

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Introduction

Ladies and gentlemen,

I'm pleased to be here with you today to talk about the future of global migration, which is set to be one of the defining issues of this century.

Our response to the challenges of global migration will either make us stronger - economically, culturally, and morally - or it will make us weaker, leading to heightened social tensions and economic decline.

Migration is an opportunity, not a threat

Despite the anti-immigrant rhetoric that has emerged during the economic crisis, we must see migration as an opportunity, not a threat.

It won't be long before we start to feel the impact of our ageing population and declining labour force. Many countries, including within the EU, will soon be confronted with a serious lack of skills and talent.

Many countries cannot meet their labour needs with a purely home-grown workforce. Global economic integration is deepening. The breadth of skills needed to drive innovation is expanding. And this means that the need for a mobile global workforce will increase.

The EU's working age population will shrink by 12 per cent by 2030 without net migration. The EU will be short of an estimated 380,000 to 700,000 IT workers in 2015. And by 2020, the health sector could be short of two million professionals.

Even today, when unemployment is exceptionally high in some parts of Europe, many countries are already facing labour and skills shortages in certain sectors.

Of course tackling unemployment needs to be our first priority and immigration cannot be the only answer to the demographic crisis. But history tells us that countries who remain open and attract the best talent keep pace with their competitors. Those who shut their borders gradually fall behind.

So, the EU needs to establish a demand-driven labour immigration policy to ensure its future prosperity and economic growth.

I am pleased to say that we have already established the basis for this policy:

- We introduced the "Blue Card" scheme, which is designed to attract skilled workers from non-EU countries to live and work in the EU.
- We are also working to facilitate access to the EU for intra-corporate transferees, as well as introducing fair rules for seasonal workers;
- And I intend to introduce proposals before the end of the year aimed at improving the admission to the EU of the best students and researchers from across the globe.

Requirements for effective migration policy making

But in a rapidly changing environment, with serious economic challenges and new mobility patterns, our current policies will not be enough. We need to rethink our policies if we are to maximise the opportunities that migration offers.

For me, there are **four key requirements** for effective migration policy making:

1. We need a stronger evidence base;
2. We need to be more innovative and have new ideas;
3. We must engage more deeply with all our stakeholders; and
4. We must cooperate more closely with our partner countries.

1. Stronger evidence

First, we need **a stronger evidence base** to feed our policies. Although our knowledge is constantly improving, the impact and costs of migration policy measures are often unknown.

We need comprehensive performance indicators to improve our policies.

And we must make a concerted effort to gather and share information on migration - creating a strong culture of monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment of migration policies and programmes.

We should also analyse migration and labour market data to better predict our future labour needs, and to identify new labour market sectors that will bring economic prosperity.

Challenging myths

A stronger evidence base will also allow us to challenge common misconceptions about migration.

It is more important than ever for us to stand up against the rising tide of anti-immigrant rhetoric.

Unscrupulous politicians have been quick to recognise and exploit people's fears, blaming migrants for our economic woes. Their mantra will be familiar to most of you: "migrants are coming over here, taking our jobs, forcing down our wages and exploiting our welfare systems".

This statement is alarmist, misleading and wrong. It is the worst kind of politics, exploiting people's insecurities and worries about the future.

The proposed solutions are simplistic, ill-thought out and simply unworkable.

We must counter such assertions with facts. And we must recognise that reliable evidence is the best defence.

We must use the evidence to show that immigrants do not 'steal' jobs from native-born workers.

We must show that well-designed migration policies do not drive down the wages of native workers.

And we must make clear that migrants generally pay more in taxes than they receive from the state. They are not a structural burden on the overall public welfare system.

The bottom line is that migration stimulates and sustains economic growth. Migrants should not be unjustly blamed for society's ills.

This is the message that we must promote.

2. Greater innovation

The second requirement is for **greater innovation** in our approach to migration.

Our immigration systems need innovative policies that will enhance our competitiveness.

For example, increasing labour market transparency will improve global labour mobility and attract the most talented people to work in our countries.

