

European Governance of Migration

The Political Management of Mobility, Economy & Security

Conference Berlin, September 17 – 19, 2008

Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Berlin

Opening Remarks

by Ralf Fücks, Co-President of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung

Dear Excellencies,

Dear Partners,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you all in the name of the Heinrich Böll Stiftung to the opening of the **“European Governance of Migration”** conference. Welcome to our new location in the heart of Berlin.

Today international migration in connection with the issues of regional conflicts, humanitarian plights, the integration of minorities and new citizens belongs amongst the most prominent challenges of many societies and nations. According to official statistics of the United Nations, nearly 200 million people were classified as international migrants. These figures underline the significance the issue of migration has for countries with considerable emigration, as well as for countries encountering heavy immigration.

Western European and North American nations hardly will be able to sustain economical growth and their standard of living without a continuous influx of skilled labour and manpower. That's no surprising news. Up to now, particularly after the Second World War, immigration has significantly diversified the demographics of societies in Western Europe and North America.

At the outset of the 21st Century, restrictions on the movement of goods and capital across borders in the European Union have been largely eliminated, while freedom of movement across national borders has been bestowed upon the citizens of the EU. Additionally, outside the borders of Europe, with the growing globalization of capital, communication and services, the mobility of people has increased enormously. It is however, the highly qualified workers of the world, above all others, who enjoy a relatively high freedom of mobility.

This global trend towards mobility and free trade has also brought harsher restrictions on the external borders of the European Union. The paradoxical consequence remains, that many EU States now have difficulties fulfilling the need for immigration that the changing demographics in their societies are beginning to require. Compared to immigrant societies like Canada, Australia or the US, most European countries are falling behind in the global competition for talents. Germany, in particular, with its rapid decline of inborn young people, is facing a brain drain instead of attracting skillful, entrepreneurial people, hungry to work their way up. At the same time, our performance in opening migrant kids the path to higher education is more than poor.

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Given the growing importance of migration with regard to the labor market, innovation and global networking; looking for coherence between competing political domains such as migration, employment, security, development, and social policy is thereby indispensable. A coherent national, regional and international migration policy and a better coordination of governance institutions would be urgently needed. An improved migration management between Europe as a receiving continent and emigration countries in the south and east should also see the improvement of human rights as important goals. Current European Migration Policy first and foremost is directed to prevent immigration and to stiffen European Border Control. Not being linked to a comprehensive immigration and development policy of the European Union, these deterrence policies create daily human tragedies in the Mediterranean Sea and at our eastern borders, undermining the Geneva Convention on Refugees. See it from every angle: the migration policies of the EU are in urgent need of reform.

(The concept of the conference)

In light of this context, the Heinrich Böll Foundation commissioned the Policy Paper **“The Future of European Migration Policy”** – authored by Dr. Steffen Angenendt (Senior Fellow for Global Issues at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, SWP). The Paper, which you have already received as an Executive Summary, raises many of the issues which will be discussed at this conference. The paper carefully analyzes what steps the European Union should take in order to achieve a common migration policy. Tomorrow morning, we will have the opportunity to have a closer look to the study – it’s a fine blueprint for a comprehensive and coherent European Immigration Policy.

This conference is a truly international enterprise; it has drawn participants from all parts of the world. To this symposium, we have invited distinguished experts in the fields of politics, science, business, security and civil society, from Europe and North America, as well as the most important emigration nations in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Additionally, we have representatives from the European Commission and the United Nations in attendance.

We planned this event in the run-up to the second UN Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) in October of 2008, so that the results of the roundtables during the next two days could be used as input for the UN-Forum. Our conference offers a forum for the exchange of ideas between political decision makers, social scientists, economists, security authorities, civil society groups and grassroots organizations. The main goal of this project is to launch new policy recommendations, especially to achieve a better balance in the migration politics of the European Union. So we're expecting a lot from the outcome oriented discussions during the roundtables.

During the upcoming days, participants should have the opportunity to exchange their perspectives, and to sound out options and strategies through collaboration. Let me extend a warm welcome to all of you and thank each of you for helping to realize the goals for this conference.

Without a broad alliance with longtime friends as well as new partners of the Foundation the entire endeavor could not have been put into practice. I want to express my special thanks to all our allies and partners.

We hope very much for a successful outcome of the conference – one that contains valuable recommendations for a future European migration policy. Thank you for coming and - welcome again!