

Refugee and Migration Policy in the European Union

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The opening presentation of the conference was entitled

“The Emerging European Refugee Policy: Does it Live Up to the Standards of the Geneva Convention?”

The first speaker, Mr. Raymond Hall, director of the European Bureau of the UNHCR, took stock on the progress made so far. In his view this was a particularly good moment to look at the situation at the European level and see where Europe was in terms of harmonization. The EU had just finished the first phase of harmonization, the adoption of minimum standards, and was about to move into the second phase, a common European asylum system. Mr. Hall evaluated what had been achieved so far and what challenges still lie ahead.

UNHCR has strongly supported the European harmonization process because it believes that the establishment of a coherent system is in the interest of refugees as well as states. In addition, the harmonization process is an opportunity to ensure high standards and make the system coherent, a quality it now lacks. For example, a person can today be considered a refugee in one country, but not in another. UNHCR wants a system based on a common set of standards, which is in everyone’s interest. This would also limit the disruption caused by irregular secondary movements of refugees.

Mr. Hall discussed the following points:

- What has been achieved so far?
- The short term challenges which lie ahead
- The 1999 Tampere Conference at which the European Council took the decision to develop a common European asylum policy
- The results of the EU harmonization process so far
- The beginning of progress towards the second phase
- The external dimension of the EU asylum policy

In his view, despite considerable progress, reality does not measure up to the goals set at Tampere. Mr. Hall went on to say that the asylum issue is now higher on the agenda of the EU governments than it was before. He cited a report mentioned in the Financial Times of August 20th 2004, in which 30% of respondents regarded the issue as very important. In 1997 the figure was only 3% and it has since skyrocketed. Asylum and illegal immigration are now very high up on the national agendas. This has happened despite the fact that the actual numbers of asylum seekers, arriving in the European Union, have sharply decreased. Mr. Hall listed several reasons for this:

- 1.) There are few legal asylum seekers because there are no official channels
- 2.) Once in the EU, regular migrants apply for asylum as the only way to regularize their status
- 3.) Those who are refused do not return home
- 4.) The public has the impression that the government is not in control

5.) Asylum seekers are criminalized in the public's mind

Mr. Hall also pointed out that today, asylum seekers are seen through the lens of national security. In addition, there are important differences of opinion between European governments. He identified one broad trend throughout Europe: legislation towards asylum has become more restrictive. The aim of this is to protect national populations, but at the same time it makes legitimate claims more difficult.

He went on to state that UNHCR has many misgivings about the harmonization process, especially against this backdrop. There are serious inconsistencies in the European asylum policy. For example, there are ambiguities on the issue of who actually qualifies as a legitimate asylum seeker. All in all, there are significant gains, but some practices even fall short of international standards and law. Of particular concern to UNHCR is the list of "safe countries," the accelerated asylum procedure, and the return of asylum seekers during the appeal process. The "safe countries" issue is of particular concern because, after all, a given country can be safe for others but not for everybody. Mr. Hall went on to comment on the transposition of EU directives into national law. He pointed out that they are intended as minimum standards and not as the means to settle for the lowest common denominator. UNHCR is following this issue and the actual application of the law with great attention.

Next, the speaker talked about what has happened since the enlargement of the EU in May 2004 and the consequences of the application of the Dublin regulations in the new member states. First of all, the ten new countries do not have the capability to deal with the sudden influx of migrants. They are, therefore, not in a position to deal with the implications of the Dublin regulations. Their asylum systems could implode. This is because asylum seekers are now sent back to the entry countries, often the ten new members, because they are on the geographical border of the EU. They are in fact the entry point for the majority of asylum seekers into the EU. The flow to the old member states has decreased substantially because of the proximity of the new members to source countries.

UNHCR suggests that the EU should move beyond harmonization to solve the issue. UNHCR believes that collective decision making and burden sharing would protect asylum seekers and the states themselves. A fully-fledged EU institution should be the goal. However, there is no political will to establish one. Therefore, one must be established in phases. As set by the The Hague Programme, the deadline for the implementation of a common asylum system for the EU is 2010.

The second presentation was entitled

"Building a Common European Refugee and Migration Policy: What are the Challenges?"

