Procedure file

Basic information

INI - Own-initiative procedure	2006/2251(INI)	Procedure completed
Policy plan on legal migration Subject 7.10.08 Migration policy		

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
LIBE Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs	PSE GRUBER Lilli	20/06/2006

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
AFET Foreign Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
DEVE Development	PPE-DE MAVROMMATIS Manolis	25/01/2006
INTA International Trade	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
EMPL Employment and Social Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
CULT Culture and Education	PSE BADIA I CUTCHET Maria	14/11/2006
FEMM Women's Rights and Gender Equality	PPE-DE PANAYOTOPOULOS-CASSIOTOU Marie	06/11/2006

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meeting	Date
General Affairs	2808	18/06/2007
Justice and Home Affairs (JHA)	2807	12/06/2007
Justice and Home Affairs (JHA)	2781	15/02/2007

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Justice and Consumers	FRATTINI Franco

Key events

21/12/2005	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2005)0669	Summary
26/10/2006	Committee referral announced in Parliament		

15/02/2007	Debate in Council	2781	Summary
12/06/2007	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		Summary
18/06/2007	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		Summary
12/09/2007	Vote in committee		Summary
17/09/2007	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0322/2007	
26/09/2007	Results of vote in Parliament		
26/09/2007	Debate in Parliament		
26/09/2007	Decision by Parliament	T6-0414/2007	Summary
26/09/2007	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2006/2251(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Strategic initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	LIBE/6/41700

Documentation gateway

Non-legislative basic document		COM(2005)0669	21/12/2005	EC	Summary
Document attached to the procedure		SEC(2005)1680	21/12/2005	EC	
Committee opinion	DEVE	PE378.663	08/11/2006	EP	
Committee opinion	FEMM	PE382.517	27/02/2007	EP	
Committee opinion	CULT	PE384.544	28/03/2007	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE392.153	18/07/2007	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0322/2007	17/09/2007	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0414/2007	26/09/2007	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2007)5401	18/10/2007	EC	
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2007)5763	06/12/2007	EC	

Policy plan on legal migration

PURPOSE: the presentation of a policy plan on legal migration.

CONTENT: this Commission Communication on an EU policy plan for legal migration has been prepared in accordance with a 2004 Council request for it to develop a ?policy plan on legal migration, including admission procedures capable of responding promptly to fluctuating demands for migrant labour.?

Worldwide migration flows have been growing considerably largely due to global economic variations, demographic changes and the opening up of global trade. Determining legislation on legal migration is a matter for the Member States. However, the admission of third-country nationals in one Member State can affect the labour market of other Member States. The purpose of this paper is to put forward EU initiatives for legal migration.

Legislative measures on labour migration.

Based on extensive research and public consultation the Commission suggests that the most appropriate legislative framework for legal migration, at an EU level, would be one general framework Directive complemented by four specific Directives. The legislative measures envisioned are:

i) A general framework Directive: The main purpose of this horizontal instrument will be to guarantee a common framework of rights to all third-country nationals in legal employment and who have already been admitted to a Member State but who have no entitlement to a long-term residence status. This would not only be fair on those persons contributing, both economically and in terms of tax, to the EU?s economy, it would also contribute towards the establishment of a level playing field within the EU. The proposed Directive would also include a single application for a joint work/residence permit, to be held by the worker and containing advance biometric identifies. Such an approach would simplify procedures for immigrants and employers. An employer could be held financially responsible for a third country employee ? as is the case under the research Directive. Admission will be conditional on the existence of a work contract and on the ?economic needs test?, although exceptions many be necessary for declared structural needs in certain sectors, occupations and regions.

ii) A proposed Directive on the conditions of entry and residence of highly skilled workers. The vast majority of Member States need these workers because of shortfalls in the labour markets for highly qualified workers. The proposed Directive could include a special procedure which allows for the rapid admission and acceptance of highly skilled workers. Conditions could be attached which make working in Europe more attractive. A more ambitious proposal could be the creation of an ?EU work permit? or an ?EU Green Card?, which if issued in one Member State could be applicable throughout the EU.