Today, many talented migrants struggle to demonstrate that they have the necessary skills and qualifications. Others find it difficult to find out what skills they need to develop in order to work abroad, often due to a lack of consistency between job descriptions.

So I'd like to ask you:

- What can we do to improve the assessment of skills and the recognition of qualifications?
- Could it be useful to develop an International Competence Framework with standard job profiles and skills descriptions?

We should also be more proactive in encouraging migrants to meet labour shortages in both developed and developing countries. So:

- What can we do to advertise labour shortages to potential migrants around the world?
- Can we be more effective at labour matching?
- Can we utilise labour surpluses in the EU to help development efforts in other countries?

3. Deeper stakeholder engagement

Returning to my four key requirements, the third requirement is for **deeper engagement with stakeholders** on migration policy.

Governments cannot make effective policies in isolation. Everyone in this room has a part to play – from big business to NGOs, international organisations to academia.

Why do we need businesses to get involved?

Business leaders must tell us how we can help them to attract the best and brightest from across the globe.

They must help to shape our policies – to tell us what the barriers are, where we can cut red-tape and how we should redesign legislation.

Working together, business and governments can design flexible systems to meet needs that will be constantly changing. This would give us a better picture of our most pressing labour shortages, and the areas where we need to grow and innovate.

And it is not just **big** business we need to hear from. Small and medium sized businesses must also make their voices heard. Their needs are often different, and some are short of low-skilled and

medium-skilled labour. We don't just need highly skilled migrants, we also need people who can make and mend things – electricians, plumbers, welders.

I am keen to help businesses grow through effective and flexible migration policies. But the private sector should also support and nurture the talent of the migrants they employ and help the countries whose labour they rely upon.

Events like today's Hearing present a great opportunity to discuss how businesses can help:

- For example, could businesses do more to help migrants before they depart?
- And how can we work together to invest in vocational training and improving language skills to increase the global talent pool?

This Hearing isn't the only opportunity for businesses and other stakeholders to help develop our migration policies. I plan to launch a public consultation later this year on wider economic migration issues. I am counting on you to help us shape the EU's economic migration policies.

What role do big cities have to play?

Cities also have a vital role to play in shaping and implementing our migration policies.

We live in a world of increasing urbanisation. More people live inside cities than outside them. As migrant numbers increase, cities have had to deal with a wide range of challenges from migration management to integration. Policies to address these challenges can have a profound effect on local communities.

Poor policy making and implementation can lead to community tension and the segregation and marginalisation of migrants. But get it right, and you have successful integration, innovation and economic growth.

Municipal leaders in our big cities are well aware of the dynamism and cultural benefits of diversity.

They also recognise that the issues affecting migrant populations vary from city to city, neighbourhood to neighbourhood.

A one size fits all policy imposed at the national level is unlikely to be effective. Far more effective is a tailored approach at the local level, set by people who know and understand the community.

Some cities are already setting a great example. I am impressed by the active policies of the city of The Hague. Last year over 6000 residents began an integration course. Never before had so many participated.

Thanks to the active involvement of its mayor, the Hague is also actively engaged in European networks like Eurocities and appreciates the need to have a comprehensive approach to integration, involving service providers, employers and residents.

Not far from here, the city of Rotterdam involves local communities in planning and decision making on migration and other issues. They are encouraging self-monitoring of areas in difficulty and getting local people to solve problems together.

Last year, Mayor Ahmed Aboutaleb held meetings in the 27 Rotterdam neighbourhoods facing the greatest difficulties. He explained to young boys of Moroccan or Turkish origin that if they are ready to take responsibility for their lives and neighbourhoods, they can become important members of Dutch society.

Of course integration policy cannot be directed from Brussels. But along with NGOs and international organisations, the EU can help exchange ideas and experience. And we can also monitor results.

I was pleased that the Council backed our European Agenda for Integration in December, which highlighted the key role that local authorities have to play.

We are now planning a strategic partnership with European networks of regions and cities and the Committee of Regions, to help local authorities facing the challenges of receiving and integrating migrants.

4. Stronger collaboration with partner countries

The fourth requirement is for **stronger collaboration with our partner countries**.

In order to be effective, migration policies need to take into account the interests of countries at both ends of the migration cycle.