Ms. Sandra Pratt, acting head of unit asylum and immigration at the European Commission in Brussels, discussed the The Hague Programme, which builds on the mandate of the Tampere agreement of 1999. Ms. Pratt stated in her presentation that if the EU does not solve the issue of immigration and asylum, it might lose its competitive edge in the international arena. An important factor in solving this issue is the recognition of the need to work together. The EU countries must work together to find a solution. The EU is moving towards a common policy and the European Commission believes that the EU is about halfway there.

Ms. Pratt stated that much progress has been made since Tampere. Minimum standards of treatment towards asylum seekers are now in European Union law and the European Commission attempts to guarantee that these standards are met. In addition, much progress has been made in the fight against illegal immigration and in border control. The quality of the treatment of asylum seekers has equally been improved.

The speaker emphasised the importance of a closer dialogue with third countries,

combined with the provision of technical and financial support. The money, available to deal with the issue has not been fully used. She made it clear that in order to avoid social problems within Europe, the plan of the EU has to succeed. The integration of migrants will pose a great challenge in the next ten years. She mentioned the lack of statistical data as one of the main problems, as there have been problems assembling it.

Mr. Heikki Mattila, of the Department of Research and Publications of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Geneva, was the next speaker. He spoke on

“The Problem of Irregular Migration: What Can be Done to Combat Criminal People-Trafficking Networks?”

Mr. Mattila started by stating that the IOM attempts to act as a broker between population rich countries and the industrial countries, which have selective demands. One of the main challenges is how to deal with the negative image of migration, when at the same time there is a great need for migrants. Because immigration is a global issue, it is influenced by many things. When tackling immigration and emigration, dialogue is always needed between the countries of origin and the countries of destination. Mr. Mattila gave the following definition of irregular migration: “A failure to meet the entry requirements of a country and/or the bypassing of the exit controls in the origin country.”

He then listed the push and pull factors which are at work.

Emigration push in sending countries:

- Survival migration
- Unemployment and underemployment
- The feminization of poverty
- Environmental disruption

Demand pull:

- Demography
- Labour shortage
- The demand for cheap labor
- High skilled workers: directly or via menial jobs and regularization

Mr. Mattila said that especially in Southern Europe small companies often relocate work to the informal sector, because they are too small to move to somewhere else to gain access to cheap labour. In addition, countries in Southern Europe traditionally have considerable informal sectors. Therefore, they have plenty of illegal migration. Until 2000, there was no internationally accepted definition of trafficking in persons. Now, a UN protocol exists to prevent, suppress and punish the trafficking in persons. The speaker went on to give a definition of transnational crime: “It is the assistance to a person to gain illegal entry to a country and taking profit from it.” He mentioned the existence of a division of labour in the transnational organizations that engage in trafficking in persons. There are arrangers, recruiters, transporters, investors, informers, guides and money movers. The groups are transnational, but, however, there is no central authority or godfather. They are “loosely connected international networks.” Full service smugglers, that transport people from their home village to the source country, come from Russia, China and Albania.

What are the ways to combat trafficking in migrants?

- Employ maximum co-operation between states
- Target the profits of the smugglers
- Attack the corrupt support structure and networks which make the operations possible.
- Use uniform penalties for traffickers.
- Increase the number of legal migration channels
- Combat the informal sector
- Monitoring of controls

How to better protect immigrants?

- Create national legislation.
- There needs to be a possibility by the immigrant to stay in the destination country and testify.
- Employ a victim support system, such as: legal aid and social benefits.
- Rehabilitation of the victims.
- Increase the number of signatory states to existing international instruments.

The IOM approach consists of:

- Prevention
- Prosecution
- Protection
- Policy dialogue and research

In conclusion, Mr. Mattila listed the challenges, which lie ahead:

- The introduction of a partnership between government, civil society and the business sector.
- The demographic problem needs to be addressed.
- The introduction of legal channels of migration.

The last speaker of the first day was Mr. Richard Williams, EU representative from the London-based European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE). The topic of his presentation was

“Recent Measures in the European Union and in the EU Member States that Restrict the Rights of Refugees.”

The speaker started his presentation by saying that this was a very important time in the development of EU asylum policy. He mentioned the The Hague agenda and the fact that it had established the date of 2010 as the deadline to have all the legislation in place for a common European asylum system. In his view this was a very ambitious goal and the European Union was still very far from achieving it. He gave three examples:

1. The European Union cannot agree on any kind of common list of safe countries.
2. The Chechens have a very different chance of getting their asylum application accepted. In Slovakia their chance is close to zero whilst in Austria it is 94%.
3. Italy has sent arriving boats back to Libya, with close to 2000 people, with little or no review of their status. This is a flagrant breach of the basic standards, which

were agreed upon recently.

