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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**Towards a Common Immigration Policy**

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**Towards a Common Immigration Policy**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

**Immigration presents both a challenge and an opportunity for the EU.** It has an impact on the economy, society and external relations and against the background of ageing European societies and of growing market needs, demand for immigration in the EU is set to increase. Europe looks likely to rely more on immigrants to balance supply and demand in labour markets, and more generally to fuel economic growth. So the economic interest in immigration will add to the complex mix of questions raised by immigration arranging from respect for the rights of the individual and the need for integration, through security and Europe's relations with immigrants' countries of origin, and last but not least, the need to tackle illegal immigration.

Globalisation is accelerating the pace of change for immigration. It has sparked increased human mobility, resulting in a substantial rise in the number of third-country nationals in the EU over recent decades. Many parts of Europe have become net recipients of immigration flows, including areas which previously experienced persistent net emigration flows.

At the same time, demographic trends are posing a considerable challenge for the sustainability of public finances and for the viability of social protection systems in many EU Member States. Although no substitute for structural reforms, well-managed immigration - together with enhanced intra-EU labour mobility - could help increase the overall size of the labour force and alleviate labour shortages.

However, immigration brings with it new demands on policy. Fighting illegal immigration requires particular efforts from relevant authorities. A lack of integration of legal migrants carries real socio-economic costs – mostly felt by first and second generation immigrant communities. Integration policies must lie at the very core of immigration policies. An integration policy based on non-discrimination, equal treatment, rights and duties allows immigrants to contribute more to society, and improves their potential in education and employment. It also improves mixed public perceptions of immigration.

In both Eurobarometer and national surveys, migration consistently comes out as one of the top concerns of European citizens: With immigration so important for the economic and social fabric of Europe, some concerns are of course inevitable, but fear fuels many misconceptions. European needs a coherent and consistent immigration policy to show that public policy is tackling justified concerns and to enjoy the support of the European public. There is an urgent need to provide better, more accurate information and to avoid sensationalised stories about migration in the media.

In parallel to immigration from outside the EU, the EU is also experiencing increasing movements of people within its territory. The advantages created by the European Union have stimulated Europeans to move inside its borders, and more and more people are taking advantage of this possibility. These internal movements are fundamentally different from immigration from outside and are not covered in this Communication.

- The population of the EU is close to 493 million persons. Of these, 18.5 million are third-country nationals, equivalent to just under 3.8% of the total population.
- The most significant groups of third-country nationals residing in the EU, in terms of size, are citizens from Turkey, Morocco, Albania and Algeria.
- Since 2002, net immigration into the EU has oscillated between 1.5 and 2 million per year. Most recent newcomers have settled in Greece, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom.
- Whilst demographic challenges differ for each of the European countries and regions, recent projections suggest that there will be a natural decrease of the EU population between 2010 and 2050. Assuming zero net immigration, the population of the EU would be about 26 million lower than today in 2030, and 50 million lower in 2050.
- In economic terms, the main change will involve the size of the working-age population (15-64 years), which according to current trends will decrease by 59 million by 2050. The EU will go from having four to only two people of working-age for each citizen aged 65 and above, if the participation rate remains unchanged.

**Immigration is by nature a cross-border phenomenon.** A coordinated approach is essential to help Member States to manage it more successfully.

This Communication explains why an effective European immigration policy is so important. It looks at what has been achieved so far, analyses some of the remaining gaps and weaknesses and sets out the core elements of what is needed to take forward the EU's common immigration policy over the coming years.

## 2. THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE COMMON POLICY ON IMMIGRATION

During the last decade, the foundations of a common immigration policy have been gradually established under the Tampere and Hague Programme. At Hampton Court in October 2005, Heads of State and Government identified immigration as a key area for future work, inviting the Union and the Member States to further develop a common approach. This led to the adoption of the Global Approach to Migration by the European Council in December 2005, which was reinforced by the European Council in December 2006. The Commission also established a Group of Commissioners on Migration.

Most recently, the Commission's Communication on 'The European Interest: Succeeding in the age of globalisation'<sup>1</sup>, confirmed that in a Europe with no internal borders, the changing demands of an ageing society and a labour market in constant evolution have challenged established assumptions about immigration.

### **Legal immigration**

The approach taken to legal immigration in the spirit of the Tampere mandate was ambitious, but **the policy is still largely incomplete**. Attempts at harmonisation have been reduced to the bare minimum. The foundations have, however, been laid for a right of family reunification, subject to a number of conditions. The rights of third-country nationals who have been resident in a

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2007) 581, 3.10.2007.

