Immigration: Community policy

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PURPOSE: to present a Communication from the Commission on a Community Immigration Policy.
CONTENT: The Treaty of Amsterdam establishes for the first time Community competence for immigration and asylum. However, in view of the complex nature of immigration policy and its impact over a wide range of areas, social, economic, legal and cultural, the Commission believes that we cannot rely simply on a piecemeal approach to the legislative programme foreseen in Article 63 of the EC Treaty. This view has been supported by the European Parliament which has called on the Commission to set these measures into an overall framework. The Commission believes that channels for legal immigration to the EU should be made available to labour migrants. However, in view of the strongly divergent views of the Member States on the admission and integration of third country nationals, the Commission feels that it is essential to discuss these issues openly and try to reach a consensus on the objectives of the policy to be followed. Against this background, the purpose of this Communication is to stimulate this debate. The main provisions of the Communication include the following: - the necessity of a Community framework to co-ordinate and ensure the transparency of actions which are currently carried out by the Member States; - this framework would facilitate the formulation of commonly agreed objectives of legal immigration which could underpin the detailed legislative proposals concerning migrants which the Council called for in Tampere in October 1999; - this refers not only to the conditions for the admission and residence of third country nationals for employment and other reasons, but also standards and procedures for the issue of long-term visas and residence permits, the definition of a set of uniform rights for third country nationals and the criteria and conditions under which third country nationals might be allowed to settle and work in any Member State together with the Charter of Fundamental Rights; - the procedure put in place for the monitoring of migration flows will provide a framework for consultation between the Member States on migration issues, for the co-ordination of policy, for setting common objectives and for developing accompanying measures with respect to the integration of migrants. In conclusion, given the complex nature of the issues involved and the need to ensure the participation of a wide range of actors in the implementation of such a policy, the Commission proposes this Communication be debated by the relevant actors, that is to say EU institutions and other social and governmental actors). It is proposed that the results of this debate be discussed at a conference to be held under the Belgian Presidency in the second half of 2001 and that the conclusions of this conference be presented for discussion to the Council at its meeting in Brussels at the end of 2001 which will also be considering a mid-term review of the implementation of the Tampere programme.