



THE NETWORK
OF MAJOR
EUROPEAN
CITIES

EUROCITIES Response to the Green Paper on Economic Migration

Making Economic Migration Work

EUROCITIES

EUROCITIES is the network of major European cities. Founded in 1986, the network brings together the local governments of 121 large cities in some 32 European countries. EUROCITIES represents the interests of its members and engages in dialogue with the European institutions across a wide range of policy areas affecting cities. These include: economic development, the environment, transport and mobility, social affairs, culture, the information and knowledge society, and services of general interest.

EUROCITIES website: www.eurocities.org

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EUROCITIES, which represents over 120 major cities, welcomes the European Commission's Green Paper on Managing Economic Migration and supports the emphasis on stakeholder involvement in the consultations.

Increased global competition and ageing societies have put the issue of economic migration firmly back on the political agenda. As the aim of the Green Paper proposals is to meet the needs of the labour market, EUROCITIES stresses that discussions on economic migration should be linked to the Lisbon Strategy and the European Employment Strategy.

EUROCITIES is concerned about the impact on cities of the Green Paper proposals on economic migration. As most migrants - documented or undocumented - live in cities, this is where the positive and negative effects of migration are mostly felt. Recent examples of tension in cities between native and non-native populations illustrate the challenges cities face in terms of maintaining social cohesion. An increasingly multicultural population with different needs represents another challenge in terms of service provision in the fields of housing, education, health and social services.

Furthermore, while immigration policies remain a national competence, the task of supporting immigrants on arrival (language courses, etc) with settlement and integration usually falls upon local authorities, often without sufficient resources being attributed for these tasks. As the government level closest to the citizens, cities must legitimise immigration policies, a difficult task when integration fails and when attitudes are negative.

EUROCITIES regrets that the Green Paper fails to address the impact of economic migration on cities, and the important role of cities in making migration and integration work. We also regret that the financial and administrative aspects of economic migration and the accompanying integration strategies have not been addressed. EUROCITIES strongly recommends that the European Commission undertake impact assessment before taking any decisions on the regulation of economic migration.

EUROCITIES also thinks that the Green Paper does not give sufficient importance to integration. EUROCITIES believes that introduction programmes and language training only are not enough for successful migration. Integrated strategies, covering a range of social, economic and civic measures, as well as awareness raising initiatives targeting all concerned, must be developed and implemented. Again, as cities play a key role in implementing such policies, they should be involved in their development and adequate resources given.

We offer our expertise and experience in dealing with various aspects of migration and integration in order to contribute to the development of efficient and effective policies for economic migration and integration. In particular, we will work towards implementing our charter "EUROCITIES Contribution to Good Governance concerning the Integration of Migrants and reception of Asylum Seekers". In return, cities must be provided with the proper competences and financial instruments to be able to deal with immigration in an adequate way.

EUROCITIES stresses that economic migration should be beneficial for all parties concerned; for the receiving countries and the country of origin, for the individual migrant, those already living in our societies, the undocumented as well as the documented.

In dealing with the wanted and unwanted effects of migration, human dignity must always remain the main principle, and international conventions and agreements must provide the legal framework.

EUROCITIES strongly believes that an integrated approach covering all relevant policy areas, based on impact assessment, in which the main stakeholders are involved through structured dialogue both on national and EU levels, is the way forward.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to Member States

1. Maximising the benefits of economic migration - holistic integration policies promoting social, economic and civic participation, as well as social cohesion, should be developed together with awareness-raising initiatives targeting both newcomers and the receiving society.
2. The essential role cities play in making migration and integration strategies work should be recognised, and a structured dialogue with local government established.
3. Policies on economic migration should only be developed based on a thorough assessment of the impact of these policies at local level.
4. Large cities should be provided with an adequate range of competencies and resources to respond to the challenges of receiving and integrating newcomers.
5. Too many migrants already living in our societies struggle with unemployment and poverty. A European strategy for increased economic migration cannot and should not replace the training of existing migrant workforces.
6. In dealing with economic migration, Member States should fully implement the Treaties and Conventions relating to immigration, asylum and fundamental rights, to which they are signatories.
7. Protecting the most vulnerable groups, such as the undocumented, women and children, must be prioritised when formulating immigration policies, to prevent their exploitation and eventual threats to social cohesion.
8. We appeal to Member States to develop adequate and decent systems for the return of people refused legal residence.
9. Those refused legal residence should - as far as possible - return with better "life-chances" than those with which they arrived, by being offered training while their case is being processed.

