



BRIEFING #81

Towards an EU comprehensive strategy for integration of migrants

SOLIDAR SOCIAL PROGRESS WATCH 2016

This report presents the main findings and general recommendations of the 2016 SOLIDAR Social Progress Watch Initiative regarding third-country nationals' integration policies implemented at national, regional and local level in the EU. It is based on extensive consultations with SOLIDAR members and partners, and is the second in a two-part series, the first of which is dedicated to the developments in social protection systems.

The objective of the recommendations is to monitor the commitment and progress made by national governments towards a more social inclusive and cohesive Europe. The recommendations aim to promote and strengthen the implementation of the EU Action Plan on integration of third-country nationals, in order to ensure upward social convergence in the EU as enshrined in Article 9 TFEU and in the international commitments of Member States in the field of social protection and integration. The report concludes that national policies on migration do not necessary include comprehensive strategies for integration based on the provision of equal opportunities and concrete means for participation in societies and labour market for migrants and refugees. SOLIDAR therefore calls for a rights-based approach that enforces an inclusive and cohesive integration system accessible to everyone.



Executive summary

This report presents the main findings and general recommendations of the 2016 SOLIDAR Social Progress Watch Initiative (SPWI) regarding the third-country nationals' integration policies implemented in EU Member States. The EU Strategy Groups established on Member State level as part of the SOLIDAR Social Progress Watch Initiative highlight that National Action Plans on migration are not being effectively implemented due to slow and low quality administrative and legislative processes. In practical terms, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and NGOs are the actors that develop and implement initiatives to ensure integration and equal opportunities for migrants and refugees. However, CSOs are not always included in the definition of policy priorities/target groups and in the planning, allocation and implementation of the national and EU funds for asylum, migration and integration. Policies and actions in support of civic participation are missing and should be included in order to foster social cohesion. Moreover, access to high quality and equal social provisions for migrants and refugees are not guaranteed in many countries.

In view of these findings, SOLIDAR considers that the European Action Plan to support Member States in the integration of third-country nationals residing in the EU should guarantee a comprehensive strategy for integration based on a rights based approach to provide equal opportunities and concrete means for participation in societies and labour market for third-country nationals, as stated in the Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union. To achieve this, SOLIDAR suggests the following main recommendations:

- The EU Action Plan on Integration should be implemented in synergies with the EU initiative for a Pillar of Social Rights;
- The EU Action Plan should include provisions to ensure protection of fundamental rights of all people in the EU, including undocumented

migrants.

- Actions in support of civic participation should be promoted in order to foster social cohesion.

1. Introduction

This is the second of two reports presenting the main findings and recommendations of the SPWI 2016. It presents a timely evaluation of developments in social protection systems and the situation of third-country nationals when it comes to the implementation of integration programmes. Firstly, this report presents the main findings and overall trends found in this year's country studies. Secondly, it presents SOLIDAR's general recommendations to achieve upward social convergence by reinforcing the Pillar of Social Rights in synergies with the EU Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals.

The SPWI is a monitoring tool used by civil society organisations in 15 European countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Romania, Spain, Serbia, Slovakia and the United Kingdom), allowing them to speak up together against Europe's growing inequalities and to evaluate the commitment and progress made by national governments towards a more social and cohesive Europe. SOLIDAR brings these voices to Brussels to put forward their recommendations and to give voice to their call to put upward social convergence back at the heart of EU and national policies as defined in the TFEU. The SPWI is implemented by national EU Strategy Groups set up with the support of SOLIDAR members and partners and composed of professional staff working in the social service and social entrepreneurship sectors, end-users and volunteers, experts in social services and the social economy, and social partners, including representatives of the trade union movement.

The monitoring process and our network's findings





and recommendations are based on five social benchmarks divided into two thematic fields (cf. Table 1). For each benchmark, the country studies give information first on an overview and main challenges based on the evaluation of the Commission, and second on the feedback provided by the national strategy groups. The first thematic benchmarks were developed with the aim of evaluating the measures put in place by the Member States to promote the integration of third country nationals. The second theme, which is the subject of this report, concerns the indicators that measure developments in social protection systems. These benchmarks represent the fronts on which SOLIDAR believes progress should be made in order to ensure that everyone can enjoy a certain set of rights and that people can thrive and live a decent life.

