

Ladies and Gentleman,

As all good things come to an end, so must our conference.

It would be a vain attempt to present a summary of the immense treasury of experience and thought shared during the day, and contained in the papers.

Let me but mark a few conclusions that appear to be of utmost urgency and importance.

Economic migration in our continent is a fact. This natural phenomenon cannot be attributed exclusively to the last enlargements of the Union.

The vast majority of foreigners residing in the EU member states at present come from outside the Union. (According to Eurostat, the total number of non-nationals living in the European Union is accounted for around (twenty five) 25 million which equals to (five point five) 5,5 of total population.

Meanwhile the number of citizens from the ten new Member States is around (zero point two percent) 0,2% of the total population).

Accession Eight has only made the problem more visible. It is characterized also to a greater degree by the so-called circular migration.

The migration within the EU concerns European citizens, who – by virtue of their European citizenship – should enjoy all rights resulting from their choice of work and residence. Unfortunately it is not always the case due to limits and restrictions imposed in some countries.

Those restrictions should be abolished not only because of the rights new EU citizens possess, but also for the reason that migration within the EU results in considerable benefits both for the countries sending and hosting the migrants.

Economic migration pays for the entire work market of the EU: it makes it more flexible, efficient and competitive when compared to markets outside the Union.

I propose that we – European ombudsmen – appeal to governments of all those countries which lawfully close or restrain their work markets to consider giving up these practices.

Creating a truly free area of labour perspectives in the EU market should give rise not only to swifter harmonization of employment conditions, but also to limiting violations of workers' and civil rights.

The benefits gained from economic migration are very often at the expense of migrating citizens and their families. It is often the case that migrants are victims of exploitation and crime.

Only joined efforts of hosting countries – with important role played by the local ombudsmen – and EU institutions can provide an effective remedy. This conference has proved that international cooperation of ombudsmen has crucial practical dimension. Our duty is to serve the citizens of our countries wherever they choose to live.

Closing the conference, I would like to thank each of you for your participation. My words of gratitude go especially to panelists and those who have joined in the discussions.

In particular, I would like to thank my distinguished friend Jo Carby Hall for his magnificent report which he – and the correspondents from various countries – have worked on during the last eighteen months.

This report is the greatest achievement of our conference, and as such should become an official document adopted by our assembly; the document which – if Jo Carby Hall permits – I wish to hand over to national and international institutions to use: to Mr. Vladimir Spidla, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities, as well as to Polish Prime Minister, Minister of Work and Social Affairs and Minister of Foreign Affairs. I am convinced that this historic report and recommendations included in it will be most helpful to them.

Thank you very much for participating in today's conference. Let me invite you to a concert and – following that – on behalf of Mrs. Róża Thum, representative of European Commission in Poland, and Ambassador of Portugal Jose Sequeira e Serpa to dinner which we now truly deserve. We are indeed much more than what we eat, but what we eat can nevertheless help us to be much more than what we are.

Dr Janusz Kochanowski