

Heinrich Böll Stiftung
“Mobility and Inclusion - Highly-skilled Labour Migration in Europe”
International Conference, Berlin, 18 - 19 February 2010

Argentina Szabados,
CoM IOM Germany

Session: Opening Remarks
(18.02.2010, 10:30 am – ca. 5- 10 min)

Consolidated Opening Remarks

I would like to express my gratitude and many thanks to the Heinrich Böll Stiftung, here especially to Mr. Ralf Fücks and Mr. Mekonnen Mesghena for the opportunity to collaborate on this excellent conference with a timely subject: Highly-Skilled Labour Migration in Europe.

The potentials and challenges of labor migration for sending and receiving countries have enjoyed more intensified research and increasingly strong position in public discourse, both in the EU and in Germany. It is clear that it is now upon us to suggest and take the necessary steps to find pragmatic solutions to the main barriers to highly-skilled migration in receiving countries.

These steps should include reducing information asymmetries amongst employers and prospective highly skilled migrants from abroad as well as the highly-skilled already residing in many receiving countries who currently have no possibility to utilize their skills on the domestic labor market.

For this reason, building incentives for talented highly-skilled professionals to migrate and integrate in receiving countries should be a top priority. Moreover, it is also necessary to anchor a more positive view of labor migration in the public discourse in host societies.

However, this two day conference will not only compare and contrast ideas and policies on labor migration from the perspective of a receiving countries, but also point out challenges and opportunities for sending countries, thus maintaining a holistic approach to labor migration management. This holistic approach is also reflected in IOM's work: for decades, the IOM has been involved in migration management programs and projects for the benefit of all involved stakeholders, creating a triple-win situation for receiving countries, sending countries and the individual migrants:

For one, receiving countries, societies and economies can benefit from an often ambitious, highly-skilled work-force with international experience in order to reduce labor shortages in their domestic industries.

Secondly, sending countries often experience a development boost through the transmission of remittances from their nationals abroad, as well as a transfer of knowledge and the expansion of business and trade networks, enhancing the possibilities of their domestic industries.

Thirdly, for the individual, the investment in education and work experience pays off by receiving opportunities to apply these skills, to develop professionally and personally in an international context.

IOM has contributed to various aspects on the migration management of highly qualified: In practical terms, within the framework of its current activities, IOM has devised some successful schemes for highly qualified foreigners residing in countries of destination. These programs propose temporary or longer-term possibilities for migrants to utilize their skills to foster said knowledge transfer to and network building in their countries of origin. In terms of policy, IOM facilitates interstate dialogues and regional cooperation between sending and receiving states engaged in the labour migration process. Such consultations are essential in order for labour migration to benefit all stakeholders.

The task of the following days is to discuss and devise strategies to accommodate the needs of EU labor markets in view of varying immigration and integration policies for highly-skilled migrants. The challenge will be to accommodate the interests of individual migrants and migrant sending countries for the benefit of all.

I look forward to the insights and debates on this highly important issue and thanks for your attention.