



SUMMARY REPORT FIFTH EUROPEAN MIGRATION FORUM

On Wednesday 3 and Thursday 4 April, the fifth **European Migration Forum** took place.

The main outcome from the Forum is a set of **10 recommendations** from five different workshops, adopted by the participants (see below). This is the first time the European Migration Forum has issued recommendations. These recommendations will be officially sent to all EU institutions as an input from civil society for the future strategic agenda on migration.

The Forum also included an opening speech by **Commissioner Avramopoulos** and **EESC President Jahier**; a session about the narrative on migration and a final interactive debate with panellists from the Commission, the European Parliament, the Romanian Presidency and the Committee of Regions.

The Forum was **highly visible on social media**.

SHORT ACCOUNT OF EACH SESSION OF THE FORUM (IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER)



'TALKING MIGRATION: NARRATIVES, PERCEPTIONS, AND ACTIONS': TESTIMONIES AND DISCUSSION ON HOW TO TALK ABOUT MIGRATION AND MIGRANTS IN AN INFORMED WAY, AND THE POLICIES AND ACTIONS THAT STEM FROM THIS.

The introductory panel conversation on 3 April addressed the **narrative on migration** and the effects of this narrative on integration. A [video produced by the EU-funded Spanish project 'inmigracionalismo'](#) on labelling in the media introduced the session, which was moderated by Laura Corrado (head of unit in the European Commission, DG Home Affairs, legal migration and integration unit). The speakers in the panel conversation were Berlin-based Maher Ismaail (computer engineer, app developer, social entrepreneur and the founder of [Dalili](#)), Iffat Rose Gill (NGO leader-activist, digital strategist, social entrepreneur, and founder of the [Code to change project](#)) and Niene Oepkes (policy adviser for the municipality of Utrecht, who spoke about [Plan Einstein](#)).

The key takeaways from this panel conversation were the importance of: (i) combating hate speech, (ii) portraying migrants as actors, (iii) putting more focus on what migrants bring to countries instead of what they 'take', (iv) making connections between migrants and other citizens and (v) talking *with* migrants, not *about* migrants.



Maher Ismaail



Iffat Rose Gill



Laura Corrado



Niene Oepkes

MARKETPLACE

The marketplace provided participants the opportunity to present their projects and to meet each other. Below are links to some of the videos shown at the marketplace:

- EU protect / DG HOME
- Crossing Borders Education
- ETUC LABOUR-INT video
- Netwerkpro
- European Vocational Training Association Multikulti
- European Students' Union
- Mission of Canada to the European Union



- Flüchtlinge Willkommen Österreich
- All Digital AISBL: videos [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#)
- Utrecht Refugee Launchpad

OPENING STATEMENTS

In the afternoon, **Commissioner Avramopoulos** confirmed in his opening speech that legal pathways for migration are an essential part of a comprehensive migration policy. He said that a smart and well-managed EU policy on legal migration was essential to face the reality of our ageing society and to show that there are alternatives to irregular migration. He underlined the crucial role of civil society and local authorities in migration management, especially in: (i) informing migrants of existing possibilities (the Blue card scheme); and (ii) finding innovative ways to further improve and develop our legal migration policy, following the fitness check. He also called for the adoption of the proposed EU resettlement framework regulation.

EESC President Jahier stressed in his opening statement the responsibility of Member States to comply with EU rules on migration, using the example of relocation. Referring to the [opinion of the EESC on the cost of non-migration and non-integration](#), Mr Jahier stated that migration was a reality that Europe should address responsibly by creating more legal pathways. He said that migration should not be seen as a problem to be solved, but rather as a potential solution to various challenges.

Shada Islam and 5 others Retweeted

 **EESC President** @EESC_President · Apr 3
We need a Europe that shows #responsibility and #solidarity towards migrants and towards each other. We should not look at #migration as a problem to be solved, but rather as a potential solution to various challenges.
#EUMigrationForum



From left to right: Dimitris Avramopoulos, Christa Schweng, Luca Jahier

PARALLEL WORKSHOPS

Participants then worked in **five parallel workshops** on: (1) the role of local authorities in managing migration; (2) the future of the EU legal migration policy; (3) the role of civil societies in developing safe channels for protection-related and humanitarian migration; (4) the role of civil societies in enhancing cooperation with non-EU countries for managing migration (pilot projects); and (5) the empowerment of migrants for better integration policies.



