



Committee of the Regions

CONST-IV-006

**68th Plenary Session
13 and 14 February 2007**

**OPINION
of the
Committee of the Regions
on the**

**POLICY PLAN ON LEGAL MIGRATION,
FIGHT AGAINST ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION,
FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN MIGRATION NETWORK**

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- **recommends** that a common European policy on migration be recognised, paving the way for closer cooperation and coordination between the Member States and third countries;
- urgently **calls for** the creation of a financial instrument aimed specifically at areas with the highest immigration levels, and at transit areas subject to massive inflows of migrants, such as the Canary Islands, Ceuta, Lampedusa, Malta, Melilla and southern Italy in general. In these areas, the mass inflow of migrants is an extremely serious problem;
- **recommends** the adoption of all measures needed to put an end to human trafficking and the mafias which carry it out, and asks that this be made a priority for the EU and given the necessary financial resources. It is essential to prevent illegal migration and combat the informal economy that encourages it;
- **emphasises** the key role played by local and regional bodies, owing to the experience they have gained through their relations with countries of origin and their measures to integrate migrants, particularly in the fields of healthcare (the area in which public spending is highest), housing, education and employment;
- **proposes** creating a mechanism for following up opinions on immigration in order to ensure that the Committee is represented, by the chairman of the Constitutional Affairs Commission or the rapporteurs, in the European Commission's various initiatives in this field. This mechanism would enable the Committee to be actively involved in the different stages of the legislative process: a) the pre-legislative phase (consultation as interested party, impact analysis); b) the policy evaluation phase (annual reports on migration and integration, annual integration forum).

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

Having regard to the Green Paper on the Future of the European Migration Network (COM(2005) 606 final);

Having regard to the Communication from the Commission: Policy Plan on Legal Migration (COM(2005) 669 final);

Having regard to the Communication from the Commission on Policy priorities in the fight against illegal immigration of third-country nationals (COM(2006) 402 final);

Having regard to the decision of the European Commission of 2 December 2005 to consult it on this subject, under the first paragraph of Article 265 of the Treaty establishing the European Community;

Having regard to the decision of its Bureau of 25 April 2006 to instruct its Commission for Constitutional Affairs, European Governance and the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice to draw up an opinion on this subject;

Having regard to the Presidency conclusions of the Brussels European Council of 4 and 5 November 2004 on the European area of freedom, security and justice – the Hague Programme;

Having regard to Article 63 of the Treaty establishing the European Community;

Having regard to the Handbook on Integration issued by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Justice, Freedom and Security;

Having regard to the resolution of the European Parliament on strategies and means for the integration of immigrants in the European Union (2006/2056 (INI));

Having regard to the resolution of the European Parliament on development and migration (2005/2244 (INI));

Having regard to the Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on The area of freedom, security and justice: the role of regional and local authorities in implementing the Hague Programme, CdR 223/2004 fin, OJ C 231 of 20.09.2005, pp. 83-86;

Having regard to the Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the First Annual Report on Migration and Integration (COM(2004) 508 final), CdR 339/2004, OJ C 231 of 20.09.2005, pp. 46-50;

Having regard to the Committee's Opinion on the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament - The Hague Programme: Ten priorities for the next five years – The Partnership for European renewal in the field of Freedom, Security and Justice (COM(2005) 184 final), the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament Establishing a framework programme on Security and Safeguarding Liberties for the period 2007-2013, and the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament Establishing for the period 2007-2013 a framework programme on Fundamental Rights and Justice (COM(2005) 122 final) – 2005/0037 (COD) – 2005/0038 (CNS) – 2005/0039 (CNS) – 2005/0040 (COD)), CdR 122/2005, OJ C 192 of 16.08.2006, pp. 25-33;

Having regard to its Opinion CdR 51/2006 on the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – A Common Agenda for Integration - Framework for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the European Union (COM(2005) 389 final), the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Migration and Development: Some concrete orientations (COM(2005) 390 final), and the Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals (COM(2005) 391 final), OJ C 206 of 29.08.2006, pp. 27-39;

Having regard to its draft opinion (CdR 233/2006 rev. 2) adopted on 29 November 2006 by the Commission for Constitutional Affairs, European Governance and the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (rapporteur: Ms Laura de Esteban Martin, Director-General for State cooperation and European affairs of the Community of Madrid (ES/EPP));

Whereas:

