



THE SECRETARIAT

REGIONAL HEARING FOR EUROPE

**Budapest, Hungary
25 - 26 November 2004**

SUMMARY REPORT

Introduction

On 25 and 26 November 2004, the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM) organised a Hearing for the pan-European region in Budapest, Hungary. The Budapest Hearing was the third in a series of consultations that the Commission is holding in five different regions of the world in the course of 2004 and 2005.

The Regional Hearings provide the Commission with an important opportunity to hear the views of a wide range of stakeholders and to gain insight into those migration issues which are of specific relevance to each region. The findings of the Hearings will contribute to the Commission's Final Report, which will be presented to the United Nations Secretary-General and other stakeholders in mid-2005.

GCIM Co-chairs Mr. Jan Karlsson and Dr Mamphela Ramphele, presided over the event. The opening of the Hearing was addressed by Ms. Krisztina Berta, Deputy State Secretary, Ministry of the Interior, Jean-Louis de Brouwer, Justice and Home Affairs, European Commission, and by Global Commission members Dr. Rita Süßmuth (Germany), Valery Tishkov (Russian Federation), and Joris Demmink (Netherlands). Commission member Mary Robinson and Executive Director Rolf K. Jenny provided summaries of the Hearing's proceedings during the closing plenary session.

Some 190 persons attended the Hearing, including officials from more than 30 European countries, as well as representatives of 12 non-European members of the Core Group of States which follows and supports the work of the Global Commission. The European Commission, a variety of global international organizations, other regional bodies and initiatives, representatives of NGOs and human rights organizations, the private sector, the media, as well as research and policy institutes, were also present at the Hearing.

The Hearing took place both in plenary and in working panels that involved three different stakeholder groups: (1) governments; (2) regional bodies, international organizations and experts; and (3) civil society organizations, including NGOs, the private sector and the media.

The agenda of the Hearing covered four principal topics:

- I. Irregular migration;
- II. The economic dimensions of international migration;
- III. The human rights of migrants and migrants in society, and,
- IV. The governance of international migration.

This summary report reflects the general content of discussion in both working panels and plenary. No statements in the report are attributed to individual participants or delegations.

The European context

In the course of the two-day Hearing, participants made a number of important observations with respect to the general context of migration policymaking in the pan-European region.

First, despite the recent expansion of the EU, the pan-European region is still a heterogeneous one, not only in terms of the political, economic, social and cultural characteristics of different states, but also in relation to the specific migration challenges with which those countries are confronted. As a result, it is not always possible to make broad generalizations on migration policy that apply equally to the northern, southern, eastern and western parts of the region.

Certain countries in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, for example, share some of the characteristics of EU member states, in the sense that they are confronted with the problem of shrinking and ageing populations. But, like many countries in the developing world, they also produce significant numbers of irregular migrants and in some cases have a high degree of economic dependence on migrant remittances.

The Hearing was also reminded that forced migration continues to be an important issue in the Balkans and the Caucasus, regions which accommodate a complex mixture of refugees, returnees, IDPs, irregular and transit migrants.

Second, the Hearing agreed that the issue of international migration would continue to occupy a very prominent place on the political agenda of most states in the region. Addressing this theme, a number of participants pointed out that migration had become a very emotive issue in many parts of Europe, provoking particularly strong - and often negative - feelings amongst the general public.

While some politicians had tried to lead public opinion in constructive directions, others had deliberately mobilized xenophobia and anti-migrant sentiments as a means of gaining electoral support. In this environment, the Hearing agreed, the formulation of coherent and transparent migration policies had proven to be particularly difficult.

Third, there was a general recognition that the European Union represented a particularly bold - and in many respects successful - effort to address migration issues at the regional level. Participants pointed particularly to the progressive removal of internal border controls within the European Union, and asked whether the movement of a EU citizen from one member state to another should still be regarded as 'international migration'.

Assessing the EU's record in the domain of international migration, many participants made reference to the steps that have been taken in relation to the harmonization of asylum policies, as well as initiatives taken by the EU concerning the 'root causes' of international and irregular migration, the linkage between migration and development, migrant integration, and, most recently, labour migration to Europe.