Mr. Williams saw a tendency in Europe to think that people are coming here because they are attracted by our benefits, when in fact, people are leaving their countries of origin because of push factors, not pull factors. He then talked about the Tampere Agenda of 1999, stating that ECRE was initially very positive about the outcome because:

- 1) It guaranteed the right to seek asylum
- 2) It guaranteed access to protection in the EU
- 3) It recognized the need to ensure integration
- 4) The important element of a comprehensive approach to migration to focus on root causes was included.

However, this programme has not been fulfilled. The speaker was also critical about the fact that the agreement did not guarantee the right of family reunion. The number of asylum seekers in the old 15 countries has fallen, but it has increased in the ten accession countries. ECRE has noticed some trends since Tampere: There has been an intensification of border control and there has been an extension of control abroad. For example, British airline liaison officers have prevented 30,000 people from reaching Britain without any regard to their rights as asylum seekers.

In addition, there is great concern over so called "fast track" processing systems, where asylum claims are settled in 48 hours. ECRE is not convinced that the status of people can be properly assessed in this short time. Other concerns were i.a. the lack of interpreters in Bulgaria, the fact that the Danish Refugee Appeal Board does not have access to intelligence on terrorism, and that the UK indefinitely detains people who have been linked with international terrorism. In some countries, appeal rights have been removed and in others you may only appeal after you have been deported. ECRE has also noticed deteriorating reception conditions and widespread detention. This is important because the reception centers play an important role in the integration process. There has also been a pattern of limiting access to welfare, which has led to destitution. In the UK, if you do not apply for asylum before the deadline you can be stripped of all support. In Norway, for the first time in July 2003, rejected asylum seekers were removed from reception centers. In Switzerland rejected applicants no longer receive welfare benefits since April 2004. In some countries the shape of the reception centers has been brought into question. There has also been a reluctance to provide language classes before asylum applications were settled.

The ECRE assessment of the Tampere process: there were some positive elements, but many negative.

Positive:

- The right to subsidiary protection in EU law.
- The recognition of non-state actors of persecution.
- Recognition of the 1951 refugee convention in EU legislation.
- Basic support and procedural requirements will mean, among other things that housing and food will be provided. This was not the case in Greece and Spain.

Negative:

- There are inadequate procedures.
- There have been many derogations from standards.
- There is widespread destitution
- Shifting responsibility (harmonization of standards to lowest common denominator).
- The spread of worst practice.
- Incoherence in decision-making.

According to Mr. Williams the big question will be whether the EU states live up to the goals and the timetable they have set for themselves, and if they will have the political will to reach these goals.

The speaker had several doubts concerning the regional protection programmes.

- How will they improve the protection of the refugees?
- Will they take into account operational realities?
- Will they involve UNHCR, NGOs and refugees?
- Can the use of resettlement and development assistance improve protection in regions?

His recommendations were:

- Put protection at the heart of EU policy, there is too much concern over abuse of the system.
- Increase public support for asylum.
- Make sure that the EU model is not based on the lowest common denominator of standards.
- Consistent high quality decision-making on asylum. Decisions that are consistent throughout Europe.
- Bring the integration agenda into the asylum agenda, in order to ease integration.
- Balance border controls with refugee protection.
- The EU needs to support the search of a durable solution for the 7 million refugees warehoused in refugee camps around the world.
- Protection needs to be put at the heart of EU policy. There is too much concern over abuse of the system.

Mr. Marcel H. van Herpen, director of the Cicero Foundation, gave the opening presentation of the second day. His topic was

“The Political Use of the Migration Issue: Is the Emergence of Post-Modern Populist Anti-Immigration Movements à la the Dutch ‘List Pim Fortuyn’ heralding a New Trend in Europe?”

Mr. van Herpen started his presentation by posing an interesting question: Are the recent problems in Holland a model for future trouble in Europe? He then went on to discuss the murder of Theo van Gogh by a radical Islamist terrorist. He was murdered because of a movie he made about the supposed oppression of Muslim women by their husbands.

