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Subject:	Conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States on the integration of third-country nationals legally residing in the EU - Council conclusions (9 December 2016)
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Delegations will find in the annex the Conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States on the integration of third-country nationals legally residing in the EU, adopted by the Council at its 3508th meeting held on 8-9 December 2016.

**Conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of
the Member States on the integration of third-country nationals legally residing in the EU**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES

EMPHASISE the need for effective integration policies for third-country nationals residing legally
in their territories;

RECOGNISE that increased migratory influxes pose additional integration challenges;

NOTE that the effective integration of third-country nationals legally residing contribute to the
building of inclusive, cohesive and prosperous societies, which is of a common interest to all
Member States;

ACKNOWLEDGE the European Commission's Communication entitled "Action Plan on the
integration of third-country nationals"¹;

NOTE that the Action Plan looks at the key policy priorities in the field of integration and proposes
concrete tools to support integration in five thematic areas, including financial support from EU
funds, and promotes policy coordination between actors involved in the integration process;

ACKNOWLEDGE the New Skills Agenda for Europe and *WELCOME* its focus on improving and
making better use of the skills and qualifications in the EU, including those of third-country
nationals;

¹ COM(2016) 377 final

TAKE NOTE of the Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on Integration of refugees in the EU², the European Parliament Resolution of 5 July 2016 on refugees: social inclusion and integration into the labour market³ and the Opinion of the Committee of Regions' Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs entitled "Action plan on the integration of third-country nationals";

RECALL the specific legal basis for integration of third-country nationals provided by Article 79(4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;

REAFFIRM their commitment to take into account the common basic principles for immigrant integration in the design and implementation of integration policies and in particular the fact that integration is a dynamic two-way process of mutual accommodation between the host society and third-country nationals, which implies commitment from both sides;

UNDERLINE that the respect of values underpinning European societies, as enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, is a sine qua non for social cohesion within the European Union;

WELCOME the strengthening of the role of the national contact points on integration and their transformation into the European Integration Network, with a stronger coordination role and mutual learning mandate;

RECOGNISE the role of regional and local authorities, civil society, social partners as well as local partners and communities in the integration process, in close cooperation and coordination with national authorities while respecting the division of competencies in the Member States;

² SOC/532

³ 2015/2321(INI)

TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION the proposed measures embedded in the Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals while respecting the specific situation and conditions in the Member States;

WELCOME the Commission's efforts to increase the funding available for integration, in addition to the existing resources available, under the asylum migration and integration fund in the context of its proposal for the annual budget for 2017;

INVITE Member States to:

1. Participate actively in the exchange of best practices in the area of integration of third-country nationals, by sharing knowledge and experience through study visits, thematic seminars, online tools and peer learning activities, in particular through the European Integration Network;
2. Where appropriate, make use of the tools announced under the New Skills Agenda for Europe to address the assessment, validation, and recognition of qualifications and skills of third-country nationals, including recently arrived beneficiaries of international protection, recalling that the relevant Council preparatory bodies will examine the relevant proposals under the New Skills Agenda for Europe;
3. Fully implement the partnership principle as enshrined in Article 12 of Regulation (EU) No 514/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council;
4. Improve monitoring and assessment of integration outcomes and integration policies by promoting better use and further development of the current tools and indicators, including the EU Indicators of Immigrant Integration (the so-called "Zaragoza indicators");

5. Focus their efforts on the following areas in accordance with the national policies and priorities:
- a) Pre-departure, pre-arrival and early integration measures, in particular those favouring early access to education, to vocational training and to the labour market, including a focus on introductory and language courses and on providing basic information about the host societies;
 - b) Offering opportunities to third-country nationals to actively participate in the economic, social, civic and cultural life of Member States; combating discrimination and segregation; providing equal opportunities and promoting intercultural dialogue and mutual acceptance between third-country nationals and host societies;
 - c) Active promotion, for instance through civic orientation programmes, of values underpinning European societies, such as democracy, the rule of law and the respect for fundamental rights;
 - d) Education and vocational training, in particular activities targeting language learning, early childhood education, as well as non-formal and informal learning; promoting access to the mainstream education system and encouraging third-country nationals to take up and complete such education, as well as support for and training of teachers, educators and youth workers as well as professionals in the field of culture and sport working with third-country nationals, in particular with young people;

- e) Employment and social policies; promotion of labour market integration of third-country nationals, including of beneficiaries of international protection, to encourage their contribution to the economy and society while taking into account the specific situation of vulnerable groups, and support for migrant entrepreneurship;
- f) Involvement of the private sector in promoting respect for diversity and ensuring non-discrimination in the work place; close cooperation with social partners and civil society being central issues in promoting labour market integration;
- g) Promoting access to basic services for third-country nationals through an integrated approach, in particular as regards housing, health, education and social services involving different bodies at national, regional and local level;
- h) Ensuring better coordination of key actors at national, regional and local level and promoting mainstreaming of integration in all relevant policy areas;
- i) Promotion and support of volunteering activities for the integration of third-country nationals, including by youth organisations;
- j) Promotion of participation of third-country nationals in cultural and sports activities and organisations as a means to facilitate contacts between third-country nationals and the host society, equipping them with intercultural competences and fostering intercultural dialogue;
- k) Addressing the specific needs of the most vulnerable third-country nationals, such as children, in particular unaccompanied minors, women, the elderly and the disabled;

- l) Countering stereotypes, intolerance, discrimination, racism and xenophobia, including through targeted research, training and supporting programmes for public authorities and other stakeholders including NGOs, academia, cultural institutions and enterprises to raise awareness and improve knowledge about and responses to these phenomena;
- m) Awareness raising measures regarding the challenges and opportunities that migration can present for European societies;
- n) Investment in policies promoting social inclusion of third-country nationals to make European societies more prosperous, cohesive and inclusive in the long run.

INVITE THE COMMISSION TO:

- 1. Provide support for Member States as regards the assessment, validation, and recognition of qualifications and skills of third-country nationals, including recently arrived beneficiaries of international protection lacking documentary evidence of their qualifications;
- 2. Consider the need for allocating more resources from the EU budget for the integration of third-country nationals in the future annual budgetary procedures and to provide guidance to Member States on how to maximise the EU funding supporting integration;
- 3. Ensure better coordination and exchanges between national and EU level and between existing EU expert groups and fora working on topics related to integration;

4. Explore ways for EU action and support for Member States on the following issues not mentioned in the Action Plan, with a view to:
- a) disseminating good practices with regard to the integration of illiterate third-country nationals;
 - b) promoting cooperation with the media by organising seminars or conferences, especially on fighting negative stereotypes and creating a balanced public perception of migration (role of mass media, communication campaigns, promoting exchanges between third-country nationals and host society), as well as raising awareness of the positive impact of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue;
 - c) strengthening cooperation with the existing Council preparatory bodies and committees (in particular the Education Committee, the Social Questions Working Party, the Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee) in order to improve, if appropriate, country-level data to better monitor integration policy outcomes at EU level, and to improve their current methods and tools;
5. Closely and regularly monitor and report to the Council and the European Parliament on the implementation of the EU-level actions to support Member States included in the Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals.
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