SOLIDAR members have reported that over the last few years the National Action Plans on migration are not being effectively implemented due to slow and low quality administrative and legislative processes. At the end, Civil Society Organisations and NGOs are the actors that develop and implement initiatives to ensure integration and equal social opportunities for migrants and refugees. However, those organisations are not always included in the definition of policy priorities/target groups and in the planning, allocation and implementation of the funds. Therefore, in order to stop this situation, SOLIDAR is promoting a comprehensive set of social standards in Europe. In view of the main challenges identified by many of our members and partners in the 2016 SPWI, SOLIDAR stresses the need to adopt a rights-based approach that builds on comprehensive and integrated social policies that are based on high-level social standards. This would enforce upward social convergence in the EU as enshrined in Article 9 TFEU, and certain rights granted by the Charter of Fundamental Rights in accordance with the international obligations to which the Member States have committed in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Furthermore, this year's findings and recommendations will be

used to identify gaps and possible improvements in the outline of the EU Action Plan on third-country nationals' integration, the European Commission's latest major initiative in the field of migration and social affairs. The recommendations developed in this report have thus fed into the consultation processes on the Legal Migration Fitness Check and on the Pillar of Social Rights.

Table 1. Benchmarks of the SPWI 2016

<p><u>1) Integration of third-country nationals</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools/programmes implemented in a country for the integration of third country nationals; • Measures/programmes implemented in a country to promote intercultural coexistence and combat discrimination. <p><u>2) Developments in social protection systems</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate income support in a country as a basis for social protection over the life-span of a person to fight poverty and ensure active inclusion (Minimum income, Unemployment benefits, Pensions, Level of household indebtedness); • Provisions for decent work at national level to guarantee that people can earn a living and avoid in-work poverty (minimum wage, provisions for reconciliation of private and professional life); • Non-discriminatory universal access to quality and affordable care, social, health, education and lifelong learning and basic financial services.

2. Towards a rights-based and harmonised EU approach to the integration of third-country nationals?

The EU is and will continue to be a region of immigration. European communities are composed of different ethnic, cultural and religious groups. The rights of minorities are protected by the Charter of Fundamental Rights and diversity is celebrated as an added value for open and democratic societies.





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In addition, the increased rates of global mobility confirm that many more people will travel to and through the EU in the coming years. Against this background, a harmonised and holistic EU approach to integration policies is needed.

Integration is the process by which immigrants become part of the life of their country of destination. Integration policies and programs determine migrants' opportunities to participate in society. Integration policies are multi-faceted and overlap with many other policy areas such as education, employment, social services, political and civic rights, rule of law and anti-discrimination frameworks.

Although migration and integration are shared competences between the EU and Member States, so far the EU's role as legislator in this field has been very limited due to the principle of subsidiarity. During the last ten years, the fifteen countries covered in this analysis have developed and implemented at least one National Plan on Migration following the EU acquis on migration. However, there is a common tendency to primarily focus policies on status recognition, border control and residency and working permits. Policies on integration seem to be on a second level, by covering multi-sectoral political fields such as language and education, employment and labour market access, health and social issues, intercultural dialogue, and living dimension of integration.

Nevertheless, in June 2016, the European Commission presented the Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals which establishes a framework for action and concrete initiatives to support Member States in the integration of the 20 million non-EU nationals residing legally in the EU. It includes actions supporting pre-departure and pre-arrival measures, education, employment and vocational training, access to basic services, active participation and social inclusion. Through this Plan,

the Commission aims to create a two-way process on integration. This means not only expecting third-country nationals to embrace EU fundamental values and learn the host language but also offering them meaningful opportunities to participate in the economy and society of the Member State where they settle. The Action Plan is an important step made by the EU to promote harmonisation of Member States' policies for integration.

SOLIDAR advocates for the EU Action Plan to include a comprehensive strategy for integration on a rights based approach to provide equal opportunities and concrete means for participation in societies and labour markets for migrants and refugees. Integration goes beyond labour market participation and therefore in order to be successful, integration policies should be based on a holistic approach which guarantees equal access to rights and responsibilities to each individual and do not grant rights according to "status".