Each workshop met twice: on the first and second day of the Forum. Within each workshop, participants worked in small groups to draft and select recommendations.

Each workshop selected two recommendations per day. On the afternoon of the second day, participants voted on these recommendations to select **10 recommendations** to be communicated to the Council and to the European Parliament. The full list of 18 recommendations drafted in the workshops is available in *annex 1*.

THE FLOOR IS YOURS – PARTICIPANTS SUGGEST FURTHER TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED IN SMALL FOCUS GROUPS

During '**the floor is yours**' session, participants proposed and hosted nine conversation tables on different issues, and were encouraged to exchange key insights and messages. The nine tables are described in the bullet points below.



- **The narrative on migrants in the media and social media (hate speech and fake news):** this conversation table reflected on ways to improve the discussion on migration, the efficiency of imposing restrictions on hate speech and educating social media users.
- **Meaningful migrant and refugee participation:** this conversation table focused on: discussing on education and training programmes for and with women; collecting and sharing data; the creation of quotas for the representation of women with migrant background; and the building of financial models.
- **Regularisation of undocumented migrants:** participants in this conversation table discussed how regularisation was a good thing. This is because currently undocumented migrants fill gaps in the labour market but they do not pay tax, so legal frameworks for them are better than illegal ones. They included that a deeper debate on the obstacles to regularisation should take place.
- **Statelessness:** the key message that emerged from this conversation table was that the EU must guarantee fundamental human rights for everyone, including stateless people. Participants in the conversation table agreed that statelessness was a neglected topic, creating gaps in protection for stateless people. The participants also discussed a trend towards criminalising statelessness, and said that nationality was a human right and should not be considered as a reward.
- **Knowledge sharing by successful programmes via sustainable funding:** this conversation table focused on the need to fund collaboration and innovation, supporting both larger organisations to share their knowledge/experience and smaller innovative organisations.

- **Access to rights for Roma people:** this conversation table led a discussion on the tools necessary to fight the negative perception of Roma people and discrimination against them. The participants also discussed tools for developing trust between Roma and local communities. These tools included: private sponsorship, a national Roma strategy, documenting the undocumented Roma, and support to set up a truth and reconciliation system.
- **Rethinking the ‘assistentialist’ model for inclusion:** this conversation table focused on the idea that empowerment is the right pathway for full inclusion of migrants. This empowerment should involve: promoting the skills of migrants, giving migrants access to all rights, active inclusion of migrants, migrants’ self-management, and support to newcomers by migrant associations.
- **An EU protocol to add a ‘gender-sensitive dimension’ to the Geneva Convention:** the discussion at this conversation table focused on how to remedy the lack of focus on gender equality in the Geneva Convention. It also focused on how to build a coalition to strengthen international protection for women, girls and LGBTIQ communities, to support EU framework and raise awareness of gender issues.
- **Digital skills for migrants and the role of digital inclusion in social inclusion:** the discussion at this conversation table focused on the type of digital skills (basic skills and job-related skills), needed for the social inclusion of migrants. It also focused on: the recognition and validation of such skills; the need for sustainable funding to provide these skills; and the overall need to consider basic IT skills as a core aspect of integration in the economy and society.

RESULTS OF THE ELECTIONS FOR THE FORUM BUREAU

The civil-society members of the Forum Bureau are elected to serve for a two-year period. They act in the interest of the whole Forum, not in the particular interest of their organisations. The Bureau generally meets four times per year (the Commission organises the meetings and covers its travel expenses). Minutes of the Bureau meetings (as well as general information on the Bureau itself) are available on the [EESC website](#).

This year, the civil-society participants elected two new **members of the Bureau of the European Migration Forum** for the next 2 years:

- **Essonmala Marie Paule Dominique N’Guessan** from **Associazione Interculturale Universo** (Italy) (representing national-level organisations)
- **Rossella Nicoletti** from **Eurocities** (representing EU-level organisations)



Cristian Pîrvulescu (EESC Member)



Essonmala Marie Paule Dominique N'Guessan



Rossella Nicoletti

The Bureau will meet in the coming months to evaluate the fifth Forum and start preparing the sixth edition.

