

Immigration: open method of policy coordination and integration in the relations with third countries

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by Anna TERRON I CUSI (PES, Italy) on Community immigration policy. Parliament regretted that the Council had not adopted the legislative instruments put forward by the Commission and called on the Council to take up a position on the Commission's communications at the earliest opportunity. An open method for the coordination of national policies cannot under any circumstances take the place of the legislative measures called for. The method could prove difficult to introduce if it were to be misused for the purpose of further delaying the legislative process or concealing the fact that deadlock has been reached. On the question of economic migrants, Parliament asked the Council to adopt the directive on the conditions for entering the EU for employment purposes, as a first and necessary step towards ensuring simple and transparent procedures for legal entry into the EU. An ageing population and a lack of low-skilled and very highly-skilled workers are common features of all the Member States, which use immigration as a remedy against this situation. Member States retain responsibility for selecting and establishing the number of economic immigrants required to cover national labour market needs. Parliament stressed that coherence between Community policy on immigration and other EU policies, particularly those relating to employment and social inclusion, is essential. It also asked Member States to take urgent steps to shed light on illegal employment, especially in the domestic help sector, in which a very large number of female migrant workers are employed. A new solution must be found which permits families employing such workers to draw up a legal employment contract entitling them to social security cover. On the matter of the integration of third country nationals, Parliament felt that full integration of migrants is a key factor in measuring the success of European immigration policy. Various actions have been developed in the Member States to address the increasing pluralism of present-day societies. The experience acquired in this area, both successes and failures, is an asset that the Commission should harness, evaluate and make available to all key actors. Member States should not misuse integration policy as a way of rendering immigration impossible in practice. Parliament condemned the imposition of integration tests and language requirements which immigrants are required to comply with before they enter a Member State. Parliament went on to state that readmission agreements represent one aspect of EU external policy. EU Member States should accept their obligations with a view to improved management of migration flows, but this must not form the EU's sole priority as regards relations with countries of origin in the migration context. Factors which encourage unwanted emigration must be examined. Cooperation with third countries should include measures to support the establishment of positive trends both for countries of origin and transit and host countries. This means promoting co-development projects and coordinated action in the field of education and training, examining economic and other opportunities linked to people's mobility, and assisted return policies. Co-development policies should remain one of the objectives of budget line B7-667 and of EU external action programmes. Parliament drew attention to the need to take into account, along the lines mentioned by the Commission, the enormous financial flows which the money sent home by immigrants constitutes. It asked the Commission to take the initiative in order to ensure that these earnings can be sent back legally, cheaply and easily, to benefit co-development initiatives.