Building on the 2011 European Agenda on Integration, the EU Action Plan sets out policy priorities and the tools to support the implementation of integration across Europe. Priority needs to be given to specific measures to be undertaken at both EU and Member State level to strengthen and support integration across key policy areas. The five policy priorities proposed in the EU Action Plan are as follows:

- **Pre-departure/ Pre-arrival measures:** providing support to integration of third-country nationals legally residing in the EU at the earliest stage in the migration process has proven to be a key element of successful integration. Example of actions: launching projects supporting pre-departure and pre-arrival measures for local communities, including in the context of resettlement programmes with a focus on priority third countries.
- **Education:** education and training are among the most powerful tools for integration and





access to them should be ensured as soon as possible. Example of actions: supporting peer learning events on key policy measures such as welcome classes, skills and language assessment, support for unaccompanied children, intercultural awareness, recognition of academic qualifications and integration into higher education.

- **Labour market & Vocational training:** employment and early integration into vocational training are core parts of the integration process. Finding a job is fundamental to becoming part of the host country's economic and social life. Example of actions under the New Skills Agenda for Europe: a) developing a «Skills and Qualifications Toolkit» to support timely identification of skills and qualifications for newly arrived third country nationals; b) ensuring that better information about qualification recognition practices and decisions in different countries is collected through the Europass portal; c) and improving the transparency and understanding of qualifications acquired in third-countries, through the revision of the European Qualifications Framework.
- **Access to basic services:** access to basic services such as adequate and affordable housing and health services is a basic condition for third-country nationals to start a life in the society of the receiving country. Example of actions: promoting the use of EU funds for reception, education, housing, health and social infrastructures for third country nationals.
- **Active participation & Social inclusion:** the full participation of third-country nationals in all aspects of community and societal life is essential to achieve integration. Example of actions: launching projects to promote intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity, social inclusion and active civic participation.

The success of integration policies depends on the

right tools that strengthen the relation between a strategic, coordinated and multi-dimensional policy framework and adequate funding support.

- **Policy coordination:** in order to address the challenges highlighted above, the EU should play a stronger role in coordinating and liaising between the different actors and stakeholders in the field of migrant integration.

Migrant integration is a political priority that has to be pursued not only **across the policy areas of education, culture, health, employment and social inclusion, but also at different levels (EU, national, regional and local) and by involving non-governmental stakeholders** (civil society organisations, including diasporas and migrant communities, as well as faith-based organisations).

- **Funding:** The EU has supported integration actions through dedicated funding and more broadly through instruments addressing social and economic cohesion across Member States.
- In the current Multi-annual Financial Framework 2014-2020, the EU funds for integration are part of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) with a global amount of 3.137 million euros. The general objective of the AMIF shall be to contribute to the efficient management of migration flows and to the implementation, strengthening and development of the common policy on asylum, subsidiary protection and temporary protection and the common immigration policy.

Regarding the integration of third country nationals, the Fund aims to support:

1. Immigration and pre-departure measures (e.g. information packages and campaigns to raise awareness and promote intercultural dialogue, the assessment of skills and qualifications, training enhancing employability in a Member State);
2. Integration measures (e.g. setting up and de-





veloping integration strategies with the participation of local or regional actors, providing assistance in areas such as housing, health, child care, measures focusing on education, actions to promote self-empowerment).

The largest share of the total amount of the AMIF (approximately 88%) will be channelled through shared management: the Commission entrusts the Member States with implementing programmes at national level. Member States then allocate these funds to end recipients (e.g. international organisations, non-governmental organisations, social partners). Under the shared management, each Member State has primary responsibility for setting up management and control systems. The Commission monitors the implementation of the Fund by evaluating the extent to which the objectives of the Fund have been achieved and the remaining 12% of the total amount is divided between Union actions and emergency assistance (i.e. heavy migratory pressure in one or more Member States) to be implemented through direct or centralised management by the Commission.

