

news from Labour

In the European Parliament

European Parliamentary Labour Party

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French government's failure has fuelled riots says MEP

President of the European Parliament's all party anti-racism group said today that the French riots have been a "powderkeg waiting to explode" because France has failed to integrate immigrants into the economy and has avoided creating equality of opportunity in the workplace and housing.

In a frank assessment of the crisis in France, Claude Moraes MEP said that unrest among French immigrants was bound to be more acute than in London or in Dutch cities because unemployment among some ethnic groups in France can be 5 or 6 times higher than the national average. This can be compared to the worst instances in the UK where unemployment can be double the national average among some ethnic groups.

The London Labour Euro MP said:

"The UK has continued to grapple with tough integration problems but France has one of the worst records of labour market discrimination in Western Europe. This is because they have opted for an assimilationist model which says "everyone is French, everyone's the same".

"But opportunities are not equal. Immigrants need policies that will remove barriers into the labour market. France has failed to properly implement key pieces of legislation - the employment directive and the racial discrimination directive - that would have a real impact on immigrants looking for work."

"France needs to look to integration rather than assimilation.

"The EU can help France root out the cause of unrest after this crisis by pressing the French government to implement a legal framework that will allow immigrants into the labour market, and together, highlight the best examples of jobs, housing, policing and education integration.

"Nothing can excuse the violence we are seeing in France but the root causes of exclusion must be addressed."/ENDS

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Claude Moraes is a former Commission for Racial Equality commissioner and is currently working with French non-governmental organisations and voluntary organisations on integration policy.



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