



4th meeting of the EUROPEAN MIGRATION FORUM

Towards a more Inclusive Labour Market for Migrants: Seizing the Potential by Addressing the Challenges

Brussels, 6-7 March 2018

Summary Report

The 4th meeting of the European Migration Forum brought together over 280 representatives from Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), local and regional authorities, Economic and Social partners, national governments, the European Commission and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). The EESC hosted two days of detailed debates about the challenges and opportunities of integrating migrants into national labour markets in the European Union.

In his keynote speech, **Dimitris Avramopoulos, the EU Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship**, emphasised the importance of integrating migrants who **have obtained a legal path to stay in Europe** given that failure to do so will fuel populism and risk undermining the cohesion of our societies. According to Commissioner Avramopoulos, integrating migrants into the labour markets is **vital for both ensuring social cohesion and for addressing skills and labour shortages** in many sectors of the European economy.

In his keynote speech, **Georges Dassis, President of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)**, also stressed the importance of integration for the growth of Europe, but remarked that **integration is a two-way street**: European societies must ensure the rights and integration of migrants, but migrants also need to be willing to integrate and respect their host societies. Migrants must respect the EU's model in terms of equality of gender and education of children, he said.

Session 1: Testimonies of Migrants Successful at Integrating into the EU Labour Market

The session focused on the ways to successfully integrate into labour markets. The audience heard testimonies by two migrants, **Maria Lourdes Gernan** from the Philippines and **Ramin Shadani** from Iran, who talked about their experiences in EU labour markets. Speakers agreed that the validation and development of migrants' skills as early as possible could prove crucial. Ms Lourdes Gernan pointed out **numerous scenarios leading to migrants becoming undocumented even if they enter the EU legally**. Mr Shadani pointed out the **practical difficulties** that he had encountered, for example opening a bank account in Slovenia. The importance of learning the language of the host community was also stressed.

“Learning the language can make a difference between being in paradise or hell,” said Mr Shadani, who recently opened a translation and interpretation start-up company in Slovenia.

Eugenio Ambrosi, Regional Director for the European Economic Area, the EU and NATO at the International Organisation for Migration, said that **a failure to listen to and talk to migrants is a “major shortcoming in the EU’s policymaking”**. With their proper inclusion into the labour market, migrants become more self-reliant, less vulnerable and less marginalised. Mr Ambrosi argued that “this is the best security response – far more efficient than sealing borders that can’t be sealed anyway”.

EESC Member **Jose Antonio Moreno Diaz** stressed the need to change the narrative on migration away from migrants being depicted as a burden on society to one about **the need for migration in any modern society**.

Session 2: Access to EU Funding

A panel discussion on access to EU funding with four panellists was moderated by Sean Klein. EU funds are a major tool helping migrants to gain access to the labour market and to fully integrate into society. The debate focussed on current and future funding needs.

Catherine Woollard, Secretary General, European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)¹, presented the results of a recent ECRE report on spending on the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)² called ‘Follow the money’. She observed that many EU Member States are not fully distributing the money allocated to them under AMIF. **She recommended adopting a multiagency, multi-ministerial approach to AMIF** (i.e. not just the interior ministries deciding on the distribution of the money). She proposed setting up **mechanisms so that money can be reabsorbed and reallocated** when Member States are not using the funding for integration allocated to them under the AMIF. As for management of the funds, ECRE recommended **simplification** and consistency in the interpretation of rules as well as new mechanisms for small grants and direct funding to NGOs where there is a risk that governments are not channelling funding to them.

Silvia Ganzerla, Policy Director at Eurocities, also recommended **channelling funding stuck at the national level to civil society organisations**. “There are examples of cities struggling to accommodate refugees whereas Member States are sitting with the money,” said Ms Ganzerla, describing this as “a very inefficient use of resources”. She recommended **improving access for local governments to EU funds and setting up pilot projects allowing direct access** to those funds. Ms Ganzerla also recommended better synergies between EU funds for integration.

Jean-Marc Roirant, EESC rapporteur on the funding of Civil Society Organisations by the EU, recommended relying on civil society in order to use best funding available at EU level for integration. He pointed out that budget authorities should increase funding for Civil

¹ The European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) is made up of 95 NGOs across 40 countries

² https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/financing/fundings/migration-asylum-borders/asylum-migration-integration-fund_en.

