

TRIPARTITE SOCIAL SUMMIT – 16 MARCH 2016

STATEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PARTNERS ON THE REFUGEE CRISIS

1. Since the refugee crisis started in 2013, the EU Member States have received about 2 millions refugees. More than 1 million have arrived in 2015 and another million are expected in 2016 because of the persisting conflicts.
2. Responding to the unprecedented flows of migrants into Europe is urgent. The Council does not yet address the key challenges for managing the humanitarian crisis on Europe's borders in a common programme of work. A stronger cooperation among member states is the only solution to the extraordinary flows of refugees arriving in the EU, which have led some Member States to close their borders, putting at risk the Schengen acquis.
3. Schengen is one of the most tangible achievements of the benefits of European integration for citizens and companies. Damaging or breaking the Schengen area will seriously disrupt value chains and will ultimately destroy jobs and reduce wealth. In particular, effective control of the EU's external borders is essential. Adequate financial means are necessary to allow Frontex to play its role, while ensuring that international protection is available to those who are in need for it, according to the EU Treaties and to international law.
4. Integration of asylum-seekers and refugees in the labour market is essential. Europe's population is ageing. In a number of member states, the workforce is starting to shrink. Many unfilled vacancies, in both qualified and unqualified functions, co-exist with high unemployment throughout Europe. This undermines our overall future growth prospects. Besides necessary measures to make better use of our labour markets and to improve intra-EU mobility, legal migration from third countries is part of the answer to ensure our future prosperity and overcome demographic change challenges. It is in our interest to ensure that people from around the world who have skills needed on our labour markets regard Europe as an attractive destination to study, live in and work legally.
5. Integrating people rightly staying in Europe in training, employment and society in general is crucial. The organisation of integration courses, housing, language learning classes and other education and training measures is a responsibility of public authorities and society as a whole. However, economic and social partners are taking a large number of initiatives to contribute to this.
6. The issue of assessment, testing and screening of skills and competences is a cornerstone of a revitalised policy for labour market inclusion of asylum-seekers and refugees in Europe. It is crucial to increase capacities of all players within the integration chain to help validation of skills and skill matching; this exercise has to be tailored to the

specific conditions of people who could not plan their migration project. The different layers of integration paths (language learning, civic education, social assistance, balance of competences, labour market activism) are not always well integrated and do not work in synergy. This is an impediment for smooth and right-based inclusion in the labour market.

7. To foster a better integration and fair participation in the labour market is the only way to build solidarity and social cohesion and prevent further social unrest and rejection of refugees and migrant populations.

8. The key issues, in our shared view,

- are the need for a joint, Europe-wide solution involving all EU Member States, in a fair, balanced and responsible manner, factoring in skills analysis / validation and national / regional economic needs;
- furthermore, the inclusion and integration of refugees that are granted permission to remain in the EU into society, particularly in the labour market has to be a common goal of all member states.

European economic and social partners underline:

- A. their commitment and willingness to work with governments and other stakeholders to design and to develop policies to support inclusion. Employer organisations in the public and private sectors, chambers of commerce and industry, chambers of skilled crafts, and trade unions, as well as other actors, have an important role to play and are committed to promote and support the inclusion of refugees into work and society.
- B. the numerous national actions engaging employers, chambers of commerce and industry as well as trade unions in the integration of refugees and migrants. We agree that employers have to rely on a stable and skilled workforce adapted to their needs. We agree that inclusion into work must be on the basis of guaranteeing equality of opportunity and treatment between national and migrant workers, taking into account the objective situation of refugees as part of active labour market instruments available to job-seekers.
- C. the need for a coordinated, pan-European programme for the provision of VET, apprenticeship to refugees/migrants which encompasses transit countries - both within the EU and neighbouring states - as well as the countries of destination.
- D. the challenge facing local public services, as they confront the need to improve the capacity of newly arrived people to contribute to the local labour market at a time when resources are increasingly scarce, without causing reductions in services to local communities.
- E. the impact of the arrival of hundreds of thousands of refugees on public services, and the need for Member States to use the built-in flexibility within the Stability and Growth Pact to deal with the fiscal consequences of the refugee crisis.

- F. that migration, when properly managed, can play an important role in addressing the increasing old-age dependency ratio deriving from the ageing of European populations.
