

Towards a new European policy on migration

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Introduction

The development of a forward-looking, broad and comprehensive European Migration Policy that can benefit all stakeholders should be the goal of the EU. Restricted mobility and protectionism is not the answer to the future challenges. Mobility and openness must thus continue to be embraced. For countries of destination, well-managed migration can help to prevent labour shortages and bottlenecks in the labour market, increase tax revenues, and make economies and societies more dynamic. For countries of origin remittances and the temporary, or permanent, return of migrants can facilitate investment and the transfer of new knowledge and social capital. Even in times of global economic crisis, migration can play a vital role in the recovery.

The future policy must take into account that most, if not all, countries in Europe will face demographic challenges and labour shortages in a wide range of sectors within a few years time. To meet the goal set out in the Lisbon strategy that the EU should remain a competitive player in the global economy the problem of a shrinking population needs to be addressed. Facilitating expanded opportunities for labour migration is crucial also in fulfilling the objective to make the European labour markets as attractive and competitive as possible as well as the targets of full employment and maintaining the high standard of Europe's welfare systems. Successful integration policy is a key factor for realizing the positive impact of migration, for the individual as well as for society.

It is also important to improve measures to combat illegal immigration and human smuggling. It is indeed a problem that people are entering the EU illegally with a risk of being exploited. However, such measures must be implemented with respect for fundamental human rights and in such a way that they do not undermine the right to seek asylum. Illegal immigration is best combated by the creation of more legal ways into the EU rather than building walls at the borders.

A Comprehensive European Migration Policy (CEMP)

A future CEMP is defined, above all, by an understanding that responsibility for the success of migration and integration rests across society. It demands a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, and strong partnerships with countries of origin and transit. This ap-

proach requires willingness to openly debate what role migration should play in achieving Europe's economic and social goals, and in making the EU a more effective player in globalization and in development.

In short, a CEMP framework must include a rapprochement with the Lisbon agenda, enabling states to individually and collectively create safe, orderly channels for legal migration that help meet labour-market needs and remain competitive. It also must combat illegal migration, create a sense of solidarity amongst Member States, and establish relationships of trust and mutual benefit with third countries of origin and transit. At the same time, the CEMP must strengthen public and private institutions and help them adapt in order to benefit from the opportunities created by increased mobility, manage diversity to their advantage, and improve the process of integrating migrants, while respecting the interests and promoting fair outcomes for all of society.

Migration and mobility

An effective, flexible and demand driven labour migration policy will best meet Europe's future needs. Facilitating expanded opportunities for labour migration will therefore remain important to meet the target of full employment, maintaining the high standard of Europe's welfare systems and meeting the goals for a dynamic and strong European economy as set out in the Lisbon Strategy. Sweden recently adopted a new system for labour immigration. In short, the reform implies that as long as salary conditions and other relevant social insurance conditions are fulfilled, it is the needs of the labour market that should be decisive when applications for work permits are examined. The Swedish reform can hopefully serve as an inspiring example for a future European model.

The future EU policy must also explicitly recognize the role third country nationals residing in the EU can play both in our economies and in the development of their countries of origin. The natural propensity of many migrants to move back and forth between their countries of origin and destination must be encouraged. The policy should therefore seek to avoid obstacles to voluntary return and circular migration. In this context, more attention should also be given to strengthening the many positive aspects of migration for countries of origin, countries of destination and the migrants themselves. Increased coherence between different policy areas is a prerequisite. The aspirations behind the CEMP and the Lisbon agenda are one and the same, and future policy should embrace them together.

We also need to facilitate circular migration. We should create flexible systems that allow individuals to move legally between countries, without this negatively affecting the migrants themselves, countries of origin, or countries of destination. The EU should enhance dialogue on opening legal channels for migration to the EU and to facilitate circular migration with our neighboring countries. The EU should enable mobility beyond the physical movement of workers, requiring, for instance, the portability of rights and contributions, and the ability to apply for and gain work with a new employer. Such mobility, in a flexible and globalised world, should apply regardless of length of stay. Member States should retain control of who enters their countries.

Building partnerships with third countries in the field of migration

If migration is seen as a continuum beginning in the country of origin, then the starting point for the CEMP must be a deepened and broadened dialogue and cooperation with third countries. A continuous development and efficient implementation of the Global Approach to Migration remains a priority and should be fully integrated into all relevant aspects of the EU's external policies. The Global Approach should be based on genuine partnership and joint ownership with third countries and it should be carried out in a spirit of solidarity among EU Member States. Increased focus and resources must be devoted to intensifying implementation of the migration and development agenda. Asylum and the protection of refugees must remain a key element of the Global Approach to Migration.

