European network of immigration liaison officers. Recast

2018/0153(COD) - 16/05/2018 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to optimise utilisation of immigration liaison officers deployed by Member States, Commission and EU Agencies to third countries.

PROPOSED ACT: Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: there are almost 500 immigration liaison officers (referred as ILOs) currently deployed by Member States to third countries. The existing Regulation (EC) No 377/2004 on ILOs sets out the obligation to establish local or regional cooperation networks among immigration liaison officers of Member States and outlines the objectives of such cooperation, as well as ILOs' tasks in relation to the third country and their responsibilities vis-à-vis the sending Member State.

The evaluation of the current ILO Regulation confirmed that ILOs and their networks **remain relevant** in the current global migration context and consistent with existing and planned EU migration policies. It also highlighted that this Regulation had a limited and above all indirect impact on the establishment of formal networks between ILOs deployed in the same place, on the intensification of the collection and sharing of information and on the improvement of the coordination of the EU's position and activities towards third countries.

The Commission therefore proposes to **review legislation on ILOs** deployed by EU Member States in third countries in order to help strengthen the European dimension of coordination with key stakeholders.

This proposal responds to the calls of the European Parliament and the European Council to develop coherent and credible policy with regards to preventing and countering illegal migration, tackling migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, enhancing return of illegally staying third-country nationals and managing effectively the external borders of the European Union.

CONTENT: this proposal to recast Regulation (EC) No 377/2004 lays down the general principles for the **creation a European network of immigration liaison officers** deployed by Member States as well as the Commission and Union Agencies to third countries with the objective of contributing to managing migration effectively and ensuring a high level of internal security within the European Union.

The proposal aims to:

- strengthen the rules governing the **sharing of strategic information with the Union Agencies**, ensuring that this becomes a two-way process and Member State ILOs access the relevant Agencies' analytical products in a more systematic manner and are further assisted in fulfilling their tasks in locations;
- **closer coordination** both at network management and at regional operational level of immigration liaison officers deployed by Member States, the Commission and Union agencies.

In order to **strengthen the governance** of a European network of ILOs, the proposal:

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further clarifies the definition of immigration liaison officer, making an explicit reference to law enforcement liaison officers working on immigration-related tasks;

- **introduces a Steering Board** at the European level to strengthen among Member States, the Commission and the Union Agencies the network management and coordination of immigration liaison officers deployed to third countries;
- introduces **reporting requirements** to be agreed by the Steering Board, which will include follow-up actions, and also introduces the possibility for the Steering Board to commission ad-hoc targeted information requests;
- reinforces **information exchange** between immigration liaison officers as well as members of the Steering Board via a secured web-based platform;
- provides legal certainty as to processing of **personal data** by immigration liaison officers for the purpose of fulfilling tasks and activities defined by the proposal.

BUDGETARY IMPLICATION: the total cost of implementing the proposal is estimated at **EUR 17.3 million over a nine-year period starting in 2019**, of which EUR 1.6 million to support the functioning of the Steering Board, EUR 12 million for the implementation of the activities of a European network of ILOs and EUR 3.5 million estimated for the deployment of the immigration liaison officers by the Commission.

If the proposal is adopted before the next financial framework, the necessary resources (estimated at EUR 860 000) shall be financed from the current ISF Borders and Visas budget line and the amounts shall be deducted from the total allocation of EUR 17.3 million for the implementation of this proposal.