

The transitional arrangements restricting the free movement of workers on European Union labour markets

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Csaba ÖRY (EPP-ED, HU) in response to the Commission paper on the transitional arrangements restricting access for workers from eight of the 'new' Member States to labour markets in several of the 'old' Member States. Pointing out that 2006 has been declared 'European Year of Workers' Mobility', MEPs stressed that the free movement of workers is one of the four fundamental freedoms of the EC Treaty, as well as an expression of solidarity between the old and new Member States. They called for the transitional measures in force to be abolished, "given that there are no signs of strain on the labour markets of the Member States which have opted for openness without restrictions" and that fears of massive migration have proved groundless. They added that the transitional periods were a major contributory factor to higher levels of illegal work and "sham self-employment", and would increasingly lead to "regionally acute wage pressure", unfair working conditions and exploitation of migrant workers.

The report said that Member States should abolish national rules which contradict the 'status quo clause' of the Accession Treaty, which stipulates that workers from the new Member States should not face greater restrictions than applied before the accession treaties were signed. It also called on the Member States to enforce the preference rule whereby, when a post is vacant, nationals of the new Member States have priority over non-EU nationals. Labour law should also be strictly enforced so as to guarantee that all EU workers are treated equally, that there is fair competition among businesses and that social dumping is prevented.

The Commission was urged to: intensify cross-border joint action by the Member States' labour inspectorates; consider setting up a corresponding European cooperation network (a 'social Europol'); produce standardised statistics, in conjunction with the Council, on intra-EU migration by January 2009; set up systematic monitoring of migration of workers within the EU; and provide the funds necessary to finance these actions.