Free movement of persons: right of third-country nationals to travel the Community

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The Committee of the Regions welcomed the Commission’s proposal for a directive on the right of third-country nationals to travel in the Community and on the abolition of controls at internal borders, these measures representing an important contribution to the free movement of persons as guaranteed by the single European market. This freedom of movement, which allowed third-country nationals to make visits of short duration to all EU Member States, would especially promote travel and tourism within the Community. As regards the provision of services by European undertakings employing third-country nationals who were required to travel to the territory of another Member State in order to perform these services, the CoR, while respecting the conditions imposed by the Member State concerned, stated that it supported the idea of a special entry permit being issued to the employees (third-country nationals) of the aforementioned undertakings. In addition, the CoR drew attention to the fact that the regions of the European Union were attempting to help third-country nationals escape their isolation by introducing an improved integration policy that would eradicate social conflict. Integration could also be promoted through actions in the field of cultural and education policy. In this connection the CoR recalled the decision taken by the Council on 30 November 1994 regarding a joint action on ‘facilities for the movement of students who are third-country nationals residing in a Member State’, and regretted that this joint action did not establish facilities for the movement of third-country nationals who had unlimited leave to remain and of nationals participating in group travel activities (e.g. sporting associations and cultural excursions). However, freedom of movement for third-country nationals could not be introduced at the expense of public security. The CoR underlined the need for certain measures to be adopted in order to offset any deficiencies that might arise in respect of security and for work to continue on the directives even after the introduction of measures deriving from the third pillar. Finally, with a view implementing more effectively, within the single market, greater freedom of movement for EU citizens and third-country nationals, the CoR advocated that at the Intergovernmental Conference of 1996 the key areas of justice and home affairs should no longer be entrusted to intergovernmental cooperation but rather should be incorporated into the EC Treaty.