According to a number of Hearing participants, such initiatives, including the recently established Hague Programme, are indicative of the extent to which the EU considers the issue of migration to be not only a regional concern, but also a global issue, to be addressed in a comprehensive manner.

Other participants underlined the need for the EU and its member states to ensure that its efforts to address the issue of migration in a global and comprehensive manner go beyond

the level of policy statements. What, for example, does it actually mean to address the ‘root causes’ of migration? What will this mean in terms of concrete programmes and projects, and what level of resources will be devoted to such initiatives?

Finally, the Hearing identified a number of important migration challenges that seem likely to confront the states and societies of Europe in the years to come:

- will the EU continue to expand (to include Turkey, for example), and what will be the migratory consequences of such an expansion?
- to what extent will the diminishing size and ageing profile of the European population prompt the region to admit significant numbers of migrants from other parts of the world?
- can states and other actors address the apparent growth in the scale of irregular migration into and across Europe, and can they do so in a way that protects the institution of asylum?
- what can be done to ensure that migrants and ethnic minorities enjoy the benefits of full social, economic and political inclusion in the countries where they have settled?

I. Irregular migration

There was a general agreement amongst Hearing participants that the issue of irregular migration is one of the most pressing concerns for governments and citizens in many parts of Europe. But the exact nature and scale of this issue requires further precision.

First, the concept of irregular migration is used to include a number of very different phenomena, including illegal entry; overstaying after regular entry; the abuse of asylum systems; the failure to remove unsuccessful asylum seekers; human trafficking and smuggling; and the organization of bogus marriages and educational opportunities. The current discourse on international migration, it was suggested, is too prone to consider this variety of phenomena in an undifferentiated manner.

Second, relatively little is known about the profile of the irregular migrants living in or transiting through the pan-European region. According to some participants in the Hearing, irregular migrants probably represent between 10 and 15 per cent of the total migrant stock in the region. Many of them are thought to be males who are aged between 20 and 40, and who are seeking an opportunity to work, save or send home some before eventually returning to their countries of origin. But such generalizations are based on very limited empirical research, and there are reasons to believe that women constitute a growing proportion of the irregular migrants in and from the pan-European region.

The causes and consequences of irregular migration

Turning to the causes of irregular migration, the Hearing compiled a long list of factors that have contributed to the growth of this phenomenon. Looking at countries of origin, participants referred to the problems of poverty, unemployment and underemployment, economic disparities and the concentration of wealth, corruption, poor governance, human rights violations and demographic pressures.

With respect to destination countries, participants suggested that the growth of irregular migration was related to the high standard of living and demand for labour in many European states, the emergence of ‘dual economies’ with large informal sectors in those countries, the

ability of irregular migrants in some European countries to access local services such as health care and education, and the presence of diaspora populations that facilitate the entry and absorption of new arrivals

According to a number of speakers, the growth of irregular migration could also be seen as a response to the increasingly restrictive migration and asylum policies pursued by European states in earlier years.

The Hearing was provided with a considerable amount of information in relation to the negative consequences of irregular migration. Irregular migrants, the Hearing was told, often find themselves in situations of insecurity and exploitation, and may consequently have to resort to 'survival crime'. And yet because of their irregularity, they are often unable or unwilling to seek redress from the authorities in the country where they reside.

In Europe, as in other parts of the world, female migrant domestic workers are especially vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, and are not always adequately protected under national law.

Despite these observations, the Hearing was informed that 'terrible reality' experienced by many irregular migrants is in many cases no worse than the 'terrible reality' that they experienced at home before their departure. In this respect, it was suggested, irregular migrants might be regarded not only as people who are in breach of the law, but also as people who resort to desperate measures in order to improve their situation in life..

The Hearing was also reminded that many of Europe's irregular migrants are unable to access public services, and so the burden of assisting them often falls on NGOs and other hard-pressed civil society institutions. Professionals such as doctors, teachers and social workers may also be placed in a difficult dilemma in assisting irregular migrants if it is in contravention of the law to do so.

