

SOCIAL AGENDA

Migration: the changing face of Europe



At the recent Spring European Summit, heads of state and government underlined the importance of immigration and the impact it has on European societies and the EU economy.

Immigration contributes greatly to the prosperity of the EU – and demand for immigration is set to increase in the years to come. Immigrants contribute to the economic development of Member States as tax payers and consumers; they also help alleviate demographic decline and labour shortages.

But migration is not without its challenges. The social situation of immigrants is often not what it should be and they frequently face high risks of unemployment and poverty. And in many countries integration is difficult, with discrimination and exclusion remaining major challenges.

Migration is a complex topic with many different facets. To respond to the range of challenges related to migration, the EU is in need of a common voice and a common set of instruments. In December 2007, the European Council explicitly requested a renewed political commitment for further developing a comprehensive European migration policy based on common political principles and on a genuine partnership with countries of origin and transit of immigrants. On the basis of this mandate, the Commission prepared a Communication proposing a set of basic common principles and measures organised

around three policy pillars: prosperity, solidarity and security. The Communication addresses legal immigration, integration, visas, border control and management, illegal immigration, trafficking of human beings, undeclared work and relationship with third-countries. It deals with the necessity to increase coordination between different levels of governance and between different policy areas involved in migration management. It also argues that the integration of legal immigrants needs to be improved by strengthened efforts from host Member States and contributions from the immigrants themselves.

In this edition's "Special feature", which begins on page 14, we take a

Immigrants contribute to the economic development of Member States as tax payers and consumers.

close look at the issue of migration – the employment and social policy dimension

and the policy initiatives that are being taken at EU level. Migration is also the topic of this issue's interview, which is a double interview this time. We get the viewpoint of both sides of industry – John Monks from the European Trade Union Confederation and Philippe de Buck of BUSINESSEUROPE.

Immigration is certainly not a substitute for structural reform. However, if it is well-managed, it can play an important role in alleviating the effects of demographic ageing and help European societies to better manage labour and skills shortages.

Nikolaus G. van der Pas



Special feature

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INTERNATIONAL EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL ISSUES

- 17 April:

Commissioner Vladimír Špidla travelled to Mexico to start a new EU-Mexico dialogue on employment and social policy. The two sides will share knowledge and experience on common challenges such as combating poverty and improving social cohesion. It is the first time the EU and Mexico have extended cooperation to the social field and is a follow-up to the Association Agreement concluded in 1997.

- 16 April:

The Commission launched a new structured policy dialogue with Brazil on social policies. The two sides will share knowledge on legislation, policies and programmes so as to improve social cohesion.

- 11 April:

A major new study entitled 'Is social Europe fit for globalisation?' was presented by the Commission. The study stressed that the European social model is more valid than ever, but needs to get in better shape to take on the challenges posed by globalisation. The results of the study were subsequently discussed at a high-level conference in Brussels on 16 April on the social implications of globalisation and how to turn it into an opportunity for the European Union.

EMPLOYMENT AND EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

- 29 February:

The Joint Employment Report was adopted by employment ministers. The report shows that employment growth has been impressive over the last year. Almost 6.5 million new jobs were created during the last two years and another 5 million jobs are forecast by 2009. Unemployment in the EU is expected to fall to under 7% in 2008, the lowest level since the mid-1980s. The Report – which assesses Member States'

implementation of their national reform programmes in the area of employment – is strongly upbeat. But it also points to a number of ongoing areas for concern, notably youth unemployment and under-investment in education and training.



- 30 January:

The Commission formally accepted an application from Portugal for assistance under the European Globalisation adjustment Fund (EGF). If approved by the Budgetary Authority, the €2.4 million requested will help 1,549 redundant workers in the automotive sector in Portugal to get back into employment.

- 13 December 2007:

The Commission formally accepted an application from Malta for assistance under the EGF. If approved by the Budgetary Authority, the €681,000 will help 675 redundant workers in the textiles sector back into employment.

WORK ORGANISATION, WORKING CONDITIONS AND SOCIAL DIALOGUE

- 3 April:

The Commission called on national governments to take urgent action to improve the situation of posted workers – temporarily posted by their employers to another Member State – through better cooperation between national administrations. The Recommendation sets out a series of concrete actions to remedy shortcomings in the way the existing legislation is implemented, applied and enforced. It calls in particular for more effective exchange of information, better access to information and exchange of best practice. The initiative comes as a follow-up to the Commission's June 2007 Communication on posting of workers.

- 13 March:

The Tripartite Social Summit took place in Brussels. European Commission President José Manuel Barroso and Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša – current President of the European Council – discussed with high-level employers' and workers' representatives the progress made under the EU's Growth and Jobs Strategy. The leaders of EU institutions and social partners also addressed the priorities for the next three-year cycle of the Lisbon Strategy, the social consequences of climate change and energy dependency as well as topics on the social dialogue agenda for the coming months.

- 20 February:

The Commission invited trade unions' and employers' representatives to help improve the role of European Works Councils (EWCs) in consulting and informing employees. EWCs currently operate in 820 major companies across the EU, covering some 14.5 million employees. The second stage consultation gave social partners the opportunity to start negotiations on updating and improving the way the bodies operate, with a view to revising the existing legislation.

PROMOTING AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

- 28 April:

The European Commission presented a report which stated that demands for and costs of long-term care provision in the EU would rise significantly by 2050. It also said that the vast majority of Europeans (almost nine out of ten) favour home- or community-based care over care in an institutional setting. The projected growth in demand for long-term care services presents a major challenge for national governments. But the report underlined the fact that Member States are striving to guarantee access for all to quality care by providing adequate resources to meet this demand.

- 17 March:

A survey presented by the Commission showed that older people in Europe are vulnerable to poor treatment, neglect and abuse. According to the survey, almost half (47%) of people across the EU consider the phenomenon to be widespread in their country – and the challenge is only likely to increase with demographic ageing.



- 4 March:

The second meeting of the European Forum for the Rights of the Child took place in Brussels. It addressed the issue of an alert mechanism for missing children and child poverty, with special attention to the situation of Roma children. One child in five in Europe lives at risk of poverty.

- 29 January:

A new report released by the Commission confirmed that Institutional care for people with disabilities in Europe continues to fall short of acceptable standards in many cases. The report recommends a wider use of good-quality, community-based services, which offer people a better quality of life, without necessarily costing more. Well over one million disabled people still live in some form of institutional care in Europe today and conditions in these places can vary greatly (see article page 9).

- 22 January:

Two new independent studies showed that Supplementary pension schemes continue to pose obstacles to mobility for workers across Europe. The studies support the case for a Europe-wide initiative to improve people's access to supplementary

pension rights when changing jobs or working in another EU country (see article page 12).

GENDER EQUALITY

- 6 March:

A new Commission report showed that, despite recent progress, women in Europe are still shut out of top posts in both politics and business. Across the EU, 24% of parliamentarians are women – up from 16% a decade ago – with a similar proportion holding ministerial office. In the private sector, men still represent 9 out of 10 board members in top companies and two-thirds of company bosses. The report, “Women and men in decision-making 2007 – analysis of the situation and trends”, coincided with International Women's Day on 8 March.

- 23 January:

A report was adopted by the Commission that shows that women are continuing to drive employment growth in Europe, but still remain disadvantaged on the labour market in relation to men. Women now have higher educational attainment, but despite this they continue to be employed less and paid less than men.



Twenty-first century man

The role of men – particularly fathers – is changing and European work cultures are having to adapt

What does it mean to be a man today? Up to 50 years ago or so, the common image of men was fairly clear-cut: a strong, disciplinarian father who was the family's sole breadwinner. Men were not expected or encouraged to be involved in the day-to-day care of the house and children, which was seen as a woman's job.

But as the role of women in society changes – for instance in the world of work, in education and within the family – so too must the role of men. This is a side of the gender debate that is not touched upon as often however. Gender equality is frequently seen as synonymous with women's rights: When people talk about the fight for gender equality, they usually mean the fight for women's rights, in an overwhelmingly patriarchal society. But gender equality is a two-sided coin and is, or at least it should be, as much an issue for men as for women.

Looking after baby

In Europe, the dual-career household is increasingly becoming the norm. More and more women are working and moving into professions that, once upon a time,

were solely the domain of men. But while women's professional lives have changed considerably, the division of labour at home is still far from equal. We have, of course, moved on from the stereotype of the 1950s: women are no longer expected to be ready at the door with their husband's pipe and slippers when he comes home from the office! But nonetheless, studies show that, when childcare and domestic tasks are taken into account, European women work around 13 hours more per week than men.

Most women are – for obvious reasons – eager for this to change. But, perhaps more surprisingly, more and more men are too – especially when it comes to looking after children. Research carried out in the EU project 'Work Changes Gender' (see link at end of article) shows that male employees in European companies are increasingly family- and care-oriented.

One area in which this can be seen is parental leave. Although the number of women taking time out to look after their children is still far greater, a growing number of men now see this as a serious option. One such man is Keith

Pannett, a UK freelance writer who took a year off work after the birth of his first daughter. "At the time my wife's work situation was more stable than mine, so it made sense that I be the one to stay at home," he said. Being there for his daughter in her first months was invaluable, Mr. Pannett says, and has made their relationship stronger. "It was much more work than I'd imagined," he adds, "but it was very rewarding."

But statistics show that he is still very much in a minority. According to EU studies, 84% of men do not exercise their entitlement to parental leave. While most Member States have parental leave schemes with rights transferable between the mother and father, far fewer have paternity leave arrangements exclusively for fathers and not transferable to the mothers. On average, fathers are entitled to paternity leave between two and ten days, with some exceptions like Sweden (see below).