Member State for more than five years have been underpinned, and they are now entitled to work or set up a business in another Member State. The admission of students is now subject to common rules, though the challenge of the attractiveness of our universities to young talent remains unresolved.

Although the urgency of the demographic and **economic** needs is acknowledged, it has not been possible to arrive at common rules for the admission of workers from outside the Union. Only the admission of researchers has been regulated, in order partly to fill the gaps observed in this vital area. But initial assessments of the transposition of this directive show that it is being applied in only 6 Member States out of 27.

Any policy of immigration must now go hand in hand with a **policy of integration**, and integration policy has been the subject of a pragmatic approach sustained by **strong political demand**, symbolically reflected in the adoption of common basic principles. The funding of € 825 million to be given to the Integration Fund up to 2013 will allow work to continue. This comes in addition to the measures to facilitate integration that have for a long time been financed by the Member States through the European Regional Development Fund and above all the European Social Fund.

The needs of the labour market are clear, and will not be remedied by the sometimes contradictory policies of recruitment being pursued by the Member States. A category-by-category approach such as that called for in the Policy Plan on Legal Migration of 2005 currently seems to be the only way to move out of the impasse and beyond the Member States' reservations regarding a matter they view as falling within national jurisdiction. There is special urgency with regard to **highly qualified workers**, and in October the Commission presented a proposal for a Directive that would facilitate their admission (providing for an "EU blue card"). There are other sectors of the economy with a need for unskilled workers, such as seasonal workers, where a proposal for legislation will be brought forward in autumn 2008. As the Commission proposed in October last, this category-by-category legislation should be rendered consistent by a Directive on **a common set of rights for third-country workers**, to prevent social dumping and exploitation. Finally, it is important to recall that any common policy in the area of economic migration must be fully compatible with the principle of Community preference.

### **Schengen, visas, management of external borders, new technology**

The Schengen area is growing and strengthening; it is one of the great successes of the Union, and is one of the most perceptible achievements to the ordinary citizen in recent times. After several years of operating within the Union, the Schengen *acquis* will be the subject of a review in 2008 which will cover both the legal and the operational aspects. The Community code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders will be followed by a code on visas: the two together will provide a clear and consistent procedural framework for border control and the issue of visas. Other legislation has been adopted or is to be adopted to make provision for local border traffic, to regulate the recording and checking of biometric identifiers, or to lay the foundations for the establishment of joint centres for visa applications.

**The Frontex agency**, set up in 2005, has facilitated practical cooperation between Member States and has given a highly operational dimension to the control of persons crossing the EU's external borders. Frontex also plays an important role in the management of sea borders and in coordinating the action of Member States in reducing illegal immigration flows. But the agency's full potential will be achieved only when there is an even more determined commitment on the part of Member States and a real involvement of the non-EU countries concerned in its operational activities. The **Schengen Information System (SIS II)** is to undergo a thorough modernisation of its technical features, and new functions are to be added. The **Visa Information System**,

immediately it is launched, will make the process of issuing short-term visas more effective and more secure.

The Union needs to make better use of **new technologies** for monitoring and detection, by ensuring the full interoperability of existing systems, developing new tools, and making full use of the potential offered by biometrics. Work must continue on the rapid development at European level of an integrated model of border management, and on achieving a coherent policy for integrated control of access to the Union and its Member States.

These operational and legislative tools have been backed up by a solid financial effort: the External Border Fund is to spend € 1 590 million between 2007 and 2013.

### **Illegal immigration**

Better management of legal immigration and determined measures to combat illegal immigration are two sides of the same coin. Rapid progress has been made in the fight against illegal immigration through the use of a range of legislative and operational measures under three sets of policy priorities, on illegal immigration, external border controls and the return of illegal immigrants.

Statistics on the **presence of irregular migrants** are – by their very nature – difficult to obtain. Regularisations can provide information on the population of irregular migrants. At least 3.7 million people have been regularised in EU Member States (France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain) since the early 1980s. One of the weaknesses in the machinery set up so far is the inadequacy of European policy on returning immigrants. Only one expulsion order in three is enforced. European rules are before the Council and Parliament, and have been there too long: legislation is needed very rapidly. Work has begun, though, in a related area, namely the pull factors that attract illegal immigrants, in particular undeclared work. As long as the European market offers such openings it will not be possible to manage immigration flows coherently; indeed they can be expected to increase. The directive proposed last May should allow the fight to be taken to the source, the employers of workers staying illegally in the Member States. The Commission's Communication on undeclared work of 23 October 2007 takes stock of the actions undertaken in the Member States in order to discourage undeclared work including by means other than repressive ones, for instance by the use of fiscal instruments, and illustrates the scope for mutual learning on successful practices.

