

Brussels, 8 October 2008

Strengthening the EU's Comprehensive migration policy: new initiatives of the European Commission on the Global Approach to migration, on Integration and on Family Reunification of third-country nationals

Today the Commission adopted new initiatives to reinforce the EU's comprehensive approach to migration. It includes a Communication on "Strengthening the global approach to migration: increasing coordination, coherence and synergies", a Report to the 2008 Ministerial Conference on Integration on "Strengthening actions and tools to meet integration challenges" and a Communication reporting on the application of Directive 2003/86 on the right to family reunification. The proposals presented today build on the principles suggested in the recent Communication on A Common Immigration Policy for Europe and provide the first building blocks for the actions thereof proposed, which should also be taken on board of the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum.

Vice-President Jacques Barrot, Commissioner responsible for Freedom, Security and Justice, stated that "Migration policy remains high on the European Unions' agenda. The Commission believes that a comprehensive migration policy that incorporates the interests of the Member States, partner countries and the migrants themselves is needed and feasible. On 16 October the European Council will adopt the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum. With the three documents presented today, the Commission already puts on the table concrete proposals for the follow-up and thorough implementation. We will make sure to govern migration in a coherent and coordinated way in even closer partnerships with third countries. We will nurture our tools for integration as it becomes an even more crucial aspect of legal migration. And we will ensure the acknowledged right to family reunification of third country nationals is guaranteed in accordance with the Directive from 2003."

The Communication on the Global Approach suggests to strengthen the means of reaching the Union's strategic objectives: to address all migration and asylum issues in a comprehensive and balanced manner, to fully integrate migration into the European Union's other external policies, and to manage the EU's external dimension of the migration policy through genuine partnership with third countries. It suggests both substantive and methodological improvements on how to facilitate legal migration and mobility, how to manage illegal migration, and how to ensure that migration can contribute to development. The way forward is to fine-tune the Global Approach to each region and country; to step up coordination among all stakeholders; to encourage the pooling of resources; and to enhance and upgrade the migration management capacities of both Member States and partner countries.

The Report to the 2008 Ministerial Conference on Integration, to be held under on 3/4 November in Vichy, comes in response to June 2007 Council Conclusions stressing the need to consider approaches to integration that involve society as a whole. The Report focuses on participation and citizenship; on measures targeting the host society; and on how integration policies may contribute to the prevention of social alienation. It also elaborates on new instruments such as common European modules for integration and common tools for evaluating integration policies. These instruments will contribute to further addressing the integration aspects highlighted by the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum.

The report on family reunification analyses national legislation implementing the Directive 2003/86/EC on the right of legally residing third-country nationals to be joined by their non-EU family members. Therefore this report does not deal with the situation of third-country nationals who are members of the family of a Union citizen regulated in the framework of free movement of EU citizens. It summarises Member States' transposition of the Directive, identifies possible problems (visa facilitation, granting autonomous residence permits, taking into account the best interest of the child, legal redress and more favourable provisions for the family reunification of refugees, the income requirement and possible integration measures should be mentioned in particular) and gives recommendations on proper application. As a follow-up to this report, the Commission will examine all cases where application problems were identified in order to ensure that the provisions of the present Directive are correctly applied. Moreover it intends to launch soon a wider consultation – in the form of a Green Paper – on the future of the family reunification regime.