The same is true of part-time work and flexible working arrangements. EU reconciliation policies are in place to make it easier for both women and men to

strike a balance between their work and family lives. But the fact is that far more women than men make use of such arrangements. Part-time work too is predominantly taken up by women: 32.6% of women work part time, compared to only 7.4% of men.

Wilfried Dumoulin, a Belgian legal advisor in Brussels, decided to go part-time a few years ago when he and his wife started a family. He says that it has been an extremely positive experience and has brought him an equilibrium that he might not otherwise have had. Although he knows very few other men who work part-time, Mr. Dumoulin says that people are always very encouraging about his decision. "Many men say they would like to do the same thing, but that it just isn't possible."

Home vs. work

Victor Seidler, Professor of Social Theory at Goldsmiths College, University of London, echoes this viewpoint. "Men often feel torn between wanting to be more involved at home and the increasingly intense work cultures that don't always allow them to," he says.

Indeed, EU research shows a lot of very positive changes among men in some parts of Europe – their private wishes, obligations and attitudes are undergoing great change – but working life is not keeping pace. Professor Seidler points out that, although many companies tout their family friendly policies, the reality is that they aren't always particularly receptive. "To some extent it's just a question of branding... they don't necessarily practice what they preach." So while employers are getting better at accepting more flexible working patterns for women, men seeking the same would be – in many cases – putting their career on the line. "Very few companies would be happy about it," says Professor Seidler. "Some would tolerate it and others would make it clear that the man would be threatening his future career."



Pater familias: the role of men and women in the home has changed since the 1950s.

This is something that Mr. Pannett has first-hand experience of. After the year of parental leave, the freelance writer decided to go back to work part-time so he could continue to spend more time with his children. "Some companies were very good and accepted the fact that I wasn't available after a certain time during the day," he said. "Others weren't so good though. I actually lost a job once because the company expected me to put in a full day despite having agreed part-time hours – they told me that the demands of my family were not their concern."

Changing attitudes

But things could be changing. Although the major motivation behind increased involvement of fathers at home is a better balance between women and men's family responsibilities, companies are beginning to see that there might be something in it for them too. Research in Scandinavia has shown that men returning from parental leave have been found to express increased loyalty to their companies, resulting in higher retention and productivity. And studies in the US have shown that fathers who are very involved with their children's upbringing are more likely to thrive in their careers and are better at learning and mastering leadership skills. A study carried out by

US information technology company IBM, for example, found that the highest performers were more likely to focus on balancing work and family life than employees who performed at a lower level.

Attitudes towards gender stereotypes in general are also changing. "It's a generational thing," says Professor Seidler, "men who have grown up with mothers who were feminists will have different expectations of the role they will play at work and at home." He points out, however, that there are big differences between Member States – in particular between northern and southern Europe. Companies – and their general ethos – are evolving too. "Masculinities and work cultures have had to change because the skills we now

value in work have shifted more towards those traditionally seen as more female – for instance communication," Professor Seidler says.

The Nordic example

Scandinavia is frequently seen as a role model when it comes to men's participation in childrearing. The Nordic countries offer parental leave to both parents – and increasingly fathers are actively encouraged to take advantage of it. Sweden, for instance, is known for its 'daddy month' – a scheme that allows 60 days (it was originally one month, hence the name) of paid parental leave per child at 80% of normal salary. The country is now looking to positive incentives to encourage more fathers to take longer leave and is working on the introduction of an 'equality bonus' in 2008, which would provide parents with a tax allowance if they split their parental leave more evenly.

The European Union is increasingly focusing on the importance of men in the gender equality debate. The Roadmap for Equality between women and men, which was adopted in March 2006 for the period 2006-2010, underlines the importance of improving the reconciliation of work, private and family life for both women and men. Men, it stresses, should be

encouraged to be more involved in family responsibilities through incentives to take parental leave and paternity leave and to share leave entitlements with women.

The EU has also supported projects that promote a more active role for men in family life and caring roles. Fostering Caring Masculinities (FOCUS), for example, aims to examine and improve men's opportunities for balancing work and private/family life in order to encourage

and prepare them to take on more 'caring' tasks. Another EU-funded project is "Men equal, men different". The project aims to change gender stereotypes and promote increased male involvement in family life and child care as well as better reconciliation of work and family life.

One thing seems certain however: fathers who do opt to spend more time with their children, through parental leave or by working part-time, are invariably

extremely positive about it. "I feel that having that time together has brought us closer," says Mr. Pannett. "It is a decision I have never regretted."

Further information:

Work Changes Gender:

<http://www.work-changes-gender.org/>

FOCUS: <http://www.caringmasculinities.org/>

Men equal, men different:

<http://www.menequal.lv/eng/>

Combining the talents of men and women

Matti Härkönen's career has been more varied than most. He has worked as a sailor, a radio editor and a DJ. He ran his own company, and studied history for a while at university. But in his early 40s he found himself unemployed and direction-less. "I thought I was going nowhere," he recalls. "I had to make some major changes in my life. So I started my training as a nurse in 2002, and graduated in the summer of 2004."

Matti signed up for a project run by the Tampere Vocational Adult Education Centre – the second biggest adult training centre in Finland catering for 11,000 students annually – and supported by the European Union through the European Social Fund. "It was a whole new world for me, and it was a bit hard at first – a lot of the training took place right there in the real workplace." He is now employed by Tampere City Mission, running a day centre for older mentally handicapped people. "I find my job very challenging, but the main satisfaction comes from daily interaction with our customers – you can really feel you are doing very important work for people in need."

The project set out to promote gender equality by increasing the number of men working in traditionally female sectors such as social and health services. "I was very conscious of going into a mainly female working environment,"



admits Matti, who is married with four children. "But personally, I think both men and women should be nurses, teachers, doctors, priests, ministers and presidents – you name it. Both sexes have different strengths and different styles of doing things. In a field where the workforce is completely male or female, adding the other gender always brings better results. Women usually get the best out of men – and the other way around."

"I think that opportunities for men and women in the Finnish labour market are

relatively good if you compare them with many other countries in Europe – let alone other parts of the world – but they are still not adequate.

"I'm quite happy with the job and the responsibility I have," he adds. "My ambition is to understand better how mentally handicapped people age, and try to find new solutions for supporting their lives."

Project: Social and health care education for men

ESF priority area: equality.

Target group: adult men, who are motivated and who have ability to obtain the qualification (practical nurse) and to be employed.

Duration: 01.09.2002 - 31.07.2005

Budget: €27619,182

Number of participants: 33 in all, 27 obtained the qualification

Partners 18

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The plight of the children of The Social Care Home in Bulgaria was the subject of a TV documentary in the UK.

Institutional care – the only option?

The EU is looking at ways to make it possible for people with disabilities to live independently in the community

In late 2007, the UK's BBC2 broadcast a documentary about The Social Care Home, a children's care home in the Bulgarian village of Mogilino. The 90-minute programme, directed and produced by British film-maker Kate Blewett, looked at the lives of the home's children, many of whom had been born blind or deaf and were abandoned by their parents. Although most of these children came to the home when they were very young and generally healthy, after years of living in extremely bad conditions and suffering from malnutrition and neglect, many were virtually wasting away.

Today in Europe, well over one million disabled people still live in some form of institutional care. This care is often of an unacceptably poor quality and frequently represents a serious breach of internationally accepted human rights standards. But is institutional care the only option? Wouldn't it be better for people with disabilities to live independently, in their own home, supported by community services?

To get a better picture of the overall situation and help find solutions to some of the problems, the European Commission

recently financed a study on the development of services in the community for people with disabilities in Europe. The study – 'Deinstitutionalisation and Community Living – Outcomes and Costs' – was carried out by the University of Kent (Tizard Centre) and the London School of Economics.

The study concluded that providing services in the community is not more expensive than institutional care, once the needs of residents and the quality of care has been taken into account. It highlighted the issue of the time – and costs –

involved in the transition from institutionally-based systems of care to new models within the community and stressed the importance of European, national and regional governments working closely with disabled people and their families.

Making a difference

More concretely though, what can the EU – and the Commission – do to promote independent living and work to achieve real integration and inclusion of people with disabilities?

Development of anti-discrimination legislation and the adoption of policy guidelines providing for effective protection of disabled people, as well as support for national authorities' attempts to fight against the abuse of human rights, is one of the main areas where the EU can make a difference.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2006, constitutes a landmark for the European Community. For the first time ever, the European Community accedes to a comprehensive UN human rights convention. The Convention – which is a legally binding instrument – represents a significant change in approach in that it establishes disability as a human-rights issue and a matter of law and not just a social welfare issue. It clearly puts the individual at the centre of the debate and stresses the importance of independent living and inclusion in the community, as well as providing measures for the full implementation of this right. Consequently, the Convention can be seen as a benchmark for EU action.

Independent living relies on people having access to social services, including assistance at home, care for older people and child care. So EU actions that take into account disability promote good, affordable and accessible social services, and try to raise awareness throughout Europe about the issues at stake. To this end, the Commission every two years issues a public report that gives an overview of the overall situation for people with disabilities and sets up priorities for future action.

In 2005, this report – the Disability Action Plan 2006-2007 – focused on making it possible for people with disabilities to live independently, either alone or with family, rather than in closed institutions. One of the priorities in the report – promoting access to good-quality support and care services – particularly backs further action for the de-institutionalisation of disabled people placed in large residential institutions. The new Disability Action Plan 2008-2009 is continuing to push for active inclusion and ensuring the rights of people with disabilities.

