

Brussels, 20 September 2006

First meeting of the Commission's Task Force on Migration produces a comprehensive overview of European activities to address immigration crises

Migration is a cross-border issue that requires a comprehensive, balanced and integrated approach involving various policy areas and all the affected regions (origin, transit and destination). The European Commission is working along such an approach for a few years now and has reinforced its efforts for coherence by deciding, on 30 August 2006, to establish a Commissioners' Task Force on Migration, under the coordination of Vice President Franco Frattini. This temporary Task Force brings together all EU Commissioners with relevant responsibilities as regards migration, including Louis Michel (Development and Humanitarian Aid), Benita Ferrero-Waldner (External Relations), Vladimir Spidla (Employment), Ján Figel (Education and training), Danuta Hübner (Regional policy), Joaquin Almunia (Economic and monetary issues) and Markos Kyprianou (Health and consumer protection).

Following the Task Force's first meeting in Profondval on 19 September 2006, President José Manuel Barroso stated: "The pressing and dramatic issue of illegal immigration calls for an urgent and strong answer from the whole European Union. The arrival en masse of illegal immigrants in the European Union, mainly by the way of the Spanish, Italian, Greek and Maltese coastlines, is a European challenge and requires a coordinated European response. The Commission plays a key role in coordinating activities covering many aspects of the migration issue. I have set up this Task Force to ensure that a coherent and effective and more articulated approach is taken within the Commission. It provides a real opportunity to demonstrate what solidarity in action means in practical terms, demonstrating the ability of the EU to deliver concrete results in complex policy areas that are right at the centre of public attention and concern."

Vice-President Franco Frattini, the Commissioner responsible for Justice, Freedom and Security and coordinator of the Task Force, highlighted the fact that "the Task Force's first meeting has already demonstrated its added value by increasing synergy across EU departments. In our joint approach we bring together the main policy areas ranging from the need to take urgent measures, in particular to better manage the EU's maritime borders, to addressing the root causes, such as poverty, lack of jobs and economic prospects, conflict and governance, improving integration, and social inclusion, promoting intercultural dialogue, health aspects, policies on economic migration and the suppression of illegal or undeclared work of immigrants. Special attention is also given to optimizing the usage of existing financial possibilities, including the European Social Fund and the European Fund for Regional Development. We have managed to identify measures and initiatives that will be swiftly undertaken by the Commission.

These efforts, combined with those of the Member States, will enable the European Union to deliver results while, at the same time, developing better coordinated strategies to respond more effectively to evolving situations, including the humanitarian disasters on the shores of the EU.”

The Task Force has confirmed its role in ensuring that a coherent and effective approach is taking in the coordination of activities in the field of immigration. It has also started the reflection on possible actions to continue and develop further the Commission efforts in this field.

Vice-President Frattini will inform the informal JHA Council in Tampere on 21 September 2006 of the work undertaken by the Commission on the different aspects of the migration issue. President Barroso will subsequently inform the Heads of State and Government in Lahti on 20 October on the different activities and initiatives taken by the Commission in this field.

The work of the Task Force and the results of these two Council meetings, corroborated by additional work, will form the basis of a Commission Communication to be submitted to the formal European Council in December 2006. In this Communication the Commission will report on the state of implementation of measures decided on in December 2005 and present proposals, where necessary, for further action. The comprehensive approach requires active solidarity, in the form of financial support, deployment of people and equipment to our most relevant borders.