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## **2006: A boost for workers' mobility, but challenges lie ahead**

***Lille, France: The European Year of Workers' Mobility concludes today with a major event to sum up the achievements of the past twelve months and chart the challenges that still lie ahead. With 2,000 events across Europe, the campaign has raised peoples' awareness of their rights to work in another EU country and how to exercise them, reinforced tools to help them find a job abroad, and highlighted the remaining obstacles to a genuine European job market. The winners of the 2006 European Mobility Awards – which recognise individuals, businesses or institutions that have contributed to geographic or job-to-job mobility during the European Year – will also be announced. As well as presenting the main findings of the Year, the event will examine how to follow them up in 2007.***

"Working in another European country gives individuals the chance to learn a new language, discover a new culture and develop new skills," said Vladimír Špidla, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. "Job mobility is also crucial to Europe's objective of boosting jobs and growth," he added. "More and more people have become aware of the opportunities for mobility in 2006 and are now willing to try them out. In 2007, we need to draw on these lessons and develop a real mobility culture in Europe."

Highlights of the Year included the launch of the new EURES jobs portal with 1 million vacancies across Europe, the first ever Europe-wide job fair with 200,000 visitors at simultaneous events in more than 300 towns and cities, and the co-funding of 39 mobility projects at national, transnational and cross-border level.

2006 has also seen a gradual but consistent change in Europeans' attitudes towards geographic and job-to-job mobility. According to the latest Eurobarometer survey on employment and social affairs, 3 out of 4 Europeans recognise that job mobility is essential in today's labour market. 35% of enquiries to the EU's EuropeDirect advice centre this year related to mobility issues, compared to 25% in 2005. Use of the EURES portal has increased significantly, with 8,000 employers now registered as recruiters (up from 5,000 in 2005) and 184,000 job seekers posting their CVs (up from 80,000 a year ago).

The typical mobile worker has also changed, and now tends to be younger and more qualified, staying abroad for short periods. Mobility is often linked to a return to the country of origin and attracts more and more people without work, be they unemployed or in search of a first job. According to a Eurobarometer study on mobility, 59% of people without work who moved country found a job within 12 months. Of those who remained in their home country, only 33% found a job

The Year has also shown that obstacles to a genuine mobility culture in Europe remain. Besides the traditional legal and administrative factors – linked to social security and recognition of qualifications – two new categories have been highlighted in 2006: 'practical' obstacles – related to housing, language, or employment of partners and spouses – and 'psychological' ones – in particular the issue of return and the lack of recognition of mobility experiences by employers.

A new and ambitious Mobility Action Plan will be launched by the European Commission in 2007 to tackle these issues, covering the following four areas:

- Mobility needs to be prepared, using tools such as the EURES portal;
- Workers and their families need access to support services at all stages of their mobility experience;
- The issue of return – namely reintegrating workers in their home job market after working abroad – must be properly taken into account;
- Mobility should become a natural element in the professional career of all Europeans.

100 speakers will present experiences at this week's conference, which will feed into preparations for the Action Plan in 2007. The event will also see the presentation of the first European Mobility Awards by Commissioner Špidla at the prestigious La Piscine museum in Roubaix (see IP/06/1722). The awards recognise businesses, associations and individuals who have contributed to enhancing mobility for workers during the European Year.

For more information about the European Year:

[http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/workersmobility\\_2006/index.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/workersmobility_2006/index.cfm)

For more information about the closing conference:

[http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/workersmobility\\_2006/index.cfm?id\\_page=459](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/workersmobility_2006/index.cfm?id_page=459)