ESF support

But policy priorities are no good without effective implementation and this can only happen with sufficient financial support. This is where the European Social Fund (ESF) comes in. The ESF supports, among other things, projects to promote independent living, in particular community-based services for people with disabilities near their place of residence, including rural areas (for example through staff training and modernising care systems). The Fund also supports the replacement of existing closed institutions with good-quality services and housing within local communities (so-called 'de-institutionalisation').

Luk Zelderloo, Secretary General of the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD), warns that "it is crucial that the European Community avoids structural funds being used for setting up and/or renovating large residential settings and that it includes this in the guidelines used by the Member States who are in charge of these funds." EASPD is of the opinion that choice is primordial and needs to be the starting point for independent living for people with disabilities. The main challenge for services is to adapt them to the real needs of people with disabilities. "The European Commission needs to further promote and include choice, community-based services and person-centred services," Mr. Zelderloo says.

It is possible to make a difference – and the BBC2 documentary is a testament to this. Since the first airing of the programme, the Bulgarian authorities have been looking for solutions: the children in the home in Mogilino have been assessed by a medical team and rehabilitation plans are being put together for each child. The challenge for the EU now will be to create services that strike a balance between security, freedom, independence and sustainability.

Further information:

Full text of study: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/index/7002_en.html)
UN Convention: (<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/documents/tccconve.pdf>)



ESF dough for bakery project helps jobseekers with disabilities

For people with disabilities, be they mental, physical or special educational needs, finding employment is often an uphill struggle causing unnecessary stress on top of the problems they already face. The European Union recognises the difficulties this target group faces on the labour market, and has therefore pinpointed them to receive training and co-funding through the European Social Fund (ESF). One project that has benefited from ESF co-funding is Job & Co-CBW in Ghent, Belgium.

Founded 20 years ago, Job & Co is an operation providing help to the unemployed through its training and guidance programmes (Job & Co-CBW); through employment with 'Con Brio' its cleaning business for bus shelters, churches, schools and companies; and through its social enterprise 'Duet', a catering and chocolate company. The scheme offers vocational training, both in-house and externally, tailored specifically to the client's needs.

Eddy, 27, was referred to Job & Co following a difficult employment history, marked by low self-esteem and short stays in jobs, resulting from his special educational needs. He took part in Job & Co's 'suitcase' project, aimed at young jobseekers aged up to 26, with an employment disability. The idea behind this project is that jobseekers arrive with a suitcase full of possibilities to be opened and explored, as well as added to with further options. Participants were offered approximately 500 hours of guidance before beginning specific training.

A key part of the Job & Co philosophy is taking the time to match the job perfectly to the client, improving the chances of success. Eddy had spent a number of years unsuccessfully searching for his place on the employment market, choosing jobs on a trial-and-error basis. Failing to stay in a job for a sustained period,



Eddy found himself in a negative spiral, lacking confidence in his own abilities and attitudes. The 'suitcase' project was able to change that, giving him the time to find his personal strengths and to try out a number of professions.

The scheme includes group sessions, which are important to see how well the clients express themselves as part of a group, as well as a variety of short work-experience trials. It became evident that Eddy was suffering from low self-esteem and had no clear view of his assets or of the opportunities open to him. With the support of the rest of the group and experience in different types of work, Eddy was able to overcome these problems and to take the next steps towards employment.

Eddy's first choice was an apprenticeship with a supermarket, but after an extended trial period, he realised that this was not for him. He then decided to train with Job & Co's in-house bakery, and has really found his place there. "It's because I feel at home," Eddy explains as he kneads bread, "I do better here."

Job & Co's staff members do everything possible to help their clients feel at ease in the work environment, but are fully aware that they are there to act as a stepping-stone to the world of employment. Rik, who has been training bakers since the project opened, says, "It's great that they feel at home, but we have to be careful that this enhances their eagerness and motivation to pursue employment rather than resulting in them feeling comfortable and not wanting to leave."

To facilitate a smooth transition into the workplace, Job & Co provides support throughout both internal and external training. Eddy is currently taking his first apprenticeship in an outside bakery, but continues to receive training from Rik and encouragement from his job coach Gabriele. He will then

hopefully continue his progression with further apprenticeships before finding a full-time job as a baker.

Those who have followed his progress are thrilled by the changes that they see in Eddy. Gabriele speaks of how with this apprenticeship: "After eight years, he has met an employer who sees that he is someone who wants to work. He's very open now and has a realistic target; he feels appreciated." Eddy himself explains that his plans for the future are "to carry on getting better as a baker, especially to become as good as possible at making pastries." He thanks Gabriele and Job & Co for having opened his eyes to his own abilities and to the profession that he has come to love.

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Thinking ahead: mobility is on the rise, particularly among young Europeans, so supplementary pensions are increasingly important to people's retirement plans.

Changing jobs? What about your pension?

The EU is working to make it easier to move between jobs or Member States without losing out on pension rights

For many people, one of the biggest advantages to being a part of the European Union is the ability to travel and work freely in different countries. But it is one thing to have the right to do something, and often another thing entirely to be able to actually do it.

Working in a different country, whilst offering great opportunities for a new career, meeting different people or learning new skills and languages, also carries with it significant challenges. One issue uppermost in many people's minds is: what happens to your rights to benefits such as health care or pensions? Thanks to European legislation, for the last 30 years people working abroad have been allowed to count periods of time spent working in a different country towards their rights to a pension, healthcare and other benefits. But this coordination of national social

security systems is only concerned with those rights provided by the state. What about pension rights that workers build up through their job?

Benefits of mobility

Being able to change jobs, or work in a different country, is not just beneficial for individuals. A European workforce that is flexible and able to respond to global shifts in production and consumption is an important element of the European Lisbon agenda. The days when people would be employed by the same company for their entire working career are gone, and it is not unusual for people to have a number of different careers – and work for lots of different employers – in a working life. What's more, with rapid increases in life expectancy, that working life is itself getting longer.

Indeed recent research suggests that, on average, 40% of workers across the EU have been in the same job for less than five years, and that looking to the future nearly 40% of workers would expect to have changed employers in the next five years. The mobility of workers – both through changing jobs within a Member State or finding jobs in new Member States – is a positive trend because it improves economic performance, ensuring that the right skills are put to the best use. But it also brings new challenges that national governments and European law makers will increasingly need to address, to ensure that people who change jobs are not penalised or discriminated against because of their decisions about where and when to work.

Not only is mobility on the rise across Europe, but occupational or supplementary pensions are also set to play an

increasing role in many Member States. This in part reflects national governments' efforts to address the challenge of a growing elderly population, but it also reflects the increasing importance that workers and employers place on the provision of good workplace pension schemes.

It is against the backdrop of the increasing importance of supplementary pensions to individual's retirement plans, and the welcome increase in labour mobility, that discussions about the ways in which mobile workers gain access to supplementary pensions and what happens to the rights they build up when they move to a new job have been taking place in Europe for a number of years. The questions that have continually been raised are; is it right that individuals who change jobs (either within a country or across a border) should be significantly disadvantaged compared to workers who remain with the same employer? And is it right that workers who arrive in a new job have to spend lengthy periods, effectively excluded from building up pension rights? The answer to both of these questions – from European citizens, social partners and expert groups alike – has been a resounding 'no'.

Diverse rules

It should be remembered though, that the rules of supplementary pension schemes

can vary considerably, both across Europe and within Member States themselves, reflecting the apparent haphazard way occupational or supplementary pensions have developed over the last century. However, certain elements of supplementary pension schemes that could potentially discriminate against workers who change jobs can be identified amongst these diverse rules and regulations. Firstly: how long from the moment of starting a new job does an individual begin to build up their rights to a pension or have access to a pension scheme at all? This can be a very important factor. For example, in some Member States a worker would have to contribute to a pension scheme for 10 years or even more, before they were considered to have fulfilled the conditions that would allow them a pension at retirement. Obviously making a decision to move jobs before having fulfilled these conditions could have a seriously detrimental effect on an individual's retirement income.

Secondly: what happens to the pension rights built up in one job when someone starts a new job in a different firm? Again the rules of how previously built up pensions (which are known as 'dormant pension rights') are treated in the period between leaving one job and retiring can be very different. However there is plenty of evidence that in many cases dormant pension rights of mobile workers are

being treated less favourably than the pension rights of those workers who do not change jobs. How dormant rights are treated over often long periods of time can make a tremendous difference to the amount of pension that is available when it becomes time for someone to retire.

In response to these challenges faced by mobile workers the Commission introduced a Directive in 2005 that consisted of four key elements aimed at reducing obstacles to mobility and increasing protection for individuals who do change jobs. Firstly, it underlined the principle that a new worker should gain rights to a pension within a reasonably short period of time after joining the pension scheme. Secondly, that if a worker moves to a different job (either within or across a border) the pension rights that they have already built up should be treated in a fair way. Thirdly, that if someone wants to be mobile they should be allowed to take their pension with them and transfer it to the pension scheme of their new employer. And finally, individuals should be provided with information about the potential impact that changing jobs might have on their pension rights.

The Directive (initially known as the Portability Directive), has been carefully discussed and debated in both Parliament and Council over the last two years, and has undergone a number of revisions, the most significant being the removal of the concept of pension transfers. Both Parliament and Council felt that this provision was a step too far at this time, and that the focus of the Directive should be on access to pensions and fair treatment of dormant pension rights. A lot of progress has been made on this technically challenging draft Directive. The Commission is currently working closely with the Slovenian Presidency to reach agreement with Council and Parliament on a Directive that reduces barriers to occupational mobility and allows more people access to good quality supplementary pensions and hopes to have an agreement in the near future.

