



## The Common European Asylum Policy: Towards a Balanced, Flexible and Comprehensive System

“The Commission puts in place the final building blocks of the Common European Asylum System. Significant progress has been accomplished in recent years as a result of the implementation of common standards, but considerable disparities remain between Member States. Our proposals represent a major step forward towards achieving higher standards of protection, a more equal level playing field as well as higher efficiency and coherence for the system”

- Vice-President Jacques Barrot, EU Commissioner responsible for Freedom, Security and Justice, October 2009

Renaissance Hotel  
**Brussels**

29<sup>th</sup> April 2010

*Organised by*



Centre for  
Parliamentary  
Studies



*“An International Symposium for gathering knowledge, discussing the latest challenges and sharing best practices in migration and asylum policy in Europe”*

"The implementation of the Community legislation of the first stage of the Common European Asylum System. This should include actions to improve the quality of asylum decision-making and the continuing development of the capacity of stakeholders, including Member State authorities, UNHCR and non-governmental actors, in the asylum field."

**- European Refugee Fund 2008-2013**

"Asylum seekers should have the same chance of being accepted and rejected in all EU countries..."

**- Jacques Barrot, European Commission Vice-President responsible for Justice, Freedom and Security**

## Abstract and Programme

The EU competences on asylum policy in Europe delineated at Tampere in 1999 and reconfirmed in the **European Pact on Immigration and Asylum** from 2008, contains four important legislative frameworks which play an important role in its structure: **The Qualification Directive** stating who will qualify for asylum or subsidiary protection status, the **Asylum Procedure Directive** stating the minimum standards in the number of procedural guarantees and rights of asylum seekers, the **Reception Conditions Directive** pointing at minimum standards for asylum-seekers and the **Dublin Regulation** clarifying the responsibilities of member states for assessing asylum applications.

Once the creation of a **Common Asylum Policy** in Europe became a top priority, this goal was reaffirmed in the **Hague Programme** from 2004. However, numerous challenges in the field highlighted that the adoption of minimum standards in the directives was not sufficient on their own, and subsequently, a series of amendments were put in place. These aimed to clarify legal concepts, eliminate differences between the rights of refugees, enhance the effective access to those rights, simplify procedural notions, improve the quality of asylum decisions and facilitate access to examination procedures. All these initiatives revealed the need to increase the **practical cooperation** between member states and create an **integrated** and **balanced** approach to facing the asylum policy challenges in Europe. Both targets can be achieved through the creation of the **European Asylum Support Office**, the **European Refugee Fund** and also through intensified exchange of good practices and procedural lessons from different member states. Good cooperation between major **international organizations** active in the field is also imperative.

These policy issues were reassessed again in the Pact in 2008, with the Commission driving forward new measures to streamline the allocation of beneficiaries of international protection through voluntary and coordinated reallocation, achieving better protection of people outside the EU and improving the training of EU staff working at its **external borders** to provide better information to asylum seekers about their rights and obligations in the EU.

As we approach the EU's 2010 implementation target for the common asylum policy, this special International Symposium provides a timely opportunity for stakeholders to examine the challenges that Europe is facing to increase the practical cooperation between different member states and to develop further a **balanced** and **flexible** strategy towards better burden sharing between member states.

The *Centre for Parliamentary Studies* welcomes the participation of all key partners, responsible authorities and stakeholders. The Symposium will support the exchange of ideas and encourage delegates to engage in thought-provoking topical debate.



## **The Common European Asylum Policy: Towards a Balanced, Flexible and Comprehensive System**

Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2010  
Renaissance Hotel, Brussels

**09:00**      *Registration and Morning Refreshments*

**10:00**      **Chair's Welcome and Opening Remarks**

*Mr. Willy Bruggeman PhD, Professor at the Benelux University  
Centre; Chair of the Belgian Federal Police Board (confirmed)*

**10:05**      **Introduction of Participants**

**Session One:**

**10:30**      **Towards a Successful Common Asylum System in Europe –  
The Post-Lisbon Role of the European Parliament**

- Providing a Higher Degree of Protection – Challenges Ahead
- Reforming the Qualification and Asylum Procedures Directives
- Towards the Single Asylum Procedure and Common Standards on Protection – Existing Benchmarks and Frameworks at EU level
- Lessons Learned from the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum

***Speaker:***

*Baroness Sarah Ludford MEP, Member of the European Parliament,  
Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (tbc)*

**10:50**      **Rethinking Minimum Standards for Asylum Seekers –  
Towards a Balanced and Flexible Approach**

- Good Practices and Capitalisation of Valuable Experience from ECRE's Recent Activities
- The Minimum Standards Framework – An Appropriate Tool for Meeting the Needs of Asylum Seekers?
- Lessons Learned so far; Current and Future Challenges
- Towards a System which Respects the Rights of Asylum Seekers

***Speaker:***

*Mr. Bjarte Vandvik, Secretary General, European Council on  
Refugees and Exiles (confirmed)*



**11:15 First Round of Discussions**

**11:45 *Morning Coffee Break***

**12:05 Session Two: UNHCR Experience in the Field of Asylum**

- Cooperation with other International and Regional Organisations
- Redefining Push Factors for Intensified Immigration and Asylum Applications – Effective Measures to Overcome this Tendency
- Rethinking the Definition of Asylum Seekers and Identifying Special Measures
- Best Practices from the “10 Point Plan” of UNHCR

***Speaker:***

***UNHCR Senior Representative (tbc)***

**12:30 Second Round of Discussions**

**13:00 *Networking Lunch***

**14:00 Session Three: IOM Experience in Reintegration and Immigration of Asylum Seekers**

- Lessons Learned from Voluntary Assisted Return / Reintegration Programmes
- Existing Educational Toolkit on Migration and Asylum
- Increasing Knowledge of Asylum Policy Issues in Europe – Capacity Building and Communication Strategies for the Future

***Speaker:***

***Mr. Pascal Reyntjens, International Organization for Migration (IOM) Brussels Office, Head of Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Unit (AVRR) (confirmed)***

**14:25 Third Round of Discussions**

**14:55 Session Four: The Asylum-Seekers' Perspective – Access to Information and Effective Remedies**

- Comparative Knowledge on the Implementation of the Asylum Procedure Directive – Current Research Project by FRA
- Focus Group Discussions with Asylum Seekers in all 27 European Union Countries – Mind Mapping for Future Strategies and Actions

***Speaker:***

***Mr. Adriano Silvestri, EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (confirmed)***



**15:20**      **Fourth Round of Discussions**

**15:50**      ***Short Break***

**16:00**      **Case Study: Improving Asylum Procedures through Transnational and International Border Cooperation**

- Frontex Experience in Overcoming Asylum Challenges at EU External Borders
- Effective Strategy for Building Capacity of Border Personnel
- Intensifying Cooperation between Relevant Agencies
- Providing Necessary Information to Asylum Seekers at the Borders

***Speaker:***

***Frontex Senior Representative (tbc)***

**16:20**      **Final Discussions**

**16:40**      **Chair's Summary and Closing Remarks**

**16:45**      ***Networking Reception and Refreshments***