



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

**A COMMON IMMIGRATION POLICY FOR EUROPE:
Principles, actions and tools
[COM (2008) 359]**

The issue of immigration has come closer to the fore of European discussion and priorities over the past years. It featured in the Tampere European Council of 1999, and more recently in The Hague Programme of 2004 and in the adoption of the Global Approach to Migration of 2005. The European Council of December 2007 paved the way, and also asked for a Comprehensive EU Immigration Policy. The current French Presidency of the Council has also listed a common immigration policy as one of its main priorities.

The policy must be contextualized within a number of challenges facing the European Union. An impact assessment carried out by the Commission Services¹ identifies a number of them:

- the issue of a decreasing and ageing EU population;
- labour and skill shortages in some sectors;
- insufficient integration of legal migrants;
- the pressure of constant illegal immigration;
- insufficient partnership with third countries;
- insufficient adaptation of border management and visa policy in a globalised world; and
- a lack of cooperation between Member States on migration governance.

Through this Communication, the European Commission is calling on the Member States to adopt ten general principles:

1. Have clear, transparent and fair rules to promote legal immigration and strive for a common visa policy to ensure a level-playing field;
2. Work towards and invest in more efficient structures that would match the available skills (including those of third-country nationals who are economically inactive) with current needs and provide real alternatives to illegal employment;
3. Improve integration on various fronts (including access to health care and social security for legal immigrants and assess legislation related to family reunification) and continue to develop the humanitarian tradition of hosting refugees and persons in need of protection;
4. Strengthen a high level of political and operational solidarity, mutual trust and transparency among others, set up mechanisms to monitor the impact of national measures, develop interoperable systems and work towards allowing the EU to speak with a common voice;
5. Make better use of, and adapt, the current financial instruments available, taking into account the external borders of certain Member States and the challenges that they face;

¹ SEC (2008) 2026



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6. Work on closer partnerships with third-countries, including providing real possibilities for circular migration and social security coordination;
7. Establish a visa policy that allows a four-tier approach to checks carried out at each stage when immigrants are traveling to the EU, create uniform European Schengen visas, make the issuance of visas possible through Common Consular Centres representing more or all Member States, explore a system of prior electronic authorisation;
8. While maintaining the integrity of the Schengen area (that is, no internal border controls), strengthen the management of the external borders by reinforcing Frontex, integrate the various different systems in operation, build on the European Border Surveillance System, cooperate with third countries at a European level, support the build-up of border control capacity and develop new burden-sharing mechanisms, and develop a one-stop-shop for land borders that would integrate an individual Member State's authorities to conduct only one check on travellers;
9. Combat illegal and undeclared employment and protect and support victims of human trafficking;
10. Make return policies effective and sustainable by, among others, avoiding indiscriminate large-scale regularizations, ensure full mutual recognition of return decisions, strengthen practical cooperation between Member States and take steps to ensure that all third countries comply with the obligation to accept readmission of their own nationals.

The Communication places an emphasis on coordinated and coherent action both by the EU and its Member States across many levels, and the need to develop a common methodology across the EU and its Member States. It also highlights the point that immigration issues should be taken into consideration in all other policies.

Supplementary documentation including the European Commission's Impact Assessment, its summary, and the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on A Common Immigration Policy for Europe: Principles, actions and tools (COM/2008/0359), are available at the following URL:

http://ec.europa.eu/prelex/detail_dossier_real.cfm?CL=en&DosId=197142

19th September 2008