Further information:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/portability_en.htm



People need to be aware of the impact changing jobs might have on the amount of money they can expect when they retire.



Migration: a challenge and an opportunity

Migration has increased greatly over the last 20 years, and has now become the main source of population growth in the EU. And it is a subject that is increasingly a key issue in the EU social policy debate – particularly when it comes to the integration of migrants.

The European Union is one of the most peaceful and prosperous regions of the world and has become the dream destination for many immigrants. Both “push” and “pull” factors are behind the increasing migration inflows to the EU. “Pull” factors – growing labour market needs due to demographic ageing, for example, or new needs for high skilled migrants. “Push” factors, meanwhile, force people to leave their home countries because of rapid demographic growth combined with poverty, youth unemployment, war and other political and/or social problems. The prevailing economic and social gap between the EU and the developing world will continue to act as a strong driver for migration.

Europe is entering a phase of rapid population ageing and shrinking workforce at a moment when the pace of technological change is accelerating and all Member States are confronted with the challenges and opportunities of globalisation.

So far, Europe’s economic growth has benefited from the positive contributions

of both employment and productivity growth. However, as the employment rate keeps increasing, the ageing of the workforce will unavoidably make Europe’s task of promoting employment growth and responding to labour market needs more and more difficult. From 2011 onwards, the EU population of working age (from 15 to 64 years) will start to decline steadily. According to Eurostat, the size of the work force in Europe is expected to shrink from 227 million to 201 million in 2025 and 160 million in 2050 in the absence of immigration. The implications for the years to come are clear and very challenging: Even if Europe continues to make progress in combating unemployment and raising the employment rate, it will be extremely difficult even to sustain its employment level. Zero or negative employment growth will have a direct impact on economic growth unless productivity starts growing at a much faster pace. But even in this case, Europe will have to compete at a global level with the US, as well as China and other emerging economies with plenty of room for both employment and productivity growth at least for two more decades.

International migration is a global, persistent phenomenon and can only be effectively governed in a truly cooperative and comprehensive manner. At present, in most Member States the possibilities for legal immigration

are very limited, while illegal immigrants keep coming in large numbers. Several Member States have implemented major regularisation campaigns over the last few years, thereby increasing their stock of legal immigrants. These stop-and-go approaches cannot be fully explained by changes at labour market level. Moreover, the social situation of immigrants is not satisfactory and they face much higher risks of poverty, exclusion and discrimination. The unemployment levels of migrants – in particular second- and third-generation – remain in most Member States significantly higher than those of the native working-age population, with a gap of close to 8 percentage points.

These facts illustrate the need for more effective policies to manage economic migration both at EU and national level. Nevertheless, despite the complexity and the diversity of the situations across Member States, the European Union has gradually established, over the last decade, the foundations of a common legal framework on migration. The European Council has therefore repeatedly called on the EU to respond to immigration challenges and opportunities with a common voice and a common set of instruments. In December 2007, it explicitly requested a renewed political commitment to further develop a comprehensive European migration policy based on common political principles and on a genuine partnership with countries of origin and transit of immigrants. On the basis of this mandate the Commission prepared a Communication, which was adopted in June, pursuing an integrated approach to all aspects of the phenomenon. The Communication proposes a set of basic common principles and measures organised around three policy pillars: prosperity, solidarity and security.

The link with the upcoming new Social Agenda is particularly strong. Most employment and social policy dimensions, ranging from employment and inclusion to discrimination and gender, are of key relevance.

The articles in the next pages provide an overview of the employment and social policy dimensions in the area of migration and the policy initiatives at EU level.

The Commission sets common principles for the Common Immigration Policy

In December 2007, the European Council taking into account the growing importance of migration trends, requested a renewed political commitment towards building a Comprehensive EU Immigration Policy. As underlined by the European Council, further developments in this policy area would require a common set of political principles encompassing all aspects of migration, serving as the platform for future operational measures. The Lisbon Treaty, if entering into force in January 2009, will provide useful instruments and a reinforced legal basis to achieve these objectives.

In response, the Commission has produced a Communication (adopted in June) proposing a platform for future action. In it, the Commission takes stock of the fact that national immigration policies in a European Union without internal border controls have indeed become strictly interrelated. The proposed EU action aims to complement – not to replace – national policies. Mainstreaming of national policies, promoting effective monitoring mechanisms and exchange of best practices can only be ensured by measures taken at EU level. At the same time, Member State competences – for example in determining the numbers of immigrant workers to be admitted – will remain unaffected.

The Communication is based on a set of common principles and measures organised around three policy pillars: prosperity, solidarity and security.

Prosperity encompasses all aspects related to economic migration, the labour market and economic growth. It underlines the

need to provide further incentives for high-skilled migrants, invest in training and provide real alternatives to the illegal employment of immigrants. It calls for more coordinated efforts for the integration of immigrants in the host societies. It also proposes developing effective monitoring mechanisms for the identification of future skill needs and the assessment of policies. The link with the Lisbon Strategy is particularly clear. Migration is an emerging policy priority within the next three-year cycle of the Integrated Guidelines 2008-2010.

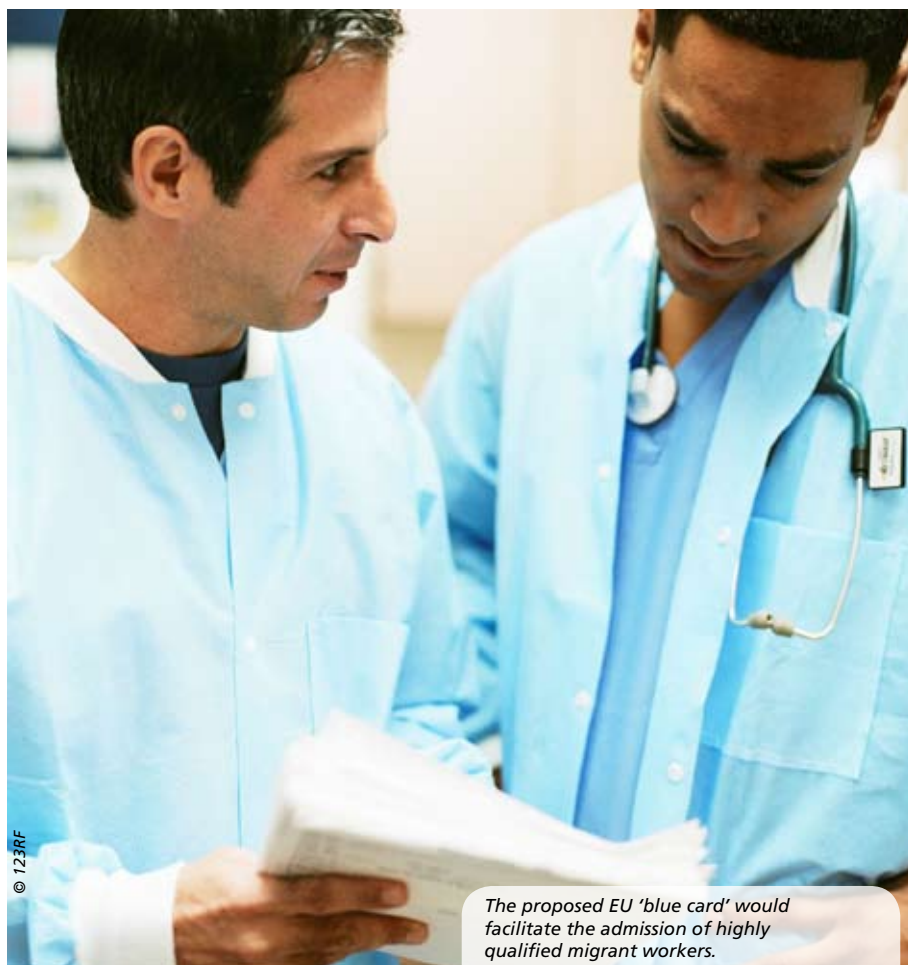
Solidarity refers mainly to the need to improve the sharing of information, shared responsibility, mutual trust and the pooling of resources among Member States. Developing interoperable systems, mutual support mechanisms and the pooling of human resources and technical and financial means is necessary for a more effective immigration management. It also refers to the need for a genuine partnership with the countries of origin and transition.

Security focuses on the need to effectively discourage and reduce illegal migration, fight against human trafficking and other relevant criminal activities. The Communication stresses that the prevention and reduction of these activities is critical for the credibility and public acceptance of this EU policy.

The Communication also deals with governance issues. The common immigration policy requires a close coordination between the EU and the national level, especially in the areas of economic, social and development policies. But the framework should be flexible enough to adapt to change. The dimension of migration should be factored into all related policy areas, particularly employment and social policy. The renewed social agenda for opportunities, access and solidarity that is scheduled to be adopted by the Commission before summer 2008 will look at the links between migration, demographic change, skills shortages and labour market developments, as well as the need to ensure the inclusion and integration of migrants.



Migration has increased greatly over the last 20 years.



The proposed EU 'blue card' would facilitate the admission of highly qualified migrant workers.

The role of the European Employment Strategy

Employment policies are vital in EU's effort to help immigrants integrate

Immigration has a clear impact on the EU, bringing with it new demands for policies which allow immigrants to improve their potential in employment and contribute more fully to the economy and society as a whole.

Against the background of demographic ageing and growing labour market needs, demand for immigration in the EU is set to increase. At present, according to Commission figures, there are around three million unfilled jobs in Europe and finding people for jobs in high-skill

sectors, such as engineering, is becoming increasingly difficult in certain regions. For example in Germany, Europe's largest economy, vacancies for engineers rose by nearly 30% over the past year to around 23,000. The same applies to the information technology sector, which contributes more than 5% of the EU's GDP.