iii) A proposed Directive on the conditions of entry and residence of seasonal workers: Seasonal workers are regularly needed in sectors such as agriculture, building and tourism. The proposed scheme would include a new residence/work permit, which would allow third country nationals to work for a certain number of months per year for up to four to five years. Entry and exist stamps should help prevent abuses.

iv) A proposed Directive on the procedures regulating the entry into, the temporary stay and residence of, Intra-Corporate Transferees (ICT): This scheme will set out common procedure on how to regulate the entry into, temporary stay of, and residence in, the EU of ICT personnel. The procedures will be without prejudice to international commitments entered into by the EC or by the EC and its Member States. In order to enable the allocation of international companies? key personnel and specialists within Europe, intra-EU mobility of ICT personnel will be addressed.

v) A proposed Directive on the conditions of entry and residence of remunerated trainees: Currently, no rules exist for this particular category of persons ? unlike unremunerated trainees. Allowing third-country nationals to acquire skills and knowledge through a period of training in Europe can be a way to encourage the circulation of bright persons. Safeguards will be put in place to avoid abuses ? such as trainees who are in reality underpaid temporary workers.

In other measures, the Commission considers enhanced integration, knowledge-sharing and co-operation with third countries. With this policy plan, the Commission is fulfilling a mandate it received from the Hague Programme in 2004. More precise measures will be proposed in the coming four years and the Commission will continue to engage in talks with experts from the Member States, the EU?s social partners and all other interested parties.

Policy plan on legal migration

The Council had an exchange of views on the implementation of the European Council conclusions of 14 and 15 December 2006 relating to a Comprehensive European Migration Policy.

In particular, the Council took forward the discussion on migration which was started at the informal Ministerial meeting in Dresden in January 2007 throughout which it was envisaged to:

1. strengthen cooperation with third countries in the fight against illegal migration through the development of incentives to cooperate, partnership agreements on migration and development;
2. promote circular migration by allowing temporary stays for the purpose of work or further training and education.

The discussion focussed on a Presidency note which put forward the following ideas:

- that the countries of origin and transit should be given practical support for capacity-building within the framework of region-specific cooperation platforms for migration and development;

- the appropriate cooperation platforms should be designed on the basis of uniform principles (e.g. regular meetings, ongoing dialogue and exchange of information, monitoring and accompanying evaluation);

- in establishing country-specific migration profiles, particular account should be taken of:

- causes of migration;
- own capacity of countries of origin to regulate migration and obstacles in the countries of origin which stand in the way of economic development;
- and exploitation of the potential which exists in those countries.

The note also suggested that, in concluding partnership agreements on migration and development, the following elements might be considered:

- creation of temporary residence permits for work, educational or further-training purposes according to Member States' possibilities;

- granting of optional quotas for certain sectors of the labour market or education by the Member States;

- obligation on partner countries to recognise principles of democracy and the rule of law as well as protection of human rights;

- reliable readmission of own nationals and third-country nationals by the partner countries;

- EU measures to promote reintegration of migrants who have returned to the partner country, and to exploit the knowledge and know-how acquired;

- obligation to create framework conditions in the countries of origin which make it possible to use the development-policy and economic potential of migration in those countries.

The note adverted to the need for reliable guarantees in relation to national competence of Member States for their labour markets.

It should be noted that in December 2006, the European Council invited the Commission to examine by June 2007 how possibilities for legal migration might be incorporated into the EU?s policy in the field of external relations, in order to arrive at a balanced partnership with third countries. At the same time, the Commission was also invited to present detailed proposals by June 2007 to better organise legal migration between the EU and third countries and provide information about the various forms of legal migration.

The discussion held by the Council will help the Commission to draft these proposals. The Commission will brief the Council on the state of play of its work on these issues at the next Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting in April 2007.

Policy plan on legal migration

The Council endorsed Conclusions on Extending and Enhancing the Global Approach to Migration. The conclusions will now be submitted to the General Affairs and External Relations Council, for adoption.

The Council underlines the importance of the issue of migration for the EU and its Member States. It notes the first set of priority actions for the purpose of the Global Approach focussed on Africa and the Mediterranean region. Strengthened political dialogue, including the recent EU missions to Africa, and concrete cooperation with African and EuroMed partners on migration and related issues, including development aspects of migration, are important recent achievements. The strengthened capacity to manage the control of external borders, in particular through joint maritime operations, is another important achievement. The Council believes that these measures should be further intensified in the light of recent events.

