Asylum and migrations: collection and analysis of Community statistics, action plan

2003/2157(INI) - 07/10/2003

The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Arie OOSTLANDER (EPP-ED, NL) welcoming the Commission's proposed Action Plan. It agreed with the Commission's analysis that Community harmonisation in the field of statistics was needed in order to bring definitions and practices into line with each other. This would enable accurate and comparable figures to be obtained which could be used as the basis for devising a Community policy on migration. MEPs pointed out that currently not all Member States were supplying comprehensive information to Eurostat, and this was hampering progress. They believed that binding legislation was therefore needed so that EU policy as a whole was not adversely affected by the failure of one or more Member States to fulfil their obligations. They nevertheless stressed that any new legislation must be flexible enough to allow for ongoing adjustments to take account of improvements in practices. Above all, the publication of statistics should not become a tool for the manipulation of policy or public opinion. The report recommended that the proposed legislation be based on the 1998 UN recommendations on statistics in the field of international migration. The committee was particularly concerned that reliable data should be gathered on illegal immigration, especially trafficking in women and children, the full magnitude of which was as yet unknown. While understanding the Council's view that some data on illegal migration was sensitive, it said that this must not be used as a pretext for not supplying Eurostat with general statistics. It also recommended that statistics compiled by Member States and NGOs should be combined in order to avoid duplication of effort and to obtain a more complete picture of the phenomenon of illegal immigration. The Commission was urged to investigate whether Eurodac and EUROPOL might also be involved as providers of data. MEPs also insisted on the importance of gathering gender-based statistics and pointed to the gender differences in the reasons for migration, types of migration and the conditions in which women and men migrants live. Lastly, they stressed the need for adequate funding to be made available for implementing the Action Plan and called on the Commission to clarify which budget lines would be used.