

**BELGIAN EU PRESIDENCY
IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM
Programme**

INTRODUCTION

The Belgian Presidency will ensure the continuity of the work initiated by the Spanish Presidency, in close collaboration with the European Commission and the European Parliament. The effective implementation of the multi-annual Stockholm Programme (2010-2014) will be the connecting thread of the Presidency.

The Belgian Presidency will focus on the ongoing development of a genuine common asylum and immigration policy, with a clear focus on responsibility and solidarity.

The main priorities of Belgium with regard to asylum and immigration run along three main axes:

- The development of the second phase of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) by 2012, which ensures effective access to asylum procedures and provides a high level of protection to those in need, in accordance with the Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees and the relevant international instruments, while paying attention to fair and effective procedures capable of fighting abuse.
- The development of a common policy on legal migration that is beneficial to the country of origin, the host country as well as the migrant him- or herself, based on the labour markets needs of the Member States.
- The fight against trafficking in human beings and illegal immigration, in particular through the improvement of the external border management.

ASYLUM

The establishment of a Common European Asylum System (CEAS) by 2012 which, among other things, seeks to establish a common asylum procedure and a uniform status for people found to be in need of international protection, is the top priority for Belgium. Respect for fundamental rights, effective access to asylum procedures and high protection standards in accordance with the Geneva Convention and other relevant international instruments are of prime importance. Compliance with the EU asylum acquis, as an essential condition for a genuine European asylum system based on mutual trust, is also considered very important by the Belgian Presidency.

Belgium will very actively continue the debate on common standards for providing international protection (recast proposal for the **Qualification Directive**) which, among other things, should lead to the harmonisation for the grounds of protection and to a further approximation of the international protection statuses.

The discussions on the recast proposal for the **Dublin Regulation**, determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection, and on the **Eurodac Regulation** will both be advanced as far as possible.

The Presidency will also continue the discussions on the Commission proposal to extend the scope of the **Long-Term Residents Directive** to all beneficiaries of international protection, with a view to reaching a political agreement.

In addition to this, Belgium will continue the technical discussions on the recast proposal of the **Asylum Procedures Directive** in order to come to common and more coherent standards for asylum procedures.

The technical discussions on the recast proposal for the **Reception Conditions Directive**, which aims to further harmonise the reception systems and to offer better guarantees and legal security to asylum seekers, will be continued in the second half of 2010.

Particular attention will continue to go to the further reinforcement of **practical cooperation**, for example by striving for a rapid operationalisation of the European Asylum Support Office which will be based in Malta.

Belgium wishes to initiate a general discussion on the strategy to be followed for establishing the CEAS by 2012 at the Informal Council of 15-16 July, which will focus on *'How to reach a Common European Asylum System by 2012'*.

The Presidency will, in collaboration with the Member States, the European institutions, civil society and the UN Agency for Refugees (UNHCR) organise a Ministerial Conference in Brussels on 13-14 September dedicated to the quality and efficiency of the asylum policy (*'Quality and Efficiency in the Asylum Process'*), which will be a complement of the work on legislative harmonisation.

IMMIGRATION

Legal migration

The programme of the Belgian Presidency as regards legal migration - one of its main priorities - will follow the implementation of the Stockholm Programme. Belgium will put special emphasis on the promotion of well-managed legal migration that benefits the country of origin, the host country as well as the migrants themselves, and is based on the labour markets needs of the Member States.

The Belgian Presidency will continue to work on the legal instruments provided in the Commission's Action Plan on legal migration of 2005.

It will attach great importance to completing the negotiations on the Directive on a single application procedure for **a single permit** for third-country nationals to reside and work in the territory of a Member State and on a common set of rights for third-country workers legally residing in a Member State.

It will start negotiations on the last two Directives concerning the conditions of admission and residence for **seasonal workers** and for **Intra-Corporate Transferees**.

Progress in the negotiations on these issues should, over time, help to start a genuine evaluation of the entire set of texts adopted on the matter and give Europe a new impetus for migration matters, which is especially important given the

demographic challenges against the 2020 horizon. Migration in the context of an ageing population will be the central theme of a conference of experts which will focus on legal migration and its different aspects: demographical, economical, political and external.