Mr. van Herpen then went on to discuss populism and stated that it uses a discrepancy between the needs of the population and the solutions offered by mainstream politicians. The discrepancy is often caused by a blocked political system. Populists always offer quick and simple solutions. They use weak groups, such as immigrants in society as scapegoats to blame for the problems. The electorate of populist parties are the real victims of social problems, but also imaginary victims with an anti-migrant attitude. It is interesting that often the new rich support populist parties because they do not like red tape and prefer quick solutions.

The speaker listed three shifts that explain the Pim Fortuyn phenomenon:

- 1.) A generalised decline of trust in the political system. This trend affects the system as a whole: the government, the political parties (whose memberships have plummeted), politicians

- (including those of the opposition parties) and the institutions. As a result the electorate is more volatile and sceptical.
- 2.) A shift from materialist values to postmodern values. The political system used to be predictable. In the past your social position determined what party you voted for. Until the 1970's politics was based on socio-economic criteria. The emphasis, however, has shifted from materialist values to post-materialist values. Issues like tolerance, the environment, autonomy and spiritual well-being have gained in importance. As a result workers, who tended to vote for left wing parties, now vote more and more for right wing anti-immigration parties, while middle class voters now vote for left wing parties because these promote environmental protection and liberal social values.
 - 3.) A third shift is the massive growth of migration flows in the world. The first wave was in the 1960s when the guest workers came to the Western Europe. This was followed by a wave of family reunions in the 1980s. And a third wave came in the 1990s with the Balkan Wars and new groups of migrants and asylum seekers.

Lastly, Mr. van Herpen went on to talk about Pim Fortuyn. He was a former member of the social democratic party, who lectured at a university in Groningen, in the northern Netherlands, who openly expressed his homosexuality. His anti-immigration stance was rather unusual, because he did not use any of the old socio-economic arguments of the old anti-immigration parties, but rather emphasised progressive, post-modern values as tolerance, emancipation of women, and the rights of minorities, i.a. gays, not to be discriminated against. The Netherlands is according to the available sociological data the most post-modern country in the world. This, to a large extent, explains the Pim Fortuyn phenomenon. Fortuyn wrote a book with the title: The Islamisation of Our Culture, in which he stated that there were big differences between Islamic and Dutch Culture. These differences concern:

- Individual vs. collective responsibility
- Division of state and church
- The relationship between children and parents and between men and women
- The position of homosexuals and values in general.

He argued that the Dutch should defend their tolerant values against intolerant Islam and offered the following 'solutions':

- The Netherlands is full, therefore no more immigrants should be allowed to enter the country, including refugees and family reunions
- Cancel the Dutch participation in the Schengen treaty
- The Netherlands should withdraw from the Geneva Convention
- Article 1 of the Dutch constitution (anti-discrimination article) should be cancelled in order to be able to spread existing immigrants evenly over the country

These populist solutions were attractive for 15 - 20% of the Dutch population because they seemed to be quick and simple. In reality his proposed measures would not save Dutch post-

modern values, but rather herald the end of the liberal and tolerant Dutch society, we know. One could, however, expect that his approach will also become more popular in other countries. We see already the same trend in Flanders where Vlaams Blok, when it recently had to change its name into Vlaams Belang (Flemish Interest) not only changed its name, but also started to use the same post-modern arguments to support its anti-immigration policy in order to appeal to a broader public.

The second presentation of the day was by Dr. Patrick Simon from the National Institute of Demographic Studies (INED) in Paris. His presentation was entitled

“Integration and Exclusion of Migrants in France: The Law Banning All Religious Symbols in Schools as an Example of the French Approach.”

Dr. Simon started his presentation by introducing a key question: How to manage visibility? He then went on to say that the headscarf question came up in January 2004, the law against it was drafted in February and it is now implemented in schools.

The first incident that happened in schools with regard to the headscarf, took place in 1989, when two girls refused to remove it in school, and were consequently expelled. Out of this arose the question of how to accommodate the headscarf? Another question is whether the state and state officials should remain neutral. Between 1989 and 2003, when there was no legislation on this specific issue, schools made very diverse decisions. Some were very tolerant and others refused to allow the practice. This negotiation through “scarf mediators” prevailed for 14 years.

Dr. Simon then went on to elaborate on the reasons why this issue has arisen now. He first pointed out that there are no clear statistics on the number of disputes, thus it is impossible to determine whether there have recently been more disputes. He listed two important factors:

- 1.) The rise of Islam in French society.
- 2.) The attacks of September 11th 2001 have increased the tension around Islam in French society.

