



CONCLUSIONS

shaping migration strategies

European Parliament
Brussels, 20th September 2007

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patterns - practices - policies



Looking at the conference 'Shaping Migration Strategies' through the eyes of the hosting Members of Parliament and the chairman of the day Prof. De Ruijter brings us to the heart of the matter.



"We have to look at immigration as enrichment and an inescapable phenomenon of today's world, not as a threat," Commissioner Frattini said. The top justice official made this declaration during the conference 'Shaping Migration Strategies' organised by EQUAL project partners and four members of the European Parliament.

Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Vladimír Špidla outlined that „Fortress Europe does not exist in reality and does not exist in our projects. Migrants are an opportunity and a challenge“. In this sense, Commissioner Špidla added that „investing in human beings is the key of the future of the social and economic Europe“.



MAIN MESSAGES

- MIGRATION is a not a threat, but an opportunity for all.
- STRATEGIES in the involved policy area's - development, employment, justice, human rights, foreign affairs - are at the moment competing instead of cooperating. Political will is needed to strive for more cohesion.
- SHAPING EXPERIMENTS are needed now - after years of discussions - more or less future migration flows and effects are known. It is time for action.

Dirk van den Boom underlined that experiences from the field agree with Commissioner Frattini's statement: „We have to look at immigration as an enrichment and as an inescapable phenomenon of today's world, not as a threat. It is time for action“.

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patterns - practices - policies

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Participation is the key to successful migration; work is the key to participation



Ruud Lubbers, former Dutch Prime Minister and High Commissioner of the United Nations Refugee Agency, said during the conference that “participation is the key factor of migration, not integration.”

The urgency of approaching migration differently is evident. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, liberal Member of the European Parliament and co-host of the conference, said that “it cannot be ignored that the reality of ageing and demographic changes will necessitate rethinking migration policies. Considering current migration flows, the decline in the EU working age population will entail a fall of about 20 million employed people between 2010 and 2030. Therefore, an EU common policy towards migration will be of crucial importance the coming years”.

Participation as a key concept and our European increasing necessity for workers show the long-term value of lessons learned within the EQUAL-framework. Unfortunately we have not yet shaped the circumstances under which we can profit ideally of these lessons. “Taking into account the speeches and discussions presented during the conference and the results of all different EQUAL-projects reached under different national circumstances one thing is clear to me”, said Prof. de Ruijter, “and that is that we are still undermining our economic and social potential with restrictive policies.”

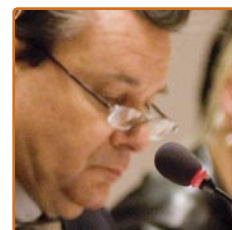


Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert added the speech of Mr Van den Boom showed us very distinctively and rightly so that we are talking and discussing about policies and situations which affect the lives of individuals, their whole being. While working on migration policies we should

realise that there is always a story such as the one of Abdul, Fatima or Aisha behind it, being affected by it.

Coherence is still essential

It cannot be emphasized enough. All speakers have mentioned the subject in one way or the other. Within a topic as wide as migration, coherence is essential on many levels. Prof. De Ruijter emphasized what he had seen: “Shaping Migration Strategies has been a display of both efforts of and current limitations to coherence. Different policy areas involved (development, employment, justice, human rights, foreign affairs and more) are often competing. Different levels of governance are producing counter-productive policies.”



Mrs Jean Lambert saw a silver lining during the conference: “I was very encouraged to see both Commissioner Spidla and Commissioner Frattini there. This is a very rare sight and signals that, at last, we are moving away from seeing migration as a question of legality and criminality in the context of Home Affairs and starting to recognise that migrants are people with another „identity“ as an essential part of our societies. I hope that this presages a close working relationship between the two DGs”.

While coherence is often lacking Members of Parliament were encouraged and impressed by enormous response manifested in the room being filled with people from many types of organisations but all feeling the sense of urgency of exchanging ideas and best practices on migration on a European level. Coherence may be difficult to achieve, but during the conference real exchange was established between different activities all over Europe, between different and often isolated policy areas and between European, regional and local level.

Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert saw this involvement in the

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audience which links policy to practice: “The sense of urgency is finally expressed in actual policy proposals as can be derived from all the different proposals from the European Commission now being discussed by the European Parliament and the Council which were mentioned during the conference. Many proposals on asylum policies were mentioned, for those who have an international right to claim asylum. Within the Global Approach on Migration as communicated by the Commission, many proposals on all different elements of migration are being prepared, discussed or implemented. The bigger picture is emerging and is being filled in through different proposals: time for action! The real problem, as mentioned by several speakers at the conference, lies with the Member States. Through clinging on to their national points of view and because of fear for the next election results or the paper headlines, they slow down the process of doing what has been agreed years ago: developing a European migration policy.”

NEXT STEPS

Immediately after the conference Members of Parliament spoke on next steps, for Europe as well as in their own activities.



Jean Lambert: “We shall see how Parliament reacts to this in its handling of the dossiers relating to employment and migrant workers and I would hope for close co-operation on this. One of the criticisms, for example, of the proposal for a Directive concerning penalties for employers employing those without the correct papers is that it creates different penalties for exploitation of third-country nationals compared to EU nationals. Hopefully, we will see a drawing together of these two groups and a potential for greater social solidarity. I shall be following such issues closely.”

Also Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert has concrete plans and expectations for the next months: “Mr Frattini and his team are working very hard on producing directives and proposals forming a package of migration policies, the Global Approach on Migration. In the next months a few very directives will be presented by the Commission, such as the one on the blue card for highly skilled immigrants. The European Parliament as a co-legislator has an important role in this process. As the migration spokesperson for the ALDE (liberal group) I for example participated in the complex but successful negotiations on the directive for return of illegal immigrants.”

On elements some of the key participants have seen essential input for next steps. Prof. de Ruijter sees a need for more efforts in the field of circular migration, as an only way of reaching complementary results for both Europe and developing countries. “Only circular migration can transform the brain-drain of bringing more and more highly-skilled from developing countries into a brain-gain.” Jean Lambert saw another point of coherence action towards development policy: “In terms of the experience gained on the issue of prepared return, I will work to see how we can best integrate this in to our Development policy and, again, remove it from the sphere of Home Affairs.”

Finally, directly connected to EQUAL next steps have to be taken. Lambert: “I think there is a challenge to us as Parliamentarians and to practitioners to ensure that we do not lose the valuable expertise and experience gained through the EQUAL programme. I shall urge the Employment and Social Affairs Committee to raise this directly with the Commission.”

Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert added: Good policy can never come about without the experiences of the people in the field. Especially in an area in which humanity is so important as is the case in the field of migration. So I would like to call on everybody present at the conference to let us, policy makers on a more abstract level, know what is needed, as you did during this conference.”