Society Organisations (CSOs), including in the form of operating grants and multiannual financing, and ensure that voluntary work is properly valued in the new financial regulation. Mr. Roirant stressed that the European institutions should promote a positive image of CSOs, which are vital to involving the public and encouraging them to express their views. Taking their cue from some Member States that have adopted "charters of reciprocal commitment" or "pacts" to this end, the European institutions could take steps to establish genuine European civil society dialogue. He also recommended that the Commission proposes a European fund for democracy, human rights and values within the EU, to be equipped with an ambitious budget, directly open to CSOs and managed independently.

Beate Gminder, Director, DG Home, European Commission, stressed how important it is to use other funds (e.g. the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) for housing needs, educational and vocational skills upgrades) alongside AMIF for integration purposes. Ms Gminder mentioned that, **for the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the Commission is likely to propose a similar fund to AMIF with increased flexibility to respond to unforeseen events in the field of migration and integration.** Regarding access to funding, the Commission is planning to set up a portal where information on all EU funds can be accessed. The Commission is also working on establishing a mechanism to measure integration outcomes for migrants brought about by initiatives financed by the EU funds, but this will remain a challenge. Given the risk of disproportionate spending on returns and insufficient spending on integration, ECRE recommended allocating a minimum percentage of funding to integration in the future AMIF.

Ms Gminder also stressed the importance of ensuring a meaningful consultation and association process for local authorities and NGOs in the next MFF. This could be ensured by involving them in the assessment of needs, in defining priorities, in drafting programming documents and in the evaluation/monitoring processes. Other panellists suggested including the ministries of employment and social affairs in the design and delivery of the AMIF programme as they are regular interlocutors with civil society organisations on the issue of integration.

Workshops – Main findings

Four parallel workshops (1a-4a) were held on the first day and four (1b-4b) on the second day of the Forum. Below are the main outcomes of the discussions.

Workshop 1a: How to foster a multi-stakeholder approach in the labour market?

The first workshop focused on the **importance of a multi-stakeholder approach to promote integration in the labour market.** Partnerships involving different stakeholders, and in particular economic and social partners, can provide a much more comprehensive and holistic approach to integration as integration is a complex process and different stakeholders can meet different needs of migrants and provide different points of view. The role of NGOs and CSOs, in these partnerships, together with economic and social partners, was discussed as well as obstacles to and key factors of success for such partnerships.

In these partnerships, NGOs and CSOs can bring real added value by helping connect authorities with migrants (acting as a bridge between the two) and they play a key role in advocating and lobbying for migrants. They have the capacity to inspire trust and understanding among migrants, can be more flexible and faster than authorities and have the

capacity to introduce new approaches to integration. They can fill the gaps which sometimes exist in public action and can complement state intervention (e.g. the key role that volunteers played in Germany during the early stages of the refugee crisis in 2015). NGOs and CSOs can also play an advocacy role for migrants' integration.

The **main obstacles** to a multi-stakeholder approach for integration are the limited financial capacity of many organisations and the lack of support from public authorities. There is fierce competition for funding between organisations with the same goal whereas they should complement each other and build on existing initiatives. Participants also agreed that there is a tendency to work in silos, thus limiting the amount of knowledge and information that is shared among partners. Other obstacles include the small size of many actions, the difficulty in scaling them up and the fact that data protection requirements make the exchange of information between partners difficult.

Several **key factors of success** in setting up effective partnerships have been identified, among which are an open-minded approach between partners, continuous coordination, shared and focused goals with clear mandates from the start, early intervention in terms of listening to and understanding the needs of migrants: every strategy should be based on good analysis and a mapping of needs. Political commitment by public authorities, combination of bottom up and top down approaches, dissemination of the right information at the right time to both the target group and the host society were also identified as key factors for success.

Workshop 1b: Concrete solutions for better cooperation at the local level

During this workshop different actors shared their perspectives on **how to improve cooperation at the local level to achieve a better integration process**. Participants underlined the need for specific coordinating structures and the importance of mapping the needs of different actors. Cooperation between municipalities was also seen as an important element for improving cooperation at the local level. In this regard, participants proposed the creation of a database between different actors to share information about migrants, such as their skills and informal education.

