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Focus: Labour Migration
The Future of Labour Migration
Preface

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The Tenth AIAS Annual Conference, on 'The Future of Labour Migration', was held on 14 June 2007 in Diemen, the Netherlands. It was the first AIAS Annual Conference organized outside the inner city of Amsterdam and in cooperation with another organization, Randstad, to which we are grateful for hosting the event.

Since the first AIAS Annual Conference – which took place in 1998 and which was devoted to the different consequences of the Economic and Monetary Union – the theme of international changes related to labour markets has always been very dear to AIAS. Accordingly, the 2007 conference focused on the issues related to international labour migration. The theme of labour migration is very timely, as it is of great interest not only to researchers, but also policy makers, business organizations, firms, trade unions, both in the receiving and sending countries, and of course to the migrants themselves. Surprisingly perhaps, the actual flow of people across borders is fairly small if compared with the flow of goods, services and capital. Estimates suggest that only 3% of the world's population live outside their country of origin; and, in developed economies, including the United States and Europe, only 9% of their respective populations come from abroad. When it comes to international trade as a proportion of GDP, it is estimated to constitute between 13% and 18% of its volume.

Despite these seemingly low numbers, the issue of labour migration is important, and this is particularly true in the political dimension. In the United States, the new legislation concerning the 12 million illegal – but nevertheless hardworking – migrants, mostly coming from Latin America, is being hotly debated. In the European Union, the recent decision by Member States not to

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share the burden of the protection of the EU borders in the South has stirred discussion.

The conference offered an opportunity to reflect on a number of questions. Could there be a more 'rational' migration policy? What can migration offer to the migrants themselves? How does it affect the sending countries and the receiving countries? What is its effect on the economic welfare? What is its effect on the welfare state? How does it impact on labour relations? These issues were approached by guest speakers in the contributions presented in this focus section.

Dr Monika Ewa Kaminska, researcher at AIAS, with the assistance of Mohamed Bouchareb and Emma Folmer, edited the talks given at the meeting for a Conference Proceedings volume, which is published internally by AIAS, and in this form is obtainable directly from the institute itself. Their report formed the basis for the texts presented here.

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