He also stated that there is no clear line between French society and immigrant society. The extent of possible accommodation remains open. In addition, there has been an expansion of radical Islamist organizations. Dr. Simon also stated that violence against women now plays a key role in the headscarf debate.

Part of the reason why this question has arisen now is that school officials are tired of, what they see as provocation. In their view the very presence of the headscarf in schools runs against the key message of the schools. The question of visibility comes into play here. A part of the reason why girls now use the headscarf, even though their mothers often do not, is because the second generation is now a part of the society and tries to use visible signs to be identified by society. One of these signals happens to come from religion. In France the attack on the line between public and private life, is seen as an attack against the rules of the game.

Dr Simon then went on to talk about the history of the French model of integration. It is an old system, dating from approximately 1850. There have been three major periods of integration:

- 1.) 1850-1900, during the construction of nation states in Europe. During this time the concept of citizenship was still not fully developed.
- 2.) The period between the two world wars.
- 3.) Post World War II migration.

In France, Portuguese immigrants are very well integrated, but postcolonial migrants, like the Algerians, are not. In France there has always been a policy of assimilation. The immigrants are supposed to disappear. In France the realization that the immigrants were here to stay, came very late. Their children grew older and entered the labour market, but because of their origin, were often unemployed. This leads to a redrawing of the French model in the early 1990's. The deal was that if the immigrants respect the norms and values of the society, they would be a part of society. This was a clear shift from assimilation.

Dr Simon then went on to discuss the headscarf issue a little more. The debate on the headscarf has two sides. On the one hand, if it was allowed, you would be promoting integration by adjusting your values. On the other hand, it can be seen as pure discrimination of Muslim women if you consider women should wear the headscarf. Dr. Simon then concluded that a line should be drawn. There is an extent to which French society should accommodate immigrants. The question is: where exactly should the line be drawn? He thinks that it is dubious that at the same time as one is trying to emancipate Muslim girls, France is throwing them out of school. After all, not all religions even have evident symbols and thus will not be affected by the new legislation. He added that the headscarf ban will probably not influence migration to France.

Mr. Jean-Christophe Dumont from the OECD in Paris gave the next presentation which was entitled:

“The Role of Migration in the EU Labour Market: What Kind of Migration Does Europe Need to Satisfy Its Need for Skilled and Unskilled Labour?”

Mr. Dumont started his presentation by pointing out that highly skilled migration is not a politically sensitive issue. Europe has an ageing, highly skilled workforce and there is a need to alleviate labour shortages with immigration. In his view the migration system should be changed to facilitate highly skilled immigration. He also pointed out that human capital has always been seen as an asset for a country. In addition, highly skilled workers integrate better for a number of reasons, like the fact that they have relatively high incomes.

In the 1990's employers throughout Europe started reporting labour shortages in highly skilled jobs as well as semi skilled and low skilled jobs. There were many reasons for this:

- 1.) The economic boom of the 1990's.
- 2.) The rapid technological changes that were taking place.
- 3.) There was a mismatch between the supply and the demand of labour.
- 4.) There was a clear lack of labour mobility.
- 5.) There were structural rigidities in the labour market.
- 6.) There was an overestimation of the needs

Most OECD countries reacted accordingly to facilitate highly qualified immigration. Germany, for example, adopted the “green card” program in order to recruit highly skilled workers from such countries as Poland, Algeria and India. Many countries even offered special incentives, such as tax reductions, to get highly skilled workers. Mr. Dumont went on to say that OECD countries clearly benefit from highly skilled migration. In addition, he stated that almost all OECD countries have a positive net inflow of highly skilled migrants. He also stated that short-term labour shortages are much easier to satisfy with migration, although, it does cost a considerable amount of money.

The speaker stressed the following points:

- The objectives of countries are different.
- The policy adopted needs to suit the needs.

- Structural problems will not be solved even with a constant flow of immigrants.
- The real question when formulating an immigration policy is what type of objective you have, not what type of system *should* we have. It is important to discuss the most efficient policy for the specific objective.