The Global Approach to Migration should also entail concerted use of EU instruments, such as real development policies that offer migrants the opportunity to invest and innovate at home. Circular migration and mobility partnerships, that allow greater freedom of movement, should be seen as important tools in this effort. They can help ensure that migrants travel to the EU through legal channels.

In a longer term perspective, promoting dialogue and cooperation on migration management and facilitated mobility should continue to be at the core of the external agenda. The EU needs to establish strategic long-term partnerships with all relevant third countries according to priorities. The Council should decide on a priority list of such countries and should devise a comprehensive strategy on how to work with them individually, taking account of all relevant aspects such as development and poverty reduction, financial issues and foreign policy goals. The Global Approach to Migration, and the various cooperation mechanisms developed for its implementation, should be the basis for broadened, deepened and refined cooperation. Such partnerships should encompass the wider migration agenda and be closely linked to the Millennium Development Goals as well as to national development and poverty reduction strategies.

Integration

The main goal of integration policy: equal rights, opportunities and obligations for all, should be at the core of European cooperation on integration. The future wealth and cohesion of Europe depends on its capacity to reach that goal. The mutual interaction between immigrants and other residents of Member States should be enhanced. Efforts in support of shared values based on democracy and human rights should be increased, with due respect for the multitude of values in the Member States. Legislation and other measures against discrimination should also be further developed.

Integration policy should continue to be an area of primary national competence. European cooperation may still be reinforced, through strengthened knowledge exchange and the development of tools to monitor results of integration policies in Member States. Integration policies may also be further coordinated with other relevant policy areas. Comparable European indicators should be developed for the evaluation of results of integration policies and for more effective European knowledge exchange.

Clear goals and the identification of common priorities are also required. Access to the labour market is central to successful integration. Employment should therefore be a priority area

and integration initiatives coordinated with measures in the framework of the European employment strategy. Moving in the direction towards comparable indicators and common priorities, the possible use of the Open Method of Coordination in some form in the area of integration policies may be explored.

1. How big a role should immigration play in responding to demographic change, and on what basis?

With an aging population, the share of people in active age will diminish and the demand for labour will increase. As the effects of the global financial crisis unfolds it is clear that it has impacted the European labour markets more rapidly and deeply than initially expected. As part of an overall strategy to ease the growing dependency burden on working populations, and to sustain the rising costs of national welfare systems, there is a need to facilitate the growth of the European labour force by opening up for legal migration from third countries. It is, however, clear that labour migration is not the only solution. Reforms to increase labour migration must be combined with decisive actions to better utilize large groups of residents that are now excluded from the labour market. In addition to tapping the EU's own existing human resources, achieving the goals of the Lisbon strategy will require reaching beyond the borders of the EU in order to attract migrants for whom there is a demand and who can contribute to making our economies more diverse and vibrant. Moreover, by offering expanded opportunities for legal migration, the EU can become a credible counterpart in real partnerships with third countries. It is only through the formation of real partnerships and mutual understanding between the EU and its partner countries that efforts to facilitate legal migration will succeed.

2. What role can the EU have in pursuing immigration and integration goals, versus other levels of governance?

The global economy is creating needs common to all Member States. To meet such needs, a common response is often both effective and desirable. While Member States will design specific policies that respond to national conditions, the EU should establish principles and policy goals that ensure coherence and continuity among Member States. One such response should be to develop common policies that would attract the labour migrants needed on the European labour markets, for example unified and simplified entry procedures and a common framework for rights and obligations.

Clear and affirmative political leadership on EU level could also contribute to changing negative public opinions and perceptions that migration is an economic liability, a cultural challenge and even a security threat. Such general change in public opinion is pressing as the need for labour migration is growing.

3. What other national and European policies are necessary for EU policy in on immigration to be effective?

The link to the establishment of the Common European Asylum System is obvious and important. Policy coherence is a crucial issue and an expected increase in migration and mobility calls for the organizational and institutional structure of the EU regarding migration to be revised. A future organization should allow for further integration into relevant policy areas, e.g. economic, social, foreign and development policies. In addition, efforts are needed to main-

stream and coordinate with policy areas where the relevance to the migration agenda is increasingly recognized, such as environment, trade and health.

Literature

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