

23 May 2016

A European migration policy beyond the humanitarian aid perspective

There were 33.5 million people born outside of the EU-28 living in an EU Member State on 1 January 2014, equal to 7% of the total population of the 28 EU countries.¹ Despite the arrival in Europe of more than one million migrants in 2015 (more than 3-4 times the level of 2014), the ratio migrants/EU citizens did not vary significantly.

Furthermore, despite the growth of populist positions across Europe, migrants do not represent a threat for European economy, rather an opportunity taking into consideration the demographic decline in the continent and the need for workers with all skills. According to OECD, migrants put in more in taxes and social contributions than they receive in benefits.²

Furthermore, besides the pure economic perspective, when integrated and socially included, migrants represent a cultural and social asset for their hosting communities.

A coherent migration policy should include forward-looking measures, not just a short term perspective aimed at facing the humanitarian crisis. These measures must be able to allow current migrants to fully integrate in their communities so as to maximize the benefits of migration, both for host communities and the migrants themselves, always keeping in mind that integration is a two-way process.

Integrating migrants in the community, offering them the rights and opportunities enjoyed by Europeans, will allow these new members of our community to make a contribution to the society they belong to and to take part in the decision that affect them, not least as the best way to address identity questions and tackle segregation and radicalization.

The integration process should take place at the community level within a wider European perspective. Emphasis must be given in conferring upon them all the rights and legal protections available, both at the national and European level, be it social, employment, education, housing rights and protections against discrimination, prosecution or segregation.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics#Migration_flows

² Migration Policy Debates © OECD May 2014