



**Informal Meeting of Justice and Home Affairs Ministers
Dresden, 14 – 16 January 2007**

Plenary session III.2 – Monday, 15 January 2007, 16:30 – 18:30 hrs

Topic

Initiative concerning the European migration policy

Context

1. Increasing globalization has led to a growth in migration, affecting all states worldwide and Europe in particular. In its conclusions of December 2006 the European Council emphasized the importance of this issue and drew attention to the challenges and chances associated with it. It is very unlikely that the migratory pressure on Europe will decrease. To the contrary, it is to be expected that migration movements across the EU's external borders in southern and south-eastern Europe (Canary Islands, Lampedusa, Malta) will increase.
The challenges presented by migration are at the very top of the political agenda throughout Europe, and they are also a top priority of the European Union (cf. Council conclusion of 15 Dec 2006). To control and limit immigration is a prerequisite for stability and hence is in the interest of all EU Member States. This is indispensable for safeguarding social cohesion.
2. In view of the internal market and a growth in the movement of goods and persons in Europe, the acts of one Member State in the management of migration, visas and asylum can create conditions which have a direct impact on the others. Member states and the Commission must therefore be prepared to adapt the European immigration policy to current requirements at any time. Member States must therefore commit to intensify their cooperation at European level and make such cooperation even more effective. In their efforts to manage migration at EU and national levels, Member States must inform, consult and support each other. Action to this effect should include conducting a joint analysis of migration movements as well as reaching agreement on those priorities that can best be coordinated at EU level.
3. Against this background, on 30 November 2006 British Home Secretary John Reid wrote to the Finish EU Presidency also on behalf of France, Italy, Poland, Spain and Germany

and submitted a joint paper which proposes closer cooperation of EU states in matters related to migration policy. This initiative, which was proposed by Germany and France at the meeting of justice and home affairs ministers in Stratford-upon-Avon on 25 October 2006, aims at strengthening the cooperation between EU Member States in managing and controlling migration and defining objectives, principles and priorities of a common migration policy.

4. Key elements of the initiative

The joint paper deals with illegal immigration, returns and external borders, relations with third countries and co-development as well as cooperation regarding asylum. The paper proposes that the European migration policy should focus on the following issues:¹

- Establishing close European cooperation in the fight against illegal migration, especially with regard to return measures and border protection; strengthening of FRONTEX; containing fraudulent visa applications filed in several Schengen states and reducing secondary migration into the EU; improving information sharing between EU states; close cooperation between consulates of Schengen states; making more extensive use of biometrics in the visa issuing procedure
- Agreeing on bilateral partnerships between EU Member States and third countries based on a model treaty; concluding robust readmission agreements (Cotonou agreement) and exchange of best practices; promoting temporary and circular migration as instruments of migration and development policy to tackle the root causes of migration and flight; on a voluntary basis, introducing national quotas that are to be reported to the Commission; supporting the integration of migrants into the labour market of their home country after their return; taking action to contain the brain drain from countries of origin
- Promoting information sharing between asylum authorities with a view to streamlining asylum procedures; reducing asylum shopping; evaluating the first phase of asylum instruments.

¹ With regard to the following items, see also the conclusions of the European Council of 15 December 2006, paragraph 24, letters a, b, c and f.

Proposal on how to proceed

- Discussion and specification of priorities of a European immigration policy with a view to concluding a European pact for a common policy in the area of immigration control emphasising the interdependence of migration and development. Measures to promote circular migration could serve as an incentive for developing countries to accept readmission agreements.
- Once the Member States have come to a consensus on priorities and aims, the Commission should be required to see to their implementation and draw up a model agreement for partnership agreements.

Questions

- *What is the general view on the above-mentioned initiative in the light of the current migration situation and in view of the conclusions of the European Council?*
- *What do you think of the idea of circular migration? What would be suitable instruments to promote circular migration if the Member States retain competence and responsibility for labour migration? What is your experience with circular migration measures? Can you give examples?*
- *What do you think of the proposal to conclude partnership agreements between EU states and third countries? How could a specimen partnership agreement look like? What aspects should be taken into account?*