Recommendations to EU Institutions

1. EUROCITIES calls for increased co-operation between European Commission services on the complex issues of economic migration.
2. Economic migration policies should be linked to the Lisbon Strategy and the European Employment Strategy.
3. Greater emphasis must be put on integration policies for immigration to be successful.
4. European Institutions should recognize the pivotal role of cities in the immigration and integration process and in the coordination of immigration policies by establishing an appropriate consultation framework with large cities and their associations.
5. More research into the consequences of the Green Paper proposals is needed before a final decision on a EU approach on economic migration is made. In addition, we call for an impact assessment study on how such policies will affect large cities.
6. The EU should increase its international efforts to address the economic and political crises in many of the home countries and regions of new immigrants into Europe. The EU must also increase its efforts to ensure a secure return for those who have been denied permission to stay in the Union.
7. Existing and future European policies should continue to adhere to the European and International Treaties and Conventions on human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, and in particular the rights of established minorities, immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

POLICY CONTEXT

In this paper EUROCITIES highlights a number of issues that are of special concern to cities and responds to several of the questions raised in the Commission's Green paper. The response is based on EUROCITIES Strategic Objectives, the "Immigration and Integration and the Local Level; EUROCITIES Recommendations to National Governments and EU Institutions" (see annex I and II). More specifically, one year ago, EUROCITIES members agreed the charter "EUROCITIES Contribution to Good Governance concerning the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers" in which they committed to maximising their efforts towards improving their integration strategies.

Migration

Migration from third countries to the EU is a result of increasing globalization. It enriches local societies and challenges their functioning. Most immigrants end up in cities, which become increasingly multicultural. New dividing lines and inequalities appear. Changing social and cultural aspects constitute a challenge for cities in terms of service provision, social cohesion, and for their capacity to innovate and adapt to changing circumstances.

Economic Migration

Apart from forced migration due to conflict and war, economic interests usually drive migration. Economic migration to EU countries has not been encouraged since the 1960-70s. Today, increased global competition and ageing societies have put the issue back on political agendas. The Lisbon Agenda and the recent Commission Communication on the Social Agenda recognise the need for migration. To improve its economic performance, Europe needs to attract students from other countries, and in particular "the best brains" in fields like IT, high tech and research. The ageing of European societies also leads to an increase in the number of workers needed in specific sectors, such as health and elderly care.

Immigration may not fully address the challenges of increased global competition and an ageing population, but the long-term impact of sensible migration policies together with the right accompanying measures, will be substantial.

Integration

EUROCITIES strongly believes that migration policies will only be successful when accompanied with integration policies. Integration is a two-sided process in which the full rights of residence are granted in exchange for the newcomer's maximum effort to become an added value to society.

Integration is an organised and jointly performed process allowing newcomers to quickly find their place in society, through which they can function independently without direct state support. EUROCITIES believes that rights of residence must include full access to the labour market, education, housing, public health, social security and social services, as well as the right to maintain and promote one's cultural identity within the limits of the law. These basic rights go together with the necessary efforts to be able to communicate adequately in the national language(s), to develop an understanding of the norms and customs of the receiving society and to accept that society's basic democratic values.

THE ROLE OF CITIES

EUROCITIES regrets that the Commission Green Paper fails to address the impact of economic migration policies on cities and the essential role cities play in making both migration and integration policies work. With cities contributing to 80% of national GDPs, they are vitally important for the European economy, and it is clear that they must be involved in developing policies in the field of economic migration.

Immigration policies remain a national competence. Even if Member States have committed to developing a common immigration and asylum system, and the EU increasingly coordinates and harmonises national immigration and asylum legislation, the implementation of legislation is delegated to national or regional bodies (immigration services, the police and other legal authorities), and the task of supporting immigrants on their reception, settlement and integration is often the responsibility of local authorities.

Reception and integration policies, including introductory language courses, the provision of education, housing, and other support services, are often therefore a local affair. In the majority of cities there are insufficient, and in some case no, financial and policy resources to perform these public tasks. This means that the solutions found to pressing problems related to migration and integration, are often provisional and ad-hoc.

Despite the mainly limited formal competences in the immigration and integration fields, the Green Paper proposals on economic migration will have important effects on cities as service providers, employers and as hosts to documented or undocumented newcomers.

Local government must explain and legitimise policies and create social cohesion. In the current context where the acceptance of migrants is declining in many cities and many workers are afraid of losing their jobs due to global competition, it is particularly challenging to explain that we need more immigration. The capacity to attract migrants depends largely on the capacity of cities to offer a tolerant, open and welcoming atmosphere and a good quality of life, which, apart from employment opportunities, are the decisive factors.

MAKING ECONOMIC MIGRATION WORK

EUROCITIES welcomes the opportunities that economic migration means for our societies in economic, social and cultural terms. At the same time, it is important to be aware that only by involving all relevant stakeholders and taking all potential challenges seriously, will these policies achieve the intended positive results.

