Common agenda for integration and framework for the integration of third-country nationals in the Union

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Stavros LAMBRINIDIS (PSE, GR) in response to the Commission communication entitled 'A Common Agenda for Integration - Framework for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the European Union'.

The report began by pointing out that there are around 40 million immigrants in the European Union today and they "might be seen as the EU's 26th Member State". Integration of immigrants was not just a local matter but one of EU-wide importance, since successful integration would strengthen the Union's economy in the face of global competition. Efforts to integrate the immigrant population should therefore be equivalent to EU commitments to integrate accession countries.

The committee broadly welcomed the Commission proposal to establish a European Fund for Integration of third-country nationals for the period 2007-2013, while urging that use of the Fund follow certain "concrete principles", including reducing the employment gap between immigrants and others, improving immigrant participation and performance in education, enhancing the political and civic participation of immigrants, providing support for coordination of integration efforts among the Member States and for the exchange of best practice, and focusing on the integration of newcomers, ensuring nevertheless that programmes targeting second and third generation immigrant descendants also receive funding.

MEPs also called for monitoring mechanisms to evaluate integration programmes in the Member States, and encouraged the Commission to consult migrant communities in defining and implementing European aid and development policies in their home countries. The report urged Member States "to establish transparent, humane, fast and reasonable procedures for the granting of long-term resident status, for family reunification and for the naturalisation of long-term resident immigrants and their children". The committee also expressed approval for the integration programmes of certain Member States involving a mutual commitment by the host country and immigrants.