There is also a growing need in lower-skilled domestic and care jobs as well as in other sectors of economic activity (namely in construction, tourism and agriculture). Indeed, Europe looks

likely to rely increasingly on immigration to balance supply and demand in labour markets, and more generally to fuel economic growth. Although no substitute for structural reforms, well-managed immigration – together with enhanced intra-EU labour mobility – can play a significant role in alleviating the effects of population ageing and help European societies deal with labour and skill shortages.

In terms of migration policy, the European Commission – following a long public consultation with all EU-level stakeholders – proposed a Policy Plan on Legal Migration in 2005. As things stand, this seems to be the only way to move beyond the reservations held by several Member States regarding a matter which they see as falling within national jurisdiction. On this basis, last October the Commission presented a proposal for a Directive that would facilitate the admission of highly qualified workers (providing for an "EU blue card"). There are other sectors of the economy with a need for unskilled workers, such as seasonal workers, where a proposal for legislation will be brought forward in autumn 2008. As the Commission proposed last October, this category by category legislation should be rendered consistent by a Directive on a common set of rights for third country workers, to prevent social dumping and exploitation.

However, to achieve the strategic goals set by the Lisbon Strategy there will need to be close cooperation between these EU migration policy initiatives and employment and social policies.

Employment policies have an important role to play in this context, since facilitating access to the labour market remains one of the main conditions for successful integration while at the same time policies dealing with alleviating labour and skill shortages increasingly focus on the role of migrants. This was clearly underlined during the Joint Council of Ministers of Employment/Social Affairs and Justice/Home Affairs in December of last year and the recent 2008 Spring European Summit.

The Lisbon strategy pays close attention to the integration of immigrants in the labour market. The 2007 Lisbon National Reform Programmes (NRP) show that many Member-State authorities rank migration and integration issues among their key policy challenges. From the Commission's side, a series of initiatives to step up policy efforts were set out in the Communication "Towards a Common Immigration Policy", which was adopted last December. The focus is on two main types of policies.

The first set of initiatives promotes the inclusion of immigrant workers in

EU labour markets. This is particularly important for the large number of immigrants with low qualification already settled in the EU. The initiatives mainly consist of active labour market policies (focusing on training measures, wage subsidy schemes and the involvement of employment services).

The second set focuses on the EU labour market's need for migrant work. In particular, it looks at policies facilitating access to the EU labour market for flows of qualified migrant workers in order to alleviate existing labour and skill

shortages. Examples of this are the "blue card" proposal, a points system or other measures to facilitate the entry of selected groups of foreigners. In this context, it is important to remember that any common policy in the area of economic migration must be fully compatible with the principle of Community preference.

In this area, a variety of policy measures, studies and other activities are implemented with the financial support of the European Social Fund (ESF) and PROGRESS, the new employment and social solidarity programme.

A study of migrant women in the European labour market

Migrant women are at a distinct disadvantage, in many areas of their lives, compared to both migrant men and native women. This is one of the main findings of a study, carried out by RAND Europe on behalf of the European Commission, on the role of migrant women in the EU labour market.

There is a growing body of research into the gender aspects of immigration into the EU, particularly in relation to the labour market. This particular study aims to improve the overall understanding of the labour market situation of migrant women and of the policies that can affect them. The study assesses the relative disadvantages experienced by migrant women, compared to native women and migrant men across a range of areas including housing, health, access to services and, crucially, employment. The analysis of data using the EU Labour Force Survey (LFS) shows that migrant women tend to fare worse than both native women and migrant men across a range of indicators, including participation rates, employment, unemployment and whether employment is commensurate with skills levels. There are, however,



considerable differences in the situation of different groups of migrant women in the labour market. For instance, one of the most striking findings of this research is that, disaggregating migrant women into those born within the EU and those from third countries, it becomes apparent that third-country women migrants are at an even greater disadvantage in the EU labour force than other groups such as EU-born migrant women, migrant men and native women.

By highlighting the unsatisfactory labour force situation of third-country migrant women, this research raises pivotal questions for policy. If migration is to play a role in mitigating some of the current and expected shortages in labour supply (and improving the matching of skills to jobs), then the low participation rates, high unemployment levels and incidence of 'deskilling' of third-country migrant women need to be addressed as urgent policy concerns. However, as the policy discussion in this study indicates, disparate policies around immigration or integration are unlikely to address these issues effectively on their own. Instead, the research suggests that there is a need for integrated and coordinated policies to improve the labour force situation of migrants, especially migrant women, and to realise the benefits to society that such improvements would bring.

likely to address these issues effectively on their own. Instead, the research suggests that there is a need for integrated and coordinated policies to improve the labour force situation of migrants, especially migrant women, and to realise the benefits to society that such improvements would bring.

The report is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/employment_analysis/index_en.htm

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Living together: integration is key if immigration is to be a success.

The challenges of social inclusion

Migrants frequently have trouble integrating into a new country; what can the EU do to help improve the situation?

When they arrive in the EU, migrants face a number of challenges when it comes to integrating into society. They have to learn a new language, find a job, find a place to live, get accustomed to different cultural ways, and learn what their rights and obligations are in a new country. These challenges can be compounded by their own personal history – the reasons that led them to leave their country of origin and negative events that may have disrupted their lives. As a result, they often have to rely on poor financial means to start a new life and get by in their new home. Furthermore, they frequently encounter difficulties getting their diplomas and qualifications recognised, and transferring any social protection rights they may have acquired in their country of origin. Migrants can also find themselves confronted with

negative stereotypes that can lead to direct and indirect discrimination, hampering their efforts to find a job, a place to live and to fully integrate into society.

EU Member States have a number of policies in place to help newcomers settle in and adapt in a new country. These policies include basic language training; vocationally oriented, practical information on employment and immigration rights; guidance on government and community institutions; and advice on how to gain access to essential services. But despite this, it seems that – in all EU countries – these policies are not enough to make it possible for migrants to fully integrate into society. Years after their arrival in a country, migrants continue to face barriers when looking for a job, a place to live, or when trying to get health care.

Higher risks

In most EU countries, non-EU migrants and their children are at higher risk of poverty than the rest of the population; nearly 30% of the people born outside the EU live under the poverty threshold, against 16% for the overall population. Women face specific difficulties, resulting from the accumulation of different and sometimes conflicting factors linked to their personal administrative status, the recognition of their skills, their role in dealing with the institutions, and their role in the family as defined by their culture of origin.

In most EU countries, children of migrants born outside the EU also tend to do less well at school. But some countries, such as the Nordic Countries, France and

the Netherlands, are more successful than others in closing the gap in educational achievement between native and foreign-born pupils.

EU-wide studies report that migrants are more likely to live in deprived areas and in poor-quality and overcrowded housing. What's more, that housing tends to cost them a higher proportion of their household income. And voluntary organisations report higher numbers of migrants and ethnic minorities among the homeless population living in hostels.

EU-wide studies also suggest that migrants do not have equal access to health care. In most countries, migrants who have been granted residency status are generally fully covered by health insurance system. However, in practice, they face cultural and language barriers, a lack of knowledge about the health-care system (its organisation and complex administration of health insurance), as well as communication problems with doctors and other service providers. When it comes to migrants without residency status (asylum seekers and undocumented migrants), their access is often limited to emergency care



School days: The EU needs to close the gap in educational achievement between native and foreign-born children.

(or basic care services) – and they end up paying very high bills for which they are not reimbursed.

Government strategies

Most of the discrepancies between the situation in society of migrants and non-migrants are partly addressed through the

range of social inclusion strategies that governments develop to fight poverty and social exclusion in their country. However, these discrepancies are not only related to the socio-economic characteristics of migrants. This suggests that specific policies need to be developed to promote the social inclusion of migrants, taking account of their diversity and of the specific barriers to integration that they face.

Specific measures put in place by EU governments include: the enhancement of “reception” measures; measures to ensure follow up, in line with the specific migration and integration “pathway” of the migrant; measures addressing discriminatory behavior in the host society; as well as investment in sound knowledge about the social aspects of migration.

In the context of the EU social inclusion strategy, Member States have agreed to mainstream the social impact of migration into the work of the new 2008-2010 cycle. They will report on the main social aspects of migration in their 2008 National Strategy Reports, and it will be the major focus theme for 2010.

The integration of migrants on the ESF agenda

During the 2000-2006 European Social Fund programming period, the Fund provided considerable support to the integration of immigrants. Training was one of the key measures to help migrants integrate into society and into the job market. Each year, the ESF assists - through training and other projects - some 600,000 people with a migrant background or from ethnic minorities - and it is aiming to increase this number considerably during the 2007-2013 programmes.

The 2000-2006 EQUAL experience showed that even in Member States where asylum seekers are not allowed to work, integration support plays a crucial role – in particular in speeding up their entry into the labour market once they receive refugee status and obtain permission to work.

ESF 2000-2006

A number of ESF projects have been set up to aid the inclusion of migrants into the labour market. In Sweden, for instance, immigrants have benefited from individual coaching and an employment plan enabling them to receive support throughout the various stages of job placement. Out of 130 immigrants who took part in the project, 101 found work – and four have set up restaurants or shops of their own. “The project was so successful,” says Leif Ottosson, project coordinator at the Blekinge project, “that it is being duplicated by other employment offices all over Sweden”.

www.ams.se

ESF 2007-2013

Migrants are identified as one of the key target groups for the ESF 2007-2013 period and nearly all Member States address immigration in their ESF programme priorities. Furthermore, Member States have to report on what they are doing to help increase migrants' participation in employment.

