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**The 4th European Migration Forum to address labour market inclusion of migrants**

**Today sees the opening of the** [**European Migration Forum**](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/european-migration-forum-4th-meeting)**, a platform for dialogue between civil society, institutions and authorities on the topic of integration of third-country nationals into the labour market**

Held for the fourth consecutive year by the European Commission and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the 2018 Forum has, as its main theme, the challenges and opportunities involved in integrating migrants into the EU's labour markets.

With the Multiannual Financial Framework for EU finances under preparation, this year's Forum will also focus on current funding opportunities from EU sources to be used for migrant integration.

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, **Dimitris Avramopoulos,** said: *"It is now time to go beyond the "crisis discourse" about migration we hear every day, and to focus instead on how to turn migration into a real opportunity, for all of us. Now and in the long term. For those who have obtained a legal right to stay into the European Union it is essential, and even urgent, that we now focus on their integration into our societies*."

EESC President, **Georges Dassis,** said: "*The majority of migrants have fled persecution, wars and oppressive regimes. Now they are trying to build a life for themselves in Europe. They deserve a new life and that's why we must always promote solidarity and help them achieve normalcy in their lives – among other things, by integrating them into the labour market."*

*"Migration must be seen as an investment for the future. We sometimes tend to forget what Europe would look like without migration, and we focus on numbers instead of the advantages of an inclusive society. Migration must also be seen as a means to tackle the challenges presented by our ageing population and as a response to the demands generated by new forms of work which require new skills",* argued **Mr Dassis***.*

Spanning over two days – 6 and 7 March*,* the Forum will give the floor to more than 120 civil society organisations from across the European Union, as well as to representatives from local and regional authorities, Member States and EU institutions.

Their discussions will touch upon many aspects of the labour market inclusion of migrants, such as the need to promote regular employment and decent work, to prevent exploitation and tackle discrimination, the importance of skills validation and development, encouraging entrepreneurship amongst migrants, and many other issues.

According to 2016 figures, the unemployment rate for migrants born outside the EU was 16.2%, as compared to 7.8% for the native-born population. The evidence suggests that the skills and qualifications of third-country migrants, in particular migrant women, are greatly underused in local labour markets across the EU.

The full programme is available [here](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/programme-1). The opening speeches by Mr Avramopoulos and Mr Dassis, as well as the plenary sessions will be [webstreamed.](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/european-migration-forum-4th-meeting/webstreaming)

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**Background information**:

The programme for the event was compiled on the basis of input from civil society organisations during the consultations held in October 2017. The Forum also builds on other related initiatives from the Commission, such as [Employers together for Integration](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/legal-migration/european-dialogue-skills-and-migration/integration-pact_en) and the [European Partnership for Integration](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/e-library/documents/policies/legal-migration/integration/docs/20171220_european_partnership_for_integration_en.pdf).

The EESC has also held numerous **consultations** and **stakeholder events** dedicated to migration issues, such as:

- [Social Innovation for Refugee Inclusion](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/2017-social-innovation-refugee-inclusion)

- [Implementation of legal migration legislation](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/implementation-legal-migration-legislation)

- [EU Funds for integration – How can we better support people with a migrant backgrou](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/implementation-legal-migration-legislation)nd (jointly held with the European Commission)

- [Civil society support for refugees and migrants](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/civil-society-support-refugees-and-migrants)

**Relevant EESC opinions**:

[State of implementation of legal migration legislation](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/information-reports/state-implementation-legal-migration-legislation)

[Towards a coherent EU labour immigration policy with regard to the EU Blue Card](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/towards-coherent-eu-labour-immigration-policy-regard-eu-blue-card)

[Integration of refugees in the EU](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/integration-refugees-eu)

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*The European Economic and Social Committee is an institutional consultative body established by the 1957 Treaty of Rome. The Committee has 350 members from across Europe, who are appointed by the Council of the European Union. It represents the various economic and social components of organised civil society. Its consultative role enables its members, and hence the organisations they represent, to participate in the EU decision-making process.*

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