The full list of candidates is available in [Annex 2](#).

INTERACTIVE DEBATE

A lively panel discussion took place to discuss the recommendations formulated in the workshops. The panel was made up of: **Laura Corrado** (European Commission, Directorate-General Home Affairs), **Jean Lambert** (Member of the European Parliament), **Mihai-Cătălin Necula** (State Secretary, Romanian Presidency) and **Barbara Duden** (Chair of the Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs, Committee of the Regions). During this debate, the participants voted on the 18 proposed recommendations, selecting **10 recommendations**.

Comments and questions to the panel and comments covered a variety of issues including: the importance of funding for integration policy and for migrant organisations; the limitations of the EU legal migration policy due to its sectoral approach; the constant changes in migration rules and how this creates mobility problems; the need to have meaningful participation of migrants; and the difficulties faced by undocumented migrants.

All panellists agreed on the crucial role of action at the local level, whether by local authorities or by NGOs.



From left to right: Mihai-Cătălin Necula, Jean Lambert, Laura Corrado, Barbara Duden



Laura Corrado regretted the failure of the negotiations on the Blue Card scheme. She stressed that the EU was already implementing many aspects of the principles set out in the Global Compacts, and said that the Forum's reflections would feed into the Commission's work on a new agenda on migration. She also highlighted the efforts made by the Commission to push for the adoption of the EU resettlement framework, while reflecting and supporting alternative pathways, like private sponsorship.

For **Jean Lambert** it was important to ensure that changes in migration rules would not mean a step back, as was the case with the Qualification Directive, which brought more uncertainty to refugees. She agreed on the importance of including social cohesion (in the broad sense rather than the narrow sense of solely focusing on integration) in migration debate, and highlighted the risk of forgetting rural and provincial areas in the migration debate. Looking at the recommendations on racism and stereotypes, she underlined the enormous amount of work ahead on the equality agenda.

Barbara Duden mentioned existing initiatives at local level in cities, where organisations have promoted rights for undocumented migrants. She said there was a need to learn from migrants in a real two-way process, one that did not just impose learning on them. She reminded the audience that the local level was where the consequences of migration were most obviously present, and that it was often the local level that created hands-on and innovative solutions to the challenges of migration and integration. She mentioned the Committee of the Regions' initiative 'Cities and Regions for Integration', which already has 22 European cities and regions.

Mihai-Cătălin Necula stressed the diversity of the situation of migrants in different EU countries, and said there was therefore sometimes a need for a tailor-made approach, as was seen in the Blue Card negotiations. He underlined the importance of the multi-stakeholder approach and the need for strong principles on migration management: legal pathways and procedures for those who are allowed to stay and return for those who cannot stay.

The audience made specific comments on the situation of undocumented migrants and on complementary pathways.

The issue of **undocumented migrants and regularisation** was intensively discussed during the workshop. Participants asked what EU policy could do about regularisation, and whether EU funding could be used for undocumented migrants. Barbara Duden pointed out that undocumented migrants are a major concern for cities, and referred to innovative initiatives on undocumented migrants in large cities. Mihai-Cătălin Necula said that undocumented migrants should be returned, whether voluntarily or not. However, he said that for those who cannot be returned, documents should be provided detailing their status. He also said that basic services, such as schooling for children or medical services, cannot be denied to undocumented migrants.

On the issue of **criminalisation of NGOs working with undocumented migrants**, Jean Lambert explained that the European Parliament had held a hearing on that same issue that week. She said that Parliament was pushing for guidelines for the interpretation of the Directive on this issue. Laura Corrado acknowledged the difficulties faced by undocumented migrants, but highlighted the limited possibilities for a solution at EU level in the short or medium term, saying that this was politically highly sensitive, and that regularisation was principally a competence of Member States.

On **complementary pathways**, some participants were critical, stating that the organisation of humanitarian corridors should be a task for Member States and not left to charity. Participants also said that talking about legal migration was at odds with the current situation in the Mediterranean sea, and they regretted that the lack of follow-up on the humanitarian visa proposal in light of the lack of a resettlement framework.

