

Migration and Development - Reflection Dinner

European Parliament
2 May 2007

Summary Conclusions



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The reflection dinner of 2 May 2007 has been an occasion of consideration and open dialogue on the links between migration and development. Its main message is that only a recognition of the link between migration, development and human rights in their complete dimensions allows the achievement of the highest benefits from related policies. Human rights recognition and guarantees are not only ethical commands and international legal obligations, but in fact pre-conditions for any form of sustainable and durable economic and social development, essential for managing migration. Therefore they cannot be considered as simply cross-cutting matter, but must be treated as specific clear-cut major issues.

The subject was analysed in the frame of the political cornerstones and the theoretical assumptions and interconnections that define and characterise its debate at present. Three case studies based on field experience offered elements for, at the same time, a re-examination of current policies, a better focusing of general assumptions and an outlining of new fields of reflection and orientation for action.

The discussion that followed showed largely shared orientations towards a certain number of elements that could nourish the political debate and concrete initiatives in the near future.

1. It is recognised that even if positive steps have been made within the current debate on migration and development, a number of policies need clearly to be revisited:

- Current policies essentially focused on flows controls and enforcement have failed in reducing forced migration.
- Integration policies remain a central issue, necessary to enable migrants to contribute to development of both origin and host countries, and must provide for a secure residence status with clear set of rights.
- An extension of the EU neighbourhood policy to all the ACP countries could be a valid instrument contributing to development and reducing forced migration.
- EU conceptional thinking and policy should not be concentrated only on South/North migrations; they must also systematically tackle the problems of South/South migrations

2. The understanding of the links between migration and development must be greatly improved.

- In order to increase a clear practical perception of these links, it is essential to take advantage of field experience institutionalising connections between institutions and other actors.
- Key policy makers acknowledge the link between migration and development, but their acknowledgement remains substantially abstract and brings about very little consistency between development and migration policies: it is difficult, for instance, to perceive in the current organisation of legal migration any reflection or incorporation of policies of development and brain drain in the countries of origin.
- Return strategies, diasporas policies and circular migration policies are rarely qualified by a clear and holistic frame analysis of the countries' of origin development needs and policies.

3. A serious shortcoming of the institutional debate, neglecting an important potential resource of development both in the country of origin and in the host country, is the exclusion of forced migrants – such as refugees and internally displaced persons - from the existing migration and development policy agenda. Forced migrants can be an important factor of development of both countries once they enjoy basic rights.
 - It is demonstrated that dissemination of good practices towards forced migrants, such as education, vocational training and employment, successfully contributes much needed skills and expertise to the development of their host and home countries; above all they participate in building democracies and more just, peaceful societies.
 - Basic human rights are the same for nationals and non nationals. Reflections and policies should address themselves to appropriate different—but not discriminating—modalities of their exercise.
 - Increasing legal channels of migration reduces forced migration, including much of the worst and most dangerous forms of migration, such as human trafficking.

4. There is a need to continue investigating root causes of migration.
 - The root causes of migration are still scarcely addressed in the debate on migration and development.
 - Successful policy elements, such as circular migration, can only be envisaged and developed with clear views on the root causes of migration.
 - Shared responsibility and facilitated connections between all relevant actors, including NGOs, are needed to tackle the scarce knowledge of this issue.
 - Development policies address root causes and have a long term perspective, whereas migration policies more typically aim at immediate results and have a short term perspective. It is essential that both perspectives be reconciled.