Migration and asylum policy: European strategy and the Union's future policy

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OBJECTIVE: to present a strategy paper from the Austrian presidency on EU migration and asylum policy as a possible basis for future EU policy in this area. CONTENT: this Council paper presents an overview of a re-definition of European policy on migration. Currently, this policy is determined by national interests. However, the paper stresses that, at the end of the 1900s, it is becoming increasingly clear that the challenges in terms of migration should be met by the Union as a whole, rather than individually by Member States. Current migratory movements seem to demonstrate this (the exodus of Croats, Bosnians and Kosovans, the illegal immigration of Iraqis and Kurds and the emigration movement from the Maghreb) because they affect the whole of the EU territory. The paper seems to suggest that it is becoming essential to define a European policy concept on immigration and that the current situation, whereby EU immigration policy is simply the sum of the individual Member States? own policies in this area, can no longer be maintained. This concept must develop as a coherent, medium-term migration policy for the EU, which takes account of the highly complex topics involved, the fact that crisis situations repeatedly occur, the experience of inadequate reaction to such crises in the past and the realisation that one-dimensional measures do not solve the problem. For these reasons, the strategy paper proposes that, in the short term, the EU?s migration policy, in particular its visa, asylum, immigration, freedom of movement and border-security policies, must cover the following areas: 1) reduction of migratory pressure in the main countries of origin of immigrants: - intervention in conflict regions; - extension of development aid and economic cooperation; - political cooperation between host States and States of origin; - raising of human rights standards. 2) reduction of illegal migration and suppression of illegal immigration networks, especially in connection with the fight against organised crime. 3) immigration control: - improvement and standardisation of data capture; - promotion of tried and tested systems for the quantitative control of new immigration; - standardisation of rules governing the migration of third country nationals, and especially those governing family reunification; - transfer payments to immigrants determined by migration policy considerations; - combatting of illegal employment. 4) definition of an overall concept of official controls for entry to Member States, at all stages of movements of persons: - in the country of departure at the time of granting visa, - in transit by checks to be carried out by transport undertakings, - in the transit States by implementation of the Community acquis, - in external-border controls of the EU Member States, - by security nets at internal borders, - in the country of final destination with swift procedures (under the law governing asylum and aliens). 5) determination of the status of legal immigrants with a view to promoting integration. 6) new protection for refugees: - temporary protection for displaced persons and solidarity compensation; - integration programmes which are socially acceptable to the host States; - reintegration programmes with international support; - reform of the asylum application procedure; - transition from protection concepts based exclusively on the rule of law to include politically oriented concepts, additions to the legal basis for this, - reduction of manifestly unfounded applications for asylum. 7) agreements with States of origin and transit States: - on the approximation of legal standards affecting migration policy, - in the field of prevention and - with regard to effective repatriation. 8) ?europeanisation? of migration policy. The paper also singles out a number of priority areas. These include immigration management, combatting illegal immigration, developing legal procedures which make it possible for migration policy objectives to be attained, developing a borders policy for which there is joint responsibility and establishing a uniform, comprehensive EU law on asylum and the repatriation of illegal immigrants.