Control of external borders: development of a common policy, Thessaloniki Council

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Hubert PIRKER (EPP-ED, A) in response to the Commission communication. The report called for uniform security standards at all the external borders of the enlarged EU and supported the creation of a European Corps of Border Guards, financed from the EU budget, to assist Member States in achieving this. MEPs also wanted to see improved cooperation among Member States and the Commission through a standardised system for the provision and analysis of data on legal and illegal immigration. The report stressed the need for a coherent approach to a common European policy on asylum and migration, including legal means for third country nationals to enter the Union and an integration policy which balances the rights of legally resident third country nationals and the host societies. It supported the idea of legal immigration quotas being set by Member States. Regarding illegal immigration, the committee said that the overriding priority should be a voluntary return policy. It supported the development of Community agreements on readmission with countries of origin and transit. MEPs also highlighted the need for extensive information campaigns in countries of origin and transit to raise awareness of the consequences of illegal immigration or a refused asylum application.