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**DIRECTORATE FOR EMPLOYMENT, LABOUR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
EMPLOYMENT, LABOUR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

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Session I: ASSESSING AND ENHANCING THE HUMAN CAPITAL OF IMMIGRANTS

Issues for Discussion

**SEMINAR ON THE INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS INTO THE LABOUR MARKET
Lisbon (FLAD), 15 June 2007**

English - Or. English

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SESSION I. ASSESSING AND ENHANCING THE HUMAN CAPITAL OF IMMIGRANTS

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

1. One key characteristic of immigrants is the fact that they often arrive in the host country without the human capital specific to the country. Native-born persons have more or less automatically acquired this by virtue of having been educated and socialised from birth in the country. The principal way in which this difference generally manifests itself is through the language understood, spoken and written by the immigrant. Proficiency in the host-country language is usually a prerequisite for making full use of the skills, qualifications and experience earned in the origin country in the host country; this is particularly important for highly skilled jobs. Without adequate host-country language proficiency, immigrants may have to accept jobs for which they are formally overqualified but for which the language requirements are less stringent. Language proficiency is also needed in order for immigrants to participate more fully in the social, economic and political life of the host country.

2. Language, however, is not the only element that affects the possibility for immigrants to find jobs that correspond to their skills and experience. Their formal qualifications, if earned from an educational institution in another country, may be unfamiliar to potential employers, who are therefore unable to interpret the usual “signalling” value of the education received. In some professions, especially those which are self-regulated and require licensing, foreign qualifications and experience may not always be fully recognised or accepted.

3. In some cases, the education or training obtained in the origin country may be inappropriate because the methods or the technologies used in particular domains are different in the origin and destination countries, and some adaptation to what is prevalent in the host country is required.

Questions for discussion:

- 1. How can migration policy facilitate the arrival of immigrants with qualifications and experience that are more easily transferable to the host country?*
- 2. How can immigrant qualifications and experience be “translated” into a form which employers can assess or evaluate?*
- 3. How can language training best be provided or immigrant skills adapted / upgraded most efficiently to the needs of the host-country labour market and economy?*