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MEP announces consultation process on illegal employment

Addressing a conference organized by the European Documentation and Research Centre (EDRC) on *'The Good company: Business ethics in the EU and Malta'*, MEP Simon Busuttil announced that, in the coming weeks, he will be embarking on a wide consultation process with stakeholders to hear their views on the Commission proposal, published in May this year, for a new European law imposing sanctions against employers who employ illegal immigrants.

Earlier this year, Dr Busuttil was appointed as the EPP negotiator on this law.

Intervening on "Values and policy-making in the European Parliament" Dr Busuttil argued that employers who engaged immigrants illegally were not just breaking the law but they were also falling well short of adequate ethical standards.

Referring to the new legislative proposal, Dr Busuttil said that its objective was to impose tough sanctions on employers who resort to illegal employment but at the same time to discourage illegal immigration by showing that Europe is not a free-for-all and illegal employment can no longer be tolerated.

"This law will be another tool in our fight against illegal immigration", Dr Busuttil said. "Risking your life to cross over to Europe and then live in modern-day slavery is just not worth it."

He questioned the ethical standards of employers who recruit illegal immigrants and subject them to exploitation, paying them very low wages not paying them at all, subjecting them to unreasonably long working hours and exposing them to health and safety risks".

"Is a company that undertakes illegal employment a 'good company'?" Dr Busuttil asked.

Illegal employment was not just exploitative, Dr Busuttil said. It also put law-abiding businesses at an unfair competitive advantage and cheated Maltese and other workers of a regular job.

Sanctions envisaged in the proposed law are financial penalties, administrative sanctions and criminal sanctions.

National authorities will be required to increase inspections to 10% of enterprises every year, up from the current average of just 2%.

"In the coming weeks I shall be embarking on a consultation process on this law to hear what stakeholders have to say" declared Busuttil, who is the EPP shadow rapporteur on this law.

Consultation meetings will be held with the Maltese authorities, with employers' associations, trade unions, NGOs as well as immigrants. A public debate is also envisaged.

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