Common immigration policy for Europe: principles, actions and tools

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The European Pact on Immigration and Asylum was adopted by the European Council of 15-16 October 2008, following the Commission's Communication of June 2008 "A Common Immigration Policy for Europe: Principles, actions and tools". Building on the progress already achieved over ten years, the Pact is a further stepping-stone towards a comprehensive EU migration policy. The European Council makes **five basic commitments**, which will continue to be developed and transposed into concrete measures in particular in the programme to follow on from the Hague Programme:

1. to organise legal immigration to take account of the priorities, needs and reception capacities determined by each Member State, and to encourage integration;

2. to control illegal immigration by ensuring that illegal immigrants return to their countries of origin or to a country of transit;

3. to make border controls more effective;

4. to construct a Europe of asylum;

5. to create a comprehensive partnership with the countries of origin and of transit in order to encourage the synergy between migration and development.

When adopting the Pact, the European Council decided to hold an annual debate on immigration and asylum policies. This annual debate will enable the European Council to monitor implementation, by both the European Union and the Member States, of the Pact and of the next multi-annual programme on freedom, security and justice that will from 2010 follow on from the Hague Programme.

As regards this debate, in the Pact itself the European Council:

- invited the Commission to **present a report to the Council each year**, based on Member States' contributions and accompanied, as necessary, by proposals for recommendations on the implementation, by both the European Union and the Member States, of this Pact and of the programme that will follow on from the Hague Programme;
- stated that the debate will also enable the European Council to be **kept informed of the most significant developments** planned by each Member State in conducting its immigration and asylum policy.

To prepare for the debate, the European Council invited the Commission to propose a **tracking method** to the Council. This Communication responds to that request.

The purpose of the tracking method as described in this Communication is to prepare for the European Council's first annual debate which will be held in June 2010.

The tracking method will be the process by which the Commission will prepare an annual report to the Council using contributions from Member States and factual information from various sources.

The Commission considers that the tracking method will add a structured annual cycle of reporting and high-level political debate to the area of immigration and asylum. The annual report will be a **key political statement** from the Commission on policies on immigration and asylum implemented at EU and national levels. Holding an annual debate in the European Council signals that immigration and asylum are major political issues of European integration. The process will thus ensure that the new impetus of the European Pact and of the future multi-annual programme on freedom, security and justice is maintained, and that the EU's common immigration and asylum policy will continue to be developed taking account of the specific needs of each Member State and in the common interest of the European Union.