

**High-Level Policy Forum on Migration,
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Conclusions

by

M. Eric Besson

Minister of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and
Mutually Supportive Development, France

I am very honoured to have chaired, for France, the First High-Level Policy Forum on Migration organised by the OECD. Your Organization was very successful in bringing together so many ministers and high-level officials in charge of migration and integration issues in OECD countries.

I would like first of all to thank the Vice-Chairs of the Forum, Ritva Vilijanen, Permanent Secretary to the Finnish Ministry of Interior and Piet Hien Donner, Minister of Social Affairs and Employment of the Netherlands.

I would also like to thank all participants for their excellent contributions over the past two days. Lastly, I would like Aart de Geus, Deputy Secretary-General of the OECD, to give my warmest thanks to the Secretary-General of the OECD, Angel Gurría, as well as all the OECD staff who helped organize this Forum.

The discussions allowed us to have very fruitful exchanges on three key issues:

- The impact on the economic crisis on international migration;
- Labour Migration Policies to support economic growth;
- The integration of immigrants and their children

The current economic crisis and the rapid rise in unemployment have led many OECD countries to adjust their migration policies. Secretary-General Gurría opened this Forum by citing the example of Australia, which has made a 25 percent cut in skilled migration; he also referred to the United Kingdom which has witnessed a decline in inflows recently.

For many countries, the challenge is to match inflows to labour demand. One point on which we all agree, however, is that the long-term challenge remains important beyond any temporary shocks. The main question is therefore: in this context, how can we effectively meet labour market demand and integrate immigrants and their children successfully?

All countries seem to be facing this same question although the range of responses suggests there is no single and definitive answer. Our discussions have shown the interest in sharing our national experiences in order to develop more responsive, effective and fair migration policies.

We find that the road map should emphasize two main objectives:

- Better manage labour migration to support economic growth in the host countries and promote development in source countries
- Improve the effectiveness of integration policies.

Better manage labour migration to support economic growth in the host countries and promote development in source countries

There is a significant margin for manoeuvre to increase the employment rate of young people, older people or other groups which are underrepresented in the labour market.

However, beyond the crisis, we should keep in mind that not all labour demand disappears during the crisis and hence not all labour migration stops; during the recovery, we will surely note shortages in some sectors of the labour market, some of which may well be filled by labour immigrants.

It is therefore important to work to prevent attitudes of hostility to migration and immigrants from increasing in public opinion.

Participants also expressed their interest in strengthening cooperation in the fight against irregular migration, human trafficking, and the illegal employment of foreigners. Here our discussions underlined the importance of incentives for employers and immigrant workers to respect entry, stay and employment regulation, while ensuring safeguards for native and immigrant employees.

Temporary, or circular migration, has enjoyed growing interest in recent years. However, a balance between temporary and permanent migration must be found based on the characteristics of labour market demand.

Over the past decade, most OECD countries have privileged high-skilled migration, adopting measures aimed at facilitating recruitment and stay of this category of immigrants. This demand will only grow in coming years, in science and technical fields. International student migration seems one promising channel to strengthen skilled migration.

It is also important to develop legal entry channels to meet low-skilled labour market demand. Appropriate measures will mix prevention and sanctions in order to prevent a rise in the illegal employment of foreigners and possible recourse to mass regularisations, a response that the European Union has now ruled out in the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum adopted during the French presidency.

In general, participants agreed that better management of labour migration rest on the following five pillars:

- Identify the nature and size of labour market demand in order to better target policies for recruiting immigrants.
Here, the Swedish Minister of Migration, Tobias Billstrom, shared with us the innovative Swedish approach which, in a tradition of social dialogue, allows recruitment of foreign workers not through the public employment agency but directly by employers. The Swedish presidency of the European Union will certainly be a key moment to look at the first results of this novel experience, as noted by Jonathan Faull from the EU Commission.
- Accelerate the processing of labour migration visa applications while ensuring effective and appropriate controls;
- For employers, put in place means by which employers can verify the legal status of immigrants, and strengthen work-place enforcement;
- Develop an instrument for assessing the skills and qualifications of immigrants and at the same time put in place supplementary training programmes if necessary;
- Strengthen as far as possible, the links between migration and development of the sending countries. For example, lower the cost of transferring remittances, reduce obstacles to return, and share the cost of training between the host country and the origin country.

In summary, as our colleague Piet Hein Donner has emphasised, good labour market management must insure that short-term adjustments are compatible with long-term needs.

- The challenge is to strengthen our economies' competitiveness; nonetheless, it would be wrong to think that existing labour market rigidities will be solved through immigration alone.
- There is also a challenge for integration because labour migration cannot just be temporary. First of all, immigrants often want to settle; here, our Austrian colleagues cited a significant figure: in Austria ever since the wave of migration in the early 1990's, labour migration has accounted for no more than a third of migration. Here, surely, the issue of circular migration also arises, a fact noted by the Swiss delegate.

Improve the effectiveness of integration policies

As a result of the economic crisis, the recent progress in terms of better labour market outcomes for immigrants and their children is placed at risk. Many countries have seen a sharp rise in the unemployment rate and a sharp drop in the employment rate for immigrants.

I think that we all agree on this point: we must help immigrants integrate successfully into our labour markets. This can be achieved through giving immigrants access to mainstream active labour policies, and stronger anti-discrimination policies -- the same rights for natives and immigrants, as Ms. Consuelo Rumi Ibanez reminded us. Even more than the rest of the population, Ms. Annemie Turtleboom argued that immigrants must have access to general policies to support employment, mobility, and training. She also called for stronger anti-discrimination policy and the adoption of specific measures to prevent the crisis from unduly hurting those populations which are most at risk. Michal Sedlacek also drew attention to the fact that immigrant themselves have a responsibility to ensure their own integration; they have to accept the values of their host countries. This is particularly important for promoting gender quality as underlined by Minister Böhmer.

During this Forum, the exchanges of experience with integration allowed us to draw some very important lessons we should place emphasis on:

- Rapid integration of new arrivals through acquisition of the host-country language;
- The need to improve contacts between immigrants and potential employers;
- Measures aimed at making better use of immigrant's skills;
- Addressing the problems faced by children of immigrants during their schooling and in the labour market, especially discrimination. But we must also address the issue of language within the families, as the master of the host country's language is key for the educational performance of children.

Some suggestions for future work by the OECD

The participants in the Forum commended the quality of the analysis and the studies conducted by the OECD in the area of international migration. They invited delegates to the OECD Working Party on Migration to consider the following directions for future work on migration:

- Continue to monitor the evolving impact of the current crisis on immigrants and their children;
- Develop analyses of the political economy of international migration, specifically to better inform public opinion;
- Strengthen international cooperation at the regional and global level for the management of migration; it is important to go beyond bilateral frameworks.
- Further analysis and review migration management policies by conducting country reviews;
- Develop a system for monitoring the labour market integration of immigrants and their children through a set of comparable indicators;
- Continue to analysis the links between migration, remittances and development, and evaluate the impact of the brain drain on the development of the origin countries.