Out of a total ESF budget of over €76 billion, around €1.2 billion is dedicated to specific measures to increase migrants' participation in employment. The money given by the ESF is supplemented by Member State funding.



Staying healthy while travelling in Europe

If disaster strikes abroad, European Health Insurance Card makes it easier to get medical care

Sometimes, a foreign stay doesn't go quite the way we plan it... During a vacation in the French Alps, Ralph – an Irish citizen and a fanatical snowboarder – took a tumble and broke his leg. Luckily for him, he had his European Health Insurance Card with him, so he only had to pay a small percentage of the total hospital bills.

Once upon a time, falling ill or having an accident while in another EU Member State could mean a lot of painful red tape and paperwork – on top of a painful injury or illness.

But since June 2004, things have become significantly less complicated. Now, citizens from the 30 Member States of the European Economic Area as well as Swiss nationals can use the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) to get medical care when disaster strikes during

a temporary stay abroad, be it for work, studies or pleasure.

Today more than 171 million people have a European Health Insurance Card in their pocket.

The EHIC is free, although it is necessary to be covered by a state sickness insurance scheme from one of the Member States mentioned above. Third-country nationals, who are working or living in Europe (except Denmark), and therefore covered by the sickness insurance scheme of one of the Member States, can also apply for a European Health Insurance Card.

Easily recognisable

Although individual Member States are responsible for the distribution of the EHIC and issue it in their national lan-

guage, the card shares a common design. So it is easily recognisable for medical staff, even if they do not speak the same language.

Having the card means that a patient is entitled to the same medical treatment as a local, even when the medical treatment provided would not be met by the sickness insurance scheme of his or her home country.

For now, there is no single harmonised sickness insurance scheme at European level. Each Member State is free to organise its own sickness insurance scheme as it sees fit and every country has its own rules for public medical provision. In some countries, treatment is free, in others, patients must pay part of the costs, or have to pay the full costs and then claim a refund.

It's important for people using the EHIC to be aware that the health care system of the Member State they are visiting could be completely different from the health care system of their own country.

Take for example the story of Charles, an English businessman, who needed to see a doctor during a business trip to Paris. He was very surprised when the doctor asked him to pay a fee, even though he had produced his EHIC and actually thought the doctor had refused his card. He wrongly believed that the European Health Insurance Card would give him access to the same free treatment he usually got on the National Health Service at home in the UK. The reality, however, was that – like all French residents – he had to send the bill to the local sickness fund which would only partly refund the doctor's fee.

Another thing to be aware of is that the EHIC can only be used in the framework of public health care provisions. In some countries, public medical provision co-exists with private health care. But private health care providers (doctors, hospitals, dentists etc) will not accept the EHIC and the costs of the medical care will not be reimbursed.

What happens if someone forgets their card at home or loses it? Ida is an Estonian student living in Bruges and studying at the College of Europe. During a night out with her fellow students, she fell and broke her ankle. She was taken to hospital where she realised that she had forgotten to get an EHIC before leaving Estonia. The hospital staff was very helpful and contacted Ida's Estonian sickness insurance institution, which promptly faxed a Provisional Replacement Form to the Belgian hospital. This form contains exactly the same data as the European Health Insurance Card and has exactly the same value. However, its validity date is much shorter and it is only valid for one



stay abroad. Ida received the same treatment as a Belgian patient. The bill was sent to Estonia and she only had to pay a small amount, as all Belgian patients do when they get hospital treatment.

Sensitive information

Some people are concerned that the EHIC might contain sensitive information or information about their health status. But this is not the case. The EHIC only contains two kinds of information: First, it allows medical staff to identify the card holder as someone who is covered by a state sickness insurance scheme of another Member State; secondly, it

gives the name of the sickness insurance institution back home where the bill must be sent.

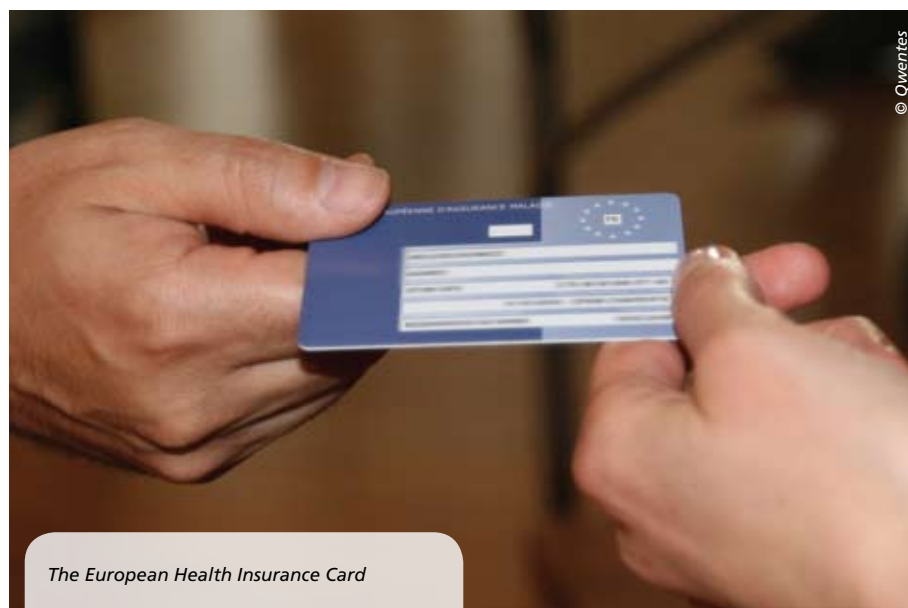
Klaartje, from the Netherlands, saw her holiday at the Belgian coast almost ruined when she broke her tooth while biting into a mussel shell. It all worked out well in the end though and she was happily surprised to find that she just had to go with the bill and her EHIC to the local sickness insurance fund where she would be partly refunded (in the Netherlands

dental care is not refunded by the state sickness insurance).

Klaartje's story is a good example of how the European Health Insurance Card has simplified medical insurance when travelling abroad. It also shows that you don't have to go on adventure holidays to find yourself in need of medical assistance abroad. Sometimes all it takes is a particularly tough piece of seafood...

Further information:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_security_schemes/healthcare/index_en.htm



The European Health Insurance Card



Roma: 'Sowing the seeds for hope'

The EU is looking at ways to better integrate a group of people that has long suffered discrimination and social exclusion

Imagine for a moment: the whole population of Belgium, the Czech Republic or Sweden is marginalized. The idea of sending your child to school with Swedish children, having a beer with a Czech friend or hiring a Belgian would be unimaginable, even socially unacceptable. These people would frequently be on the receiving end of abuse, from nasty jokes or childish insults to all-out bigotry and discrimination.

Luckily, this is unthinkable in the modern, prosperous European Union. Or is it...? There is one ethnic group of more or less the size of the populations of Belgium, the Czech Republic or Sweden which has been living for centuries now in Europe and facing such prejudice every single day of their lives: the Roma.

All that makes "social Europe" for the majority – a sense of security, personal freedom and basic rights, as well as the notion of being respected and able to fulfil one's own potential – is far from the experience of Roma men, women and children, both in old and new Member States. Can we really speak of equal opportunities if some children are deprived of the basic right to a good education? Is there any chance for equality as long as the majority of Roma live in poverty, their

unemployment rates soar far above those of the majority of the EU population and as long as the persistent discrimination of an entire group of people is accepted as somehow normal behaviour?

Political message

Over the past decade, the European Commission has looked closely at the situation for Roma throughout the EU and has been able to pinpoint what many of the underlying problems are. What is needed now is to take this knowledge and transform it into action.

The closing conference of the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All concluded with a plea to Member States and the EU to "Sow the seeds for hope!" This is also reflected in the strong political messages from the European Council in December, as well as from the European Parliament and civil society. For the first time ever heads of state and government acknowledged that both the EU and the Member States must use all available means to improve the inclusion of Roma.

Social inclusion and anti-discrimination are areas in which the EU has made considerable progress in recent years. Strong legislation prohibits the discrimination of

people on grounds of ethnic origin. However, these laws are not always enforced and applied – whether at the workplace, in schools and in the market for services and goods – as they should be. The European Structural Funds, in particular the European Social Fund, play an important role in supporting inclusion on the ground and past experience has proved that they can trigger change. ACCEDER, for example, a project run by the Fundación Secretariado Gitano, organised tailor-made vocational training and job placement for thousands of Roma in Spain. What is needed now, however, is a major change in people's way of thinking. The 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, which was officially opened in Slovenia on 8 January, provides an ideal opportunity to do just this, by showing that the Romani culture is an integral part of European culture and highlighting the benefits this can bring.

Clear priorities

The situation of the Roma is a complex problem that requires a complex response – there is no quick-fix solution and all aspects of the question need to be taken into consideration. The main priorities, however, are pretty clear: education, employment, health and housing. The High Level Advisory Group of experts on ethnic mi-

norities, set up by the Commission under its strategy for tackling discrimination, has worked hard over the last two years in order to identify which barriers prevent ethnic minorities from participating in the labour market. One of the – not surprising – key findings was that across the EU, Roma are the group which runs the highest risk of social exclusion. They share many of the obstacles to integration – a low level of education and training, a lack of effective integration policies, discrimination, stereotypes and negative attitudes to name just a few – with other ethnic minorities. What makes their case more extreme, however, is that while other minorities may face two or three of these obstacles at the same time, Roma frequently find themselves dealing with multiple barriers. In fact, the High Level Advisory Group identified

14 barriers which are relevant for most ethnic minorities, and it is not unheard of for Roma to be up against them all.