The Council, while underlining the need to continue these efforts as a matter of urgency, also reaffirms the need to both extend the geographical scope and to enhance the content of the Global Approach in general. It calls on the Member States and the Commission to ensure that sufficient human and financial resources are allocated, within the existing financial framework, in order to enable the timely implementation of the comprehensive approach to migration.

1) Extending the Global Approach - Applying the Global Approach to Migration to the Eastern and South-Eastern Regions Neighbouring the European Union: the Council underlines the necessity for the EU to achieve a more efficient management of migration given the considerable numbers of migrants coming from or through the eastern and south-eastern regions. Existing cooperation structures in the region need to be enhanced and fully integrated in EU-relations with the third countries concerned, in order to create a more comprehensive and coherent approach. This applies, in particular, to dialogue and effective cooperation in matters such as enhancing border control, combating illegal immigration, organised crime and trafficking in and smuggling of human beings. This also applies to ensuring well-managed migration for social, cultural and business purposes and harnessing the opportunities to strengthen the links and synergies between migration and development in these regions.

As a matter of priority, particular attention should be given to strengthening the dialogue and cooperation with the regions directly neighbouring the EU, i.e. the countries of the Western Balkans, Turkey, the ENP countries ? including issues that could affect them, such as the consequences of the Iraqi refugee situation ? and the Russian Federation. Furthermore the dialogue on migration issues should be intensified with Central Asian and Asian countries of origin and transit identified in accordance with the migratory routes concept.

The Council invites the Commission to report back on the implementation of the Global Approach thus extended.

2) Enhancing the Global Approach - Circular Migration and mobility partnerships between the European Union and third countries: the Council reiterates that active consideration must be given to how legal migration opportunities can be incorporated into the Union's external policies in order to develop a balanced partnership with interested third countries. These would need to be adapted to the specific EU Member States' labour market needs as well as to the cooperation results achieved from the third countries concerned. The Council believes that these two concepts could make an important contribution to a comprehensive approach, which combines measures aimed at facilitating legal migration opportunities with those reducing illegal immigration. Such a strategy could, in particular, be directed to promoting sustained cooperation with third countries along the migration routes towards the European Union.

The Council underlines that these mobility partnerships will be considered in those cases where they bring added value both to the EU and the third country on the management of migration flows and on the understanding that the willingness to contribute to this partnership and to cooperate actively is the basis for the opportunities offered by them. Such partnerships should, as far as appropriate, include the offer of legal migration opportunities, adapted in particular to the specific Member States' labour market needs, while fully respecting the competences of the Member States and the principle of Community preference on the one hand, and a genuine cooperation on preventing and combating illegal immigration, trafficking in and smuggling of human beings as well as effective readmission and return policy while respecting the protection of human rights, on the other hand.

The Council believes that the concept of mobility partnerships between the European Union, Member States and third countries could be tested by way of a limited number of pilot partnerships. The Council therefore invites the Commission to consult Member States on the further development of this concept, including, in particular, on the terms of reference, and with a view to exploratory talks with interested third countries on pilot partnerships in close cooperation with the Presidency and interested Member States. The Commission is invited to report back to the Council on the outcome of these consultations in order to enable the Council to decide by the end of 2007 whether to invite the Commission to launch pilot partnerships. The Council agrees that legal migration opportunities, including well-managed circular migration can potentially benefit all partners involved. All possibilities for a well-managed circular migration should therefore be explored in close cooperation with all relevant stakeholders with a view to the adoption of Council Conclusions not later than the end of 2007.

Policy plan on legal migration

The Council adopted conclusions on the policy plan on legal migration. Firstly, it welcomes the important progress being made with the adoption and the implementation of the Global Approach to Migration. It notes the first set of priority actions for the purpose of the Global Approach focussed on Africa and the Mediterranean region. Strengthened political dialogue, including the recent EU missions to Africa, and concrete cooperation with African and EuroMed partners on migration and related issues, including development aspects of migration, are important recent achievements. The strengthened capacity to manage the control of external borders, in particular through joint maritime operations, is another important achievement. The Council believes that these measures should be further intensified in the light of recent events.

