Common immigration policy for Europe: principles, actions and tools

2008/2331(INI) - 22/04/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 485 votes to 110, with 19 abstentions, a resolution on a Common Immigration Policy for Europe (principles, actions and tools).

The Parliament **strongly supports the establishment of a common European immigration policy** founded on a high level of political and operational solidarity, mutual trust, transparency, partnership, shared responsibility and joint efforts, as well as on the values enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

General considerations: the Parliament reiterates that the management of migration flows must be based on a coordinated approach, taking into account the demographic and economic situation of the EU and its Member States. It therefore regrets that, so far, too little has been done to establish a common legal immigration policy. According to the Parliament, a common immigration policy must be flanked with an effective policy for the development of the countries of origin and requires the establishment of a common asylum policy. Moreover, the Parliament notes that **immigration into the EU is not the solution** to overcome the challenges faced by developing countries.

In addition to these general consideration, the Parliament makes the following points:

(1) Prosperity and immigration:

- **legal migration**: whilst legal migration continues to be necessary in order to address Europe's demographic, labour market and skills needs (according to Eurostat, population ageing in the EU will become a reality in the medium term, with the working age population projected to fall possibly by almost 50 million by 2060), the Parliament notes that **regular migration must be the alternative to irregular immigration**. The Parliament supports the development of national "Immigration Profiles", with labour market needs being a central aspect of these profiles, while avoiding the brain drain in countries of origin. It calls on the Commission and Member States to develop mechanisms, guidelines and other tools to facilitate circular and temporary migration as well as measures, in cooperation with the countries of origin, to offset the loss of human resources, offering concrete support for the training of professionals in key sectors. It also calls on the Member States to refrain from pursuing active recruitment in developing countries suffering from lack of human resources in key sectors, such as health and education. Moreover, the Parliament calls for measures for the integration of legally staying third-country nationals by providing them with opportunities to learn the language of the host country and by giving them an improved ability to support their children's development. Furthermore, immigrants should be granted full freedom of movement as workers following a period of five years’ legal residence in a Member State;
- **integration**: according to the Parliament, integration should be based on social inclusion, anti-discrimination and equal opportunities, namely through the possibility of access to health, education, language training and employment. While it supports integration efforts by the Member States as well as by regular migrants, the Parliament considers that further progress is needed to promote the adjustment of the immigrants as well as the host population. According to the Parliament, a good integration process is the best tool to eliminate mistrust and suspicion between native citizens and migrants and is fundamental to removing any xenophobic ideas or actions. It encourages the development of mutual learning mechanisms and the exchange of best practice between Member States as well as the inclusion of migrants in their own integration process. The

Parliament also calls on the Member States to **grant migrants the right to vote in local elections** (note, in this respect, that an alternative motion for a resolution was tabled by the EPP-ED group in plenary in order to delete this paragraph but was rejected). The Parliament also calls for financial support for the structural and cultural integration of immigrants (for example, via programmes in the field of education), as well as for other measures to combat discrimination and to promote the **integration of immigrant women** into the host society.

(2) Security and immigration:

- **integrated border management**: the Parliament stresses the need for a comprehensive master plan setting out the overall objectives and architecture of the EU's border management strategy. The architecture should include an analysis of the effectiveness of the existing border management systems of the Member States. The Parliament stresses, however, that integrated border management should strike the right balance between ensuring the free movement of a growing number of people across borders and ensuring greater security for EU-citizens. It therefore calls for an assessment on the feasibility of an integrated four-tier approach, whereby checks would be carried out systematically at each stage when immigrants are travelling to the Union. The Parliament proposes, in particular, the replacement of current national Schengen visas with **uniform European Schengen visas**, allowing for equal treatment of all visa applicants. It also calls on the Council to adopt arrangements based on solidarity among Member States with a view to sharing the burdens arising from border policing and to coordinate the Member States' national policies;
- **irregular migration**: the Parliament considers **effective combating of irregular immigration** as a crucial part of a comprehensive EU migration policy. It therefore regrets that effective decision-making in this field is hamstrung by the insufficient ability of the Member States to really work together. The Parliament expresses its shock at the human tragedy that is caused by illegal migratory sea routes and calls for urgent action to **stop this human tragedy** once and for all and to reinforce dialogue and cooperation with the countries of origin. Recalling that irregular immigration is often operated by criminal networks, the Parliament stresses that Member States have a shared responsibility to save lives at sea. Therefore, efforts must be redoubled in the fight against organised crime, human trafficking and smuggling at EU level. The Parliament also considers it is essential establish **cooperation agreements** with the countries of origin. It also calls for the reinforcement of the mandate of FRONTEX in order to extend its coordination capacity and its ability to coordinate permanent missions in areas which face high migratory pressures. Emphasis should also be placed on increasing FRONTEX's risk analysis and intelligence gathering capacity. The Parliament supports, in particular, the establishment of specialised FRONTEX offices to better assess the specific situations at maritime borders to the South. Moreover, it calls on FRONTEX and the Commission to carry out a study, with estimates, on the possibility of FRONTEX acquiring its own equipment and on the requirements for the **possible upgrade of FRONTEX operations at sea into an EU coast guard** without undermining Member States control of their borders. It also calls for further developments on the concept of a European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR);
- **returns**: the Parliament considers that that migrants who are staying irregularly on the territory of the Member States **have to be required to leave the territory of the European Unio**n. It therefore calls on the Member States to ensure that returns are conducted with due regard to the law and the dignity of the persons involved, giving due preference to **voluntary return**. In particular, the Parliament notes, in this respect, the adoption of the Return Directive and calls on Member States, in the context of its transposition, to preserve more favourable provisions already laid down in their domestic law. It also calls for a system of Return Counselling Services to be established in closed and open accommodation centres as well as for monitoring and support for social and professional reintegration mechanisms for migrants having been returned. The Parliament also stresses the need for a genuine European dimension in return policy through the **mutual recognition of return decisions**. Moreover, it calls for the strengthening of co-operation, including through consular co-

operation, and legislative provisions with a view to establishing a **European "Laissez Passer"** issued to illegally residing third-country nationals with a view to facilitating readmission to third countries.

(3) Solidarity and immigration:

- **coordination between Member States**: the Parliament deeply regrets the fact that Member States have demonstrated insufficient solidarity in the face of the growing challenge of immigration. It calls for an urgent review of the Framework Programme on Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows for the period 2007-2013 and its four financial instruments. The Parliament also welcomes the set of measures proposed by the Commission in this area (including the recast of several fundamental texts, such as the Dublin regulation or Eurodac);
- **cooperation with third-countries**: lastly, the Parliament regrets that cooperation with third countries has not achieved sufficient results, with the notable exception of Spain's co-operation with third countries, such as Senegal and other countries in sub-Saharan and north Africa. It therefore calls for targeted support for third countries of transit and origin to help them build an effective border management system. It stresses the importance of a development policy in third countries of origin or transit as a means of addressing the challenge of immigration at its roots. The Parliament calls for an improved co-ordination of the Union's immigration and development policies, taking fully into account strategic objectives such as the Millennium Development Goals. It stresses the importance of establishing Migration Information and Management Centres, as the one inaugurated in Mali in October 2008, which can contribute significantly to tackling migration problems by addressing the concerns of the potential migrants. Moreover, it stresses that all agreements with countries of origin and transit should include **chapters on co-operation on immigration** and calls for an ambitious policy with third countries on police and judicial co-operation to combat international criminal organisations engaged in human trafficking.