Legal immigration policies and measures to combat illegal immigration lose much of their relevance when Member States mount large-scale legalisation operations. Moving beyond the mutual information mechanism that is in place, it is time for a genuine debate on a common approach to this question. National measures taken in isolation may weaken European cohesion and solidarity.

Effective measures against illegal immigration will involve the cooperation of the countries of origin and transit, through active participation in the following mechanisms:

- the establishment of machinery for cooperation in the fight against the networks and groups that organise and participate in human trafficking;
- for the management of the external borders, training of the responsible staffs in the countries of origin and transit, cooperation with them, and a strengthening of joint arrangements for border surveillance;

- cooperation in the steps needed for the return of illegal immigrants, with special reference to their identification and documentation, and the establishment of more effective return mechanisms; this will include effective implementation of the readmission obligation in Article 13 of the Cotonou Agreement as well as the conclusion of EC readmission agreements with further third countries.

### **The external dimension**

The external dimension of EU migration policy has grown in importance in recent years, and migration related concerns have been integrated into the EU's external relations policies and programmes, as well as the development agenda. There has been a particular concentration on the EU's neighbouring countries, with a dedicated institutional framework. Within this framework, political dialogue and cooperation on migration and related issues are already well developed and are being strengthened where necessary.

Most recently, the EU has defined the **Global Approach to Migration**, based on enhancing dialogue and cooperation with third countries in partnership, solidarity and shared responsibility. Its initial focus has been on Africa and the Mediterranean.

The Global Approach builds on **political dialogue and cooperation** developed in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy through bilateral agendas. It covers the whole of Africa and also addresses the regional and multilateral levels. The political framework for such dialogue and cooperation with Sub-Saharan African countries is Article 13 of the Cotonou Agreement. The EU-Africa Strategy and its 'Partnership on migration, mobility and employment', to be adopted at the Summit in Lisbon in December, will be the consolidation of the longer term migration and development agenda taken forward with Africa to date.

In the context of the Global Approach, **more targeted financial and technical instruments of cooperation** have also been developed, which are being used and applied where appropriate. New EU initiatives include: Africa-driven migration information and management centres; circular migration to try to manage labour migration in a more flexible manner to the benefit of both countries of origin and destination and the migrants themselves; mobility partnerships to provide a balanced framework to better organise cooperation between countries of origin and destination; migration profiles that provide a tool for policy-makers; as well as cooperation platforms to bring together migration and development actors in countries and regions.

However, now that priorities have been set, the real test of the Global Approach's value and effectiveness in Africa is just beginning. Over the coming years, all actors involved – the Member States, the Commission and the international organisations, in partnership with third countries – need to intensify the process already under way and to deliver results. In particular, there is an urgent need to ensure proper follow-up to and delivery on the political milestones that were agreed between Europe and Africa at the Rabat and Tripoli conferences last year.

The Global Approach has now been extended to the eastern and south-eastern regions neighbouring the EU. The nature of EU dialogue and cooperation on migration with these regions is quite different from sub-Saharan Africa. The real challenge with these regions is to reconcile the EU's security concerns with our neighbours' expectations (and the EU's own interest) in terms of increased mobility.

The Global Approach to the East also covers Asia where, so far, the interest of the EU Member States seems limited to readmission issues. Efforts therefore need to be made to open the approach further to other dimensions relevant to our relations with these countries, such as immigration of

highly skilled workers. Migration is a priority of the new EU Central Asia Strategy. It is worth noting that the main themes of the second Global Forum on Migration and Development, which will take place in Manila in October 2008, will be the protection of migrants' rights and the link between migration, development and security.

As far as Latin America and the Caribbean are concerned, migration should continue to be addressed in the context of the preparation of the EU/LAC Summits (in particular the Lima Summit in May 2008), with the objective of arousing more structured and regular dialogue and cooperation.

The staff working document annexed to this Communication gives an overview of implementation of the Global Approach with both Africa and the East and South-East to date.