In order to increase the impact of EU funds on integration, the Commission suggests to Member States to increase possible synergies between the AMIF and other existing funds which have social inclusion as a considerable scope. For this purpose, the following Funds are mentioned by the Commission in the Action Plan:

- **European Social Fund (ESF)** (ESF): The ESF (86 billion euros) shall promote high levels of employment and job quality, improve access to the labour market, support the geographical and occupational mobility of workers and facilitate their adaptation to changes in the industrial and production systems. The ESF shall benefit people, including disadvantaged people such as the long-term unemployed, people with disabilities, migrants, ethnic minorities, marginalised com-

munities and people of all ages facing poverty and social exclusion.

- **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)**: The ERDF (183 billion euros) shall contribute to the financing of support which aims to reinforce economic, social and territorial cohesion by redressing the main regional imbalances in the Union through the sustainable development and structural adjustment of regional economies, including the conversion of declining industrial regions and regions whose development is lagging behind.
- **European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)**: The EAFRD (95 billion euros) shall contribute to achieving the following objectives: fostering the competitiveness of agriculture; ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources, and climate action; and achieving a balanced territorial development of rural economies and communities including the creation and maintenance of employment.
- **Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD)**: the assistance to be provided by the FEAD (3.8 billion euros approx.) may take the form of a food and/or basic material assistance operational programme or a social inclusion operational programme. The exact group or groups of people to be targeted by the FEAD is identified at national level. Depending on the criteria used to identify the FEAD recipients, it is possible for asylum seekers to receive assistance.
- **Internal Security Fund (ISF)**: the general objective of the Instrument (2.76 billion euros) shall be to contribute to ensuring a high level of security in the Union while facilitating legitimate travel, through a uniform and high level of control of the external borders and the effective processing of Schengen visas, in compliance with the Union's commitment to fundamental freedoms and human rights.

The EU has also developed the **Action Plan on Hu-**





man Rights and Democracy, which introduces a set of guidelines on key human rights issues, enhanced the effectiveness of bilateral human rights and democracy work, successfully promoted action at the multilateral level and improved the mainstreaming of human rights across the EU's external action. The EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy puts a strong focus on the need to foster a comprehensive agenda to promote economic, social and cultural rights to promote and support the development and increased coverage of national social protection floors and gradual implementation of higher standards of social guarantees.

Regarding the integration of third-country national, refugees and asylum-seekers, the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy presents the following objectives:

- Fostering a comprehensive agenda to promote Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR);
- Promoting stronger partnership with third countries' Civil Society Organisations (CSO), including social partners and between authorities, parliaments and CSO;
- Promoting, protecting and fulfilling children's rights;
- Cultivating an environment of non-discrimination;
- Migration/trafficking in human beings (THB)/ smuggling of migrants/asylum policies;
- Ensuring the effective use and the best interplay of EU policies, tools and financing instruments.

National economic and social policies will need to cater for the recent inflow of third-country migrants and refugees, in particular to provide for their immediate needs and their integration into the labour market and society. They constantly face barriers in the education system, on the labour market, and in accessing decent housing. Undoubtedly, the integration of 20 million non-EU nationals poses a significant challenge for Member States, but by setting the right ground with suitable conditions a successful and cohesive integration can be granted.

Experience shows that integration policies work best when they are designed to ensure coherent systems that facilitate participation and empowerment for everyone in society. Against this background, the [EU Action Plan on integration of third-country nationals](#) is aware that integration should go beyond participation in the labour market towards enhancing active contribution to the political, cultural and social life. Integration is most effective when it is anchored in what it means to live in diverse European societies.

Developing welcoming, diverse and inclusive societies is a process that needs the engagement both of the receiving society and the third-country nationals. The promotion of intercultural dialogue, including interreligious dialogue between faith communities, of respect for human rights, and of European values is essential.

The topic of integration of third country nationals is also linked to the initiative for a [European Pillar of Social Rights](#). On 26 April 2017, the European Commission presented its proposal for a European Pillar of Social Rights. Since the launch of the idea in March 2016, SOLIDAR together with trade unions and social NGOs advocated for a pillar of enforceable social rights which could be implemented to achieve real upward social convergence as well as upgrade labour law and social protection standards in the EU. The issue of a pillar applying to all residents (and therefore extended to third country nationals) is for SOLIDAR a matter of realising equal opportunities.

