

Joint Declaration

on the role of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions concerning the managing contemporary International Migration and Demographic Challenges (Athens, Greece)

We, the representatives of the Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions who are participating in the international conference organized by the Economic and Social Council of Greece and hosted in Athens, Acropolis Museum on December 2 and 3, 2024 on the theme "Demographics - Immigration - Labor Markets",

Bearing in mind that the Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions have an advisory role to governments and/or legislative bodies in matters of economic and social policy; taking into account that as well AICESIS (the international association of ESCs and similar institutions), as UCESIF (the union of French speaking ESCs and similar institutions), from which a large number of members participate in the current conference, promote social dialogue in relation with core problematics that our societies are facing today;

Considering that the Economic and Social Councils must reflect the interconnectedness and complexity of economic and social relations that are evolving in an international geopolitical turmoil, accompanied by the expansion of migration flows, growing demographic imbalances and significant changes in labor markets internationally;

Realizing that the achievement of the 17 universal Goals for Sustainable Development included in the 2030 United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development is applicable to the effective investigation and treatment of the effects of countervailing demographic trends, increasing migration and refugee flows;

and

Acknowledging that conflicts, internal and external inequalities, the twin transition and the effects of climate change trigger dramatic changes in workers' preferences to move and choose the place to live and work, by taking into account specific parameters of socio-economic life (sectoral, institutional, social and geographical); this condition has direct and indirect consequences widening the gap between the needs of local economies and the willingness and capacity of working population to adapt in the reskilling process at the local level.

Understanding that the above factors affect each category of workers differently ((highly) skilled, unskilled, seasonal, commuters, nomads, young people, women, etc.), which generally worsens the living conditions of the vulnerable groups of the population-

Considering that climate change and rapid migration shifts are restructuring ad hoc labor markets, and are increasing the costs of adaptation and finding work for local businesses and the agricultural sector,

Knowing that the acute issue of the refugee and migration crisis, which was succeeded by the Covid-19 pandemic, cultivates the ground for the development of centrifugal forces from the goal of international institutional cooperation, with respect to the rights and solidarity between workers and migrants,

Seeing that the trends of the demographic transition, nowadays, constitute one of the greatest contemporary challenges for economic policies, as demography influences economic and social policies both at the national and the international level, due to a strong impact it has on labor markets and geopolitical relations. It is becoming apparent that there are diverging or even opposite trends of population flows around the globe, as in Europe the ratio of wage earners/pensioners is more and more decreasing, whereas the trend is reversed on other continents.

Recognizing that intensifying migration flows and counter-demographic trends in the "developed world" create new imbalances and pressures on national social security systems, which require systematic and permanent adjustments and/or adaptations,

The international community seems to be about to realize that coordination and cooperation is a prerequisite for a sustainable policy on migration and demographic transition, and concrete actions are necessary, especially in developed countries, to ensure the smooth integration of migrants into their societies, thereby fostering a sense of security for local host communities.

Undoubtedly, in strategic terms, the provision of additional financial assistance for the socio-economic development of less developed regions, the mitigation of the development gap, the institutional deepening of responsible governance and accountability issues both at the global and the national level, is particularly important. Equally important is the protection of labor rights and the combat against undeclared work, the consolidation of a favorable environment for sustainable businesses and international fair trade; all these are important parameters for the implementation of policies aimed at effective international coordination and cooperation on this issue.

In the light of the aforementioned, we, the Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions, seek to contribute, on the basis of a process of institutionally integrated, inclusive and effective social dialogue, to the formulation and implementation of national policies and international agreements. The effective management of the above issues ensures that these policies respond to current challenges, needs and priorities, based on the social dialogue processes of all relevant stakeholders and interested parties.

In light of the above:

1) We recommend to address the imbalances in the labor markets from the pressures of the immigration crisis and demographic transition through:

- a new "architecture" for a "broad and inclusive growth" that will take into account the new realities of labor markets (digital, climate, technological) in order to reduce imbalances in regional labor markets;*
- a joint plan to support the less developed regions and countries in a more sustainable way and to improve the conditions of employability and integration into the labor markets, as well in the countries of origin as in the countries of immigration;*
- new tools to record and redirect human flows efficiently and upgrade integration policies in local labor markets;*
- a systematic analysis of local needs in countries of immigration for the attraction, training and smooth integration of migrant populations.*

2) We propose to deploy a strategy to manage human flows and sharp fluctuations through:

- a new strong framework for the management of migration at the international and regional levels through dialogue and cooperation between governments, the civil society and all interested parties;

- efforts to reduce and resolve conflicts and to actively support local development and stability in the communities from which immigrants come from;

- a coordination process that will entail better cross-border management, a more simplified asylum policy and an inclusive development strategy.

3) We propose to support actions for the effective management of the demographic transition through:

- the necessary adaptation of parenthood support programs for native and foreign populations, social security coverage and education for populations in conflict areas;

- awareness campaigns in less developed regions about ensuring quality of life and a share of prosperity for young families, birth control and population healthcare;

- the establishment of adapted regional training and education programs for young people, the elderly, migrants in order to respond to the changing demographic conditions;

- the evaluation and implementation of successful examples of public policies that respond to local and regional specificities and respond to the challenges of global demographic evolution.

Athens, December 3rd, 2024