- 1) Europe is undergoing the greatest migratory emergency in its history. The end goal of this migration is to reach European soil, making it more than a localised problem that only concerns the Member States and regions most targeted by this migration. The issue must also be considered from the perspective of Europe as a whole, the Member States and the countries of origin and transit: together, they must confront the new challenges generated every day by these migratory flows, including migratory population movements within the EU. The Hague Programme set up by the European Council in November 2004 outlines a work programme for creating a common migration policy and establishes it as an EU priority;
- 2) there is a lack of reliable statistical data enabling accurate assessment of the relationship between legal and illegal migration and the migratory phenomenon overall. It therefore remains necessary to pursue the work of the European Migration Network in order to obtain objective, comparable information with a view to supporting common immigration and asylum policies;

- 3) the integration of immigrant populations should be considered in terms of their inclusion in the labour market (with particular concern for female migrants), but also from a broader perspective taking, *inter alia*, educational, cultural, social and political aspects into account;
- 4) integration is a two-way process that requires both the immigrants' will to integrate into the host society and their responsibility to carry it through, and EU citizens' desire to willingly accept immigrants. Awareness and education campaigns are therefore necessary in order to exert a positive influence on the behaviour of both groups;
- 5) local and regional authorities, as direct recipients of this migration and major players in the implementation of integration measures (occupational, educational, cultural, social and political), must play a key role in defining migration policy, at as close a level as possible to citizens, in order to ensure that migrants are successfully integrated;

adopted the following opinion at its 68th plenary session, held on 13 and 14 February 2007 (meeting of 13 February):

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1. Views and general recommendations of the Committee of the Regions

The Committee of the Regions

- 1.1 **believes**, in line with its previous opinions on the return of illegal migrants and the regional and local application of the Hague Programme¹, that immigration should be considered from a broad perspective that includes a clear vision of the most important measures required in the field of migration policy, and should not be based on fragmentary measures. All the necessary legislative, operational and economic initiatives must be considered in order to tackle the phenomenon from beginning to end, through development cooperation with countries of origin and the fight against illegal human trafficking, and by adopting the necessary measures to integrate all migrants who have settled in our countries and combating the informal economy, which exerts a strong pull factor and is a catalyst for exploitation; the Committee notes that criminal organisations help to encourage illegal immigration;
- 1.2 **stresses** that despite the increase in migration since the 1980s and the fact that the EU receives a high number of immigrants from developing countries (currently estimated at

¹ CdR 242/2002 fin.
CdR 223/2004 fin.

around 40 million people), there is still no common European policy for the regulation of migratory flows, and Member States therefore take unilateral decisions that make it difficult to adopt a common position;

- 1.3 **points out** that when it comes to managing migratory flows, we should not have to wait until events take a serious turn for the worse. Emergencies should not be a prerequisite for establishing association agreements;
- 1.4 **considers** that the association agreements signed with third countries should cover political, social, economic and cultural aspects, so as to establish a proper relationship of interdependence between migration and development, as recommended in the European Parliament's report on development and migration²;
- 1.5 **confirms** that the key to preventing uncontrolled migration is full development cooperation, by implementing projects that generate employment; setting up an economic and trade forum, university networks and micro-credit funds for migrants; implementing measures to help migrants cooperate in their own countries' development; and installing infrastructures, particularly to provide drinking water (42% of Africa's inhabitants have no access to drinking water), electricity (only 20% have regular access to the power grid), health centres and schools. In this context, it will be crucial to help strengthen institutional frameworks, establishing a series of prior conditions (such as transparent management and democratisation of structures) in countries receiving development aid, so as to ensure that it is properly received and utilised. Overall, the aim must be to boost the quality – rather than quantity – of development cooperation; it is particularly important to guarantee that aid is implemented transparently, in order to ensure that it actually does generate development;
- 1.6 **emphasises** the key role played by local and regional bodies, owing to the experience they have gained through their relations with countries of origin and their measures to integrate migrants, particularly in the fields of healthcare (the area in which public spending is highest), housing, education and employment. As part of their cooperation with countries of origin, local and regional authorities have set up numerous agreements and projects, such as the shelters for returning young people opened by the Community of Madrid in Morocco, under the AENEAS programme;
- 1.7 **notes** the Declaration of the Fifth Conference of Parliaments of EU Capital City Regions (held on 26 and 27 April 2006), which states that, owing to their prosperity and vitality, capital city regions exert a strong pull on people from other countries seeking new opportunities; and, in this context, **considers** that measures should be implemented to avoid mass arrivals outside the regular channels via airport, sea and land border crossings, and that adequate planning is required in order to integrate these people into other regions of our countries;

² European Parliament report on development and migration (A6-0210/2006).

