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Migration Forum

"EU Migration policy"

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- Migration issues are high on the policy agenda of the European Union. The EU sees migration as one of the most visible challenges of globalisation.

Europe needs migration

- **The EU needs immigration.** Our population is ageing and shrinking. By 2050 we estimate that there will be a 25% decline in the numbers of young adults (aged 25-39); that we will lose up to 52 million people of working age (15-64); and that by then a third of Europeans will be over 65.
- **Immigration alone will not solve the problems of an ageing and declining population,** but it is one of the solutions we need. We recognise also the impact ageing may have on the nature of immigration in the future with the likely increasing demand for women to work in the domestic and caring sectors. New approaches will be needed to ensure good working conditions in these areas.

A common migration policy

- EU leaders decided back in 1999 that we needed to work together to face these issues and that this meant developing a common policy. This common policy acknowledges that international migration is part and parcel of today's world and that the central question is how to manage it effectively.
- Migration is a subject that affects many policy areas and we have to act on all of them. This is why we work very closely with third countries on migration issues both to manage legal migration to the EU and to discourage illegal

movements of people. This is why we give priority to strengthening not only border controls but also policies to integrate and ensure equal treatment at work and in society, for immigrants legally residing in the EU.

- We are also concerned in Europe about the impact of emigration, particularly on developing countries. This has led us to develop in the last couple of years a new approach to migration management which we call a '**global approach**'.
- The aim is to develop **comprehensive and coherent policies**, addressing the whole range of migration-related issues of interest both to the EU and to our partners. It brings new policy areas into the immigration debate, in particular development. We believe that by implementing this global approach we can maximise the benefits of migration for migrants, their countries of origin and the EU – the so-called triple win scenario.
- What are the key issues we face today?

The challenge of managing legal migration

- A major priority is managing legal migration and implementing the **Policy Plan on Legal Migration** issued by the Commission in 2005.
- To maintain and improve economic growth in the EU, it is essential for **Europe to become a real magnet for the immigrants it needs, especially the highly skilled**. We have to simplify admission procedures and make them easier to understand.
- This is why in 2007 the Commission will be putting forward a number of directives to harmonise legislation: on the admission of **high-skilled workers**, which may include an EU "green card" to facilitate mobility between the

Member States; **on the rights of legal immigrants in employment** so as to protect migrant workers during the initial 5 years before they are eligible for long-term residence; on **seasonal workers** which provides an opportunity to facilitate circular kinds of migration as part of our migration and development agenda.

- These directives, once adopted will complete the EU legislation which protects the status and rights of migrant workers, both men and women, and add to those concerning family reunion and long-term residence.
- It is important to stress that the Commission is required to monitor the transposition and the implementation of all these directives. We regularly convene contact committees to exchange information with Member States, to see where difficulties are arising and to ensure that the spirit of the legislation is maintained.

Establishing a Common European Asylum System

- EU legislation is also a key factor in the protection of the rights of asylum seekers and refugees. The initial legislation foreseen in the Amsterdam Treaty is now in place and the Commission is about to launch a wide debate on the future of EU asylum policy with a Green Paper which will be published in June this year. At the same time we are carrying out a series of evaluations of the implementation of EU asylum legislation (notably the Reception conditions directive and the Qualifications directive, and a report on the Dublin system. Based on the results of the debate which will follow the Green Paper and these evaluations a policy plan will be published in 2008 setting out all the measures that the Commission plans to adopt so that the Common European Asylum System can be established in 2010 as foreseen in the Hague Programme.

Border control and the challenge of illegal immigration

- **Controlling the external borders of the EU** has also to be a priority: remembering that the EU has 6 000 km of land borders and 85 000 km of coastline. Facilitating legal migration goes hand in hand with policies to reduce illegal migration and there are real humanitarian reasons for this. It is estimated that since 1996 some 8000 people have been lost at sea trying to reach the shores of Spain, Malta and Italy. Illegal migration is often driven by smugglers and traffickers and may lead to exploitation, especially of women, once the immigrants reach the EU.
- For the first time Member States are working together in **joint operations to protect the EU's external borders**, especially in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, under the coordination of the Borders Agency (FRONTEX).
- At the same time we are working with third countries to address the issues which create these forces and to tackle the traffickers and organised gangs who exploit them.
- An important aspect of fighting illegal immigration in the EU is **preventing the illegal employment of immigrants** which can also lead to the exploitation of the migrant worker. An **EC Directive designed to harmonise penal sanctions against employers** who offer work to illegally residing third-country nationals will be put forward next month.

The Challenge of integration

- There can be no immigration without integration. This is no easy task because national differences mean that there can be no single policy. Several models

exist in Europe and they are constantly being reviewed and adapted to changing circumstances.

- A new phenomenon which we must tackle urgently is that of immigrants who are "afraid of" or "reject" integration. And this does not affect just the first generation of immigrants but also their children.
- A key priority over the next few years will be to do more to help migrants integrate, especially young people. The **Common Agenda for Integration** presented by the Commission in September 2005 encourages national policies, but sets common goals. These respect different traditions, cultures and religions but fully comply with national and EU laws. They also promote the absolute value of human life and dignity, for example, equality between men and women.
- In the Hague Programme, the European Council called for the establishment of a **European framework** to strengthen integration policies. At the core of this framework is a series of eleven **common basic principles**, which were adopted by the JHA Council at the end of 2004. They form the basis of the European approach to integration today.
- These principles give a first idea of what we mean by integration in the EU. They set a number of initial objectives and they identify key measures in areas such as employment, education, respect for diversity, and dialogue between citizens.
- The most important is the definition which emphasises that **integration is a two-way process** – that there is a need for change on the part of both the immigrant and the host society – there must be mutual adaptation.

- Equally important is the principle that sets the boundaries of this change. **The acceptance of cultural, social and religious differences has its limits** and these are defined in the principles by national and EU law and by the basic values of the European Union such as equality, the rule of law, respect for human rights and for the democratic process.
- **Anti-racist, anti-discrimination and equality legislation** and programmes are an essential complement to integration policy. In the EU we have a basic legal framework to prevent racism and xenophobia. The establishment last month of the **European Fundamental Rights Agency** will reinforce our capacity to analyse and fight these phenomena. It will also help us to define clearly and promote those European fundamental values which are so important as a basis for active citizenship and participation in society.

Meeting the challenges

- These are the highlights of EU policy over the next few years. We are developing a new approach to migration management which is different from those of traditional immigration countries. We believe that this European approach, gives us the best prospects for minimising the negative effects of migration and for maximising the benefits for all concerned - the EU, the countries from which migrants come and the migrants themselves.
- We should be clear, immigration today concerns us all. Our societies are becoming increasingly diverse. The challenge is to manage this diversity, to ensure that society provides equal opportunities for all its members and that diversity thus becomes an advantage for the whole of society. This is what EU policy aims to promote.