The Global forum for Migration and Development has an important role to play as a platform for dialogue and cooperation between governments on migration issues.

The Forum can certainly help to design policies that can make migration into a driver for development and meeting labour needs of source countries.

We should work closely with these countries to understand their needs and to find mutually beneficial solutions.

Our migration policies should help our partner countries to develop and grow. So:

- Can we do more to understand the issue of brain-drain?

- Is it feasible to have migration profiles for all developing countries by 2015?
- What can we do to encourage and facilitate circular migration, so that migrants take the skills and experiences they have gained back to their home countries?

The money sent home by migrants is a vital source of income for many countries. These remittances often represent a lifeline for the poor.

According to the World Bank, remittances received by developing countries were estimated to be over 300 billion € in 2011, more than three times the size of official development assistance.

Although remittance costs have fallen steadily in recent years, they remain too high, especially in Africa and small nations where remittances can be vital.

So let me use this opportunity to make an appeal to business, in particular banks and money transfer companies, governments and international organisations to make a serious effort to bring down costs even further. By applying modern technology and changing legislation where needed, this should be achievable

We must also work to facilitate the use of remittances for national development purposes:

- For example, could we help to develop Diaspora bonds to enable migrants to use their savings to finance public and private sector projects?

The EU's response to the Arab Spring

With the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility, the EU has put in place a framework that addresses issues of importance to both the EU and partner countries – from legal and illegal migration to development and international protection.

The EU will do more to engage with our partners, particularly in Africa and Asia. We must for example - and this is a matter very close to my heart – increase our support for individuals in need of protection.

The EU recently has adopted a resettlement program and I very much hope this will allow us to place a more active role in providing international protection for those in need. I also intend to further promote the Regional Protection programs in close cooperation with the UNHCR.

Our neighbours will of course get special attention.

In 2011, the EU missed a historic opportunity to show North African countries and the world that it was committed to defending the fundamental values upon which it was built.

Instead of helping these countries and giving protection to those in need, the EU was too concerned with security matters and simply closed its borders. It's as if we said "It's wonderful that you've started a revolution and want to embrace democracy, but we have an economic crisis to deal with so we can't help".

I hope that the EU will not miss the opportunity that still lies before us. The Arab Spring is still in its early stages.

When I visited Tunisia at the end of March last year, I was impressed by the Tunisian people's commitment and determination to make their country a success.

I believe the EU has a special responsibility to help people in countries who have struggled against the odds to overcome oppressive regimes. Respect for human rights and the promotion of democratic values are basic principles upon which the EU was founded

That is why we are changing our policies. For example:

- We are seriously stepping up our financial assistance (1 billion € extra on top of the 5.7 billion already available)
- We will help these countries to build democratic structures, and to reform their law enforcement agencies and judicial systems. And we will invest in education, especially for young people.
- We will promote the mobility of people between these countries and the EU. This will include issuing multi-entry visas to researchers and business people.

Right now we are negotiating Mobility Partnerships with Tunisia and Morocco which I hope will be signed before the end of the year. These partnerships cover all aspects of migration from asylum, border control and the fight against trafficking, to legal migration and visa facilitation.

And through these partnerships, we will boost the number of places on offer in a program called ERASMUS MUNDUS. This will enable many more Tunisian and Moroccan students to study in Europe.

We are more deeply engaged with the region now, but we need to sustain this over time. We will continue to assess whether our policies are providing an effective response to these historic challenges.

And importantly, we must also step up our efforts to support the courageous people who are defying dictatorships in other countries, with Syria the most tragic example.

Conclusion

Let me conclude. Migration will always be a part of our past, present and future.

It is up to us how we see and deal with this reality.

Do we see migration as a problem and close our eyes as well as our borders? Or do we embrace the opportunities and benefits that migration brings – both cultural and economic?

Working together, we can ensure that migration is a force for innovation, a force for growth, and a force for good in the world.

The Hague Process is an invaluable policy tool and I hope that you will be successful in your efforts to achieve these aims.

Thank you for your attention. Now it's my turn to listen – I am ready to take questions.
