New Avenues for Legal Labour Migration

2020/2010(INI) - 20/05/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 495 votes to 163, with 32 abstentions, a resolution on new avenues for legal labour migration.

Starting from the premise that migration is a normal phenomenon, Parliament highlighted the contribution that third-country nationals make to European societies and economies, while stressing that migration needs to be managed in an orderly, safe and regular manner.

In order to open up new avenues for **legal economic migration**, Members called for the EU to set ambitious and sustainable targets, while making effective use of and improving the existing legal policy framework.

The current EU legislative framework

Recalling that Article 79 TFEU provides for EU-wide management of legal migration, Parliament urged Member States to develop a **common immigration policy**, with common rules on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals and definitions of the rights they enjoy once they are legally resident in the EU, including the conditions governing freedom of movement and residence in other Member States.

Members pointed out that the current legislative framework and divergent transpositions of existing directives by Member States have created many inconsistencies for third-country nationals. They recommended **simplifying the legislative framework** by harmonising the provisions in all existing directives on legal migration relating to application procedures, grounds for admission and refusal, procedural guarantees, equal treatment, access to the labour market.

According to Members, the establishment of a comprehensive EU framework for legal migration would promote more **orderly migration**, attract the workers, students and businesses that national and EU labour markets need, help undermine the criminal business model of human smugglers and traffickers, improve access to decent working conditions, and promote the integration of women and men on an equal footing.

Member States are also invited to strengthen coordination between national authorities in relation to mobility programmes for third-country nationals within the EU.

Creating a talent pool

New tools would be needed to help match employers with potential employees, **address labour market shortages** and facilitate the recognition of formal third-country skills and qualifications at EU level.

Members therefore proposed the establishment of an **EU-wide talent pool** to identify and match talent, which would serve as a one-stop shop for third-country workers, EU employers and national administrations.

This pool should cover all employment sectors, low, medium and high-skilled workers, as well as salaried and self-employed jobs, including in SMEs and start-ups. The EU could play a major role in setting up, controlling and monitoring this tool, including through funding.

Parliament also recommended facilitating and accelerating the **mutual recognition and certification of diplomas**, certificates and other professional qualifications, including the formal and non-formal acquisition of skills in third countries.

Strengthened relations with third countries and the promotion of legal entry routes

Given the EU's ageing population and shrinking workforce, Members stressed that labour mobility programmes could boost the EU's labour markets and contribute to economic growth. Global and regional cooperation on migration should be supported as a means of enhancing the availability and flexibility of legal migration channels.

Members considered that a **broader dialogue on migration**, for example through regular summits between the EU and various third countries, could make it easier to respond to the needs of EU labour markets and facilitate balanced partnerships.

The resolution also stressed the **important role of remittances** and the benefits of safe and regular migration for both sending and receiving countries. It supported efforts to address the problems of 'brain drain' by developing instruments for **circular migration**. To this end, it asked the Commission to analyse the models currently applied by other countries, such as points-based systems.

To facilitate circular migration, Members proposed the introduction of preferential mobility, access to renewable permits, the right of re-entry and an extension of the period of authorised absence to allow third-country nationals to return to their country of origin.

Developing the EU legislative framework

Parliament argued that sectoral directives are a panacea neither for the EU's labour market needs, nor for the issue of legal migration more generally. It believes that, in the medium term, the EU must move away from a sectoral approach and adopt an **immigration code** setting out broad rules governing entry and residence for all TCNs seeking employment in the Union and harmonising the rights enjoyed by such TCNs and their families.