Economic immigration: a Community approach

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The Council held an exchange of views on the Green Paper on an EU approach to managing economic migration, submitted by the Commission on 14 January 2005, and in particular on its implications for the working of domestic labour markets, in the context of the European employment strategy.

The Green Paper concerns admission procedures for the economic migration of third country nationals. It proposes a number of options with a view to the progressive introduction of a Community legislative framework, in accordance with an action plan which the Commission is due to submit this year. The action plan would follow on from the adoption of the Hague Programme, which laid the foundations for progress within the framework of freedom, security and justice.

The aim of the discussion was to enable the Commission to sound out delegations' initial reactions to the questions asked in the Green Paper.

Discussion centred on the following three topics in particular:

1) possible Community measures (for example minimum standards, accelerated admission procedures when there is a shortage of labour in a particular sector, improving the EURES system, etc.) for access by third country nationals to domestic labour markets, also taking into account the need for flexibility in view of the diversity of national situations;

2) the possibility of adopting a sectoral approach to the admission of third country nationals to domestic labour markets with the aim of promoting access by certain categories of migrants according to needs;

3) the need for better coordination of procedures relating to immigration and access to the labour market on the one hand with measures for the social integration of third country nationals in the host country on the other.

During the discussion, delegations acknowledged that the subject of migration warranted action at EU level, insofar as all European Union States were affected when third country nationals entered a Member State. However, action should fully respect the principle of subsidiarity by setting a common framework for some aspects while not encroaching on Member States' responsibility for managing migratory flows.