

European Commission (EC)

A. THE IMPACT OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

During the current global economic crisis with a steep economic downturn and expectations for worldwide and prolonged high unemployment, the European Commission (EC) considers that well-managed global migration should be viewed as part of the solution, rather than as part of the problem of the economic crisis. For this reason, it is important to continue to cooperate with partner countries on topics related to migration and development.

The EC is closely monitoring the effects of the economic crisis on migration. Several studies have been funded, internally and externally, and in Europe and in countries outside Europe a number of activities have been launched at the broader and horizontal policy-making level.

The following list provides examples of European Union (EU) policy responses to the economic crisis.

1. Improving up-to-date monitoring of the effects

In 2009, the Commission established a monthly monitoring report focusing on employment and social issues in the EU. The Commission also encouraged better cooperation between public authorities, public and private employment services, social partners and civil society on how to improve monitoring of the economic and financial crisis.

2. Keeping people employed in Europe

The EU is committed to helping EU member States fight unemployment and prepare labour markets for recovery, by creating jobs and promoting mobility, upgrading skills, matching labour market needs with labour demand, and increasing access to employment.

The Commission is easing access to EU funds for retraining laid-off workers and helping them find new jobs. Specifically, the EU is pursuing €1.8 billion in payments earmarked for its social fund, which supports millions of workers every year. The Commission is also considering expanding the scope of the European Globalisation Fund.¹

The Commission has proposed a new EU microfinance facility for employment to develop micro-enterprises and to offer job opportunities for the unemployed and thereby to open the road to entrepreneurship for some of Europe's most disadvantaged groups. In this joint initiative with international financial institutions, €100 million has been reallocated from the existing budget for this purpose.

Immigrants may also benefit indirectly from these general initiatives and support programmes.

The Commission has indicated its willingness to dedicate at least €500 million in 2009 from money allocated to the tenth European Development Fund (EDF) to support the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) hit hardest by the economic crisis. This financing will be delivered, if possible, as budget support, and will be calculated based on such parameters as forecasted export losses, decreased remittances and financial flows.

In addition, the EC has called upon countries facing inflows of returning migrant workers

Migration Profiles to promote an evidence-based approach to migration and to ensure policy coherence.

A Migration Profile is a collection of data and information relevant to migration for a specific country gathered according to a common template. The main objective is to use the profiles as a basis for a coherent and comprehensive migration and development policy. It allows a country to develop such a policy in order to benefit from migration and mobility and to create linkages with other policy areas focusing on (a) development cooperation; (b) employment and job creation; (c) provision of workers in sectors of the economy facing a shortage of workers; (d) promotion of brain circulation; (e) protection of basic human rights, including migrants' rights, and (f) maximisation of the development benefits of remittances and migrant entrepreneurs. Migration Profiles were created for a number of countries in Africa, Eastern Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean. These profiles contribute to the dialogue between the EU and its partner countries.

In the first half of 2009, the Commission started discussing these profiles with Governments in developing countries and international organizations to better define this tool. Recently, the EC also promoted Migration Profiles in the context of the third Global Forum on International Migration and Development (GFMD) held in Athens, Greece, from 2 to 5 November 2009. The Commission invited all interested stakeholders to contribute to improving and further developing this tool. The aim of these activities in the GFMD context was to arrive at a common assessment of the potential of Migration Profiles and their format, and to further promote their use in full ownership by countries and with support of the international community. At the forthcoming Global Forum meeting in Mexico in 2010, the EC will report on the results from this work.

C. CURRENT AND PLANNED ACTIVITIES IN THE AREA OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Creating synergies between migration and development remains high on the EU's policy agenda. The EU recognizes that, if managed effectively, migration can contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In this regard, the EU proposes for countries of origin and destination to work in partnership to facilitate the contribution of migration to areas such as poverty reduction, health, education and gender equality. In 2005, with the adoption of the Global Approach to Migration, the link between migration and development became one of the three main areas of work in the EU migratory policy programme with third countries. Creating synergies between migration and development were given the same level of importance as the control of irregular migration and the management of legal migration flows. Since 2005, the EU has been implementing concrete activities to strengthen these links. In this regard, the focus on the role of remittances as a tool for development of countries of origin has increased, as they are seen as both an opportunity and a possible challenge to countries of origin. Besides remittances, transnational communities can play an important role in the economic development of countries of origin, such as by functioning as a conduit for small and medium size trade and investment facilitation and for small-business development. However, small and vulnerable economies with well-developed education systems, such as those in the Caribbean, are especially affected by the negative impact of emigration of highly-skilled people.

The link between migration and development is not only a key component of the Global Approach to Migration of 2005 but also referred to in the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum,⁴ adopted by the European Council at the end of 2008. These frameworks have helped to

increase policy coherence within EU member States and to strengthen cooperation and partnership between the EU and partner countries.

With respect to policy coherence and as viewed from a development perspective, key elements of the policy framework are the Commission's Communication on Policy Coherence on Development of April 2005, the European Consensus on Development of December 2005, the Council conclusions on the EU Policy Coherence for Development report of November 2005, the biannual reports of 2007 and 2009 on Policy Coherence for Development, and the recent Commission's Communication containing proposals to further enhancing policy coherence for development. The policy and legal framework consists mainly of the Directives on payment services (2007) and E-money (2009) as well as active participation of the Commission in different expert groups of the Group of Eight (G-8) and the Group of Twenty (G-20) on global remittances and financial access.

The following paragraphs list current and future EU activities in this area.

1. Activities aiming at improving the nexus between migration and development

- Development of the concept of circular migration and the assessment of ways to facilitate both managed and spontaneous circulation of migrants, implemented by EU member States, in which the interest of countries of origin and destination, as well as the interest of migrants themselves, are respected.
- Development of an EU Code of Conduct for the ethical recruitment of health workers in developing countries, that seeks to avoid outmigration or emigration of highly-skilled persons in sectors that are critical for development.
- Actions aiming at reversing “brain-waste” of returning migrants.
- Support of networking activities of transnational communities in Europe and support of their involvement in efforts to enhance development in countries of origin.
- Adoption of the Blue Card Directive, which, in order to meet concerns of some developing countries, contains provisions for facilitating circular migration of highly-skilled migrants while preventing these migrants from permanently emigrating.
- Analysis of the effects of climate change on international migration in connection with development.

2. Efforts to reduce costs of remitting money while making remittance transfers safer and more conducive to development at the same time

- Adoption of measures to improve the banking system in countries of origin and to promote innovative financial products, so as to positively impact banking services in countries of origin, to strengthen legal financial channels and thus facilitate the investment of remittances in development activities.
- Promotion of more affordable, faster and more secure transfer of remittances to migrants' countries of origin; efforts to ensure that relevant legislation does not contain provisions hampering the effective use of legal remittance channels.

- Evaluation of the feasibility of creating a common EU portal on remittances to inform migrants about transfer costs and encourage competition among remittance service providers.

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