There is a wealth of good practice to be found in public policy – the vigorous process of de-segregation in schools in Hungary, the health policy in Romania which works with health mediators and outreach programmes or the Czech annual priority plan are just a few examples. Moreover, a number of initiatives by European companies – very often in close partnership with public authorities and civil society – show clearly that change is possible. SVIK or US Steel Košice in Slovakia, for instance, have developed with local Roma NGOs and trade schools comprehensive programmes to qualify and employ Roma from the local communities.

Ending the discrimination and exclusion suffered by Roma is important on many different levels. It would help to alleviate social tensions, ease human suffering and avoid personal tragedies. But from an economic viewpoint, it would also provide the EU with a pool of talent that has up until now been mostly ignored.

And now, suppose that sending your kids to school with Roma children, taking a Roma friend out for a beer or hiring a Roma for your new company is as normal as if they were Belgian, Czech or Swedish. Not so hard to imagine, is it?

Further information:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/fundamental_rights/roma/index_en.htm

Employment challenges ethnic stereotypes

Born in Alicante, Spain, Mariana Santiago Vargas has a strong sense of her Roma identity. But whereas her parents make their living as street traders, 20-year-old Mariana decided to go for a professional training and stable employment.

After high school she enrolled on administration, finance and accounting courses. With the help of the ACCEDER project, specifically tailored to the needs of Spain's Roma community and supported by the European Union through the European Social Fund, she trained as a congress hostess and learned how to apply for vacancies. "When I started I did not know how to search for job opportunities on the internet," she recalls.

Mariana is now employed as a shop assistant by the well known department store 'El Corte Inglés', and works as a consultant for an insurance company. "As you can see, I can't stop doing things!" she declares enthusiastically. "My parents always encouraged me to keep up my studies and to look for a job, even though this sometimes made me different from other relatives who did not think I should



go on studying. But I like learning and I try to develop myself day by day."

Mariana lives with her parents and two brothers in a mixed area on the outskirts of the city, where she maintains strong relationships with both her extended family and with non-Roma friends.

ACCEDER, run by the Fundación Secretariado General Gitano, (FSGG) operates across Spain to counter discrimination and broaden opportunities for Roma people in employment and society generally. Mariana herself feels she has never directly suffered discrimination, but adds:

"As a Roma, I can't bear people saying bad things or attacking people coming from my ethnic background, or hearing what some people say about my culture."

She believes that having a stable, professional job will help her "to break down stereotypes and prejudices towards my Roma culture and way of life. Being better prepared for a career has never interfered with my feeling Roma," she asserts. "In no way have I lost my identity."

ACCEDER project

Priority area: social inclusion

Target group: Roma community

Project duration: 2000-2008

Total funding: €62 million

Number of participants: 35,304

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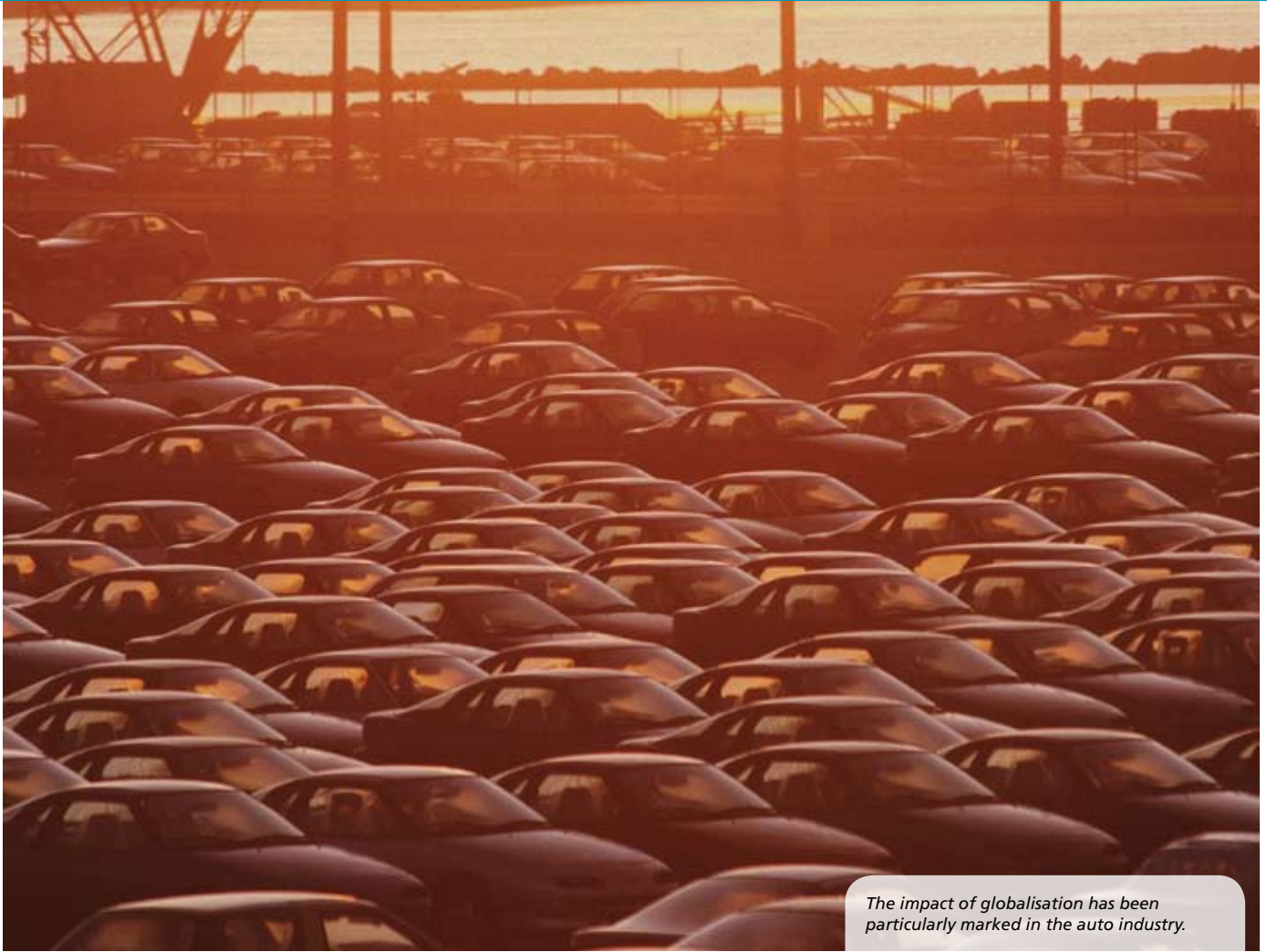
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The impact of globalisation has been particularly marked in the auto industry.

The benefits of globalisation

Social policies are key to tapping the opportunities of globalisation

Globalisation is one of the key phenomena of today's economy, albeit one that is loosely defined and whose impact is often exaggerated. This impact is partly the result of policy changes that have opened up markets and eased freedom of movement, but it is also a result of the costs of communications and transport having been slashed, facilitating flows of information and resources, but also of skills.

In a recently published study entitled "Is Social Europe Fit for Globalisation?", we examined the social impact of globalisation for the EU and the policy challenges that arise. The study's key message is

that the EU as a whole will gain from globalisation, even if some groups lose, but that these net gains will not be uniformly distributed across groups of individuals, regions and countries.

Nor will these gains accrue automatically, but will instead depend on successful adaptation and well-judged policy responses. In particular, the EU has to balance its efforts to boost competitiveness and to transform its economy by adopting and implementing policies that smooth the adjustment process and offer sufficient protection to those vulnerable to the changes and uncertainties that globalisation will bring.

For many, globalisation is an opportunity, affording scope on the supply side for increased specialisation, enhanced diffusion of technology, and a competitive spur to innovation and productivity growth that raises real income by lowering the price of goods and services. Yet for others, globalisation is perceived to be a threat to the values, institutions and policies that have underpinned post-war Europe's success and way of life, in short to social Europe. There are also widespread fears that globalisation is aggravating uncertainty and that a 'race to the bottom' in social policy and provision is inevitable, even though one of the key findings from the study is that evidence simply does not support the gloomy view.

The study also emphasises that globalisation is not a static phenomenon. It is, for example acquiring more of an 'Asian face', through the emergence of China (and, now, India) as rapidly expanding economies. As they evolve

from low-cost competitors in mass markets to compete in technologically more advanced products and services, new challenges will surface to which the EU has to be able to respond. In future, the view that it is the unskilled who lose from globalisation while highly qualified workers gain will have to be replaced by a more subtle analysis.

The challenge for policy makers is to devise policy responses, both at EU- and Member State- levels, to ensure that the effects of globalisation are, on balance, as positive as possible. A core challenge is to achieve economic flexibility with better social protection in order to

create an environment capable of making the best use of the opportunities offered by globalisation. In this context, social policy has a vital role to play, not least in the early implementation of active policies which help people acquire skills and become more competitive in the labour market, rather than passive, reactive policies.

Adjusting to globalisation implies policy developments that will, in turn, have social impacts and create uncertainties that need to be managed as social risks. While labour market policies are sure to be prominent and necessary, they are not going to be sufficient, and

a coherent and complementary strategy for social protection and social inclusion remains vital.

- Contribution by Iain Begg, Professorial Research Fellow, European Institute, London School of Economics, co-author of a study on the 'Social impact of globalisation in the European Union'

Further information:

Study: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/main_studies_on_ss_en.htm

Turning wine into profits

Like many businesses in the beautiful Portuguese region of Braga, Vinhos Norte felt that it was not benefiting from globalisation. Companies were moving away from this once-thriving industrial area, looking for lower production costs abroad, but those that remained were not gaining from the opening up of international markets.