Stakeholder involvement - Consultation and dialogue

All relevant stakeholders, including all levels of government, social partners, and NGOs, must be involved in the development of economic migration policies and their accompanying measures, in order to ensure effective outcomes. Cities have a central role because migration policies have a large impact on cities and because of the experience they have with migration. Many cities have long experience - some more than 40 years - handling various aspects of migration. Cities are committed to sharing their knowledge and experience, and propose to national governments to

explore together the various proposals in the Green Paper. This should take place through structured dialogue and consultation.

Responsibilities, competences and resources - impact assessment

EUROCITIES is disappointed that the Green Paper pays little attention to the question of who will finance and coordinate the implementation of new economic migration policies and their accompanying activities. This is an important concern for cities, often responsible for the implementation of immigration and integration strategies, while at the same time they experience cuts in their budgets.

It is essential to develop proper integration strategies and to provide public authorities of large cities with an adequate range of competencies and resources to respond to the challenges of receiving and integrating newcomers. For example, city administrations and city-related agencies (such as job centres) should not be burdened with new bureaucratic procedures such as: testing out employment plans; work and residence permits resulting from proposals in the Green Paper; without extra resources to do so.

Before a decision is taken on new economic migration policies, EUROCITIES proposes a Europe-wide mapping exercise of local responsibilities, competences, and resources combined with an impact assessment of the effects of the various policy proposals on cities.

As the aim of migration policies is to meet the needs of the labour market, any discussion on economic migration must be linked to the Lisbon Strategy and European employment policies. This, again, requires co-operation within the relevant services of the European Commission and between ministries at national levels. More than anything, it calls for cooperation and dialogue between spheres of governance.

Racism and xenophobia

Due to social and political changes, and growth of racism and xenophobia, there is little popular support for migration in cities today. It is important to recognise that the relationship between newcomers and the host society tends to be more emotional than rational. Local governments face the challenge of defending national migration policies where people from third countries with certain skills are more or less openly recruited, while at the same time integration is failing. In addition, due to global competition, many workers are afraid of losing their jobs, and are therefore increasingly prone to xenophobic sentiments. Member States should set aside resources to inform the public and counteract negative reactions.

Harmonisation

The ageing of European populations and the interdependence between Member States requires more harmonisation at the EU level. As economic migration is a highly complex and sensitive issue, EU legislation on the admission of economic immigrants should only be seen as 'first step legislation', leaving Member States to respond to the specific needs of their labour markets and to determine the volume of admissions.

Despite the fact that all of Europe is facing similar challenges in terms of labour market shortages and declining competitiveness, the specific needs at European, national and local levels differ

considerably. These differences call for flexibility and for dialogue between the different levels of government.

Admission procedures - a flexible approach

Handling economic migration requires transparent, fast and flexible admission procedures. Combined work and residence permits should be granted simultaneously in order to avoid red tape and administration, but also in order to attract migrants. And a repetition, for example, of the economic needs test, is not necessary if the parties of the contract remain the same and the work permit has not expired.

While EUROCIITIES recognises the valuable contribution of immigrants as entrepreneurs, we see no added value for legal measures at the EU level for the admission of self-employed persons. In line with this, special procedures for short-term contracts for the self-employed should be avoided, since these can easily be abused to circumvent the normal procedures.

EUROCIITIES holds the view that immigrant employees should have the possibility to change employer and sector. The employee should hold the permit in order to enhance his or her protection and to avoid abuse from the side of the employer. This right could possibly be limited to a single sector (healthcare, for example) in order to better meet the needs in the labour market in an efficient way. This limitation should, however, not exceed more than three years.

Both sector related legislative proposals and a common European accelerated procedure could be appropriate instruments for needs-oriented migration, provided they are designed in a transparent and simple way and that the level of legal protection is the same. New migration rules should also cater for persons in the middle and lower segments of the labour market, not just for highly qualified staff.

Discrimination in the labour market

EUROCIITIES favours a EU immigration policy that takes account of long-term demographic developments and labour market needs. Priority must be given to using the untapped and often undervalued potential of EU citizens as well as third country nationals and irregular migrants in the national and EU labour markets. EUROCIITIES urges the European Commission and national governments to pay more attention to migrants already living in our societies - and particularly the young - who are more likely to be poor and unemployed than any other group possibly as a result of discrimination.

The development of a strategy for increased economic migration should not replace the training of the existing migrant workforce.

Rights

The Green Paper includes no reference to relevant international or EU Treaties and Conventions that provide a legal framework for migrant workers and their families. EUROCIITIES believes that any policy for economic migration should be based on a clear framework of rights for all workers concerned. EUROCIITIES calls upon Member States and the EU to explicitly acknowledge that all international and European instruments on human rights apply to migrant workers, regardless of their legal status.

EUROCITIES regrets that the migrant perspective is absent from the Green Paper; as it speaks mainly of “win-win” situations for sending and receiving countries, without reference to the migrant worker and their family, rights, needs or wishes. EUROCITIES would like to emphasise that we are dealing with human beings, not commodities.

