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Half of Europeans would consider moving for work

The European Commission has today adopted a report setting out in a consolidated way the rights of Europeans to live and work in another EU country. The report also provides an update on legal developments in the past decade. Currently, 2.3% of people in the EU reside in a Member State other than their own. However, a new Eurobarometer survey also presented today finds that 17% of Europeans envisage working abroad in the future and 48% would consider looking for work in another country or region if they were to lose their job.

"The right to live and work in another European country is one of the EU's fundamental freedoms, but too few people currently take advantage of this right," said László Andor, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. "Worker mobility can help reduce unemployment by matching people with jobs available. Europeans recognise this fact, but still face barriers to moving around Europe for work. That's why we want to make it easier for them to move around and have made this a priority in our Europe 2020 Strategy."

Communication on free movement of workers

Today's policy Communication on "Reaffirming the free movement of workers" offers an updated picture of the rights of EU migrant workers, taking into account legal developments over the past decade. It clarifies the impact of a series of judgements by the EU Court of Justice and how they apply to these rights. At the same time, it aims to raise awareness of the rights of migrant workers.

The free movement of workers is a success from a legal point of view, but that the right to move and live in another European country still needs to be improved in practice. The European Commission will work on facilitating and promoting intra-EU mobility in the context of the new strategy for the single market (following the presentation of the Monti report).

As part of its new ten-year strategy: Europe 2020, the Commission will work on facilitating and promoting intra-EU mobility. In particular, the flagship initiative 'An agenda for new skills and jobs', due to be adopted by the Commission in the second half of 2010, aims to increase labour participation and better match labour supply and demand, including through labour mobility.

Eurobarometer survey on geographical and labour market mobility

A new Eurobarometer survey released today sheds light on Europeans' attitudes to worker mobility. The survey found that:

- Most Europeans think moving countries or regions is good for EU integration, half think it's good for the economy, labour market and individuals, but fewer think it's good for families.

- 10% of Europeans say they have lived abroad for work either within or outside the EU at some point in their lives, while 13% have done so for education and training. 41% know a friend or relative who has either worked or studied abroad.
- 17% of Europeans envisage working abroad in the future, ranging from 51% in Denmark to just 4% in Italy. 34% of Europeans rate the chances of finding a job abroad better than at home.
- Unemployment is a powerful reason to move: 48% of Europeans would consider moving regions or countries for work if they lost their job.

Background

Every European has the right to work and live in another Member State without being discriminated against on grounds of nationality. However, despite the progress made, there are still legal, administrative and practical obstacles to exercising that right. Other factors also influencing cross-border mobility include housing, language, the employment of spouses and partners, return mechanisms, historical 'barriers' and the recognition of mobility experience, particularly within SMEs.

The Commission has made tackling these issues a priority as part of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

The Special Eurobarometer survey on geographical and labour market mobility looks into Europeans' attitudes towards and own experience of moving in Europe. It also aims to explore the motivation behind moving, or not doing so. Similar surveys were carried out in 2005 and 2007.

Further information

Communication: 'Reaffirming the free movement of workers: rights and major developments'

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=847&furtherNews=yes>

Special Eurobarometer survey: Geographical and labour mobility – full report

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_337_en.pdf

Special Eurobarometer survey: Geographical and labour mobility – summary report:

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_337_sum_en.pdf

Working in another EU country :

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=25>

EURES – the European Job Mobility Portal :

<http://eures.europa.eu>

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