



PRESS RELEASE

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“LET’S TRY IT OUT!” SAY MEPs AND BUSINESSES ABOUT BLUE CARDS

Definition of qualified employees and conditions of minimum wage are limiting the potential of EU Blue Cards. In any case it is an initiative that has to be supported and properly promoted. MEPs from Employment and Social Affairs Committee and representatives of the business sector discussed the framework and conditions of the European admission scheme for economic migrants from third states.

EU Blue Card should be a single work and residence permit (one-stop shop) giving high qualified nationals of non EU states access to work as well as to a range of socio-economic rights, including family reunification. European Parliament will deliver its non-binding opinion in the end of November, prior to political agreement of Council for Justice and Home Affairs. Blue Cards Directive should be implemented by Member States no later than in 2011.

Host of the Policy Cafe **MEP Richard FALBR** highlighted Europe is still less attractive for qualified foreigners than the US. Out of all economic migrants approaching EU, only 7% are highly educated in comparison with 56% in case of the US. *“Let’s hope we will still need the Blue Cards in 2011 in the light of economic crisis,”* FALBR said. Draftsman of the Parliament report and reporter of Employment and Social Affairs Committee **MEP Jan Tadeusz MASIEL** commiserated the Lisbon Treaty is not in force yet, which means that European Parliament is only consulted as the co-decision procedure doesn’t apply to legal migration issues. *“The definition of highly qualified employers should not be as restrictive as proposed by the LIBE Committee and 5 years of professional experience should be required,”* MASIEL said.

View of European businesses was introduced as well. **Benjamin HOLST**, senior advisor of DA and member of BUSINESSEUROPE Immigration Working Group sees the biggest challenge in successful advertisement of the Blue Cards to foreigners. HOLST stated: *“It is the role of business organizations to strongly support and advocate the project, regardless the possibly limited impact.”* **Luc HENDRICKX**, Competitiveness and External Relations Director of UEAPME mentioned the responsibility of the EU to consider the danger of brain-drain from the third countries. UEAPME supports reasonable length of work stay of at least 2 years. *“Since it is a demand driven process, we have to find the right balance between the need for facilitating highly qualified immigration and for tackling still high unemployment rates in the EU,”* HENDRICKX said. Czech employers are anxiously waiting for January 2009, when the national admission scheme, the “Green Cards” will be implemented. In the meantime, Czech companies can benefit from a Chamber of Commerce project based on close cooperation of employers, public authorities and partners in the country of origin. *“The Blue Cards can only make a difference in combination with other initiatives on national and EU level,”* said **Michal KADERA**, Director of CEBRE.

The Policy Cafe was organized by CEBRE – Czech Business Representation to the EU and DA - Danish Employers Federation with kind support of BUSINESSEUROPE and UEAPME and hosted by MEP Richard FALBR in the European Parliament on Tuesday 4th November 2008.

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