As the main findings of the SPWI show, there is a [need to establish a link between those normative and non-normative frameworks to include a comprehensive strategy for integration based on a rights based approach](#) to provide equal opportunities and concrete means for participation in societies and labour market for migrants and refugees.





Table 2: Compatibilities between the EU Action

EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy	EU Action Plan on integration of third-country nationals	EU Pillar of Social Rights
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Right to health 2. Right to social security, including social insurance 3. Right to education 4. Right to work and rights at work 5. Right of everyone to an adequate standard of living, including food, clothing, housing 6. Promoting, protecting and fulfilling children's rights 7. Cultivating an environment of non-discrimination 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Education, vocational training and skills development. 2. Employment support and labour market integration 3. Access to basic services, including adequate and affordable housing and health services 4. Full participation in community and societal life 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Equal opportunities and access to the labour market: This includes skills development, life-long learning and active support for employment. 2. Adequate and sustainable social protection: This includes access to health, social protection benefits and high quality services, including childcare, healthcare and long-term care, which are essential to ensure a dignified living and protection against life's risks. This enables citizens to participate fully in employment and, more generally, in society.

3. Main findings of the SPWI 2016 regarding the integration of third-country nationals

This year's SPWI in 15 countries shows overall trends in the integration of third-country nationals that can be found in the majority of participating countries. Our members and partners also identified trends and developments that are more specific to certain countries due to their specific (socio) economic, political or social developments. Further to these findings, the country studies developed by SOLIDAR members and partners propose **specific recommendations** on how to overcome the main obstacles and how to implement the necessary policy reforms **for the achievement of upward social convergence**.

Here is an overview of the main findings and overall trends of the SPWI 2016 on the integration of third-country nationals.

3.1 Integration policies implemented in Member States

The 2016 SOLIDAR SPWI country studies show that the majority of the countries have developed at least one National Plan on Migration over the last ten years. They have been developed and implemented in accordance with the European *acquis* on migration, however there is a common tendency to primary focus policies on status recognition, borders control and residency and working permits. Policies on integration seem to be on a second level, by covering multi-sectoral political fields such as language and education; employment and labour market access, health and social issues; intercultural dialogue; and living dimension of integration. Most of the national policies on migration do not include a clear distinction between different categories of third-country nationals, and normally they only identify legally residing migrants, refugees and





asylum seekers.

National Plans on Migration are usually launched by the Ministry of Home Affairs but, in most of the cases, it sub-delegates different competences to other ministries depending on the action field (e.g. Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Italy, Slovakia, Spain and The Netherlands). In some countries the political scope is centralised (Austria, France, Germany) while in other States the jurisdiction on migration is divided into national, regional and local competences (Czech Republic, The Netherlands and Spain). Such fragmentation of the governmental functions leads to decline the speed and quality of legislative implementation process.

Local councils have played a crucial role in the care of immigrants and their integration, as the level of public administration closest to the citizens. Together with the third sector's support, they have launched initiatives aimed to promote intercultural coexistence and local plans and to create specific services or administrative departments specialised in immigration and cultural diversity.

3.2 Allocated funds for migration and integration

The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) was set up for the period 2014-20, with a total of EUR 3.137 billion for the seven years. As the 2016 SOLIDAR SPWI country studies reveal, there is also a governmental fragmentation when allocating the AMIF into the national budget. In most cases, the Ministry of Home Affairs is the responsible authority for the management and control of the fund. In others, such as Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Italy and Spain, the Ministry of Home Affairs delegate competence to other ministries, including: the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Economy. The AMIF target groups usually are third-country nationals - being identified as legally residing/working migrants -, and the beneficiaries of international

protection. However, the distribution of the fund varies between Member States. According to the national allocation of the AMIF, the budget distribution is as follows¹:

- **Austria:** 64.53 million euros allocated for Reception and Asylum (21%), Integration of third-country nationals (40%), Return (28%) and Technical support (7%);
- **Bulgaria:** 10 million euros allocated for Reception and Asylum (26%), Integration of third-country nationals (20%), Return (40%) and Technical support (13%);
- **Croatia:** 24.44 million euros allocated for Reception and Asylum (40%), Integration of third-country nationals (25%), Return (24%) and Technical Assistance (11%);
- **Czech Republic:** 27.68 million euros allocated for Reception and Asylum (20%), Integration of third-country nationals (46%), Return (25%) and Technical support (9%);
- **France:** 265.56 million euros allocated for Reception and Asylum (23%), Integration of third-country nationals (39%), Return (33%) and Technical support (5%);
- **Germany:** 208.41 million euros allocated for Reception and Asylum (28%), Integration of third-country nationals (44%), Return (22%) and Technical support (6%);
- **Greece:** 259.34 million euros allocated for Reception and Asylum (39%), Integration of third-country nationals (12%), Return (46%) and Technical support (2%);
- **Hungary:** 31.87 million euros allocated for Reception and Asylum (20%), Integration of third-country nationals (30%) and Return (22%);
- **Italy:** 310.35 million euros allocated for Reception and Asylum (39%), Integration of third-country nationals (41%), Return (14%) and Technical support (5%);
- **Romania:** 21.91 million euros allocated for Reception and Asylum (33%), Integration of third-country nationals (29%), Return (36%) and

¹ Data from AMIF national programmes



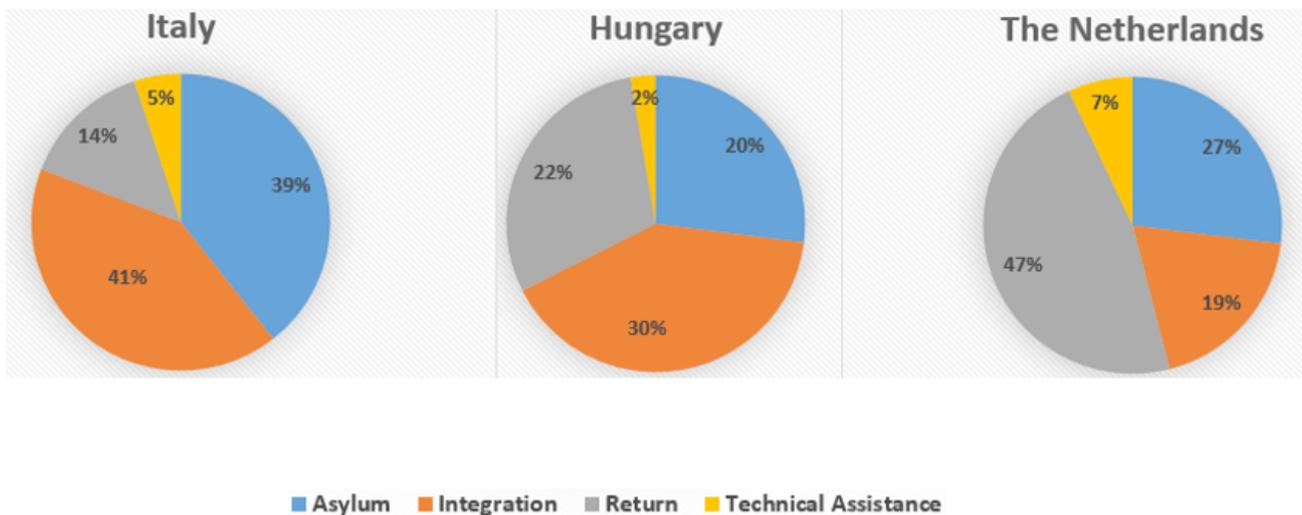


- Technical support (9%);
- **Serbia:** No beneficiary State of AMIF;
- **Slovakia:** 10.98 million euros allocated for Reception and Asylum (39%), Integration of third-country nationals (36%), Return (28%) and Technical support (15%);
- **Spain:** 257.10 million euros allocated for Reception and Asylum (27%), Integration of third-country nationals (27%), Return (40%) and Technical support (6%);
- **The Netherlands:** 94.41 million euros allocated for Reception and Asylum (27%), Integration of third-country nationals (19%), Return (47%) and Technical support (7%);
- **United Kingdom:** 392.63 million euros allocated for Reception and Asylum (19%), Integration of third-country nationals (19%), Return (51%) and Technical support (5%).