### **3. THE NEED FOR A COMMON POLICY ON IMMIGRATION: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

In a single market with free movement of persons, there is a clear need **to go beyond** 27 national immigration policies. Member States have varying needs, due to their different economic situations, demographic prospects, social standards and historical ties, and as a result, their policies to manage immigration also vary greatly. However, this has resulted in inconsistencies and a lack of coordination at EU level. Moreover, national immigration policies clearly have an impact beyond national borders; and actions taken in one Member State for national or regional reasons can rapidly have an impact on other Member States. EU citizens need to be confident that action at EU level will address their concerns so both leadership and a sustained communication effort are needed.

This is why a step change is necessary: the foundations which have been laid should be used to develop a **new commitment** and build a **common European policy on immigration**, enhancing economic opportunities and integration measures, based on solidarity and burden sharing.

Many policies must adapt to a new world of work to sustain publicly funded healthcare, social protection and pensions against the backdrop of demographic change, and to enable EU citizens to successfully adjust to change.

This common approach requires a **European framework** within which the national and EU levels can complement each other – one that respects national differences and needs, but that recognises the common challenges facing Europe's open economy and territory and enhances our ability to deal with them. This should factor immigration into decisions on economic, social, international and development issues. Such mainstreaming of immigration will not only help European society to tackle the challenges of migration, but will also benefit the immigrants themselves.

**If well managed**, immigration can play a significant role in alleviating the effects of population ageing and help European societies deal with labour and skill shortages. Without a credible European strategic initiative on economic immigration, the strong push and pull factors of immigration will continue to overpower existing national rules and legislation. EU discussion should now focus on the actions needed to manage immigration effectively and on the resources needed. A first step in the process is to have a deeper understanding of the potential impact of immigration and the challenges it poses.

#### **Economic opportunities**

While immigration is not a panacea for Europe's skills and labour shortages, low-, medium- and highly-skilled third-country national workers contribute to its economic prosperity. Our immigration strategy needs to take account of our demographic and employment trends, as well as

the role that outsourcing of certain activities play for both countries of origin and of destination. As the European population decreases and our labour markets suffer from shortages in certain sectors, we need to assess how immigration can help meet our objectives of growth and jobs.

- Immigrants do more than just increase the overall size of the **labour force**. The potential of migrants to establish themselves as entrepreneurs is increasingly recognised and there is growing evidence of a business case for diversity, such as ethnic diversity.
- Immigrants also help to alleviate **labour shortages**. On the one hand, some Member States are suffering shortages of highly-skilled workers. Such migrants will not only contribute to filling labour gaps, but will also inject technical expertise, broaden the skills base and improve the quality of human capital. On the other hand, we can already see growing needs in the services sector, in particular in households, hotels and restaurants, construction and in sectors characterised by strong seasonality such as agriculture. These key sectors also face growing demands as an increasing proportion of women join the labour market and as our population ages, requiring greater labour in health and long-term care, nursing, child care and the care of the elderly. There is a clear role here for strengthening of labour market infrastructures, above all public employment services.

- The share of skilled migrant workers is 1.7% in the EU. This compares to 9.9% in Australia, 7.3% in Canada, 5.3% in Switzerland and 3.2% in the US.
- The economic weight of the lower-wage jobs in the total employment in each Member State is very significant, ranging from 10.8% in Sweden to 38.8% in Romania in 2005<sup>2</sup>. Immigrant workers play a key role in these sectors in a number of Member States, and this role is likely to expand in the future, given current trends.

- The ageing of the EU population has **budgetary implications**. The decline of the working age population may have serious implications for the financing of pensions and put additional pressure on health spending and long-term care. Immigration can contribute to the financing of the public pay-as-you-go pension schemes, but only in the medium term as immigrants accumulate pension rights over time. In the long run, appropriate reforms of the pension systems will be needed to guarantee their long term sustainability.
- Legal immigrants contribute to **the economic development of Member States** because they are tax payers and consumers of goods and services.

### **Integration challenges**

- The EU lags behind other main immigration destinations in terms of integration. The potential for significant overall gains from immigration can only be realised if integration is successful. Integration policy should therefore be seen as a continuum, running from entry through to settlement and to social and economic inclusion. Effective and efficient integration policies are needed in particular in the areas of education, health, housing and the labour market, which fall within the direct competence of Member States, and where the EU can only have a supporting role. Policy-makers should also avoid rigidities in labour market institutions or in product and financial markets, which prevent from reaping the advantages of immigration. Last but not least, anti-discrimination and equal rights policies are important for addressing some of the obstacles

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<sup>2</sup> These figures are based on the data collected by Eurostat for the following three sectors: agriculture, hunting and forestry; construction; and hotels and restaurants.

faced by immigrants and their descendents; in this context, intercultural and inter-faith dialogue needs to be promoted.

