women, people with a migrant background, people with disabilities and people who live in rural areas could require particular attention.

The increased digitalisation of banking and payments further excludes populations that face barriers to accessing bank accounts. The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the preference for digital payments. We must ensure that basic bank accounts and digital payment methods are genuinely accessible for all.

We must address issues of inclusion across the digital divide whereby children growing up in the poorest of families have no access to online information and other resources. We must also make an effort to include women in digital transition jobs.

## Proposals:

- **Upskilling, training, retraining and life-long learning opportunities must become a right for everyone, allowing people to gain digital and ICT skills. This will allow everyone to participate equally in the digital economy, whether low-skilled, medium or highly skilled<sup>105</sup>.**
- **Authorities should ensure that digital public services are inclusive, easily accessible and adapted to a diverse population and that migrants are consulted in their creation and further development.<sup>106</sup>**
- **Under the auspices of our progressive minister-president of the Brussels-Capital Region, Rudi Vervoort, the city has introduced the label “public computer room approved by the Brussels-Capital Region”. This label is a guarantee of quality and recognition of public computer rooms made available to the general public, that meet certain criteria: number of opening hours, number of training hours, presence of a qualified facilitator and suitable equipment<sup>107</sup>.**
- **Accessing information is critical for those at risk of exclusion, which is why the city of Rennes has hired socio-digital educators to help target groups access online resources<sup>108</sup>.**





ALKUVERT

as någon anteckning eller något märke.  
en valsedel i detta kuvert.  
gas in i kuvertet.

# 8 POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

**P**articipation in political and civic life is key. The decisions taken at local, regional, or national level impact all residents, and it is therefore important that everyone should also be given a voice and participate. This is critical aspect of inclusion. While national realities can vary significantly, our political family is leading in the enfranchisement of foreign nationals.

Ahead of the European elections in 2014, the PES Presidency adopted the declaration **“Striving for a fair representation of people with an ethnic or a migrant background to promote European diversity”**. The declaration mentions *“We commit to undertake concrete measures in order for our Parties to be more inclusive and representative of the population, such as adapting our structures, rules and methods, recruiting members from a more diverse background, empowering candidates from all backgrounds or engaging effectively with communities. We will strive to ensure a fair representation of people with an ethnic and migrant background on our lists for the upcoming European elections and reaffirm our pledge to have a parliamentary Group that is a more accurate reflection of the society”*<sup>109</sup>.

Across the EU, there are different laws about who is able to vote. In most cases, only citizens have full voting rights in a country of which they are a national. All EU citizens can vote in local elections and European Parliamentary elections. Granting voting rights helps third country nationals to participate, it gives responsibility, sends the message of equal treatment and promotes diversity in society. We must tackle barriers that hinder the civic and political engagement of residents. Migrants and refugees should get training in political processes, be informed of their entitlement to vote

and stand in certain elections. As mentioned above, we must invest in refugee community and migrant organisations as they play an important role in empowering their communities. At the same time, they must be integrated in existing systems so that they become part of mainstream civic life.

## Proposals:

- We must tackle barriers that hinder the civic and political engagement of residents.
- Migrants and refugees should get training in political processes, be informed of their entitlement to vote and stand in certain elections.
- We cannot tolerate the continued exclusion of non-EU nationals from local democratic life, and therefore call for a revision of the EU directive on voting rights in municipal elections<sup>110</sup>.
- In Finland and Sweden, voting in local elections is allowed after three years of permanent residency, and in Denmark voting in local elections is allowed after four years of permanent residency. In Belgium, non-EU nationals are also given the right to vote in local elections as long as they are registered in a Belgian municipality. In Luxembourg, social elections are organised to renew the representation of employees in ‘professional chambers’ and in health welfare funds (Caisses de maladie), as well as to renew staff representation in companies. All workers in the country, without distinction based on nationality or residence, participate in such social elections.

## 9 FINANCING

The social and economic costs of non-inclusive, segregated societies may well exceed the investments needed in integration policy and the potential which results from this<sup>111</sup>.

EU funding plays a crucial role in supporting Member States to build more inclusive and resilient societies. Nevertheless, EU funding for integration policy and inclusion is heterogeneous and not always accessible for key inclusion stakeholders, including local and regional authorities.

While the need for resources for inclusion measures tends to increase, EU funds for integration as the ESF+ or the ERDF will not increase their amount in the current MFF. Recommendations concerning the EU funding for the recovery plan are very limited and vague, Member States are only requested to 'take into consideration' the situation of migrants and their children in their national recovery and resilience plans, despite the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on migrants and refugees<sup>112</sup>.

When planning and using the funds used for the Covid-19 recovery, the particular needs of migrants and refugees need to be taken fully into account. The resources unlocked by the **Next Generation EU recovery plan**, and in particular the top up to the cohesion

policy provided by the REACT-EU programme, represent an important opportunity to limit the increase in exclusion and marginalisation produced by the consequent economic crisis<sup>113</sup>. ESF+, AMF and ERDF investments should be complementary and work in synergy with other EU funds and programmes.

The European Commission has taken many steps to help with the financing of the refugee crisis from Ukraine, such as the CARE initiative, funds from REACT-EU, or the disbursement of additional funds from the Home Affairs funds, detailed in the beginning of this document. These are very important and welcomed steps.

The European Commission should improve simplification, accessibility and compliance with equality measures in the funds. It should strengthen synergies between different funding instruments, promoting and facilitating the joint use of more than one fund with synchronised applications, uniformed reporting requirements and unified auditing rules.

The European Commission must ensure that the gender dimension and the promotion of equality between men and women is respected and promoted when implementing the funds, and that gender equality is assessed as enabling conditions of funds<sup>114</sup>.

## Proposals:

- Beyond the current emergency, the European Commission should establish specific provisions to guide Member States' programming on EU funds for the inclusion of third country nationals, including access to basic services to all.
- We call for a swift implementation and additional funding of the legislative proposal on Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE) put forward by PES Commissioners Elisa Ferreira and Nicolas Schmit.
- We call on Member States to make the best of use of Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe ('REACT-EU') funds to support those fleeing Ukraine.
- We call on the European Council to endorse a proposal amending the Home Affairs Fund 2014-2020 and the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund 2021-2027, which will allow Member States to use unused funds to deal with the influx of refugees from Ukraine.
- Member States must 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.
- Partnerships with all relevant stakeholders, in particular local and regional authorities and civil society must be reinforced in programming and implementation of EU funds- and the European Commission should facilitate the access to EU funding for local and regional authorities<sup>115</sup>.
- More funding from the EU recovery fund must go to families with a migration background and marginalised groups.
- Member States should make sure that ESF+ funds earmarked to tackle child poverty and youth unemployment via the Child and Youth Guarantees reach all the target groups, and that those with a migrant background are not left out.

# 10 BEST PRACTICES TOOLBOX

*We also want to include in this paper example of good practices promoted by our parties and governments. These are some initial examples we have identified, and we would like to use the discussions in the network to receive your feedback to review and enrich this list. These can be integrated in the relevant sections of the document.*

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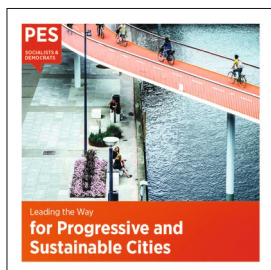
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