- 1.8 **also stresses** the position of the capital city regions, which support the development of a common European migration policy that fully covers all issues relating to the complete integration of immigrants into society. Only through integration will it be possible to share the values of democratic life and respect for human rights that underpin the political systems of the EU; therefore, **emphasises** the importance of setting up initiatives to teach migrants about the official language or languages and culture of the host society, and to help them feel that they are important and share responsibility for their own futures;
- 1.9 **believes** that migration is a challenge for all: everybody has a part to play, from administrations – European, national, regional or local – to European citizens and migrants themselves. This is the only way to solve their problems, and for everyone involved (including the countries of origin) to make the most of the opportunities offered;
- 1.10 **believes**, as a result, that it is necessary to improve cooperation:
- a) between administrations
 - b) with social players
 - c) with companies (corporate social responsibility)
 - d) with immigrants' associations;
- 1.11 **recommends** the following:
- a) greater cooperation and coordination between migration officials and those who manage development cooperation in each Member State;
 - b) the promotion of co-development as a means to harness the potential of immigrant communities established in EU countries to boost development in their countries of origin. To achieve this, it must be made easier for migrants to transfer funds to their countries of origin, by reducing costs and using official transfer systems;
- 1.12 **calls upon** the Commission and Member States to apply policies to channel the remittances sent by migrants towards productive investments in their countries of origin, making it easier for them to access micro-credit. Remittances should be channelled so that they can be linked up with investments made via the development cooperation funds; also **recommends** establishing a requirement for cancelled debt to be transferred to productive investments which could be linked up with remittances, so that migrants find it most profitable to invest their savings in these projects;
- 1.13 **calls for** the establishment of a guarantee fund to ensure the durability of micro-projects and maximise their impact on development, and supports the creation of an economic and trade forum and of networks of professionals from the EU and developing countries;

- 1.14 **urges** Member States to work together with local and regional authorities in drawing up migration policies and establishing national plans for integration and employment, as the measures required to implement them are applied at local and regional level;
- 1.15 **urgently calls for** the creation of a financial instrument aimed specifically at areas with the highest immigration levels, and at transit areas subject to massive inflows of migrants, such as the Canary Islands, Ceuta, Lampedusa, Malta, Melilla and southern Italy in general. In these areas, the mass inflow of migrants is an extremely serious problem, as there are not sufficient resources to provide them with adequate humanitarian care. It is important to note that the income difference between the countries on either side of the EU's southern border is the highest in the world;
- 1.16 **urges** the EU and its Member States to recognise the particular nature of mass illegal immigration via the coasts of the EU's island regions, the human tragedy that it represents, and its consequences for security and cohesion in Europe. The EU should exploit the potential of the regions forming its maritime border as a platform for developing mutually beneficial relations with third countries;
- 1.17 **believes**, in line with its previous opinions on family reunification, on local and regional application of the Hague Programme and on the Green Paper on a policy of return for illegal residents, and in accordance with the European Parliament's position in its report on development and migration³, that measures should be implemented to increase the legal certainty surrounding migration, in a number of areas:
- a) ensuring that existing directives are correctly transposed and applied;
 - b) clarifying legislation, particularly as regards conditions for attaining resident status;
 - c) clearly laying down the conditions under which migrants are eligible for family reunification;
- 1.18 **supports**, in accordance with its Opinion on the Green Paper on a policy of return for illegal residents⁴, the development of measures to boost and prioritise voluntary – as opposed to forced – return. It would be beneficial to set up incentives to keep potential migrants in their countries of origin. In the event of forced return, particular attention should be paid to vulnerable groups. In any case, cooperation with countries of origin is essential;
- 1.19 **points out** that, in accordance with the international conventions on children, it is in the child's best interest for him to grow up in a family environment, whenever possible. Aid should be provided in the countries of origin, and children should be educated and trained

³ CdR 243/2002 fin; CdR 242/2002 fin; CdR 223/2004 fin; European Parliament report on development and migration (A6-0210/2006).