3.3 The AMIF Partnership Principle: involvement of CSOs and NGOs

In accordance with Article 4 of the AMIF regulation², the partnership principle for civil society organisations at both national and EU levels should be enhanced, securing their involvement in preparation, planning, monitoring, implementation and evaluation of funding as required under the AMIF regulation. The inclusion in Article 4 of the AMIF Regulation of a mandatory partnership principle between Member States and relevant international organisations, including civil society organisations, is to be welcomed. However, the 2016 SOLIDAR SPWI country studies reveal that a number of Member States, in the preparation of their national programmes, have included civil society and other actors in a limited manner, or have not done so (e.g. Bulgaria, France, The Netherlands and The United Kingdom).

Figure 1: comparison among three MSs of the allocation of AMIF funds



² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32014R0516>





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In addition, most Member States have not shared their multi-annual draft programmes with civil society organisations during their preparation despite the requirement in Article 12(3) of the regulation laying down general provisions on the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund³ that says “the Member State shall involve the partnership in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national programmes.»

Among the Member States that have complied with the partnership principle, two types of involvement by external actors can be identified: consultation mechanisms on the fund management; and development and implementation of integration programmes. In some cases, external partners were included by the relevant authorities only to provide information and feedbacks on the AMIF management (e.g. Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, and Slovakia). In others, such as Croatia, Germany, Greece, Romania, Serbia and Spain, the involvement goes further than consultation towards the design, development and implementation of subsidy integration programmes.

3.4 Political climate and public opinion towards migrant integration

The negative politicisation of migration and asylum is a common phenomenon across Europe. The growing politicisation of the topic of migration has been particularly visible since the end of 2014 and with the emergence of political reactions to the so-called European refugee crisis and the terrorist attacks on Charlie Hebdo journalists in Paris at the beginning of 2015. As a reaction to the attacks, a political movement against Islam got a lot of media attention and staged a number of demonstrations throughout 2015 and 2016, especially in Central and Eastern Europe (e.g. Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, The Netherlands and United Kingdom).

³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32014R0514>

A permanent component of the European conservatives and far-right parties' campaigns are negative allusions to migrants, by blurring the differences between il/legally residing and working migrants, refugees and asylum seekers; and by considering them terrorists, financial and labour burdens and sexual offenders. The Hungarian government started a campaign in 2016 against the European Union's migrant relocation plans based on a xenophobic hate speech. The government, together with the State media, launched a billboard campaign warning of the dangers posed by refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants, linking migration to terrorism, and including provocative images and animated graphics. The Hungarian prime minister failed to convince a majority of his population to vote for closing the door to refugees, rendering the result invalid and undermining his campaign for a cultural counter-revolution within the European Union. Thankfully despite the biggest and most divisive advertising campaign in Hungarian history, the prime minister failed to entice enough voters to the ballot box.

In United Kingdom, the conservative pro-Brexit campaign focused the message on migration, creating unrealistic expectations of what migration figures could be, also claiming that Turkey was about to join the EU and that Turks were a threat to the national security, highlighting its proximity to Iraq and Syria on a poster.

Undoubtedly, the negative politicisation of the European migrant situation has been reflected in the mainstream media, raising the anti-refugee and anti-immigrant public opinion. For example, in certain French cities run by conservatives parties local news aim to scare residents about the arrival of newcomers, developing fear of foreigners and of Islamism.





Against such panorama, European Civil Society Organisations and NGOs advocate for rejecting the current political climate that is based on a disbelief in the possibility of successful integration of third-country national. They are developing pro-integration strategies as the antitheses and counter-arguments of the negative political messages. In that sense, the 2016 SOLIDAR SPWI reports confirm that there is an urgent need to help third sector organisations to fight against discrimination and achieve integration through education, labour market access, health and social benefits and intercultural dialogue.

3.5 Civil promotion of intercultural coexistence and fight against discrimination

The 2016 SOLIDAR SPWI country studies reveal that NGOs and Civil Society Organisations are key actors when implementing legislation and policies due to the essential support they provide in terms of migrant integration. By analysing every specific country case study it can be confirmed that NGOs, especially at local level, are in charge of day-to-day assistance for either legally residing/working migrants, refugees or asylum seekers. In every country NGOs and CSOs are carrying out a wide range of initiatives to ensure the efficient and fair implementation of national policies on migrant integration. In some countries, municipalities provide their own initiatives and finance projects in collaboration with voluntary and non-profit associations, NGOs, and social cooperatives. At local level, migrants and asylum seeker integration is mainly entrusted by local authorities to third sector organisations (e.g. Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain and The Netherlands).

