

Brussels, 17 June 2008

Taking forward the common immigration and asylum policy for Europe.

Today the Commission adopted a Communication on "A Common immigration policy for Europe: principles, actions and tools" and a Policy Plan "Asylum – an integrated approach to protection across the EU". The Communication puts forward ten Common Principles on which to base the common immigration policy, grouped under the three main strands of EU policy: prosperity, solidarity and security. The Policy Plan on Asylum provides for the architecture of the second phase of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). Both address the remaining elements on immigration and asylum of The Hague Programme. They should be endorsed by the European Council of 15 October 2008 and will, in the course of 2009, feed into a new five-year Programme in the Justice, Freedom and Security area.

José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, said: *"The Migration Package adopted today shows that we need to take a new approach to dealing with Immigration and Asylum. Immigration contributes to European economic performance. But this potential will be possible only if integration of migrants succeeds and people's concerns about illegal immigration are recognized. Europe needs a common policy vision which builds on past achievements and aims at providing a more coherent and integrated framework for future action by the Member States and the European Union. If we work together on the ten principles to better manage immigration and reinforce the standards for protection of asylum seekers we will make tangible improvements in these crucial areas"*

On the Communication on Immigration Vice-President Jacques Barrot, Commissioner responsible for Freedom, Security and Justice, stated that *"Immigration is an opportunity and a challenge for the EU: if properly managed, it's richness for our societies and economies. In a Europe without internal borders Member States and the EU need to act on the basis of a common vision. This is a prerequisite for managing legal migration and integration as well as fighting illegal immigration whilst upholding universal values such as protection of refugees, respect for human dignity and tolerance. "*

With regard to the Policy Plan on Asylum he added: *"With this Policy Plan the Commission launches the second phase of the Common European Asylum System, whose overarching objectives are to uphold and reinforce the Union's humanitarian and protection tradition and to achieve a true level playing field for protection across the EU. This means that we will have to improve the common legislative standards, increasing the quality of decision making by supporting practical cooperation between national asylum administrations and fostering more solidarity between the Member States and between the EU and third countries in receiving refugee flows".*

Common Principles on immigration for Europe

The Communication on "A common immigration policy: principles, actions and tools", adopted today by the Commission, outlines the Commission view on how to further develop the common European immigration policy and calls on the European Council to endorse the ten common principles proposed therein, together with a selection of concrete actions.

The ten common principles build on the 1999 Tampere European Council's milestones, the 2004 Hague Programme and the Global Approach to Migration, launched in 2005. Each of them is made concrete by a non-exhaustive list of actions to be implemented either at Member States' or EU level. These principles cover the broad spectrum of the immigration policies and are grouped under the headings of:

- *Prosperity and Immigration*: 1 – Clear rules and a level playing field; 2 – Matching skills and needs; 3 – Integration is the key to successful immigration.
- *Solidarity and Immigration*: 4 – Transparency, trust and cooperation; 5 – Effective and coherent use of available means; 6 – Partnership with third-countries.
- *Security and Immigration*: 7 – A visa policy that serves the interests of Europe; 8 – Integrated border management; 9 – Step up fight against illegal immigration and Zero tolerance for trafficking in human beings; 10 – Sustainable and effective return policies.

The common immigration policy will be delivered in partnership between the Member States and the EU institutions and will be followed up regularly through a new monitoring and evaluation mechanism, including an annual assessment and recommendations by the Spring European Council on the basis of a Commission's report on the immigration situation at European and national level.

Policy Plan on Asylum

In parallel, but in a separate document that reflects the specific nature of asylum issues, the Commission is also adopting today a Policy Plan on Asylum which lists the measures that it intends to propose in order to complete the second phase of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). The first phase of the CEAS (1999-2004) saw the adoption of an important number of legal instruments establishing common minimum standards in areas such as reception conditions for asylum seekers, asylum procedures and the requirements to qualify as a person needing international protection, as well as rules for the determination of the Member State responsible for an asylum application (the so called Dublin system).

The Policy Plan proposes to improve definition at EU of standards for protection, in order to achieve the ambitious objectives set out in the Hague Programme, by amending the existing legal instruments. At the same time, it acknowledges that legal convergence must be complemented by adequate practical cooperation mechanisms (exchange of information and best practices, common trainings, etc.) if convergence in asylum decisions, and therefore equality of protection across the EU, is to be reached. A European Support Office on Asylum will be established in order to coordinate practical cooperation activities. The Policy Plan also sets out a number of tools to foster solidarity vis-à-vis those Member States confronted with strong pressures on their asylum systems. Finally, it presents ideas for supporting third countries which host high numbers of refugees, by inter alia the establishment of an EU-wide resettlement scheme and the expansion of the existing Regional Protection Programmes.

For further information on the Communication on Immigration and on the Policy Plan on Asylum see related [MEMO/08/402](#), [403](#) and [404](#)