Asylum and migration: plans for origin and transit countries (Afghanistan, Albania, Iraq, Morocco, Somalia, Sri Lanka)

1999/2096(COS) - 30/03/2000 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted its resolution drafted by Mr. Jorge Salvador HERNANDEZ MOLLAR (EPP/ED, E) on asylum-seekers and migrants - action plans for countries of origin or transit. The Parliament notes that, despite the fact that the Amsterdam Treaty has required immigration and asylum policies to be brought into the Community sphere, the Council has continued to show a marked tendency to use the intergovernmental procedure under the third pillar for these matters, appearing to reflect the lack of concern for transparency that has been criticised time and time again in the past and this tendency is also reflected in the Council's decision to set up a High Level Group not subject to democratic control. It also considers that the action plans drawn up by the Group for the target countries, whilst containing useful data and analyses, neither make a real political contribution nor do they bring any Community value-added to the solution of the problems which remain the root cause of immigration and asylum seeking. Parliament also points out that the political leaders and representatives of civil society in the countries concerned were not adequately consulted or involved in the drafting of the plans and that this does not augur well for the successful implementation of the plans. It urges the European institutions to base their future choices on a Community approach which must, above all: - ensure that due respect is shown for the institutional role of Parliament and the Commission; in particular, Parliament should be consulted in advance on future action plans and this should not be an overll consultation, but one which will enable it to undertake a more in-depth analysis and thus adopt appropriate measures; - involve preliminary discussions, with the participation of civil society, in the countries concerned; - focus on those countries with which there is a real possibility of establishing multisectoral cooperation thanks to a satisfactory level of political stability and the existence of democratic and representative governments, starting with more intensive political and social dialogue. Parliament considers that; although the scope of these proposals covers both the Community pillar and the intergovernmental pillar, any agreement concluded with a third country forms part of the EU's external policy and reminds the Commission and the Council that the EP must be consulted so that it can express its views on all such agreements. The EP expresses concern at the imbalance in the action plans between the provisions concerning punitive action and those concerning integration - an imbalance which might, in the long term, prove counterproductive and damage the interests of the Member States. It rejects the thinking behind measures which do not manage to establish a coherent distinction between immigration and asylum proper. With regard to recommendations on asylum, the EP considers that the reception of refugees in the region does not absolve the Member States from the duties which they have as the asylum seekers' host countries under the international conventions and it stresses that the individual protection of refugees and their families must be guaranteed. It alsostresses that keeping refugees in peripheral countries must not become a long-term solution and that significantly increased aid must be given to such countries in order to enable them to cope with inflows from neightbouring states. It calls for the following to be given priority in the Unions cooperation activities: - effective protection for asylum seekers and refugees in regions neighbouring main countries of origin, whenever feasible in the light of local conditions; - structural improvements of the institutions responsible for initial reception of asylum seekers and international protection in the EU Member States; - the consolidation of a regional approach to the return of asylum-seekers whose applications have been rejected and to voluntary return from neighbouring countries (assistance with reintegration, cover of travel expenses and allowances, offer of vocational training, and assistance to local communities taking in returnees). With regard to immigration, the EP condemns the incoherent and unbalanced nature of action plans which propose measures even when the EU does not yet have its own immigration policy. It considers that the Member States must make an effort to ensure that immigration is possible by legal routes; urges minimum Community standards to be set for the admission of third country

nationals to the Union in accordance with the Commission proposals. It also urges the Member States, as a matter of urgency, to harmonise their data so as to make Eurostat's work more effective and that the main countries of origin ve held jointly responsible for the management of migratory flows to the Member States, on the basis of clear and accepted criteria. It calls for action to combat illegal immigration to focus on: - the adoption by the EU of common measures to prevent and crack down on organised trafficking in illegal immigrants, - providing healthcare for illegal immigrants and education for the children of these families, - measures to combat illegal employment in the Union, - carrying out a studyt into the political, economic and social factors underlying illegal immigration, - the provision of information on the traffic in immigrants to agents responsible for monitoring in the target countries, - the organisation of information campaigns in the target countries and neighbouring countries on the consequences of illegal entry and clandestine employment in the EU. On the subject of cooperation between the EU and target countries in internal affairs, the Parliament calls on the Council to take the appropriate decisions to permit a new political cooperation with the selected countries, centred on strengthening the rule of law. Political cooperation should include: - offering for the EU to act as intermediary in peace talks with opposition and dissident groups, - the provision of assistance to target countries in establishing or reforming administrative structures and drawing up new procedures which are tailored to local circumstances but comply with the principle of legal certainty (e.g. laws and procedures governing citizenship and personal data), - action to combat corruption, as well as to ensure respect for international human rights instruments and the promotion of national laws and procedures for their enforcement, - strengthening development aid in the countries concerned. Lastly, the EP proposes that a new heading be created in the 2001 budget to cover 'cooperation with third countries in the fields of justice and home affairs, with particular reference to immigration'.