- Integration policies entail short-term costs for **public finances**. This aspect represents an important element in the public debate on immigration. EU Member States should look at the interaction between immigration and social policy as a long-term investment in their own economic and social progress and assess the short term costs of policies aimed at promoting integration in the light of the long term.
- **Access to the labour market** remains one of the main conditions for successful integration. It entails a wide range of benefits for the individual, enterprises, society and the economy. However, current figures show that migrants tend to have much lower employment rates than the EU nationals. Immigrants are often more exposed to undeclared work and to ‘brain waste’ (when they hold jobs for which they are over-qualified). In terms of gender, female non-EU nationals face particular difficulties compared to their EU-national counterparts, in particular for highly-skilled women where the difference between employment rates for non-EU and EU nationals exceeds 20 percentage points. Lawful and gainful employment will be the most important way out of social and economic exclusion, and the shorter the integration period, the sooner migrants will become net social and economic contributors to the societies they have chosen to join. Restricting access to social rights and training can be an obstacle to labour market integration: full access to social protection and lifelong learning offer the best results. The recently adopted proposal for a framework directive laying down a common set of rights for third country workers legally residing in Member States is important in this respect.
- In particular, young people with a migrant background are disproportionately affected by unemployment. The gap between the total unemployment rate and the rate for non-EU nationals for the total working-age population is high (12-25 percentage points). Similar gaps exist for young people in education.

In 2005, the employment rate of third-country nationals was substantially lower (55%) than the EU national rate (65%). Unemployment rates were almost twice as high for non-EU nationals (17%) as for EU nationals (9%). However, it is not universally the case among Member States that employment rates for non-EU nationals are below those of EU nationals. In many of the new Member States, as well as Greece, Spain and Portugal, the employment rate of non-EU nationals was above that of EU nationals.

- **Education** is vital in many ways, not least for ensuring interaction between immigrants and other sectors of the population. However, the current educational attainment of children of immigrants in many cases raises concerns about their future personal and professional development, and will clearly influence their future participation in the labour market. Foreign ethnic background is another factor significantly influencing pupils' achievements at school in many countries, with data from all relevant international surveys confirming this. Curricula therefore need to be made increasingly sensitive to the needs of immigrant pupils, while teachers also need to be equipped with the inter-cultural skills that enable them to make the most of diversity in schools. In 2008 the Commission will adopt a Green Paper on Migration and Education.
- **Language** skills are crucial for integration. Migrants may be trapped in a vicious circle in which access to the labour market is restricted because of inadequate language skills, while language skills are developed through employment and training. Acquiring the language of the host country can be particularly important for migrant women who may otherwise be cut off from their new society and have difficulties in helping their children integrate at school.

- Similarly, adequate provisions must also be made for immigrants in terms of **housing**. This plays a key role in terms of social integration of migrants and their families in local communities. On average, migrants are disproportionately disadvantaged in this area but housing integration measures represent a great challenge. There is a need for better forecasting regarding numbers of immigrants and where they are likely to concentrate for reasons of employment or family reunification. Where migrant communities remain isolated or segregated, this is a real obstacle to participation in wider society.
- Immigration and **health** are linked in several important ways. Immigrants frequently face additional health risks linked to their living and working conditions. Immigrants also need access to health services just like other members of the population, and may require specific help and information to do so. Illegal immigrants may find it particularly difficult to obtain the health care they need due to their precarious position. Meanwhile, emigration of skilled health professionals is causing severe shortages in many developing countries. Health issues related to immigrants will be further addressed through initiatives developed in the context of the new EU health strategy<sup>3</sup>.

### **External challenges**

Immigration is now a core part of the Union's external relations policy, having been fully integrated in **political dialogue, diplomacy and cooperation** with third countries. This is particularly the case with the Eastern and Southern neighbourhood where the challenges now lie in balancing all aspects of our approach, especially those related to security and mobility. Much progress has been made with the countries of the Western Balkans in terms of mobility and people-to-people contacts. Moreover, dialogue on migration issues occupies an increasingly important place on the agenda with Latin American, Central Asian and Asian countries and the EU should aim to reinforce and broaden the scope of this dialogue. With Africa, the Partnership on Migration, Mobility and Employment will provide a concrete common understanding on the way forward.