Irregular migration, the Hearing was told, can have a number of negative social consequences. In some eastern European countries, for example, large numbers of mothers have migrated to Western Europe in an irregular manner, leaving their children without adequate care in their countries of origin.

Others have taken their children with them to Western Europe, but those children are often left alone during the day because their mother is working and because their irregular status prevents them from attending school. Relatively little is known about the real dimensions and consequences of this 'mother drain' problem, and according to some Hearing participants, it should be the subject of further research and analysis.

A number of participants in the Hearing pointed out that irregular migrants who make unfounded applications for refugee status and who fail to leave a country once their request has been rejected undermine public confidence in asylum systems and thereby jeopardize the welfare of bona fide refugees. In this context, it was noted, the notions of 'asylum seeker' and 'illegal immigrant' had become synonymous in several parts of Europe.

Finally, participants in the Hearing drew attention to the fact that irregular migration also has negative implications for established migrants, ethnic minorities and low-income communities in the inner-city areas where irregular migrants tend to congregate. More generally, it was pointed out, irregular migration is often regarded as a threat to social cohesion, national sovereignty and even national security, especially when it involves corruption and organized crime.

Policies and strategies

Focusing on the policies and strategies that might be used to address the issue of irregular migration, governmental and other representatives in the Hearing acknowledged that this area of public policy was characterized by a high level of contradiction.

On one hand, states and citizens in Europe appear largely hostile to irregular migration and would like to see it eradicated. On the other hand, certain sectors of the economy in many European states (e.g. construction, catering, health care, agriculture and the sex industry) as well as many higher-income households, rely quite heavily on the cheap and flexible labour that irregular migrants are able to provide.

In addition to the question of policy contradictions, participants in the Hearing pointed to the many practical issues that limit the ability of states to control the movement of people into and out of their territory. These include long land and sea borders which are difficult to monitor; the ingenuity of human smugglers; the need for modern states to facilitate high volumes of international travel; as well as human rights and community relations considerations which limit the willingness of the authorities to undertake rigorous and intrusive forms of action against irregular migrants.

Looking to the future, the Hearing recognized that a long-term and comprehensive strategy was required to resolve the problem of irregular migration, involving a closer and more cooperative dialogue between countries of origin, transit and destination.

New efforts were also required to address the root causes of irregular migration, to provide actual and potential irregular migrants with better information about the likely consequences of their action, and to create safe and legal migration channels, linked to Europe's labour market needs. In addition, new initiatives were needed to protect irregular migrants from exploitation by employers and landlords, and to uphold the dignity of those who are held in detention and subject to deportation.

At the same time, a number of participants suggested, the scale of irregular migration in the pan-European region could be reduced by means of enhanced border controls and readmission agreements, harsher penalties for human smugglers, more extensive workplace monitoring, the use of biometric data and the return, preferably on a voluntary basis, of unsuccessful asylum seekers.

Significantly, no consensus was reached during the Hearing on whether regularization programmes constituted an effective or appropriate response to the issue of irregular migration.

Irregular migration and human rights

Many participants reminded the Hearing of the need to ensure that the human rights of irregular migrants are properly respected.

First, there is a need to clarify the exact extent of the rights to which irregular migrants are entitled under international law, given the confusion that currently exists in relation to this issue. This, it was suggested, is a task that might be undertaken by the Global Commission by setting out what the actual international body of law is and what obligations states have regardless of the status of the migrant.

Second, efforts to combat human smuggling and other forms of irregular migration should not undermine the right of people to seek and enjoy asylum in another state. Some participants in the Hearing questioned the Global Commission's decision to discuss the issue of asylum

in the context of irregular migration, underlining the special situation and protection entitlements of refugees and asylum seekers.

Participants suggested, for example, that police officers and border guards should receive proper training in these protection entitlements, so as to ensure that that people with a claim to refugee status are not exposed to danger. In addition, participants underlined the need for the states of Europe to establish ‘quick and careful’ asylum procedures and to devote additional resources to the protection of refugees, asylum seekers in regions of origin and transit countries.

