Asylum: common procedure and internal security. 1st report

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The committee adopted the report by Robert EVANS (PES, UK) drawn up in response to the Commission communication. Pointing out that the asylum procedure was often the only way to get into the EU, which increased the pressure on the asylum system, MEPs stressed the need for a common immigration policy. They favoured a 'holistic' approach to asylum and immigration issues, which should be integrated into other policy areas, such as trade, development, environment and agriculture. The report stressed that the "best practice" to be followed by Member States should be based on ensuring the fulfilment of their international protection obligations. The open coordination method should result in a correct application of EU legislation and the Geneva Convention. Moreover, the Geneva Convention exclusion clauses - on the basis of which refugee status may be withheld on grounds such as war crimes and crimes against humanity - should be used "restrictively and with caution". The committee issued a call for the Commission and Member States to reaffirm the EU policy that individuals must not be extradited to countries where they could face the death penalty for their crimes. It also wanted the Commission to ensure that biometric data, including fingerprints, was not used for criminal investigations until privacy legislation on biometric data had been developed. Other recommendations included the need to ensure that security measures did not result in immediate and general detention, that investigations into the withdrawal of refugee status were not undertaken on the basis of race, nationality, ethnicity or religious beliefs and that particular attention was given to the needs of unaccompanied minors and women.