

# EESC ready to team up with European Commission on new pact on migration and asylum



**The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), home of Europe's organised civil society, stands side by side with the European Commission as the perfect partner to address the future of EU migration and integration policies.**

A new agreement on migration is urgently needed at European level and, to this end, the EESC is ready to support the Commission's ongoing efforts. The EESC president, **Luca Jahier**, speaking in Brussels on 3 March 2020, made it clear that migration was a priority for the EESC, as demonstrated by the fact that the Committee had been very active in this area for many years.

*The EU needs to take prompt action towards drawing up a new pact on migration and asylum, as well as working together with the Member States on integration. We need to establish a genuinely common asylum procedure that is reliable, flexible and efficient, while ensuring various legal pathways for people in need, for example resettlement programmes and humanitarian visas. The EU should also create additional ways for legal migration to the EU for other types of migrants, which will contribute significantly to decreasing*

*irregular migration*, he said.

**Mr Jahier** expressed his concerns about the state of play on migration in many European countries, notably Cyprus, Croatia, Italy and Greece, mentioning that humanitarian workers were often charged or convicted for offering help to people in need and that unacceptable xenophobia was on the rise all over Europe. *The EESC is very worried about the challenging migration situation in many southern European countries, caused by a lack of solidarity among Member States, the lack of legal access to Europe, and reduced search and rescue activities in the Mediterranean*, he warned.

Speaking at the debate organised by the EESC section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship (SOC) on the same day, **Ylva Johansson**, European Commissioner for Home Affairs, highlighted the Commission's current work in the area of migration and asylum and its intention to revive EU policy-making through a new agreement. *We need a new pact on migration and asylum, first of all because the most vulnerable depend on it, and secondly because our economy and society benefit from legal migration: our welfare systems need to be sustainable in the long term and our companies need skilled people*, she said.

She then pointed to the importance of increasing trust and overcoming differences between Member States, so that national governments could find a common way ahead. *However, to move forward, we need to be clear that migration is something normal. Each year, between 2 and 2.5 million people come to the EU: 140 000 of these arrivals are irregular – the equivalent of 5%. That means 95% of people are arriving in an orderly, monitored and managed way*, she maintained.

**Ms Johansson** agreed on the need for more safe and legal pathways to the EU for persons seeking international protection. *People who flee for their lives because of war, hunger or persecution are entitled to protection. We must give it to them. Integration of migrants and refugees is essential to our future EU migration policy. Integration starts with work. But it's also about social inclusion*, she added.

During the meeting, some EESC members voiced their concerns about the current dramatic situation at the Greek-Turkish border and on some Greek islands, underscoring the need for solidarity and for measures at EU level. They said that it was not acceptable that some Member States opted out of joint obligations and left other Member States to carry a disproportionate burden, underlining that this was the time for action and not for continuing analysis and debates.

The EESC has repeatedly underlined that civil society organisations play a significant role in making the resettlement, travel and reception of migrants and refugees more safe and humane. Civil society should therefore be involved in designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the measures on migration adopted by all competent authorities.

In this respect, **Ms Johansson** argued that the EESC was a "perfect partner" for a discussion on migration and integration, acknowledging the important

role played by civil society in facilitating the admission of persons in need of protection and supporting their integration. *Employment is the key to integration of migrants and refugees, and the social partners and civil society are essential for shaping employment and social policies*, she concluded.

## **Background**

The EESC and the European Commission co-organise every year the European Migration Forum (EMF), a platform for active dialogue on migration, asylum and integration of third-country nationals, gathering approximately 250 representatives from NGOs, local and regional authorities, economic and social partners, national governments and the EU institutions. The 2020 forum will take place on 2-3 June 2020 and will focus on migrants' integration and social inclusion.

The EESC has also a permanent study group on immigration and integration ([IMI](#)), acting as a facilitator between EU institutions and organisations working on migration policy and migrant integration.

For more information on the work and activities carried out by the EESC Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship ([SOC](#)) section, please consult our website.