Finally, Hearing participants pointed out that special efforts are required to avert human trafficking and to provide appropriate protection, assistance and psychosocial support to the victims of human trafficking, especially women and children. Such efforts should include education and awareness-raising in countries of origin, the apprehension and prosecution of traffickers, as well as efforts to reduce demand for the services that the victims of trafficking provide in destination countries.

II. Economic aspects of migration

The Hearing agreed that the notion of ‘economic migration’ was in many respects a more appropriate one than the traditional concept of ‘labour migration’. People generally move to or within Europe in order to seek new livelihood opportunities and to improve their standard of living, but they do not necessarily want to undertake the kind of wage labour associated with the organized labour migration programmes of the 1950s and 1960s.

Europe’s demographic deficit

Much of the Hearing’s discussion on the economic aspects of migration in Europe concerned the extent to which migration could or should compensate for the shrinking size and ageing profile of the region’s population.

According to some participants, Europe would eventually have to acknowledge the need for large-scale economic migration in order to fill gaps in the labour market, to sustain the region’s pensions and social security schemes and to uphold the high standard of living that many Europeans have come to expect. There was, it was suggested, a certain degree of inevitability about this process.

Other participants raised some questions about this analysis. First, while acknowledging the realities of Europe’s emerging ‘demographic deficit’, they pointed out that the situation differs from country to country, and that a region-wide policy in relation to this issue might not be the most appropriate one.

Second, it was suggested that alternative responses to the demographic problem might be found, including an extension of the retirement age, new incentives for reproduction and technological innovation. At the same time, participants pointed out that significant numbers of people in Europe, including many migrants, members of ethnic minorities and women, are currently not working. Before contemplating large-scale immigration, additional efforts should be made to bring these people into the labour market.

Third, even if an economic case for immigration could be established, the social and cultural dimensions of migration should not be discounted. According to some Hearing participants, the people of Europe might choose to accept the fact that their societies will become smaller, older and even poorer, rather than arranging for the large-scale arrival of migrants on either a temporary or long-term basis.

Despite these differences of emphasis, some participants considered that migration was likely to become one component of Europe's policy response to its emerging demographic deficit. Overall, the Hearing acknowledged that the time had come for a more open public discussion of Europe's impending demographic difficulties and the role that migration might play in addressing this issue. The European Commission's forthcoming Green Paper on legal migration was widely recognized to be an important step in that direction, and its publication was eagerly awaited.

In this context, several participants also underlined the importance of involving the private sector in the migration discourse. If employers could not find the personnel they required, it was pointed out, then they could be expected to move their capital and their enterprises to parts of the world where labour is available. The Hearing was also told that if EU member states established migration programmes that were too complicated or bureaucratic, they could actually stimulate additional irregular migration.

The economic impact of migration

Turning to the economic impact of migration, there was a general recognition that migrants make a major contribution to the European economy – as workers, as skilled professionals and as entrepreneurs. According to some participants, migrants 'give more than they take' in economic terms, and Europe's standard of living would deteriorate significantly without their presence.

Other participants took a less positive view of this issue, pointing to the high 'start-up' costs that are incurred when migrants enter a country, as well as the fact that lower-skilled migrants tend to congregate in large cities, where they place new strains on overstretched services and limited resources. This is particularly the case when the migrants concerned have arrived in an irregular manner, when they pay no taxes but are still able to access public services.

Participants also pointed out that while some migrant groups are economically successful, others tend to have relatively low rates of labour market participation and relatively high rates of welfare dependency. It was suggested that additional research is required to understand this phenomenon.

Drawing upon their experience, countries of immigration from outside the European region underlined the importance of having clearly formulated migration policies which are designed to maximize the economic impact of immigration.

Such policies, it was suggested, should include rigorous selection procedures, which match the education and skills of migrants to the changing needs of the labour market. They should also provide different entry procedures for skilled, unskilled, temporary and permanent migrants. Finally, such programmes should be supported by programmes that foster the rapid inclusion of migrants in society and which promote ethnic entrepreneurship.