The Council, while underlining the need to continue these efforts as a matter of urgency, also reaffirms the need to both extend the geographical scope and to enhance the content of the Global Approach in general.

The Council therefore welcomes the Commission Communications of 16 May 2007 on applying the Global Approach to migration to the Eastern and South-Eastern regions neighbouring the European Union and on circular migration and mobility partnerships between the European Union and third countries. The Council calls on the Member States and the Commission to ensure that sufficient human and financial resources are allocated, within the existing financial framework, in order to enable the timely implementation of the comprehensive approach to migration.

1) Extending the Global Approach - Applying the Global Approach to Migration to the Eastern and South-Eastern Regions Neighbouring the European Union: the Council underlines the necessity for the EU to achieve a more efficient management of migration given the considerable numbers of migrants coming from or through the eastern and south-eastern regions. Existing cooperation structures in the region need to be enhanced and fully integrated in EU-relations with the third countries concerned, in order to create a more comprehensive and coherent approach. This applies, in particular, to dialogue and effective cooperation in matters such as enhancing border control, combating illegal immigration, organised crime and trafficking in and smuggling of human beings. This also applies to ensuring well-managed migration for social, cultural and business purposes and harnessing the opportunities to strengthen the links and synergies between migration and development in these regions.

The Council, while recognising that the dialogue with eastern and south-eastern countries is well advanced, stresses the need to take additional comprehensive and concrete actions based on existing political and institutional frameworks taking into account the competences of Member States. As a matter of priority, particular attention should be given to strengthening the dialogue and cooperation with the regions directly neighbouring the EU, i.e. the countries of the Western Balkans, Turkey, the ENP countries ? including issues that could affect them, such as the consequences of the Iraqi refugee situation ? and the Russian Federation. Furthermore the dialogue on migration issues should be intensified with Central Asian and Asian countries of origin and transit identified in accordance with the migratory routes concept.

The Council endorses the priority actions focusing on the Eastern and South-Eastern regions neighbouring the EU and invites the Commission to report back on the implementation of the Global Approach thus extended.

2) Enhancing the Global Approach - Circular Migration and mobility partnerships between the European Union and third countries: the Council reiterates that active consideration must be given to how legal migration opportunities can be incorporated into the Union's external policies in order to develop a balanced partnership with interested third countries. These would need to be adapted to the specific EU Member States' labour market needs as well as to the cooperation results achieved from the third countries concerned. It welcomes the Commission Communication on circular migration and mobility partnerships as a basis for further discussions. The Council believes that these two concepts could make an important contribution to a comprehensive approach, which combines measures aimed at facilitating legal migration opportunities with those reducing illegal immigration. Such a strategy could, in particular, be directed to promoting sustained cooperation with third countries along the migration routes towards the European Union.

The Council underlines that these mobility partnerships will be considered in those cases where they bring added value both to the EU and the third country on the management of migration flows and on the understanding that the willingness to contribute to this partnership and to cooperate actively is the basis for the opportunities offered by them.

Such partnerships should, as far as appropriate, include the offer of legal migration opportunities, adapted in particular to the specific Member States' labour market needs, while fully respecting the competences of the Member States and the principle of Community preference on the one hand, and a genuine cooperation on preventing and combating illegal immigration, trafficking in and smuggling of human beings as well as effective readmission and return policy while respecting the protection of human rights, on the other hand.

Furthermore, the Council agrees that, building upon the efforts to implement measures and actions that are already part of the dialogue and cooperation with third countries, these partnerships could include:

- the enhancement of the links between migration and development, i.a. to facilitate productive use of the resources of migrant communities and to promote co-development projects;
- the pooling of support measures in capacity building in order to better manage and control migration;
- the promotion of the reintegration of returnees;
- visa facilitation in accordance with the common approach, taking into account the experiences in the implementation of the current agreements;
- the enhancement of the protection of human rights in the fight against illegal immigration, in readmission and return policies and in the reception of migrants and asylum seekers; and
- the protection of refugees in accordance with international standards.

