

Illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings: residence permit issued to victims

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The committee adopted the report by Patsy SÖRENSEN (Greens/EFA, B) broadly approving the proposal under the consultation procedure, subject to a number of amendments designed to clarify and improve the text. It proposed changes to some of the definitions in order to bring them more into line with the UN Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants and the Council framework decision on combating trafficking in human beings. While approving the idea of a reflection period of no longer than 30 days, in order to prevent misuse of the procedure, the committee nevertheless adopted an amendment saying that in exceptional cases this period could be extended. It also stipulated that not having any valid identity papers should not be a reason for refusing a short-term residence permit, as these papers were often taken by the trafficker or smuggler. Provision should also be made for appeal against any refusal to issue or renew a short-term residence permit and against withdrawal of a permit. Moreover, such decisions should be duly substantiated. Another amendment introduced a new clause specifying that Member States should ensure that any legal proceedings are not held in public, in order to protect the privacy and identity of those involved. Lastly, the committee advocated an active role for non-governmental organisations in providing protection for victims.