Countries of origin

The Hearing also considered the economic impact of migration in countries of origin. In this respect, particular importance was placed on the remittances that migrants send back to the families and communities they have left behind, and which provide a large and relatively stable source of income and investment in many developing countries. Such remittances, the Hearing agreed, should not become a substitute for the official development assistance currently provided by the states of Europe.

There was a particular need, the Hearing agreed, to minimize the transfer costs of remittances, which can be as high as 25 per cent of the sum remitted. To address this

problem, it was suggested, an agreed set of principles and standards for the international transfer of money are required.

In addition to these proposals, Hearing participants suggested that migrants and their families should be provided with better access to banking services, better guidance with respect to the way that remittances can be used for the purpose of local development, and increased opportunities to link their remittances with micro-credit schemes in their communities of origin. The Hearing also agreed that the economic and developmental impact of remittances could not be maximized if governments in countries of origin failed to establish effective macro-economic policies, to provide their citizens with political stability and to eradicate corruption.

Another issue addressed in this component of the Hearing concerned the issues of 'brain drain', circular and return migration. A number of participants acknowledged that the movement of skilled personnel from developing countries to Europe could in principle represent a significant loss for poorer states that have provided those migrants with education and training.

In this respect, some participants suggested, the member states of the European Union should use their development assistance programmes to invest in the educational infrastructure of the countries from which they are recruiting. They should also make additional university places available for students from developing countries, on the assumption that they would work for a number of years within the EU before returning to their own country, thereby giving it the advantage of their skills and experience.

Other participants stressed the need to take a long-term view of the 'brain drain' issue. A good proportion of the skilled migrants who are currently working in Europe will eventually go back to their countries of origin on a temporary or long-term basis, taking new skills, knowledge and resources with them.

To maximize the benefits of circular and return migration, it was suggested, new efforts should be made to ensure that migrants are able upgrade their skills while working in European countries, and that they are able to benefit from portable pensions and other entitlements. According to some participants, migrants who choose to go back to their countries of origin should also benefit from liberal visa regimes, enabling them to return periodically to Europe, should they so desire.

III. Migration and human rights and migrants in society

Recent times have witnessed a growing public debate in Europe with respect to the social and cultural situation of migrant populations, as well as the rights to which migrants are entitled and the obligations and duties which they can legitimately be asked to respect. Ironically, at a time when the region is contemplating the need to admit significant numbers of migrants in order to meet its impending demographic deficit, the region appears increasingly uncomfortable about the presence of people from other societies and cultures, and is apparently reluctant to grant them any additional rights.

The human rights of migrants

The Hearing engaged in a lively debate on the human rights of migrants, much of which revolved around the rights to which irregular migrants are entitled (see also the section on irregular migration above) and the extent to which the 1990 Convention on the Protection of All Migrant Workers and Their Families represents an extension of those rights.

There was a broad consensus that all migrants, irrespective of their legal status, are entitled to the human rights stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the six core international human rights instruments. The Hearing also reached a broad agreement that states in Europe had not ratified the 1990 Convention because they considered it to give new rights to irregular migrants and because they were concerned that such rights would be upheld in court by the judiciary.

Participants also suggested that the lack of ratifications was associated with rising levels of hostility towards migrants amongst the public and the media, and a concern that ratification would be exploited for political purposes by parties with xenophobic agendas. At the same time, it was suggested that very limited international resources had been devoted to the promotion of the 1990 Convention.

According to some participants, the unwillingness of European states to accede to the 1990 Convention should also be regarded in the context of European human rights legislation and EU directives, which have provided migrants in the region with an additional degree of protection.

While much of the discussion on human rights focused on the role and responsibilities of destination countries, several participants also alluded to the role of countries of origin in protecting the welfare of citizens abroad. In this context, particular emphasis was placed on the value of appointing labour attaches who are able to monitor the living and working conditions of migrant workers, to provide those workers with information and advice, and to intercede as necessary with employers, government, local authorities and other relevant actors.