Red Cross Barcelona, The City of Ghent and Startup Refugees based in Helsinki provided presentations. Speakers identified a number of factors of success, challenges and recommendations. **Factors for success** included stakeholders taking shared responsibility, having a high level of specialisation among professionals, paying specific attention to the target group and directly involving refugees in policy-making and projects that affect them. Challenges for them were the need for diverse profiles in order to reach objectives; the long decision-making process and bureaucracy; and the difficulty of aligning the priorities of different partners. Speakers' recommendations focused on the initial phase of new initiatives and the importance of ensuring political commitment and adequate financial resources and putting in place neutral coordinating structures to ensure independence.

Participants discussed a number of specific questions in smaller groups and came up with the following concrete recommendations: As regards **how to achieve recognition of qualifications**, they proposed a mentoring scheme with a reference person helping migrants to set up their profile and give advice on how to have their qualifications recognised. Another

idea was a skills database where the informal skills of migrants could be registered and which municipalities could share (inspired by Swedish example of an 'open college network')

Furthermore, in response to the question of **how local authorities can engage with local businesses**, participants proposed having a dedicated interlocutor who could act as a 'middle man' between migrants/refugees, local authorities and local businesses. They also recommended that local authorities offer specific grant schemes for NGOs to give entrepreneurship training to migrants and refugees.

Finally, **long-term engagement of authorities at the local level can be achieved by** creating a space for dialogue between the partners to avoid overlap and monitor each other's progress. A database of practices and benchmarking was also deemed useful to ensure that all the partners are engaged.

Workshop 2a. Recognising and developing skills – Best practices

The workshop focused on **how to capitalise on the skills that migrants bring to host societies**. First of all, participants agreed on the importance of providing support for migrants in different languages as language can be a barrier for migrants to communicate about their skills. Secondly, early stage support was seen as an important element to make sure that the validation of skills takes place as soon as possible so as to avoid skills' depreciation and loss while migrants wait for their asylum claims to be processed. Some concerns were also raised, such as the specific difficulty for low-skilled migrants in getting their skills recognised in addition to the better-known difficulties of getting high-level skills recognised. New tools and methods to discover and validate all types of migrants' skills are necessary to address this problem. Providing information to migrants on how to validate their skills was also seen as a crucial element as was the importance of increasing the employers' appreciation of non-standardised CVs. Lastly, participants considered long-term support for migrants as vital. Access to information at various points in time, psychological, linguistic and financial support are some of the elements needed to support the long-term development of migrants.

After a set of presentations by the Lifelong Learning Platform, the Mission of Canada to the European Union and the European Commission, participants brainstormed around four main questions: (i) What are the needs of migrants?; (ii) Are the right assessment tools in place?; (iii) How can migrants be supported in building their skills?; and (iv) How can the development of skills be further supported in the medium to long term?

As regards **migrants' needs**, information is crucial and would need to be provided at different points in time. Migrants have needs in terms of both formal and non-formal learning. As their language needs vary, information provision and support has to be organised in different languages. Illiteracy is a challenge and the visual recognition of skills could therefore be important. Early intervention at the very initial stage is key (e.g. fast-track procedures) to ensure that skills' validation takes place as soon as possible to avoid losses in skills while people are waiting for their status to be determined. When providing assistance in asylum centres, information on the status, prospects and the uncertainty surrounding the process need to be clearly conveyed to the migrants. Waiting for a long time for a status determination can be extremely hard, also given a situation of physical confinement. Participants observed that some countries are facing a specific situation when developing policies to better support the recognition or building of migrants' skills, as there are cases of

migrants willing to reach northern Member States rather than staying in the Member State where they are. There is also an important urban/ rural divide.

On the question of **whether the right assessment tools are in place**, participants agreed that it can be difficult for migrants to understand what skills and talents are needed and how they are assessed and valued in their host country. Tools are therefore needed to support the identification of these talents and then move to their recognition and validation. It is crucial to ensure that migrants and service providers can find the right information. Support staff is needed to facilitate the assessment processes as not all migrants can easily go through the process on their own. Furthermore, there is a range of available methods for the migrants who look for help or an assessment. There is no single, perfect assessment tool but this is not a problem. A diversity of complementary tools is beneficial (tailored/ practical/ visual). Tools in various languages are needed, taking into account the different levels of linguistic ability, with use of visualisation where necessary. Best practices need to be collected, also taking into account the different audiences (e.g. migrants, employers, local authorities).

