

E U R O P E A N E C O N O M I C A R E A
FORUM OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Ref: 15-3789

ELEVENTH MEETING OF THE EEA EFTA FORUM

Stange, Norway
11-12 June 2015

Opinion on free movement of persons and migration in the EEA
- the social aspects at local and regional level

Rapporteur: Nils Amund Røhne

The EEA EFTA Forum of Local and Regional Authorities:

- A. Having regard to the EEA Agreement on Free Movement of Persons;
 - B. Noting the reinforced subsidiarity principle set out in the Lisbon Treaty and its explicit reference to the local and regional dimension and self-government;
 - C. Noting the role of the Forum as a body in the EFTA structure;
 - D. Having regard to the increased migration of workers to Iceland and Norway from EU Member States following the enlargement of the EU;
 - E. Having regard to the Forum's opinion of November 2012 on labour migration within the EEA and impact on the local and regional level;
 - F. Having regard to the growing number of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants from third countries seeking to enter Europe;
 - G. Noting the European Commission's launch of the European Agenda on Migration on 13 May 2015 and the measures presented on 27 May 2015.
1. Acknowledges the need for a joint European efforts in order to meet the need for resettlement of refugees especially from Syria and Eritrea;
 2. Notes that local and regional authorities have a key role in refugee resettlement schemes which requires that they are consulted at all stages and receive adequate support from national governments to meet the needs of the refugees;
 3. Notes that a high number of refugees need specialized support, in addition to general social assistance, to tackle the psychological and physical trauma they have experienced and to learn to live in a new cultural context;
 4. Highlights that in some areas in Norway and Iceland there is a lack of affordable, quality housing available for immigrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers and that joint efforts by the government, local and regional authorities and civil society can make this challenge less pertinent;

5. Highlights that, in general, increased labour migration has had a positive effect for the economies of Iceland and Norway;
6. Highlights that after the financial crisis the unemployment rate for immigrants in Iceland and Norway is generally higher than that of the general population and is concerned about the long term impact this may have on social security, social benefits and other welfare costs borne by local authorities;
7. Calls for targeted measures by the Norwegian and Icelandic national authorities, in cooperation with social partners and local and regional authorities to assist unemployed immigrants to re-enter the labour market;
8. Notes, as in the Forum's opinion of 2012, that labour migration may lead to social dumping in certain sectors, and supports the measures taken by Icelandic and Norwegian governments, in cooperation with the social partners, to prevent social dumping and circumvention of national rules and regulations on wages and working conditions;
9. Highlights that Norway and Iceland have been able to maintain their social and welfare models with the increased mobility of persons within the European labour market;
10. Underlines the importance of national language skills for successful integration and labour market participation of immigrants and calls for stronger measures from the national governments to support language teaching and training for both children and adults;
11. Asks the EEA EFTA Ministers to take into account the opinion of the Forum in discussions on free movement of workers and migration