Migrants in society

Turning to the issue of migrants in society, there was a broad consensus that the events of 9.11, coupled with violent actions in cities such as Madrid and Amsterdam, had given a new impetus to the question of migrant inclusion and integration in Europe. Even the concept of multiculturalism, which had gained a broad acceptance in many European Union countries, was now being questioned. These developments, it was suggested, are indicative of the extent to which the issue of migration goes to the heart of national identity and the way we view our own society and culture.

According to a number of Hearing participants, it had now become clear that some of Europe's migrant communities and ethnic minorities had to some extent become physically, socially and culturally segregated from the rest of society, and that they did not always appear to subscribe to the core values of the countries in which they had settled and acquired citizenship. Significantly, second generation migrants who appear to be well integrated have in some situations proven to be the most alienated from and hostile towards the societies in which they live.

A number of participants raised the question of Muslim migrants in Europe, and the extent to which there was a new degree of tension between them and the 'Christian' majority. While recognizing the sensitivity of the issue, the Hearing agreed that this question is one that could not and should not be excluded from the public discourse on migration.

Other participants pointed out that migrants themselves should not be expected to bear full responsibility for the marginalization and disaffection of certain migrant communities. In general, it was pointed out, migrants want to find new and better opportunities for themselves and their families, and are often prepared to make great sacrifices in order to achieve that objective. But they had often been confronted with discrimination in the labour market and workplace, and had not always been made to feel that they were full and welcome members of their new society. According to these participants, there was now a risk that the

association increasingly made between migration, extremism and terrorism could become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

While the Hearing reached a broad consensus with respect to the fundamental importance of migrant inclusion and integration, the discussion of this topic raised a number of issues that were not readily resolved.

- what exactly are the 'core values' of a society that migrants and ethnic minorities can legitimately be expected to embrace?
- to what extent can the established citizens of destination countries be expected to make social and cultural adaptations in order to promote the inclusion of migrants?
- should inclusion and integration always take place on a voluntary basis, or is it acceptable for states to insist that migrants understand the language, history and culture of their new society?
- although dual citizenship may help to promote circular and return migration, does it also have the effect of impeding or delaying the inclusion of migrants in the new society?
- what inclusion and integration policies should be pursued with respect to temporary migrants, who are expected to return to their country of origin at the conclusion of their employment contract?

Inclusion and integration policy

While these questions might not have been fully answered, Hearing participants reached a considerable degree of agreement with respect to the basic components and principles of a successful inclusion policy.

First, while migrants enjoy many of the rights to which citizens are entitled, they also have duties and obligations to the society they have joined, whether it is on a temporary, long-term or permanent basis. Such duties and obligations, a number of participants argued, are non-negotiable for citizens and migrants alike.

Second, inclusion and integration does not occur spontaneously. Governments at both central and local levels must approach the issue in a proactive manner and dedicate time, effort and resources to this matter. At the same time, it was suggested, states should introduce and enforce legislation that protects migrants and minorities from discrimination. While they did not question the principle of a free press, many Hearing participants called upon the media to report on migration in a more responsible manner and to develop codes of conduct in relation to this issue.

Third, a number of Hearing participants emphasized the primary role that civil society has to play in the promotion of inclusion. Particular emphasis should be placed on the role of schools, churches, other religious institutions and sporting associations, where migrants and other members of the community are able to interact on a relatively equal basis. Civil society institutions, it was suggested, should also be involved in programmes designed to educate the host population about the migrants in their midst.

Fourth, participants pointed to the important role that the private sector can play in promoting diversity and social cohesion, both in the workplace and in society as a whole. A number of large companies have already committed themselves to this objective, and this form of corporate social responsibility should be replicated across the region.

Fifth, if migrants are to develop a sense of commitment and belonging to their new society, then they must become engaged in that country's political process. According to several Hearing participants, local voting rights and speedy access to citizenship are of particular importance in this respect.

Finally, there is a need to recognize that the process of inclusion and integration can be a long, difficult and non-linear one. If, as seems possible, Europe is to open its doors to additional numbers of migrants in the years to come, then an understanding of this principle will be of particular importance.