As for ensuring the **best level of support for migrants**, it was underlined that many actors should be involved. It would be important to have a place where people can meet and see the talents in an informal setting. There are issues with the administrative requirements and the length of procedures for validation. Streamlining approaches at EU level and between the national and local levels would also be important. Participants recommended the use of mentoring as two professionals have often more in common than two newcomers. However mentoring alone cannot achieve everything and is not always a suitable tool. It should be used in particular for migrants with “non-standard” skills as employers may feel more comfortable with nationals with an education that they are familiar with.

Building trust is the first necessary step as there are many barriers preventing migrants to open up. Their specific needs have to be taken into account (e.g. to be able to reconcile their family responsibilities when training is provided). Comprehensive support initiatives are therefore important (e.g. the ‘Duo for a Job’ buddy system is promising), and the support should focus on work-related skills. Migrants often need to broaden their network. Volunteering can, for example, also help them gain relevant labour market skills. The challenge is that refugees are often not seen as potential volunteers.

Access to timely and accurate information is important, for example on occupations in which there are shortages (in which it is difficult to find candidates for a job). There are trade-offs between the possibilities (and the possible need to get a job quickly) and the aspirations of migrants (and fulfilling their potential). Some are willing to rebuild their career after an interruption; others are flexible in terms of being open to making a career change.

Addressing the **development of skills in the medium to long term**, participants underlined the importance of sustaining the motivation of migrants. They pointed to the role of authorities, support organisations and role models (e.g. employers and successful migrants who acknowledge the difficulties encountered).

Whereas it would be desirable to reduce the waiting time in asylum centres, participants agreed that psychological support is essential. Experience with the situation of refugees from

the Balkans shows that some people suffered from post-traumatic stress syndrome with a time lag, i.e. once they had got themselves into a stable situation and found a job. Public authorities had not anticipated this.

Workshop 2b: Matching refugees' skills with labour market needs

The second parallel workshop related to skills (continuation of workshop 2a) addressed the specific question as to **how to match refugees' skills with labour market needs**. Following the presentation of concrete and recent ongoing initiatives in this area by four organisations (Duo for a Job, Transitions UK, IOM, VDAB – Flemish employment services) participants brainstormed on six main questions: how to support refugees in accessing job (and training) opportunities and labour market information, how to support employers in (training and) recruiting refugees, the role that civil society organisations do (or could) play in matching refugees with employers, the potential and limits of digital tools, how to assess and monitor the impact of measures and, finally, how to scale up/transfer/replicate good practice. For each of the questions, participants identified good practices, limits of current practices as well as recommendations for various levels of authorities.

The following **challenges and limitations** were noted by participants: the uncertainty about their residence status, the rules for employing asylum applicants or refugees (and the way they are applied, i.e. red tape), the complexity and lack of information about various employment incentives available (especially for SMEs and employers outside big cities) are all disincentives/obstacles for employers to train/hire refugees that need to be taken into account by authorities. The fact that there are numerous low-skilled refugees in some countries that have low resources and high unemployment does not help. Finally, the attitudes of employers and their workforce as well as potential cultural differences and the risk of a backlash if other vulnerable groups are not supported are other factors to take into account. For refugees, obstacles relate notably to a lack of openness of certain employers, long asylum procedures, uncertainty about their final country of residence, lack of trust in public services, limited language skills, staying motivated despite the many barriers and knowledge of how things work and who to contact.

Civil society organisations (**CSOs**) can play a role in acting as bridges between refugees and employers by providing concrete information to employers and debunking stereotypes about migrants. CSOs can supplement the work of public employment services (PES) which cannot give high quality support to everyone. Participants agreed that funding for NGOs needs to be sustainable and stable. One can use conditionality (when involving NGOs) when funding projects. CSOs can also ensure holistic support, combining social and labour market measures. A good example was provided about a measure in France addressing three phases: before, during and after a person enters a company to ensure sustainability of placement. However, CSOs should not and cannot carry the burden of doing everything when "national authorities are failing to act". For all actors (employers, refugees, CSOs) more certainty is needed to ensure more efficient partnerships and therefore pathways into stable employment.

