Immigration: Community policy

2001/2047(COS) - 11/07/2001

PURPOSE : to propose an open method to the Member States for eventually devising a common immigration policy. CONTENT : the European Commission adopted a proposal for a Council Directive on conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of paid employment and self-employed economic activity (please refer to procedure reference CNS/2001/0154). This is a fundamental legal and administrative tool for improving the management of migration flows, since it determines, for the first time, common criteria in all the Member States, a single procedure, which has been simplified and made transparent through the introduction of a single document (stay and work), while establishing the rights of third-country nationals. At the same time, the Commission is proposing a mechanism for open cooperation which will introduce a method for monitoring the development of national immigration policies. The Commission is convinced that the legal instruments already proposed, or about to be proposed, and for whose application the Member States remain responsible, will not be able to deliver their full Community value added, if the Member States do not use them to align national immigration policies more closely on the basis of common principles. The Commission had previously declared that zero immigration is quite simply an illusion and that the ex-post regularisation of illegal immigrants is inconsistent. Clear rules are needed, with criteria and a common framework, which will enable each Member State to manage migration flows at national level in accordance with the subsidiarity principle. In its communication of 22 November 2000, the Commission invited the Member States to link immigration policy to all the other policies directly or indirectly associated with economic and social development (training, integrating young people and women into the labour market, combating unemployment, etc.) and to situate that policy in an overall approach to relations with third countries. It is in this context that the Commission is proposing, in today's communication, to coordinate efforts in an open manner, through an operational instrument for checking the mutual consistency of Member States' policies, which must be constructed around common criteria. Accordingly, it is drawing up an initial series of guidelines concerning the management of migration flows, including measures to combat illegal immigration, the admission of economic migrants, partnership with third countries, and integration. The Commission wants an initial inventory of the work and discussions in progress to be drawn up for the inter-institutional conference which is to be organised by the Belgian presidency on 16 and 17 October next, with an eye to the political conclusions to be drawn by the European Council at Laeken.