Integration of third country nationals

Common action at the EU level on the integration of third country nationals already led to the creation of a precise framework and to a set of instruments for reinforcing and supporting the implementation of the policies in this area by the Member States.

Belgium will focus on an effective integration policy, which is necessary in order to ensure that the advantages of immigration bring maximum benefit both the host society and the migrant him- or herself.

An expert conference will be organised to stimulate the discussion on European integration modules that can serve as references for the introduction to the host society and language training, involvement in the host society, the participation of migrants in local life and other aspects of the integration process.

Fight against illegal immigration and border management

The Belgian Presidency will continue to work on the fight against illegal immigration along the lines of the Stockholm Programme.

Belgium will continue to develop an effective readmission policy with full respect for fundamental rights, which entails the implementation of existing readmission agreements, the conclusion of new agreements and the evaluation of the existing agreements.

The Belgian Presidency will continue to work on the development of an integrated EU border management and promote an active cooperation between the Member States, FRONTEX and other EU agencies and institutions.

Belgium will continue the legislative negotiations for the reinforcement of the role of FRONTEX, in light of the evaluations. It will do the same for the proposal to amend the regulation concerning the immigration liaison officers network.

Unaccompanied third-country minors

Belgium will give particular attention to the issue of unaccompanied third-country minors. It will work along the lines of the action plan on unaccompanied third-country minors which calls for a comprehensive approach uniting protection and prevention measures, collaboration with third countries and the search for sustainable solutions, and which must be guided by the principle of the best interest of the child. A seminar will be organised to allow experts to exchange and promote best practices on the matter.

Visas

With regard to the visa policy, Belgium will give priority to the deployment of the VIS, in function of its state of development. The Visa Information System should improve the implementation of the common visa policy, enhance internal security, facilitate the application of the Dublin Regulation and support border control. This deployment will require closer local consular cooperation, in particular by establishing common centres for issuing visas.

EXTERNAL DIMENSION OF ASYLUM AND IMMIGRATION

The asylum and migration issues are inextricably linked with the external policy of the European Union. Solidarity with third countries of both origin and transit is central to this issue.

The Belgian Presidency wishes to continue the implementation of the various instruments of the global approach to migration. The setting up of migration missions to third countries along the prioritised migration routes is an important tool for coming to a migration dialogue with third countries. Therefore, migration missions to Ukraine (September) and Cameroon (December) have been planned for the second half of 2010. The mobility partnerships will also be implemented and evaluated further.

With regard to asylum, the establishment of a joint EU Resettlement Programme and the further development of regional protection programmes remain points of attention for the Presidency. An extension of the regional protection programmes (RPP's) has been planned for the second half of 2010 (especially in the Horn of Africa, Libya and Afghanistan).

The various processes concerning migration and development will also be of particular importance. A high level meeting has therefore been planned within both the Rabat/Paris process and the EU-LAC migration dialogue.

The preparation of the next EU-Africa Summit in Libya next November, and in particular the Migration, Mobility and Employment aspect, will have the Presidency's full attention, as will the preparation of the third Euro-African Ministerial conference on migration and development which will take place in 2011.

The reinforcement of the cooperation on migration with the US and Russia remains a priority.

AGENDA

- 15-16 July 2010: Informal JHA Council
- 13-14 September 2010: Ministerial Conference on Asylum: Quality and Efficiency in the Asylum Process
- 29 September 2010: Conference European Migration Network (EMN): Longitudinal follow-up of immigrant trajectories
- 7-8 October 2010: JHA Council
- October 2010: EU-US JHA Ministerial meeting
- 18-19 October 2010: Conference on the fight against the trafficking in human beings in light of the 4th EU Anti-Trafficking Day
- 8-9 November 2010: JHA Council
- 9-10 November 2010: EU-RUSSIA Permanent Partnership Council (PPC) (JHA)
- 23-24 November 2010: EU-Western Balkans JHA Ministerial meeting
- 26 November 2010: High-level experts conference on legal migration : Legal Migration in view of the demographic challenges
- 2-3 December 2010: JHA Council
- December 2010: Seminar on unaccompanied minors : Minors travelling alone
- 15-16 December 2010: Conference integration: Integration modules