The Council believes that the concept of mobility partnerships between the European Union, Member States and third countries could be tested by way of a limited number of pilot partnerships. The Council therefore invites the Commission to consult Member States on the further development of this concept, including, in particular, on the terms of reference, and with a view to exploratory talks with interested third countries on pilot partnerships in close cooperation with the Presidency and interested Member States. The Commission is invited to report back to the Council on the outcome of these consultations in order to enable the Council to decide by the end of 2007 whether to invite the Commission to launch pilot partnerships.

Lastly, the Council agrees that legal migration opportunities, including well-managed circular migration can potentially benefit all partners

involved. All possibilities for a well-managed circular migration should therefore be explored in close cooperation with all relevant stakeholders with a view to the adoption of Council Conclusions not later than the end of 2007.

Policy plan on legal migration

The Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs adopted an own-initiative report drawn up Lili GRUBER (PES, IT) recalling that the number of third-country nationals legally resident in the 27 EU Member States is approximately 18.5 million, and it welcomed the Commission's response to the European Council's request for a policy plan on legal migration including admission procedures capable of responding promptly to fluctuating demands in the labour market. It maintained that illegal immigration could not be countered unless means and channels of legal immigration were established at the same time, since the two phenomena were closely linked.

The Committee welcomed the institutional implications of the draft Reform Treaty, which extends qualified majority voting and co-decision powers to police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters as well as the extension of competences in respect of asylum and immigration policies of the Union. The Commission was asked to carry out a short- and medium-term forecast of the requirements for additional labour in the various Member States. Member States should provide the Commission with a statistical estimate in order to enable the Commission to make suitable forecasts concerning labour requirements within the EU. These estimates must take into account also non-economic migrants, refugees and persons in need of subsidiary protection, as well as family reunifications. The report considered that a clear definition of each category of economic migrant concerned by the directives currently being drawn up must be adopted.

Proposal for a general framework directive: it was a essential to have a a directive designed to provide third-country nationals who were legally employed in a Member State with a common framework of rights, accompanied by the requirement to fulfil a certain number of obligations. Members insisted that such a directive be submitted in advance of the four specific directives. They recalled the need to avoid double standards of rights amongst different categories of workers and to safeguard particularly the rights of seasonal workers and paid trainees, who are more vulnerable to abuse. The report endorsed the idea of a single application for a joint residence/work permit. In addition, measures should be explored in order to investigate the possibility for immigrants to transfer their pension entitlements and their accumulated welfare rights stemming from their employment, for which they were required to pay contributions, when they return to their country of origin.

Circular migration, return migration and mobility partnerships: the report called upon the Commission to explain the link between circularity and integration, pointing out that according to the Commission 'supposedly circular migration may very rapidly become permanent and thus fail to meet the intended objective'. It supported the idea of long-term multiple-entry visas as well as the possibility of granting priority to former immigrants wishing to obtain a new residence permit with a view to further temporary employment. The Commission was asked to bring forward a comprehensive study on the possible implementation of a blue-card system and a job-seekers visa. The report also expressed interest in the planned Migration Information and Management Centre due to be set up in Mali.

Proposal for a Directive on the entry and residence conditions of highly skilled workers: expressing support for any measure designed to increase the attractiveness of the EU to the most highly skilled workers, the Committee called on the Commission and the Member States to explore ways to grant them the right to move freely within the EU; and to allow them to remain within the EU for limited period after the end of their contract or following redundancy. It considered it important that the risks of a 'brain drain' be taken into account and called upon the Commission - in conjunction with the countries of origin - to carry out statistical studies with a view to identifying the areas of expertise in which there is a clear risk of a brain drain. The Committee also supported the creation of an EU work permit (the so-called blue card) to facilitate the free movement of 'brains' within Europe and the transfer of personnel within multinational companies.

Proposal for a directive concerning the entry and residence conditions of seasonal workers: pointing out that seasonal workers from third countries make an essential contribution to sectors such as agriculture, construction and tourism, the report considered the proposed scheme essential and that seasonal workers who abide by the rules laid down for this kind of migration should be granted priority access to other forms of legal immigration.

Proposal for a directive on the procedures governing the temporary entry, stay and residence of persons transferred within their company: Members endorsed the Commission's idea of strengthening the legal framework in order to promote mobility within Europe, pointing out that the situation of the persons concerned is governed under GATS.