Digital tools have a huge potential to support matching between employers and refugees, including in tackling the language barrier. The challenge is how to reach users and monitor the use of these tools and to make sure that they are cost-effective. Depending on the skills (qualifications but also language and IT skills) of refugees, digital tools may have different roles. For those with the lowest level of skills, the most important thing is to get information about the local network (whom to talk to at the local level). LinkedIn can be very useful in making contacts with employers. However digital tools for refugee integration entail a number of limitations and risks: data protection; the difficulties for refugees in sorting out reputable versus unscrupulous organisations; in some places (e.g. Germany) job ads are still published in local newspapers; access to a real PC rather than a smartphone often makes a difference; finally, sometimes face to face interactions remain much more efficient and effective.

Regarding **monitoring and assessing results/showing the impact of measures**, this all depends on the size of the project. Contacts with jobseekers and employers are a key factor in terms of achieving success. Public employment agencies have to work with local actors to ensure that high quality support can be given to everybody. It is key for PESs to ensure automatic exchange with other databases (public services) as it is the only way to assess the impact of the measure properly in the long run and to be able to show the positive impact for all actors involved (employers, refugees, taxpayers and society at large). Nevertheless, one should also keep in mind the qualitative aspects, the "people behind the numbers" and so avoid producing statistics just for the sake of statistics.

Regarding **transferring and replicating good practices**, one of the main challenges is the lack of political will or support in a number of Member States. The lack of continuity of the policy framework, of the regulations and of funding are other institutional obstacles. The verified measures, which proved to be successful, often need to be adapted to the needs of actors and beneficiaries at the local level.

A number of good practices in the area of matching refugees and employers were identified and discussed. They relate to concrete examples such as mentoring ('Duo for a Job'), 'Be Mobile in Austria' (to move to regions where jobs are), the possibility of rejected asylum seekers to change status in Sweden, the reform of residence rights of asylum seekers in Germany in cases where they started an apprenticeship, practical guides for employers in Luxembourg and Belgium, fast track training schemes (agreed with social partners) in Sweden and Denmark, the 'Way to Work' website in Sweden. Other good practices referred to were the development of information leaflets and apps that are multilingual and can be accessed in many places and contexts; online platforms for matching; job shadowing programmes; and workplace learning, which remains the most effective way to integrate migrants into the labour market.

A number of **recommendations** were made. Some relate to the legal framework, such as having shorter asylum procedures, flexible status-changing options or avoiding red tape. Others were more practical: more funding opportunities, including to CSOs, and financial incentives to hire for employers; using existing diversity charters and organisations as bridging actors; providing cultural training to both refugees and employers; having a list of existing initiatives and tools available in each Member State; promoting pragmatic matching solutions (one week in a company to test the technical and social skills of migrants to find out their preferences); promoting "meeting spaces" given that individual relations matter. Finally

participants recommended that a reference organisation (a public authority or CSO with a clear mandate) could guarantee coordination and act as a one-stop-shop to reply to any question and share knowledge.

Workshop 3a - Addressing the issue of irregular migrants in the labour market

Holding a valid work permit or other authorisation to work is a precondition for accessing the labour market regularly, and in most cases, decent work. The workshop explored the specific practices in the Member States as to how to handle the situation of irregularly-residing migrants who are active on the labour market and the impact that these practices have on both the situation of the migrants and on the evolution of national policies against undeclared work.

Workshop 3a addressed topics such as the **provision of services and ‘firewalls’** (i.e. separation between immigration enforcement and service provision to ensure safe access) for undocumented migrants, the situation of ‘non-removable returnees’ and regularisation practices in different Member States. On the topic of ‘firewalls’, examples from different countries and cities were shared between participants. While some ‘firewalls’ are explicit in law, it was noticed that often these provisions are not a formal policy but a practice and sometimes rely on the discretion of service providers. There was therefore a plea for more legislation or formal policy on these provisions so that irregular migrants can know that they can access services safely and so that the independence of service providers is protected.

On the subject of ‘**non-removable returnees**’, participants shared the differences between Member States. In some countries, for example, these people have some rights granted or they are even granted humanitarian residence permits, so that, given they cannot be deported, they can have a regular residence status and associated rights.

Lastly, **regularisation** was seen by most participants as an important and common tool to address the reality of undocumented populations, with numerous benefits for governments, communities, families and individuals. Participants shared different practices from several Member States: including time-bound large regularisation programmes in countries such as Italy and Spain, to fixed regularisation mechanisms, such as in Spain, where migrants need to have been residing in the country for three years, have a one-year contract and prove their integration into society. The case of Portugal, where undocumented children attend school and their parents can regularise their status, was seen by civil society representatives as another example that could be applied to other countries. Lastly, many participants shared the view that there is no evidence of regularisation being a pull factor for large-scale irregular arrivals and that regularisation measures should be promoted.

