



Opinion

**By the European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions
(CESI)**

On the promotion of migrants by public services in Europe

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**The European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions
adopted the following opinion in May 2011.**

Introduction

All Member States of the European Union are affected by international migratory flows and common European migration policies in the form of directives and green papers have been initiated by the European Commission, although particular importance has been attached to integration policy in the form of the network of national liaison offices on integration, the annual report on migration and integration and the handbook on integration for policy-makers and practitioners. Within Europe, particular significance is accorded to the field of integration policy, insofar as the enlargement of the European Union in 2004 transformed what were once migratory flows from Eastern Europe into what we now see as internal mobility flows, which throw up questions of integration but also, broadly comparable issues.

Integration requires each member of society to do their bit. Social exclusion and the social isolation to which this leads prevent immigrants from playing the economic, social and political part in society required for them to integrate into their host country's society and often lead to the formation of what are dubbed 'parallel societies', which reside outside of the social and political processes of the host country and do not enjoy the same opportunities for development as the other inhabitants of the host country. Being able to be an active member of society is therefore a fundamental prerequisite for the integration of migrants in Europe.



The significance of public services when it comes to promoting the integration of migrants in Europe

1. CESI observes that being able to play an active part in society in Europe is, to a considerable degree, determined by whether one has access to and can share in the labour market, education, public services, political processes and political opinion-making as well as knowing one's own rights. Here, the public service is of the utmost significance.
2. CESI stresses the fact that sufficient language skills are also required to acquaint oneself with, and avail oneself of, one's rights as an employee, and it is only when this target has been achieved that migrants can play an equal role in the labour market in their host country. It is therefore indispensable that adult migrants be offered the opportunity to follow language courses. For reasons relating to how one obtains a professional qualification abroad, problems often arise when it comes to migrants' professional qualifications. CESI underscores the need to maintain national standards for a professional qualification. In order to guarantee this and, at the same time, ensure complete participation on the part of migrants in the labour market, further training measures for migrants, which take account of qualifications already obtained, must be put in place.
3. Accessing education is a prerequisite if one wants to access the labour market. At the same time, the possibility of availing oneself of the educational prospects on offer and integrating into the educational system of the host country plays a key role, especially for young migrants. Alongside the acquisition of specialist knowledge, school education helps to transmit the societal value system of the host country and,



in so doing, lays the cornerstone for the migrant's integration into the society of the host country. Understanding societal structures and values is essential if one wants to get by in a society and is thus a condition for the integration process. Being able to partake in education requires a comprehensive knowledge of the language spoken in the host country, although communicating the country's language is not a component of school education.

4. CESI would like to mention the fact that public educational establishments, and schools in particular, can make a meaningful contribution towards helping young migrants to integrate. However, this contribution can only be made if the corresponding structures and financial means are to hand. The additional integration requirement cannot be satisfied with existing structures. Integration requirements call for appropriate staff coverage, specific further training possibilities for teachers and the support of the public educational establishments through promoting language acquisition in early childhood and offering socio-pedagogical care to migrant families.
5. In order to participate in the host country's labour market, knowledge of the host country's language, alongside professional qualifications, are prerequisites.
6. Above and beyond the field of education and the labour market, public services play a significant role in society. Public services support a lot of the things we do together as a society, stretching from public transport and citizen centres, through the police and fire services to the public health service. The possibility to use public services, as well as value them, is part of how one integrates into, and shares in, a society.



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7. The degree of integration into society is determined, above all, by the possibility one is given to participate in democratic decision-making processes and help shape democratic public opinion. In the local and municipal sphere in particular, whether or not migrants are involved in politics is of decisive importance for the integration process.

 8. CESI stresses the significance of the public service and the importance of public services for social cohesion and points out the fact that only an adequately-equipped and qualified public service is in a position to meet this requirement. In the process, an increased number of dealings with migrants who have had bad experiences with public institutions in their country of origin and who may have a limited knowledge of the language spoken in the host country, call for particular attentiveness and there is a need for employees in the public service dealing with such matters to be offered opportunities to gain further training.

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