Proposal for a directive on the entry and residence conditions for paid trainees: the paid-trainee category should be clearly defined (age limit, language skills, maximum length of training period, possibility of converting the statute into some other kind of residence permit, etc.) and checks need to be devised in order to prevent abuse of the statute. Paid trainees should be issued with a European residence permit valid for between 6 and 12 months.

Integration:the EU's immigration policy must be based on a comprehensive approach reconciling the requirements of the employment market in the Member States, admission and integration policies. A summary of the rights and duties of migrant workers should be drawn up in order to make it easier for such workers to participate in economic, social and political life, in order to achieve integration. Member States were invited to apply Directive 2003/86/EC on the right to family reunification, and asked to grant migrant women arriving under family-reunification arrangements a legal status that is independent of that of their spouse.

Communication: the report emphasised the particular responsibility of the media (in particular European public radio and television broadcasters) in the dissemination of an accurate image of immigration and in countering stereotypes. It was essential that interested persons should be informed regarding the terms and conditions of, and the opportunities for, legal immigration into the EU. Members supported projects designed to set up training and linguistic courses in the country of origin in order to help immigrants to develop skills and better adjust to labour needs in the EU.

Cooperation with countries of origin: the Committee supported the objective of concluding agreements with third countries in order to enable both legal and illegal immigration to be managed effectively. Nonetheless, such agreements must be fully in accordance with human rights, and it expressed reservations concerning the funding of projects in countries which did not uphold human rights. The funds which immigrants remit to their country of origin contribute to the development of the countries concerned. Members considered that the cost of transferring remits to countries of origin should be reduced in order to assist development. However, whilst every effort should be made to facilitate the transfer of remittances, they remain private funds that benefit primarily the families who receive them and should not be viewed as a substitute for Official Development Assistance.

Policy plan on legal migration

The European Parliament adopted an own-initiative report drafted by Lili GRUBER (PES, IT) on legal migration by 557 in favour, 101 against and 22 abstentions. The report supported the creation of an EU work permit (the so-called blue card) to facilitate the free movement of 'brains' within Europe and the transfer of personnel within multinational companies, and it asked the Commission to bring forward a comprehensive study on the possible implementation of a blue-card system and a job-seekers visa. The number of third-country nationals legally resident in the 27 EU Member States is approximately 18.5 million (whilst nearly 9 million EU citizens are resident in a Member State other than their own).

Parliament pointed out that the reality of ageing and demographic changes necessitated rethinking immigration policies, since the current and future situation of the EU labour market could be broadly described as in demand of well-managed legal immigration (according to Eurostat the working-age population within the population as a whole will shrink by over 50 million by 2050). It welcomed the Commission's response to the European Council's request for a policy plan on legal migration including admission procedures capable of responding promptly to fluctuating demands in the labour market. It maintained that illegal immigration could not be countered unless means and channels of legal immigration were established at the same time, since the two phenomena were closely linked.

Parliament also welcomed the institutional implications of the draft Reform Treaty, which extends qualified majority voting and co-decision powers to police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters as well as the extension of competences in respect of asylum and immigration policies of the Union. Parliament supported the intention of the Commission to define the conditions of entry and stay for other selected categories of economic migrants, including unskilled or low-skilled workers. The Commission was asked to carry out a short- and medium-term forecast of the requirements for additional labour in the various Member States. Member States should provide the Commission with a statistical estimate in order to enable the Commission to make suitable forecasts concerning labour requirements within the EU. These estimates must take into account also non-economic migrants, refugees and persons in need of subsidiary protection, as well as family reunifications. The report considered that a clear definition of each category of economic migrant concerned by the directives currently being drawn up must be adopted. Parliament supported the establishment of an EU immigration portal, and welcomed the expansion of the EURES services to support the management of the economic migration of third country nationals.

Proposal for a general framework directive: it was a essential to have a a directive designed to provide third-country nationals who were legally employed in a Member State with a common framework of rights, accompanied by the requirement to fulfil a certain number of obligations. Members insisted that such a directive be submitted in advance of the four specific directives. They recalled the need to avoid double standards of rights amongst different categories of workers and to safeguard particularly the rights of seasonal workers and paid trainees, who are more vulnerable to abuse. The report endorsed the idea of a single application for a joint residence/work permit. In addition, measures should be explored in order to investigate the possibility for immigrants to transfer their pension entitlements and their accumulated welfare rights stemming from their employment, for which they were required to pay contributions, when they return to their country of origin.