EUROCITIES defends the principle of equal rights and obligations for all with regard to the labour market and the need to combat exploitation, employment segregation and abuse of any kind, in terms of salary, working hours, conditions of work and contracts. EUROCITIES believes that illegal and clandestine work needs to be prevented, and that legal immigrants as well as the undocumented should be protected from exploitation.

To make the EU an attractive destination for immigrants, the new immigration system should not replicate the old “guest worker system” but facilitate reunification, as this is a basic human right. EUROCITIES, furthermore, believes in the importance of attributing social and political citizenship rights to long-term resident migrants and their families.

Undocumented migrants

While EUROCITIES welcomes the Green Paper’s reference to the need for a European strategic initiative on common criteria for the admission of economic migrants to reduce illegal migration, we fail to see how the proposals will stop or reduce illegal migration. Experience shows that stricter or more structured admission regulations do not automatically lead to a reduction in illegal migration but to it taking on new forms. Illegal migration will continue as long as there are conflicts and poverty regardless of the quality and scope of migration policies.

EUROCITIES is concerned about undocumented migrants and the exploitation they face in the labour and housing markets. Illegal migration represents a special challenge to cities, home to most undocumented migrants. Cities have an obligation to provide, for example, healthcare and education for all citizens including undocumented migrants. Illegal migration also has several negative effects on cities in terms of crime and insecurity and even, in some recent cases, the spreading of diseases.

EUROCITIES asks Member States to assess the implications of new regulations when considering how to increase economic migration, so that formal legislation mirrors everyday realities. Undocumented migrants must be better protected and cities must be enabled to deal with challenges related to illegal migration in a constructive and humane way.

Accompanying measures

Integration

EUROCITIES is pleased that the Commission recognizes the need for accompanying measures such as integration strategies. It is essential to see migration and integration as two sides of the same coin. EUROCITIES believes that holistic integration strategies should cover measures in the following areas:

- *Introduction programmes*: intensive language training should be offered together with an introduction on civic rights, norms and law in the host society;
- *Awareness raising and information to avoid conflict, xenophobia and racism*: the receiving

community needs to become aware of immigration as a permanent phenomenon and should, together with the newcomers be educated on integration as a two-way process where both sides must make efforts.

- *Participation*: civic and political participation must be facilitated and encouraged, and migrant communities must be involved in design and implementation of policies affecting them.
- *Education*: full access to and participation in the formal education system is necessary as education is the key to independent and informed citizens.
- *Labour market*: full access to labour is probably the single most important integration measure for migrants.
- *Health and social services*: health and social services should be adapted to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population.
- *Housing*: access to decent housing must be ensured; social and spatial segregation of immigrants in the more deprived areas must be avoided.
- *Religion and cultural identity*: integration does not mean assimilation. Cultural expression should be encouraged and the right to freedom of expression and religion ensured.

Cities provide the framework for what is ultimately a local affair between the immigrant and their neighbour. Integration policies should be developed in dialogue with cities, given the need to ensure social cohesion in the city and to provide adequate services for all citizens. Cities are already committed to their share through “EUROCITIES Contribution to good governance...”. They should receive adequate resources to allow them to implement integration measures in an effective way.

“Brain drain - brain circulation” and third country cooperation

EUROCITIES believes that the European Union has a moral and ethical responsibility to avoid or at least compensate as much as possible, the negative effects of economic migration such as “brain drain” for third countries. We support compensation measures, such as small financial incentives (micro-credit), to immigrant workers who want to return to their home country as well as banking systems that facilitate money transfers to relatives in the country of origin. EUROCITIES also supports initiatives to promote so-called “brain circulation” in order to spread knowledge and competence. EUROCITIES also supports increased possibilities and financial support for third country nationals to study in European countries.

EUROCITIES believes in cooperation not only between sending and receiving countries, but also between sending and receiving cities. This would lead to early warnings on future migration patterns and a better understanding of each other’s needs. There is also an added value in cultural and technical exchange, as well as for training and learning experiences of interest to the sending cities. EUROCITIES sees the need for exchanges between city officials on both sides and believes that cooperation between cities should be fostered through Community programmes like AENEAS and EuropeAid.

Return

EUROCITIES appeals to national governments to develop and introduce adequate and decent systems for the return of people refused legal residence, and to adhere to the Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of the Council of Europe.

In order to create the wanted “win-win” situations, EUROCTIES believes that all migrants - legal and illegal - should leave with improved life-chances. An example of this is the vocational education school In Rotterdam, which is currently discussing with Luandato the fine-tuning of the training of those asylum seekers who will return to Angola.

Close co-operation between sending and receiving countries, also at city level, would be very helpful in order to maximise the outcome of migration to all parties concerned, including the migrant.