

shaping migration strategies

patterns - practices - policies

PRESS RELEASE

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MIGRATION ENRICHES EU; PARTICIPATION IS KEY

„The EU needs to become more attractive to attract high skilled workers. We will present (in November) a blue card to allow these workers to work and move to another European member State without any bureaucratic barrier“ the EU Justice Commissioner, Franco Frattini, stated today at a migration conference in the European Parliament in Brussels.

The top justice official made these declarations during the conference ‚Shaping Migration Strategies‘ organised by EQUAL project partners, this morning, one month before the tabling of new initiatives to create a harmonised European system for applying for work permits.

„We have to look at immigration as enrichment and an inescapable phenomenon of today’s world, not as a threat,“ Commissioner Frattini said. „We should take more account of what statistics tell us - 85% of unskilled labour goes to the EU and only 5% to the US, whereas 55% of skilled labour goes to the US and only 5% to the EU. We have to reverse these figures with a new vision and become more attractive for highly skilled workers“, he added.

With the creation of a blue card, Mr. Frattini hopes to reverse those figures by creating EU harmonised migration policies that will allow in millions of extra workers of all abilities. „All skill levels are required. The challenge is to attract the workers needed to fill specific gaps,“ Frattini said.

Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Vladimir 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“.

Ruud Lubbers, former Dutch Prime Minister and High Commissioner of the United Nations Refugee Agency, said during the conference that „integration is a key factor of migration. The only way to integrate is by participating actively“. He recognised that „participation is not always easy“.

Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, MEP (ALDE, NL), co-hosting the conference in the Parliament, 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“.

The conference took place one month before the European Commission plans to issue two legislative proposals on legal migration. Based on EQUAL projects with regard to migrants and asylum seekers on the labour market, Members of the European Parliament and the public discussed how these experiences could contribute to the European Migration Policy.

The conference was organised by EQUAL projects and enjoyed the support of the following MEPs: Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert (ALDE, NL), Ole Christensen (PES, DK), Ewa Klant (EPP-ED, DE) and Jean Lambert (Greens, UK).

EQUAL is part of the European Union’s strategy for more and better jobs and for ensuring that no citizen is denied access. Funded by the European Social Fund since 2001, this initiative has been developing new ways of tackling discrimination and inequality experienced by those who work and those who are looking for a job.