Workshop 3b - Preventing labour exploitation and ensuring decent working conditions

This workshop focused on how to fight labour exploitation for migrants, both with regular or irregular status. Three main topics were discussed. First of all, participants tackled the issue of **labour redress and monitoring mechanisms**, discussing how to ensure that there are mechanisms to ensure access to justice for workers regardless of their legal status. In this respect, participants shared experiences of Member States where it is possible for

undocumented migrants to file complaints and access redress without automatically risking immigration enforcement, such as in Ireland, Spain and Belgium. This was considered essential for complaints' mechanisms to be effective for all workers. Secondly, a key point was the **importance of self-organisation, participation and self-advocacy of migrants** as a path for the empowerment of migrants in the workplace.

Lastly, participants shared their experiences and views on **how to hold companies accountable** for labour exploitation and unfair working conditions. Participants agreed on some good practices that can improve corporate accountability, such as legal provisions requiring supply chain transparency and joint liability, with appropriate disincentives for violations; and working with businesses to advocate for better enforcement of labour standards, including through alliances between NGOs and trade unions as recognised social partners. It was noted that sanctions against employers often lead to the worker losing their job. Workers' self-organisation and participation is key to actually improving conditions for them. It was also suggested that, rather than 'name-and-shame' campaigns, publicising a legal case against a company can be an effective way to impact the whole sector.

Workshop 4a - Tackling discrimination and promoting diversity at the workplace

This workshop focused on promoting diversity in the workplace. After sharing experiences, participants came up with four main areas of recommendations regarding this topic.

First of all, it was agreed that it is crucial that there is strong legislation against discrimination. While legislation against discrimination exists both at the EU and at the national level, participants claimed that **legislation needs to be implemented more uniformly**. More **legal advice** should be provided to support those who issue complaints on the ground of discrimination (for example, the Belgian equality body receives 300 complaints per year). Secondly, **collecting data** was considered as an important tool to enable monitoring and evaluating possible discriminatory practices. Thirdly, participants believed that **education on diversity courses on diversity management was vital** for fighting discrimination. Those courses should be given at universities and business schools. The fourth recommendation concerned the **role of employers** and the need to increase their awareness of the need to promote diversity in the workplace. Measures that have been taken in some Member States, such as setting up leadership/management programmes and quota systems to help migrants access leadership positions; introducing diversity standards (as in Norway), should be considered by other Member States.

There should be more attention to diversity in line with the '3R process' (recruit, retain and reward); job descriptions, language requirements and career paths should be adapted to the specificities of migrant employees. Finally, participants proposed promoting **an award** at the EU or national level for the most diverse businesses.

Workshop 4b - Promoting entrepreneurship among migrants and supporting the social economy

The last workshop focused on promoting entrepreneurship among migrants and supporting the social economy. Four key issues were addressed: (i) What additional support do migrants need to be successful entrepreneurs?; (ii) How can migrants become social entrepreneurs?; (iii) How can the social economy help with the integration of migrants?; and

(iv) What support does the social economy need to play a meaningful role in migrants' integration?

Discussions were triggered by a presentation from a representative from Singa (a social enterprise involved in migrants' integration which has developed acceleration programmes for migrant entrepreneurs) and by Lucie Umukundwa, a refugee from Rwanda who has benefitted from these services to launch her successful business.

Against the backdrop of these two presentations, participants identified **obstacles and challenges** that migrants face when setting up their businesses. They came up with **solutions** that could help overcome these obstacles and with recommendations applicable to all levels of stakeholders. **Enterprise creation** was also discussed as the social economy is crucial in promoting employment among migrants and fosters their integration in the local community. Participants noted a good practice of WISEs - Work Integration Social Enterprises - which are participative, inclusive, rooted in the local community and give migrants job opportunities.