For example, in Italy 22 CSOs are working together to raise public awareness and ask political parties and the European institutions to carry out policies in favour of migrant rights. At the base of their policy initiatives, they have launched ten requests to

change the Italian and European policy guidelines on immigration and asylum. Political campaign is just one of the many initiatives undertaken by NGOs and CSOs to promote integration across Europe, including: host language acquisition; education and vocational training; health care; access to social services and promotion of intercultural coexistence.

As response to the hate speech escalation and the negative politicization of the current migrant situation in Europe (e.g. Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, The Netherlands and United Kingdom), the third sector advocates for integrative legislative initiatives that:

- Guarantee equal treatment and equal rights;
- Shift the boundaries of the public debate on migration;
- Involves citizens in social life in contrast to the culture of passiveness;
- Enhance cooperation and partnership between communities and media.

Currently, NGOs and most of the civil society actors in the researched countries are responding in multiple efficient ways to both immediate needs and long-term challenges posed by the so-called refugee crisis. However, they usually complain about not having adequate capacity for spreading and embedding proper assistance and positive attitudes due to both financial and organisational limitations.

4. General Recommendations

In view of the feedbacks received by the members of the SOLIDAR Advisory Group on Migration & Integration as well as the findings of the 2016 Social Progress Watch, SOLIDAR advocates for the plan to include a comprehensive strategy for integration with a rights based approach to provide equal opportunities and concrete means for participation in societies and labour markets for migrants and refugees.

To achieve this objective, the following comments





and recommendations have been developed:

- The EU Action Plan on Integration should be implemented in synergies with the EU initiative for a Pillar of Social Rights and the EU action plan on Human rights and democracy
- The EU Action Plan should include provisions to ensure protection of fundamental rights of all people in the EU, including undocumented migrants.
- In relation to the active participation and social inclusion, more funds should be invested in projects and programmes (e.g. training for social workers/social service providers) on fighting hate speech and preventing discrimination. Besides, the actions funded through EU programmes, we highlight that real participation in the democratic life is guaranteed by universal political rights (e.g. right to vote in local, national, European elections; right to run for elections). Therefore we call on the EU to be a promoter of universal political rights.
- Ensure that Member States apply the partnership principle to involve Civil Society Organisations in the planning, allocation and implementation of the funds and on defining policy priorities/target groups (multi-stakeholder approach);
- On pre-departure measures, it is very important that local social partners and CSOs are involved when implementing pre-departure measures in countries of origin to make sure that migrants coming to work in the EU are aware of their rights and do not receive misleading information. Raising awareness about labour rights is a way to empower migrant workers and to prevent cases of exploitation and human rights abuses;
- With regards to the access to basic services, we insist on the fact that services provided should meet the general interest and should meet the criteria set in the Social Protection Committee's Voluntary European quality framework on social services.



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This is the second of two reports presenting the main findings and recommendations of the SPWI 2016. It presents a timely evaluation of developments in social protection systems and the situation of third-country nationals when it comes to the implementation of integration programmes. Firstly, this report presents the main findings and overall trends found in this year's country studies. Secondly, it presents SOLIDAR's general recommendations to achieve upward social convergence by reinforcing the Pillar of Social Rights in synergies with the EU Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals.

The SPWI is a monitoring tool used by civil society organisations in 15 European countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Romania, Spain, Serbia, Slovakia and the United Kingdom), allowing them to speak up together against Europe's growing inequalities and to evaluate the commitment and progress made by national governments towards a more social and cohesive Europe.

SOLIDAR is a European network of membership based Civil Society Organisations who gather several millions of citizens throughout Europe and worldwide. SOLIDAR voices the values of its member organisations to the EU and international institutions across the three main policy sectors; social affairs, lifelong learning and international cooperation.

This briefing has been developed together with SOLIDAR member organisations of the Social Affairs Forum. Responsible in the SOLIDAR Secretariat: Elsa Laino, Aurora Mantas Horcas.



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