

Relations EU/Mediterranean countries: reinvigorating the Barcelona process

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The committee adopted the report by Sami NAIR (PES, F) on the Commission communication. Among the key issues raised in the report were the need to forestall the adverse economic and social repercussions of the association agreements, the need to respect human rights and democratic principles, the prevention of terrorism and immigration. The committee recommended that the qualitative importance to be attached to social aspects and to cultural and immigration issues should be equivalent to that accorded to economic, trade and security considerations. On the economic front, the report called for the various options for debt conversion to be studied and supported. Decentralised cooperation should be effectively relaunched on a long-term basis, and the Barcelona process should operate within a cohesion policy covering the Euro-Mediterranean area as a whole. Economic liberalisation should be encouraged with a view to mutual benefit and with due respect for social rights. This could be achieved, for example, by a policy to encourage micro-projects and a much more active role for civil society. A broad debate should be opened with the aim of enabling migration to be managed jointly, laying down policies on temporary migration, introducing a special travel visa for those involved in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, harnessing immigration to assist development in countries of origin and bringing about an explicit integration policy in host countries for legal established immigrants. The report suggested setting up a migration monitoring centre and called on the Euro-Mediterranean Forum to set up a migration committee. Lastly, the committee called on the Council and the Commission to ensure that the EU assumed a more ambitious political role in the Mediterranean region. It maintained that a solution to the Middle East conflict was an essential condition for achieving peace and stability in the Mediterranean region, which meant the right to security for Israel and for all the other countries in the region, as well as recognition of the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to have a viable state.