The recommendations from this workshop included the need to promote success stories (creation of an EU award), helping migrants access finance (through microfinance, targeted grants and loans, fiscal advantages or lower taxation rates in the first months of the businesses' creation, creation of a European guarantee fund), promoting training (in particular business and management training, possibly with dedicated mentoring schemes or coaching), fostering networking at all levels (among migrants, between migrants and local communities and local entrepreneurs etc. and through fairs, for instance where successful migrant entrepreneurs could play the role of 'ambassadors'). Partnerships between all levels of stakeholders appeared fundamental in creating supportive ecosystems for migrants. Those partnerships should ideally gather public sector institutions, enterprises, local communities, business support actors such as chambers of commerce and development agencies and associations of migrants.

'The floor is yours' session

This session allowed participants to propose a topic and host a discussion on a subject linked to the overall theme of the Forum. Some of discussions delved more deeply into issues raised beforehand in the workshops while some allowed for the opportunity to tackle issues that had not yet been covered. This one and a half hour session was held in a 'world café' format, enabling participants to freely choose and switch between discussion groups.

The following topics were discussed: online skills assessment tools, how to give a voice to refugees in the process of developing such tools, language skills as a prerequisite for (or not) entry into the labour market, helping refugee women find work, increasing the visibility of migrant entrepreneurs in the media, attracting private investors to boost migrant enterprises and promoting a more active role for employers in using migrant skills. In addition some discussions revolved around the impact of migrants concentrating in and living in deprived neighbourhoods on their chances in the labour market and ways of improving migrants' access to shelter and food as a precondition for entry into the labour market. The last group of topics included: the next steps in relation to legal migration within the UN Global Compact on Migration, the role of NGOs (for volunteering/as service providers) in the labour market

and ways to help refugees find accurate information about travelling to another EU Member State for job opportunities.

Interactive Debate on the Results of the Forum

The key findings of the parallel workshops were delivered to the plenary of the Forum. The debate was moderated by Sean Klein and included comments by Menno Bart, representative of The Adecco Group, Lazar Lazarov, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Bulgarian Presidency of the EU, and Simon Mordue, Deputy Director-General for Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission.

The results of workshops 1a and 1b on a multi-stakeholder approach in labour market integration and cooperation at the local level were presented by **Salvatore Sofia**.

The results of these workshops were applauded by **Lazar Lararov, Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Ministry in Bulgaria**. Mr Larazov reaffirmed the importance of improving cooperation between local authorities, NGOs and the government to improve the integration of migrants into the labour market. NGOs can intervene where the government does not have the resources. He said that, in Bulgaria, NGOs and the private sector are involved with public authorities at several stages in the formulation of integration policy. He cited good examples of multi-stakeholder approaches used in countries such as Sweden, Norway and Germany. Mr Lazarov pointed out that the Bulgarian Presidency of the EU is also looking at a reform of the EU asylum system, enhancing paths for legal migration and addressing shortages in the labour market with qualified workers and in the light of an ageing workforce.

The results of workshops 2a and 2b - recognising and developing skills and matching refugees' skills with labour market needs - were presented by **Pascal Beckers**

Menno Bart, representative of the ADECCO Group, stated that hiring was a demand-driven process. In this regard, a study by ADECCO had shown that the economic rationale for employers to hire a refugee is not very strong. Given the paperwork, hiring a refugee is more costly and complicated than hiring anyone else. There might be advantages in terms of corporate social responsibility, reputation management, being a good employer and having a diversified workforce but that is less easy to measure.

Simon Mordue, Deputy Director-General for Migration and Home Affairs at the European Commission, noted, however, the importance of seeing integration in the labour market not as a cost, but as an investment and as the return that it offers to society to have migrants and refugees well integrated in society. He stressed the efforts and funds provided by the European Commission to encourage this investment in integration, recalling that only 20% of earmarked funds are spent by Member States on integration. Mr Mordue also reminded everyone of the call from the European Commission to resettle 50,000 persons in need of international protection in the coming years and the importance of having legal

pathways for migration. Managed legal pathways should be available not only to reduce irregular migration flows by providing legal alternatives but also as they make it possible to start the training and validation of migrant skills at a much earlier stage, even before their departure. He said that, in the next MFF, the Commission will ensure that incentives are in place to encourage investment in that respect

In the debate with Forum participants that followed, one of the participants stated that he hoped to see in an EU document that legal pathways would be for all skill levels and not just for circular migration. There were voices from the public pointing to the danger of promoting programmes for migrants in countries with high rates of unemployment and pointing out that migrants are in low skilled jobs because of the hostile environment in host societies. One participant said that it should be communicated to employers that migrants need to be seen as a different group of people to natives, requiring specific measures for their inclusion in the labour market. Another participant suggested that job placements for migrants for a trial period are a useful tool to test the match between migrant and employer needs. **Simon Mordue** picked up on the latter comment, mentioning that there are many good examples of such practices on which we can build upon. He named a Belgian initiative where retired people guide migrants through to getting their qualifications recognised. **Menno Bart** reiterated that migrants provide an important contribution to EU labour markets and said that there are lots of good projects and successful practices, but that they require the existence of a supporting framework as business's primary aim is to manage their business in a profitable way.

