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NEUJOBS: WANTED SKILLS: LABOUR MARKET MATCHING AND LABOUR MOBILITY

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Introduction

- As is noted in the description for this panel discussion immigrants are often considered a valuable source of labour to meet skills shortages and economic migration can indeed be seen as part of the EU's policy mix to address long-term labour needs and ensuring we have the skills to raise productivity and competitiveness in Europe;
- This is particularly true in view of Europe's changing demographic structure. It is predicted that by 2050 in the region of 30% of Europeans will be over 60 years old.

Skills needs

- Cedefop forecasts project an increase in demand for highly skilled people by 8.5 million between 2010 and 2020. In line with this, despite the present high rates of unemployment in Europe, companies continue to experience a shortage of skilled labour;
- In particular there is a lack of people skilled in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), which can be considered as one of the main obstacles to economic growth in the coming years;
- There are attempts a EU-wide schemes for identifying labour shortages and a better matching of labour migrants with job opportunities;
- However, it is highly questionable whether attempts to anticipate skills needs at the EU level can really be effective and accurate and we have some doubts about the credibility of the European Vacancy Monitor and EU skills panorama in achieving this;
- Therefore, it is difficult to determine an EU level approach to the number of migrants that are needed (EU level targets are certainly to be avoided). This is something that needs to firmly remain in the national setting. In fact, for skills anticipation to be truly reliable it could be argued that this needs to take place at the local and regional level, as is the case in Denmark and Germany;

Encouraging intra-EU mobility

- Currently just 2.9% of EU citizens live and work in a country other than their own (EU labour force survey 2011);

- Facilitating the mobility of third country nationals within the EU would make better use of the labour supply already here and contribute to the integration of migrant workers.
- There are several (familiar) barriers to intra-EU mobility: language barriers, difficulties in finding an appropriate job, the bureaucracy involved, transfer of social security provisions, heavily regulated professions and overregulated specialisations and the worry that professional and academic qualifications will not be recognised are major concerns
- There are several ongoing initiatives at EU level to facilitate mobility. These include revising the professional qualification directive, the trilogues on the ICT directive that we hope will deliver a good outcome in the near future and the recently published proposal for a directive on the enforcement of rights of EU migrant workers, which are in the process of assessing.

Matching skills supply and demand

- In this regard greater emphasis should be put on matching the skills of workers with employer demand, combined with better matching up of locations and sectors with specific demand;
- Greater emphasis should be put on providing information to employers and jobseekers about hiring and work opportunities across the EU. Working towards a more targeted approach along these lines is an important element of the reform and strengthening of the European Employment Services tool (EURES).
- For example, responding to labour market needs in countries experiencing labour shortages can be facilitated by mapping unused human resources in countries with high levels of unemployment;
- The involvement of employers in the establishment of policies that are formulated in response to future labour market needs is crucial. This includes efforts to reach out to migrants to better integrate them into the workforce.
- An example of this is in Germany where the Confederation of German Employer Organisations has published guidelines for immigrant-friendly company policies which include examples of best practice from companies, in promoting language courses, intercultural exchange/competences, target-oriented recruitment of foreign specialists, mentoring programmes, compatibility of family and work, "welcome package"