IV. The governance of international migration

'Coherence, coordination and partnership' were the principal concepts to emerge from the Hearing's discussion of the governance of migration. According to many participants, more emphasis needs to be placed on such attributes at the national, regional and global levels, and in the interactions which take place between these different levels of governance. At the same time, the Hearing agreed on the need for migration policies to be more carefully formulated and transparently articulated, especially if Europe is going to rely on migrant workers in order to address its demographic difficulties.

The national level

The Hearing learned that at the national level, governments often fail to pursue a coherent approach to international migration. In many cases, responsibility for migration policy is divided between different ministries (interior, foreign affairs, labour, social services, trade and overseas development, for example) all of which have their own interests and constituencies.

Coordinating mechanisms do not always exist to reconcile these different interests and to take account of the way that policy in respect to one aspect of migration may have important consequences in respect to another. And because evaluation policies are rarely evaluated, the contradictions of government policy are not adequately exposed.

According to a number of participants, the issue of coherence, coordination and partnership goes beyond central government. On one hand, it was suggested, local authorities and municipalities - those units of government which deal most directly with the consequences of migration - are not adequately drawn into the policymaking process. On the other hand, there is sometimes a lack of communication and consultation between government and other actors, including employers, trade unions, civil society institutions and migrant associations.

In some countries, moreover, the discourse had become somewhat polarized, between those actors seeking greater restrictions on migration and those seeking greater liberalization. In such an environment, it was suggested, effective policymaking can be particularly difficult, especially when the media present the migration debate in highly emotive and negative terms.

A more positive dimension of national governance was to be found in the experience of states in Central, Eastern and South-eastern Europe, which in recent years have developed asylum legislation, institutions and procedures which were non-existent a decade ago. These 'success stories' it was suggested, should be analysed, and the lessons learned from them disseminated in parts of the world which are confronted with the same capacity building challenge.

Regional initiatives

Turning to the regional level, the Hearing took full note of the progress made by the European Union with respect to the governance of migration. In no other part of the world have such achievements been made with respect to the abolition of border controls, the free movement of citizens and the formulation of common migration and asylum policies.

According to some participants, there is now a need to ensure that initiatives taken at the EU level are coherent with the policies of individual member states. In the words of one participant, with the introduction of Qualified Majority Voting on a growing range of issues, there is a risk that the EU might go ‘too far and too fast’.

Beyond the borders of the newly expanded EU, it was pointed out, Europe has engaged in a number of other important regional initiatives, such as the Budapest Process, CIS Conference, the Intergovernmental Consultations and the ‘5 plus 5’ initiative. According to several participants, it was now time to take stock of such processes, to assess their impact and achievements, and to ensure that lessons learned in one forum are transferred to the others. At the same time, the Hearing welcomed the EU’s recent efforts to establish a more active dialogue with developing regions, including Africa and Asia.

Global aspects of migration governance

Participants welcomed the various initiatives taken in recent years to promote a more comprehensive dialogue on international migration at the global level, including the establishment of the Global Commission. Participants also mentioned the usefulness of other global fora, such as the Berne Initiative, ILO’s non-binding multilateral framework for labour migration and the 2006 High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, all of which are expected to contribute towards a better understanding of contemporary migration challenges at the inter-regional and global levels.

As stated at other Regional Hearings, many participants in the Budapest meeting felt that any form of supranational or ‘top-down’ governance of migration was currently neither desirable nor feasible. However, they agreed that there is scope for continued cooperation among states and other actors to pursue common approaches at the global level, *inter alia* by building upon the achievements, dialogue and policy understandings emanating from regional processes.

Governments represented at the Budapest Hearing also felt that there was no need for the establishment of a new world migration body. Better coordination and cooperation between existing agencies, and the possible clarification of their mandates, was the preferred option of states.

Some mention was also made of a global or regional ‘clearing house’ function, which would be responsible for collecting and disseminating statistical data, research, evaluation findings and good practices in relation to international migration.