

## **Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion: An opportunity to better address the trafficked beneficiaries of international protection's needs?**

*Adopting a needs-based approach, the new action plan on integration and inclusion published by the European Commission on November 2020 invites states to take into account different forms of vulnerabilities in their integration policies. Despite substantial progresses to better vulnerabilities, the action plan partly manages to take into account the impact human trafficking is likely to have in the integration process.*

The [European Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion \(2021-2027\)](#)<sup>1</sup> is part of the new [Pact on Asylum and Migration](#) published in September 2020. It builds on the achievements of and lessons learnt from the 2016 Action Plan and seeks to address a number of [recommendations made to the Commission during its public consultation with stakeholders and broad public](#). Underlining the constant challenges faced by migrants in terms of employment, education, access to basic services and social inclusion of migrants, it proposes new measures to promote integration and inclusion of third country nationals and European Union (EU) citizens with migrant backgrounds.

Several measures aim at providing interesting support for among others victims of human trafficking, including beneficiaries of international protection. The European Commission proposes to reinforce its action to address specific vulnerabilities encountered by certain groups of migrants during their integration, especially women, for example by promoting their access to prenatal and postnatal care, and childcare services which are very relevant for trafficked beneficiaries of international protection. Besides, the plan calls on states to provide training to health personnel on how to manage the specific needs of certain groups of migrants such as victims of trafficking or gender-based violence, and unaccompanied minors. It also underlines the importance of access to mental health care for migrants and EU citizens from a migrant background, as they are more prone to trauma during the migratory route. The Commission thus commits to supporting health promotion and prevention programs, specifically targeting migrants, and provides Member States with multiple sources of funding to "*take into account*" the situation of migrants and their children in their national resilience plans – a limited response to the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on migrants and refugees.

Moreover, several measures related to access to housing can provide support to Member States to promote "*non-segregated adequate and affordable housing*" including for beneficiaries of international protection. EU funds will allow to promote access to adequate and affordable housing, including social housing, without discrimination. The Commission advocates autonomous housing models for asylum seekers, particularly families, building on the successful initiatives implemented. It should be noted, however, that access to legal aid for victims of discrimination or exploitation on the labour and housing markets is not addressed in the plan. Specific needs of victims of trafficking should also be taken into account

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<sup>1</sup> COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS  
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by developing and scaling up specialised shelters which can ensure adequate support and safety in their recovery and integration process.

With regard to access to education and employment, the Action Plan emphasises the improvement of the recognition of skills and qualifications acquired in third countries and their comparability with European qualifications. The Commission wants to further develop the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals and promote its use among public authorities. It also wishes to provide support for migrants' entrepreneurship under InvestEU and the implementation of inclusive mentoring schemes. Continuity of language learning, through the development of intermediate and advanced courses, is also essential for the integration of migrants. The Action plan acknowledges that *"migrant women are at particularly high risk of being over-qualified for their job, which may lead to depreciation of their skills."* However, very few specific actions are proposed for this target group, and does not take into account the impact of human trafficking. Specific training and support for trafficked women are required to ensure long term empowerment and recovery, and access to competitive work positions. Furthermore, the Action Plan misses the opportunity to address the risks related to human trafficking for labour exploitation. Although employment is at the core of the propositions, it fails addressing employment quality as labour rights and risks of exploitation and re-trafficking.

The European Commission's call for multi-stakeholder partnership (including civil society organisations, educational institutions, employers and socio-economic partners, social economy organisations, churches, religious and other philosophical communities, youth and students' organisations, diaspora organisations and migrants themselves) could, if put into practice, open up a number of promising opportunities. In the area of integration of trafficked persons, an opening and widening of national referral frameworks could be an interesting result. In addition, the Commission's intention of an "early start" of integration and inclusion could change parameters in the integration of trafficked persons.

In the different areas, the Action Plan encouraged cooperation and exchange of experiences among Member States, in particular through the Europass portal, the European Integration Network and the Urban Academy on Integration. Moreover, the Commission intends to launch a partnership with the Committee of the Regions, to implement rural partnerships for inclusion and to support community sponsorship programmes. The creation of a group on the views of migrants within the Commission should increase the participation of migrants in the design, implementation and monitoring of future EU policies in the field of migration, asylum and integration. The cross-cutting dimension of the integration process is also reflected in the variety of European funds mobilised. The Multi-annual Financial Framework 2021-2027 should make available to Member States the future Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) to finance targeted measures in the early stages of integration and horizontal measures; the European Social Fund 'Plus' (ESF+) to promote labour market integration and social inclusion; and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to finance infrastructure and equipment.

In order to ensure effective monitoring of the implementation of the Action Plan, the Commission will carry out a mid-term review at the end of 2024 and provide regular reports to the European Parliament and the Council of the EU. In addition, it

will develop an online interactive platform, hosted on the [European Website on Integration](#), to allow the participation of various partners. In order to address the lack of available data and the lack of use of European indicators in the assessment of national integration policies, the Commission will launch a new Eurobarometer on integration. It will propose a "Joint Scoreboard" on integration policies to further harmonise the implementation of the Action Plan between Member States. Indeed, integration policies remain the responsibility of the Member States and the Commission can only propose a framework to guide them. The Action Plan will be implemented differently by the Member States, making it difficult to compare and, consequently, to effectively assess the measures adopted.

*This article was elaborated as part of the TRIPS project – identification of TRafficked International Protection beneficiaries' Special needs by the partners of the project [Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe](#), [Forum réfugiés-Cosi](#), [Immigrant Council of Ireland](#), [Italian Council for Refugees](#), [Organization for Aid to Refugees](#).*

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IDENTIFICATION OF TRAFFICKED  
INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION BENEFICIARIES'  
SPECIAL NEEDS



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