The results of the workshops on addressing the issue of irregular migrants in the labour market (3a) and on preventing labour exploitation and ensuring decent working conditions (3 b) were presented by **Liliana Keith**.

Menno Bart responded by emphasising the need for alliances with employers to fight labour exploitation. Using a business approach, he pointed out that, for companies, fighting unfair labour conditions is in their best interest as labour exploitation encourages unfair competition. According to Mr Bart, it is important for employers to ensure the enforcement of existing standards.

Simon Mordue remarked that vulnerable migrants are an easy target for exploitation and that it is important that action is taken to tackle the exploitation of their labour at the EU level. In that respect, Mr Mordue defended the importance of ensuring the effective implementation of the Employers Sanctions Directive to combat the exploitation of irregular migrants in the workplace. The Commission is currently working on a proposal for the creation of a *European Labour Authority*, which, in the future, will be able to support Member States in carrying out inspections to find cases of exploitation. Lastly, Mr Mordue reminded the audience of the low return rate of illegally staying migrants. There are around 300,000 people who are not returnable and living in an irregular situation. This can pose a problem given that they are at a higher risk of destitution and exploitation. The European Commission Return Handbook can, in this respect, help Member States return undocumented migrants and prevent exploitation. Regularisation was also raised as a method to avoid this risk of exploitation, but the Commission stressed that this is a very sensitive issue and that there is

considerable resistance among Member States to having European legislation on regularisation.

Lazar Lazarov reasserted the importance of adopting the appropriate legislation to combat exploitation but also the importance of training civil servants to identify all forms of labour exploitation. **Menno Bart** suggested that governments need to take a realistic approach regarding the labour market situation. If people have been in their country for a decade and have contributed and the labour market needs them, regularisation measures here could be a good solution.

In the debate that followed participants pointed to structural deficiencies in the labour market. In their opinion, regularisation measures and ensuring firewalls are essential elements to deal with this issue. Many countries have developed pathways out of irregular situations.

The results of the workshops on tackling discrimination (4a) and on promoting migrant entrepreneurship and supporting the social economy (4b) were presented by **Dorotea Daniele**.

Menno Bart remarked on the importance of changing not only legislation, but especially society's mindset, to tackle discrimination. He pointed out that more rules may not change the situation on the ground. The vital role of education to fight discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes was also stressed by **Lazar Lazarov**. He agreed with the recommendations of participants as to legislative amendments and on strengthening the role of anti-discrimination bodies and labour inspections. He agreed that the social economy and social entrepreneurship play an essential role in providing employment and integration. The Bulgarian Presidency of the EU will organise a conference in April on social entrepreneurship.

Simon Mordue emphasised the importance of the application of the Equal Treatment Directive to fight discrimination but recognised at the same time the need to do more. The European Commission has also launched the EU Platform of Diversity Charter, a charter that has been already been signed by many companies, such as Ikea and Siemens. Simon Mordue stressed the need to push more local authorities and companies to sign this charter as a way to boost the fight against discrimination. He said that social entrepreneurship is good for migrants but that it should not be the only choice available to them. He encouraged everyone to ask themselves, after two intense days of discussion and exchanges at the Migration Forum, how they could take forward what they had learnt from the Forum and apply it in their daily work.

In the discussion that followed participants raised the issue of introducing quotas for migrants as a useful tool for diversity management. One of the participants said that regularisation is the only way to end discrimination in the labour market. He pointed out that, when a migrant requests refugee status, he/she has to wait several years for an answer and is prone to being exploited.

Cristian Pîrvulescu, President of the EESC Permanent Study Group on Immigration, concluded by thanking everyone for their contribution to the Forum. He cited the UN

Secretary General António Guterres, who has described migration not as a problem but as a solution.