The European Union has, for some time now, recognised the potential pitfalls of globalisation and has made responding to them a key part of its employment policy agenda. This meant that Vinhos Norte was able to take part in training co-funded by the EU through the European Social Fund to teach its staff and directors how to access international markets on a larger scale.

Guilherme Pereira is Vinhos Norte's oenologist. It is vital to his job that he understands the tastes of potential customers for the company's traditional green wine, which had previously been exported on a limited scale.

"Our company was already present in some international markets," says the



company's director Graciete Lima. "But our main market was Portuguese communities abroad." To continue to expand and grow, Vinhos Norte had to find new markets for its product. In practical terms, this meant not only identifying potential outlets, but finding out what consumers in other parts of the world are looking for and learning to do business with people from other cultures. Guilherme says of the ESF-funded scheme, "With this type of training, we [are] able to see what we are doing wrong or not so well, and how we can improve it so that we succeed in selling our products outside Portugal."

The training helped Guilherme to make wines that will appeal to global markets. "I have learnt that taste varies very much from country to country, and that we cannot expect to present the same product in different countries with the same results," explains Guilherme. Wines need to be adapted for the various markets. The company now exports to countries in Europe and beyond, and has expanded its number of staff as a direct result of the training. At the same time, employees have learnt valuable transferable skills, such as languages and the importance of good planning, which they will be able to use should they want a change of career in the future.

Contact: Graciete Lima

Director

Vinhos Norte – Manuel da Costa Carvalho Lima & Filhos, Lda

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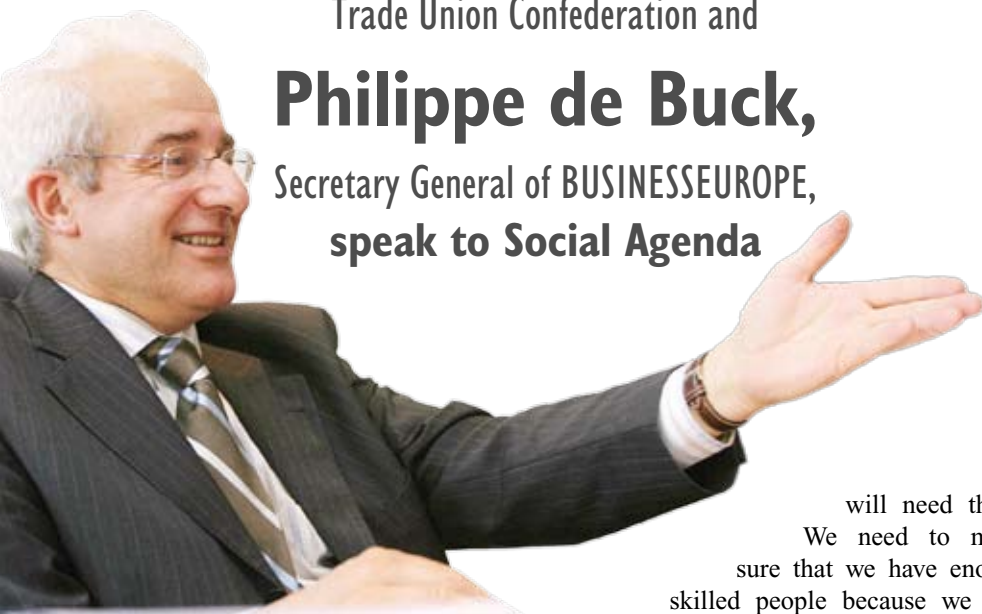
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See video: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/esf/discover/esf_library/videos_en.htm



John Monks, General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation and Philippe de Buck, Secretary General of BUSINESSEUROPE, speak to Social Agenda

The European Commission is very active in the area of migration – what do you see as the major focus points for future EU migration policy?

JM: Migration is an issue that's been a great European success story but could become a lot more difficult in the period ahead. If the current economic problems that we're currently seeing turn into an economic crisis and unemployment starts to rise, migration could become a huge political issue. This is particularly the case regarding migration from outside of the European Union. Mobility within the EU is still on the whole seen as a positive thing – although even here we are seeing some negative feelings.

PdB: This is an important issue but it's also important to remember that there are different kinds of migration. We are concerned with what we call 'economic migration' – and here we want to be involved and active and consulted. And we are prepared to deal with this issue as social partners. Because of demographic ageing and globalisation we will have to integrate more people – the economy

will need them. We need to make sure that we have enough skilled people because we will face scarcity in the future – that's a fact. Also, for companies becoming global it's important that their employees can move from outside Europe into Europe and of course in the other direction. So there is a lot to discuss here. But it's important to remember that we are talking about national rules and that the intervention of the Commission is rather limited in terms of competences and impact.

What are your views about the Commission's proposal for a Blue Card, which would be intended to attract highly qualified migrant workers to the European labour market?

JM: We understand the Commission's logic, but we feel it's got a little bit of an elitist feel to it. Most of the migrant workers Europe gets are unskilled people who come in and do base-level jobs, although there are some who do skilled jobs or come to study at university. But the idea that the EU is slamming the door on the poor and dispossessed and only opening its doors to the talented and enterprising is not quite how we see Europe in relationship to Africa and other poor parts of the world. So, while we do think that

immigration should be related to the labour market and accept the need for constraints, we are nonetheless a bit uneasy about this. I think a realistic assessment is that yes, we do need highly qualified migrant workers, but we also need other types of workers too.

PdB: We have said from the beginning that we favour the Blue Card. Why? Because it gives opportunity to others to join economic Europe and participate in the development of the EU. Also, companies that are global need to be able to move their employees from one place to another. It's also a solution for the scarcity of skilled workers. For that reason we are looking forward to the upcoming proposal of the European Commission.

Some Member States are worried that the Blue Card could lead to a drop in companies' training efforts. Do you share these concerns?

JM: There is a big risk. For instance the vocational training in Germany is a much-admired system, yet it's struggling increasingly to attract the kind of quality of young people that it used to attract. It's also expensive. So the temptation to go and hire elsewhere is quite considerable.

PdB: I don't share the concerns regarding companies' training efforts, for two reasons. Firstly the companies know the importance of vocational training and life-long learning. Also, the numbers are limited; we will not be facing thousands and thousands of people coming from China, India and all over the world. Remember that it is a system under which you enter a country with a contract – it will not be a mass of people flowing in. And it is very well regulated – the Blue Card will make it possible for people coming to the European Union to do so according to the regulations of the Member State that they are entering.

There is a lively debate right now around the risk of “brain drain” in the countries of origin. Do you think the EU’s policy approach takes this issue into account enough?

JM: This is a worry for us. One third of Namibia’s midwives, for example, have been recruited by the British health service – this has been a disaster for Namibia. It can leave some countries in a terrible state if they are desperately short of a particular skill. There will always be some cherry picking – rich countries have always attracted talent from poorer countries. But I think that, in terms of recruitment campaigns and other special efforts to recruit people, we’ve got to be very careful.

PdB: If the numbers are limited then the numbers are limited on both sides. In India and China there are hundreds of millions of people and here we are talking about a few thousand. We should keep in mind that the EU itself is a victim of ‘brain drain’ today – people are going to the US, for example, and China.

Last year the Commission adopted a proposal for a Directive providing for sanctions against employers of illegal third-country nationals. What is your position on this issue?

JM: We do support better migration management systems in Europe, to stamp out abuses by employers of illegal migrant workers. The problem is enforcement. Our experience has been that in countries that have reasonable laws they haven’t been enforced – there’s been a *laissez-faire* approach to migrant workers that’s caused a lot of trouble. So we do support the Commission looking to introduce some better and clearer rules. What we’re really looking for is equality for migrants – first-class treatment, not second-class. Not just because of our belief in protecting migrant workers but we believe it’s better for the host community too. As soon as people are coming in and undercutting the rate then the opposition to free movement mounts. Playing by the rules is important.

PdB: We are against ‘black’ (undeclared) work, because it is unfair competition. So, all that can be done to combat this should be done. It is very important that companies have clarity and know what the rules of the game are – and they have to play by those rules of course. But we have already said that we have some problems with the idea of this Directive – not with the overall aim, but with the methodology. We want to avoid cumbersome procedures. And there is also the fact that this is really something we have to deal with at national level.

A key issue is the question of labour market integration. But this is an area in which different Member States have very varied success rates. What can be done to combat low employment rates of migrants?

JM: The good news is that this is not really a problem for citizens within the European Union – they assimilate pretty well. It gets much more difficult with different cultures. But it’s very hard to generalise. The Chinese community in London, for instance – I don’t think they know what unemployment is. The Hindu communities also tend to do very well. But other cultures don’t do so well and can have extremely high unemployment rates. And unfortunately it tends to get worse from one generation to another. So the issue of cultural mix is much more important than we originally thought. The interesting political question is: do you go towards multi-culturalism British-style, or do you go for the more American system of allegiance to the flag and you’re all American?

PdB: Of course when they are here legally they are part of the labour market and everybody has to make an effort – the immigrants themselves, the



authorities that can help make it possible for them to integrate and organisations dealing with migrants that can help them increase their level of skills. Companies will also make a real effort, for instance through vocational training. But a company is not an integration school. A company can integrate people but only if there is willingness on both sides and a basis for integration, this is important. Here again there is the issue of national differences. We at BUSINESSEUROPE see how the problems of Spain, France, Italy and Malta are different from the problems of Sweden, Finland and Denmark. It’s very different from one Member State, or even one region, to another. For our part, we are prepared to discuss this and will soon start negotiations with the ETUC on inclusion of disadvantaged groups and people who have problems integrating into the labour market.

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