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Brussels, 23 May 2017

Today, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris Avramopoulos and Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne Thyssen are hosting the second meeting of the **European Dialogue on Skills and Migration**, at the [European Business Summit](#).

The Commissioners officially launched the "**Employers together for integration**" initiative, in the presence of CEOs and other high-level representatives of several companies committed to fostering migrant integration such as IKEA, Deutsche Telekom, NCC, Accenture, B-post, Scandic hotels, ADECCO and Microsoft as well as representatives of social and economic partners. The initiative aims to promote employers' efforts across the EU to support the integration of refugees and other migrants in the labour market and beyond.

Dimitris **Avramopoulos**, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, said: "*Making integration work is not just a social but an economic imperative. Only a successful integration of all migrants in the EU will allow turning migration into an opportunity, both for them and for our European society and economy. The role and engagement of employers is essential for this. I welcome the many existing efforts across Europe and invite more employers to set an example and join the "Employers together for integration" initiative launched today.*"

Marianne **Thyssen**, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, said: "*Today's forum is a sign of commitment that we unite forces with employers. Our primary task now is to tackle the challenges and to seize the opportunities of integrating refugees and asylum seekers in the labour market. It can and should be a win-win for all.*"

Peter **Wågström**, CEO NCC, said: "*Today NCC runs a number of promising projects that promote integration and diversity. We do this first and foremost because we need more people with the right skills and we believe that diversity can create better business results. At the same time, we want to play a part in building a more inclusive society.*"

Koen **Van Gerven**, CEO Bpost, said: "*Bpost is a sizeable employer in Belgium who wants to give everyone the opportunity to work for us including refugees, long term unemployed and low skilled people. Therefore we have developed a pragmatic and socially responsible employment policy, together with several partners, to achieve this ambition of social integration.*"

Jo **Deblaere**, Chief Operating Officer and Chief Executive-Europe Accenture, said: "*Employment is absolutely critical to empower refugees, yet even those with professional work experience and advanced education often struggle to achieve self-reliance. At Accenture, we aim to help refugees re-enter the workforce in jobs that match their skills, and we are proud to support the Commission's initiative to help them re-claim their livelihood and independence.*"

Birgit **Klesper**, Senior Vice President Group Corporate Responsibility Deutsche Telekom AG, said: "*The foremost requirement for successful integration into a society is integration into the labour market. A multi-stakeholder approach is a key element to fulfilling this European-wide need. If we all act in concert – politics, policy-makers, civil society and business – a great challenge becomes a great opportunity.*"

Background

The **European Dialogue on Skills and Migration** was launched in 2016 to foster exchanges between the Commission and economic and social partners, in particular employers, on labour migration related issues. For its second edition on 23 May 2017, the Dialogue focuses on the labour market integration of refugees and other legally residing migrants.

Research suggests that third-country nationals continue to face barriers to access the labour market. In 2016, third country nationals' employment rate was 15.2 percentage points lower than that of EU nationals, with women having particularly low employment rates. Third country migrants are often under-employed, even when holding a university diploma^[1].

Failure to release the potential of third-country nationals in the EU would represent a massive waste of resources, both for the individuals concerned and more generally for our economy and society. Migrants — if well integrated — can help improve the overall performance of the labour market, as well as fiscal sustainability in the long run.^[2]

That is why the Commission adopted on 7 June 2016 an **Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals** to support the integration efforts of Member States. Integration can only be effective if all relevant actors play their role: EU Institutions, national and local authorities, civil society organizations. Regarding the integration on the labour market, the role of economic and social partners, and in particular employers, is crucial. Many initiatives have been taken at national level by employers, trade unions and Chambers of Commerce. The Commission, through the second edition of the European Dialogue on Skills and Migration wants to allow individual employers and other economic and social partners to share their existing and future initiatives in this area.

Through the initiative "**Employers together for integration**", the Commission wants to give visibility to the engagement of individual employers to support integration and encourage more to join. As from today, interested employers can join the initiative on the website of the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs of the European Commission.

In addition, following up on the **New Skills Agenda for Europe**, the Commission is also working towards greater transparency of third-country nationals' qualifications, upskilling of low-qualified people in Europe and easier recognition of qualifications. A tool to support recognition of skills of third-country migrants will be launched soon.

The **European Social Fund (ESF)** is the main funding instrument supporting labour market inclusion, including of migrants. The **Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)** can also provide funding for preparatory measures to access the labour market. A call for proposal under AMIF will be launched in the second part of 2017 to support initiatives by employers and social partners to promote the labour market integration of refugees and other migrants.

For More Information[Website](#) on the European Dialogue for Skills and Migration[Sign up](#) for "Employers together for Integration" Initiative[Commission Action Plan](#) on the integration of third country nationals[European Website](#) on Integration[Repository](#) of promising practices of labour market integration and social inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees across EU Member States^[1]Eurostat, EU Labour Force Survey^[2] An Economic Take on the Refugee Crisis, DG ECFIN institutional paper, July 2016 https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/ip033_en_2.pdf

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