Carlos Trindade, President of the EESC Study Group on Immigration and Integration concluded the Forum. He congratulated all parties for their good work, and especially the fruitful collaboration between the EESC and the Commission. He stressed the importance of changing the narrative on migration and of combating stereotypes, especially given the climate of emerging nationalism and xenophobia in Europe.

LIST OF ANNEXES:

1. The 10 recommendations chosen out of the recommendations selected in the workshops
2. List of candidates for the elections to the Forum Bureau

ANNEX 1: THE 10 RECOMMENDATIONS CHOSEN OUT OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS SELECTED IN THE WORKSHOPS (IN BOLD BELOW OR AVAILABLE [HERE](#))

Workshop 1: From global to local governance of migration: the role of local authorities in managing migration

- **Include a social cohesion clause in EU /national funds targeting migrants and make it mandatory to also involve people from the host community**
- **Develop institutionalised multi-stakeholders platforms at the local level, which bring together local authorities, NGOs, migrants organisations, etc. with the purpose to guarantee accessible, inclusive and relevant services regardless of status**
- Develop coherent legislation at EU level and coherent reception system and model of care for unaccompanied minors
- Ensure direct and simplified access to resources (funding and capacity building) for local authorities to benefit all actors working together at the frontline reception

Workshop 2: What is the future of the EU legal migration policy?

- **Establish a structured process for consultation of NGO, local authorities and social partners on management of legal migration.**
- **Adopt a horizontal directive harmonising admission conditions and rights for all categories of non-EU nationals, that also includes equal treatment rights, intra-EU mobility and family reunification.**
- An EU residence permit based on a sponsorship mechanism, companies or individuals can act as sponsors for the admission of non-EU nationals for work purposes.
- An EU digital platform for job matching of non-EU nationals, integrating recognition of qualifications with skills matching.

Workshop 3: The role of civil society organisations in developing and enhancing safe channels for humanitarian and protection reasons

- **Expand extended family reunification programmes in the EU as part of complementary pathways to protection.**
- **The European Commission should take steps to harmonise processes among EU countries for welcome and integration of migrants, regardless of ways of arrival, country of origin etc., with specific attention to the special needs of vulnerable groups and the critical need for specific accessible funding available in the new Multi-annual Financial Framework for civil society organisations, grassroots organisations and local authorities.**
- Support civil society organisations (financially and through capacity building) to engage in private sponsorship so that additional protection places are created.
- Developing technical assistance for Member States on complementary pathways (information, training, exchange, capacity building) to better answer protection needs through EU and national funding an capitalising on successful projects.

Workshop 4: The role of civil society and other non-public actors in enhancing cooperation with third countries on managing migration

- **Strengthen cooperation among civil society and diaspora organisations and support their effort to provide information and incentives for reintegration of migrants in the countries of origin.**
- **Foster regional dialogue and platforms with a view to creating public private partnerships for mobility.**

Workshop 5: Migrants empowerment for better integration policies

- Develop pilot projects in local authorities across the EU to ensure access to human rights to all, also undocumented migrants generally aiming at supporting social cohesion.
- Fund and support local and grassroot organisations that work with vulnerable groups to develop gender sensitive actions and policies at local/regional/national/EU level through multi-stakeholder approach.
- Ensure meaningful migrant participation at all levels of decision-making.
- European Commission to propose the adoption of an additional protocol to extend protection to girls, women, LGBTQ for the unique issues and circumstances they face, in the spirit Cartagena and Africa Union declarations.

ANNEX 2: LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR THE ELECTIONS TO THE FORUM BUREAU

NAME	ORGANISATION
	Smaranda Krings Refugees Welcome International
	Rossella Nicoletti Eurocities

NAME	ORGANISATION
	Najib Obaid Babakerkhail French Refugee Council
	Tiziana Chiappelli Progetto Arcobaleno Onlus
	Zouhair El Hairan Euro-Arab



Abdoulaye Fall Diaw

Winkomun



Massimiliano Giacornello

Consorzio Comunità Brianza



Agnese Lace

Providus



Essonmala Marie Paule Dominique N'Guessan

Associazione Interculturale Universo
