

Links between legal and illegal migration and integration of migrants

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Patrick GAUBERT (EPP-ED, FR) in response to the Commission papers on the links between legal and illegal migration and the integration of migrants. The report proposed guidelines for a new immigration policy in Europe, seeking to strike a balance between fighting illegal immigration effectively and integrating legal arrivals. It stressed that coordination of national policies could not replace a European integration policy, and called on the Member States to define "minimum criteria" for the creation of such a policy.

Among the key points regarding illegal immigration, MEPs highlighted the need for closer cooperation with countries of origin. They agreed with the Commission that mass regularisation of illegal immigrants should be a one-off event, since "such measures tend to encourage illegal migration and do not resolve the real underlying problems". They also said that they were worried by the setting up in the Mediterranean countries, at the request of certain EU Member States, of 'preliminary reception centres' for immigrants heading for the Union's territory, which did not offer minimum guarantees to the people concerned in terms of fundamental rights.

The committee wanted to see punitive measures taken against networks of people smugglers and believed that action was needed to combat illegal working, particularly in the areas of domestic work and childcare.

Turning to the management of legal immigration, the report called for an approach based not only on the EU's labour needs but also on respect for the immigrants' human rights and their integration in society. It stressed that immigrants must be encouraged to learn the language of the host country. It was also important to organise civics courses, combat ghettoisation and encourage immigrants to take part in local elections. The committee urged all the EU Member States to ratify the UN Convention on the rights of all migrant workers and members of their families.

Lastly, it expressed dismay at the increase in honour killings, persecution and serious violations of the rights of immigrant women "on the basis of religious fanaticism and inhuman traditions", and urged the Commission and Council to tackle these issues more rigorously and guarantee protection for women under threat.