

## **A Common Immigration Policy for Europe: Principles, actions and tools**

The need for a Common Immigration Policy is testified by the fact that 3.8% of the EU's population is made up of migrants and that immigration is necessary in view of demographic and economic considerations.

The Commission Communication proposes a policy based on 10 principles under 3 headings; these being Prosperity, Solidarity and Security.

The Prosperity heading encompasses three principles, namely:

1. To have clear rules and a level playing field;

Concrete actions envisaged under this principle include *defining clear and transparent rules for entry and residence; providing information to potential immigrants, such as the rights and the rules they would have to comply with; offering assistance in countries of origin and destination; and striving for a common visa policy.*

2. To match skills and needs;

The Commission is of the view that immigration for economic purposes would require a needs-based assessment of EU labour markets, whilst respecting Member States' right to determine volumes of admission.

Concrete actions envisaged under this principle include *making a comprehensive skills requirement assessment for Europe until 2020; developing national 'immigration profiles'; increasing the effectiveness of labour-matching policies and tools; analyzing the current scenario and trends vis-à-vis immigrant entrepreneurship; investing more into bringing into the workforce unemployed and economically inactive third country nationals and creating incentives for legal employment.*

3. To improve integration as a key to successful immigration;

The Commission considers integration a two-way process requiring efforts on the part of both host states and the immigrants.

In this area concrete measures envisaged include *strengthening the EU framework for integration; developing exchange of best practices; supporting the development of specific integration programmes for newly arrived immigrants; providing for diversity management and the work place and ensuring non-discriminatory access to health care and social protection.*

The Solidarity heading encompasses another three principles, namely:

4. Transparency, trust and cooperation;

The Commission considers that cooperation should be enhanced by concrete actions, which include *strengthening information sharing and exchange of best practices; setting up mechanisms with a view to monitor the impact of national immigration measures on other Member States and pooling technical means.*

5. Efficient and coherent use of available means;

The Commission considers that solidarity should include a strong financial component taking into account the specific situation of the external borders of certain Member States.

In this regard, actions envisaged include *the strategic utilisation of existing Financial Instruments as a burden sharing mechanism; reviewing the Financial Instruments' distribution key so as to reflect increasing demands and new developments and improving coordination of activities funded through Community and national resources so as to avoid overlaps.*

6. Partnership with third countries;

The Commission considers that migration issues should be fully integrated in the Union's development cooperation and other external policies.

In this regard, concrete actions identified include *supporting third-countries in developing their national legislative framework and establishing immigration and asylum systems; reinforcing cooperation particularly with a view to mitigating brain drain and ensure that countries concerned comply with decent work standards among other measures; agreeing on mobility partnerships and cooperation on return issues; and providing real possibilities for circular migration by setting up legal and operational measures granting legal immigrants the right to priority access to further legal assistance in the EU.*

The Security heading encompasses the last four principles of the proposed Common Immigration Policy; these being:

7. A visa policy that serves the interests of Europe and its partners;

The Commission states that a Common Visa Policy should facilitate the entry of *bona fide* visitors, whilst enhancing security.

In this regard, concrete actions envisaged include *the establishment of a four-tiered approach whereby checks would be conducted at consulates, on arrival, inside the territory and on departure; replacing the current national Schengen visas by a uniform European Schengen visa; issuing visas at Common Consular Centres and exploring the possibility of introducing electronic travel authorisation before leaving for the Union's territory.*

8. Integrated border management;

The Commission considers that the integrated border management of the European Union should be strengthened.

In this regard actions envisaged include *reinforcing the operational dimension of Frontex; developing an integrated approach and to enhance the use of new technologies; developing a coordinated approach in cooperation with third countries and supporting the build-up interoperable capacity of Member States for border control through extended means of European financial solidarity. This would include the development of operational burden-sharing mechanisms to support Member States facing recurrent and massive arrivals of illegal immigrants.*

9. Stepping up the fight against illegal immigration and zero tolerance for trafficking in human beings;

The Commission is of the view that the EU and the Member States should develop a coherent policy in relation to the fight against illegal migration and human trafficking.

In this regard the actions envisaged include *providing appropriate financial and human resources to investigate smuggling and trafficking; involve workers' and employers' representatives in fighting undeclared and illegal work; facilitating exchange of good practices; increased use of biometrics in fighting illegal immigration and human trafficking and strengthening the existing legal framework on combating the facilitation of illegal entry and stay.*

*Actions would also be taken to safeguard victims of human trafficking.*

10. Effective and sustainable return policies.

The Commission considers that effective return policies are prerequisite to an effective illegal immigration policy.

In this regard, actions envisaged include *strengthening the role of Frontex in relation to joint return operations by air; devising measures to facilitate the identification of undocumented returnees; taking steps to ensure that all third countries comply with the obligation to accept readmission of their own nationals and considering the introduction of a European laissez-passer to facilitate the return of undocumented migrants.*

Finally, the Commission invites the European Council to endorse the proposed common principles on which the Common Immigration Policy would be built.

Joseph St John  
Director  
Policy Development  
Ministry of Justice & Home Affairs