Circular migration, return migration and mobility partnerships: the report called upon the Commission to explain the link between circularity and integration, pointing out that according to the Commission 'supposedly circular migration may very rapidly become permanent and thus fail to meet the intended objective'. It supported the idea of long-term multiple-entry visas as well as the possibility of granting priority to former immigrants wishing to obtain a new residence permit with a view to further temporary employment. The Commission was asked to bring forward a comprehensive study on the possible implementation of a blue-card system and a job-seekers visa. The report also expressed interest in the planned Migration Information and Management Centre due to be set up in Mali, and supported the idea of applying the same approach to the Union's eastern border region.

Proposal for a Directive on the entry and residence conditions of highly skilled workers: expressing support for any measure designed to increase the attractiveness of the EU to the most highly skilled workers, Parliament called on the Commission and the Member States to explore ways to grant them the right to move freely within the EU; and to allow them to remain within the EU for limited period after the end of their contract or following redundancy. It considered it important that the risks of a 'brain drain' be taken into account and called upon the Commission - in conjunction with the countries of origin - to carry out statistical studies with a view to identifying the areas of expertise in which there is a clear risk of a brain drain. Parliament also supported the creation of an EU work permit (the so-called blue card) to facilitate the free movement of 'brains' within Europe and the transfer of personnel within multinational companies.

Proposal for a directive concerning the entry and residence conditions of seasonal workers: pointing out that seasonal workers from third countries make an essential contribution to sectors such as agriculture, construction and tourism, the report considered the proposed scheme essential and that seasonal workers who abide by the rules laid down for this kind of migration should be granted priority access to other forms of legal immigration.

Proposal for a directive on the procedures governing the temporary entry, stay and residence of persons transferred within their company: Members endorsed the Commission's idea of strengthening the legal framework in order to promote mobility within Europe, pointing out that the situation of the persons concerned is governed under GATS. Proposal for a directive on the entry and residence conditions for paid trainees: the paid-trainee category should be clearly defined (age limit, language skills, maximum length of training period, possibility of converting the statute into some other kind of residence permit, etc.) and checks need to be devised in order to prevent abuse of the statute. Paid trainees should be issued with a European residence permit valid for between 6 and 12 months.

Integration: the EU's immigration policy must be based on a comprehensive approach reconciling the requirements of the employment market in the Member States, admission and integration policies. A summary of the rights and duties of migrant workers should be drawn up in order to make it easier for such workers to participate in economic, social and political life, in order to achieve integration. Member States were invited to apply Directive 2003/86/EC on the right to family reunification, and asked to grant migrant women arriving under family-reunification arrangements a legal status that is independent of that of their spouse.

Communication: the report emphasised the particular responsibility of the media (in particular European public radio and television broadcasters) in the dissemination of an accurate image of immigration and in countering stereotypes. It was essential that interested persons should be informed regarding the terms and conditions of, and the opportunities for, legal immigration into the EU. Members supported projects designed to set up training and linguistic courses in the country of origin in order to help immigrants to develop skills and better adjust to labour needs in the EU.

Cooperation with countries of origin: Parliament supported the objective of concluding agreements with third countries in order to enable both legal and illegal immigration to be managed effectively. Nonetheless, such agreements must be fully in accordance with human rights, and it

expressed reservations concerning the funding of projects in countries which did not uphold human rights. The funds which immigrants remit to their country of origin contribute to the development of the countries concerned, and the cost of transferring remits to countries of origin should be reduced in order to assist development. However, whilst every effort should be made to facilitate the transfer of remittances, they remain private funds that benefit primarily the families who receive them and should not be viewed as a substitute for Official Development Assistance

Parliament called upon the Commission and the Council to take part before Parliament in an annual debate on EU immigration policy, and asked the Commission to submit on such occasions a comprehensive scoreboard relating to the state of migration in Europe. It also called upon its competent committee to engage in a close dialogue with its counterparts in national parliaments responsible for matters relating to immigration, and to continue working with the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly's committee responsible for migration, refugees and population.