Mr. Dumont went on to say that the countries of origin have to offer favorable conditions for return. For example, China offers the chance to have two babies for returning immigrants. In addition, he recommended that there should be no immigration from countries that have labour shortages. He stated that there needs to be a shared responsibility between the sending and receiving country. He identified four important things to keep in mind:

- 1.) Efficiency, in order to: make international mobility easier.
- 2.) Ethics, in order to take into account the potential negative effects.
- 3.) Equity, in order to share the costs of training.
- 4.) Sustainability, in order to help the countries of origin to better manage their human resources, giving them good data, which they can use to keep track of their labour resources.

Also, he identified a very deliberate objective of the OECD countries of recruiting foreign students and then wishing to keep them. In order to achieve this, the OECD countries have made the transition from student to worker status much easier. There has been a huge increase in the number of students coming to the OECD countries. There are, however, many problems with choosing the right people for migration: how to identify the best people and determining which are the characteristics you value? He also stated that it is much easier to manage short-term migration, than long-term migration. One of the reasons is that short-term migration is less susceptible to changes in the business cycle.

In conclusion Mr. Dumont stated that:

- There is short and long-term need for skilled labour migration.
- Immigration will only have a limited effect on labour shortages.
- Existing labour reserves should be tapped.
- The impact of selective migration on the origin country has to be kept in mind and international co-operation needs to be strengthened.

The last presentation was entitled

“EU Enlargement and Labour Migration: What are the Effects? The Example of Britain”

In his presentation Mr. Sriskandarajah argued that Britain has had a successful migration policy and has benefited from this policy economically. He stated that the example of Britain is a very rare successful story in managing migration. Mr. Sriskandarajah, who is a migration expert at the Institute for Public Policy Research in London, gave an overview of the debate that took place in Britain before the accession of the ten new countries into the EU. The debate focused on whether the migration was going to be in the form of floodgates or turn stiles. In the UK, migration dominated the debate regarding EU enlargement, this was in large part because of the media. There was an unhappy coincidence of a historical unease about Europe and concern about migration. When the right wing press put these two issues together, a media frenzy resulted. There was much concern over so called ‘benefit tourism’, people coming to Britain in order to take advantage of the generous welfare benefits, and that the

government did not have control over the borders, these being full of holes. In addition, there was the issue of the Roma people. This was fuelled in large part by prejudice. Now, after six months, Mr. Sriskandarajah has the evidence which proves that the policy adopted by the government worked.

The existing member states were concerned by the expansion because it was a large-scale enlargement consisting of ten new members with 75 million people. In addition, there existed large economic disparities between current members and accession countries. There was also concern over the fact that the migration would be uncontrolled. That you would only need to show your passport to gain access to a country. It was predicted that a net number of 17,000 people would arrive in the UK. In the feverish atmosphere in which countries attempted to put restrictions on migration, the UK decided to allow migrant workers free access, because unemployment was historically low. Especially in low skilled professions, there was a huge shortage. And it was thought that the UK would have an early advantage in attracting semi-skilled workers. It was decided that you could come freely and if you found a job in the first month, then you were merely obliged to register with the home office.

Between May and September the home office received 91,000 applications from people from accession countries. At first this seems to be a great deal more than the estimate of 17,000. It is, however, not a net figure and does not reveal how many have gone back and how many were already in the country. 56% percent of the applicants were Polish, 17% Lithuanian and 10% were Slovak. 53% of the applicants were male. They were mostly young: 45% were 18-24 and 39% were 25-34 years old. 17% were factory workers. 80% earned approximately the minimum wage. Only a quarter was registered to work in London. Only 16 people had applications for work benefits accepted, 500 people applied.

This was an appropriate way to deal with the issue because it allowed the UK to further its economic and political objectives. Migration policy was used to pursue economic and political priorities. There was a compromise, which allowed access and encouraged people to register. It assured the public that government had an idea of how many were coming in. It helped the UK's relationship with accession countries, tackled the informal sector and it absorbed many illegal workers into the system. The reforms also promoted the UK's economic efficiency, an opportunity the UK took advantage of. It was the first time that excellent data for future projections were gathered.

Mr. Sriskandarajah concluded that the UK had exceptional conditions that allowed it to take advantage of the situation. A country like Germany could not have done this, because she has a much higher unemployment rate and a much less robust labour market. The issue was about economic pragmatism, not about the rationale of EU enlargement. The UK needed people and thus opened its borders. In fact, the debate that took place was exactly the same as the one that took place when Spain and Portugal joined. The result was also similar: there was no exodus from the accession countries to the old member states.