Resolution on the EU common immigration policy

2006/2627(RSP) - 28/09/2006 - Text adopted by Parliament, topical subjects

The European Parliament adopted by 295 votes in favour, 271 against and 14 abstentions a joint resolution on the EU common immigration policy, noting the failure of the Council, seven years on from the Tampere European Council and despite numerous requests from Parliament, to define such a policy, instead maintaining unanimity and the consultation procedure for all matters regarding legal immigration. Stressing that increased migration is a global phenomenon, Parliament recognised the human drama and difficulties confronted by a number of Member States in managing the very large migration flows of the last few years. It was aware that, in the absence of channels for legal migration, asylum systems had come under increasing pressure as a means to legal settlement, and deplored the very substantial humanitarian costs, including the lost lives of immigrants. It felt that the European Union should take a cross-cutting approach. Its immigration policy should not only encompass partnership with third countries, the securing of external borders to combat human trafficking and an equitable return policy, but at the same time open up channels for legal immigration, encourage the integration of migrants into the host society and allow co-development of countries of origin in order to deal with the underlying causes of migration.

Any comprehensive approach to immigration cannot ignore the 'push factors' that lead people to leave their countries in the first place. Accordingly, there was a need for real possibilities for legal migration towards the European Union and clear plans for development and investment in the countries of origin and transit. A coherent European immigration policy must be accompanied by an integration policy providing for, among other things, proper integration into the labour market, the right to education and training, access to social and health-care services and participation by immigrants in social, cultural and political life.

Parliament felt that any decision on loosening rules on immigration in one Member State had a knock-on effect on the situation faced by other Member States. Whilst it was understood that, in the absence of an EU common immigration policy, Member States had different approaches to the problem of hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants working illegally and without any social protection, Parliament believed that regularising illegal immigrants en masse was not a solution in the long term, since such a measure did not resolve the real underlying problems.

It called on the Commission to propose the creation of an emergency fund to finance 'expert support teams' to provide practical assistance for reception at borders and tackle humanitarian crises in the Member States, and to incorporate in the new funds for the period 2007-2013 an emergency mechanism allowing financial assistance to be provided in emergency situations.

Parliament recognised the need to adopt an equitable EU return directive, and called on the Council to increase its efforts to ensure its adoption. However, border checks and action to combat illegal immigration could be only one aspect of the EU's policy towards third countries, to which an active country of origin and transit development policy must be applied with a view to minimising the damaging effects of emigration. Any measures to combat illegal immigration and step up external border controls, even where in cooperation with third countries, must be compatible with the safeguards and the fundamental rights of the individual laid down in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, notably the right to asylum and the right of non-refoulement.

Lastly, Parliament urged the Commission to take the initiative as soon as possible with a view to revising Regulation 343/2003/EC, 'Dublin II', by calling into question its very principle, namely that the Member State responsible for dealing with an asylum application is the first country that applicants reach. This puts

an intolerable burden on the countries situated in the south and the east of the EU. The Commission should introduce a fair mechanism for sharing responsibilities among the Member States.