The full integration of immigration into the Union's external relations has helped to ensure coherence and complementarity with other policy areas and to better address the challenges associated with migration in partnership with the third countries concerned. In addition, mainstreaming immigration into **development policy** is enabling immigration policy to take development concerns into consideration and development policy to work to make immigration a positive factor for development. It is important that the EU helps to minimise brain drain and brain waste and maximise the benefits of mobility and migration for developing countries, for example by reducing the transfer costs of **remittances** sent by immigrants, by providing migrants increased possibilities for temporary return, or by protecting those sectors with a severe lack of human resources from active recruitment.

The temporary or permanent return of migrant workers to their country of origin can be a '**brain gain**' as migrants may have acquired additional skills abroad – for example in language, technology or entrepreneurship – which will enhance their labour productivity and might also be transferable. Circular migration has clear advantages for destination countries, countries of origin and migrants. To favour circular migration, Europe has to establish a framework that recognises and encourages circularity as a dynamic pattern of transnational movement, not just as a means of avoiding the challenges of immigrant integration. This framework needs to be linked with the EU external

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<sup>3</sup> For the health strategy document, entitled 'Together for Health: A Strategic Approach for the EU 2008-2013', see [http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_overview/Documents/strategy\\_wp\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_overview/Documents/strategy_wp_en.pdf).

relations and development agendas. The portability of pensions should be examined as an important issue relating to circular migration.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Immigration will shape European society in the future just as it has always done in the past. A successful immigration policy requires a committed and consistent policy at both national and EU levels. Only a common, cross-cutting approach can deliver an effective policy response across a wide range of policy areas. A coherent, balanced strategy will enable the EU to seize the opportunities of immigration, to address negative public perceptions, and to tackle the challenges raised by immigration – including the poisonous practice of trafficking and exploitation associated with illegal immigration.

Immigration can make a **significant contribution to the prosperity of the EU**, but this requires a big improvement in the match between labour market needs, the skills of migrants and their overall integration. Effective integration of new immigrants and those already present in the labour market is an essential condition for achieving the Lisbon goals of growth and jobs. When properly managed, legal immigration can contribute to labour market needs and provide a real alternative to illegal immigration and the informal economy.

In parallel, fostering integration can help avoid prejudices and promote a tolerant and inclusive society. Anti-discrimination and equal rights policies are important for addressing some of the obstacles faced by immigrants and their descendents.

Immigration also requires a much more effective degree of **cooperation and mutual learning** between all relevant branches of public policy. The European Union and its Member States must work together and with foreign partners on these issues to bring the economic, social and external aspects of immigration under one coherent strategy.

A **renewed commitment** to develop a common immigration policy is required to enable the Union to turn immigration to its advantage for economic growth and competitiveness. This does not require any change in the existing competences of the EU, it is a political and practical matter of working together to achieve an outcome which no Member State can achieve alone.

In general terms, this new commitment would:

- build on an assessment of the situation of migrants in the Member States, including the current and future needs and skills gaps;
- define a plan leading to a common understanding of the kind of immigration Europe needs and the accompanying measures required to ensure proper integration;
- set out common measures on how to effectively tackle illegal immigration, addressing both new arrivals and illegal migrants already present in the EU;
- ensure genuine and efficient coordination and information between Member States as regards major decisions in the immigration field, particularly regularisation measures and measures to tackle illegal immigration;
- ensure policy consistency: all policy fields need to contribute and work in complementing each other to face common challenges; both national and EU levels and different sectorial policies;

- continue the process of linking the EU immigration policy with the external agenda, including development.

In practical terms, it would:

- see the Member States and the European institutions working in **partnership and transparency**, based on **mutual solidarity and burden sharing** through an efficient and focused pooling of resources;
- turn the need for coherence and solidarity into **common rules and principles**;
- implement the initiatives planned in the context of the Employment Strategy, and the Open Method of Coordination on Social Inclusion, Social Protection and Health Care, as well as within non-discrimination policies, to reinforce coherence between these policies.
- provide **objectives and quantifiable indicators** to allow for regular evaluation of the impact of measures adopted;
- lay the foundations for **improved cooperation** among Member States' administrations by making best use of available funds and technology;
- encourage Member States to further enhance their action towards improving the labour market situation of migrants through Cohesion Policy.

The Commission is ready to make proposals to develop and implement this new commitment by the end of the first semester of 2008, to be considered and agreed by the European Council at its meeting in December 2008.