⁴ CdR 242/2002 fin.

there so that they may find jobs close to their families. Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, States must combat the illicit transfer of children abroad;

- 1.20 **believes** that the European fund for integration should be managed such that it takes account of the specific requirements of local and regional authorities, and **supports** their involvement in the negotiation of national programmes and the relevant operational programmes;
- 1.21 **calls upon** the Commission, in line with the European Parliament report on development and migration, to prepare the necessary financial instruments for the integration of migrants into the political life and society of the host country, through linguistic, cultural and civic training, without undermining the preservation of their identity. It also **points out** that consideration should be given to the specific problems relating to the integration of their descendants (children and grandchildren);
- 1.22 **considers** that particular focus should be given to education, the policy area most conducive to integration, as the school pass rate among migrants is far lower than the average for other EU citizens, and **points out** that, to ensure that migrants are integrated, it is essential to lay down the instruments needed for their inclusion in the education system and the labour market. To this end, the Committee proposes:
- a) setting up a financial instrument specifically devoted to solving immigrants' education problems;
 - b) implementing measures to facilitate the recognition and equivalence of the qualifications and, generally speaking, professional skills acquired by migrants in their countries of origin. This would make it easier for them to join the labour market;
 - c) developing training programmes for employment, aimed specifically at workers from countries which are not renowned for the vocational training and skill levels of their workforce;
- 1.23 **considers it important**, in accordance with the Commission's Handbook on integration, to:
- a) implement programmes enabling immigrants to learn the host country's language; these courses should be mandatory, at least at elementary level;
 - b) set up and promote courses on civic duty, culture and, in general, social integration and knowledge of the host society's civic values. These courses could be given in immigrants' mother tongue, to make things easier for them to understand while they still do not have a good command of the host country's language, although this should not delay or halt acquisition of the host country's language and culture;
 - c) make it as easy as possible to implement these courses, by enabling e-learning, distance learning, flexible hours, part-time courses, etc., in order to optimise take-up. It is also important to train those who will be in contact with migrants, so that they are able to deal with problems;

- d) support migrants in their efforts to ensure that their children learn the mother tongue, so that they are not subsequently hindered from returning to their home country because they do not know the language.

2. Communication on legal migration (COM(2005) 669 final)

The Committee of the Regions

- 2.1 **believes**, with regard to legal migration, that it is important to bear in mind that those whose skills lead them to emigrate are those who will be able to stimulate development in their countries of origin;
- 2.2 **considers** that, as stressed in its Opinion on the Proposal for a Council Directive on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of studies, vocational training or voluntary service⁵, brain drain should be taken into consideration. While it is important to leverage the opportunities that this brings our economies, we should also make it easy for migrants to return to their countries of origin in order to boost development there, and should allow them to re-enter in order to continue or complete their training, thus creating a constant flow of experience and advantages for the host and source countries;
- 2.3 **believes** that circular migration is an important foundation on which to strengthen migration's positive contribution to development;
- 2.4 **supports** the Commission's basic goal of guaranteeing a common framework of rights for all third-country nationals in legal employment already admitted in a Member State; **highlights**, in particular, the need to address the question of recognition and equivalence of degrees and other qualifications so as to prevent migrants from working below their competences;
- 2.5 **stresses** the importance of job accessibility for the successful integration of migrants, and points out the contrast between the simplistic approach, which is geared exclusively towards the need to welcome more migrants and simply legalise the workforce, and the regional and local efforts to combat exclusion, marginalisation and xenophobia, and the implementation of measures to integrate women, whose link with their children is key for the integration of the family;
- 2.6 **considers** that legal migration should take family reunification into account as a cornerstone of migrants' social integration, for the strategy would otherwise be incomplete. Nonetheless, family reunification as a catalyst for integration must only be promoted insofar as it is limited to the family unit, consisting of parents, children and grandparents;

⁵ CdR 2/2003 fin.

- 2.7 **emphasises** local and regional authorities' concern for the issue of gender, as it is important to consider the double discrimination that women suffer on the basis of both their gender and ethnic background; therefore, **calls on** the Commission and Member States to step up dialogue with countries of origin in order to promote women's rights and gender equality;
- 2.8 **supports** the Commission's position on temporary workers and considers it necessary to draw up more favourable regulations for the mobility of temporary workers. However, it is important to prevent temporary work from becoming a channel for illegal migration. One possible solution would be to include temporary work within the framework of cooperation projects with countries of origin, so that the workers have an incentive to return home once the temporary job is over, in order to continue work in the context of a cooperation project. Within these programmes, it could also be possible to encourage the arrival of temporary workers not just from countries that are geographically close, but also from more distant places, such as Latin America, benefiting from today's falling travel costs;
- 2.9 **believes it essential**, in line with the Commission, to improve data collection for the effective development of a European migration policy, which in all cases should take labour market requirements as a determining factor when it comes to admitting migrants. It is unsustainable for 90% of migrants to be illegal before becoming legal;
- 2.10 **welcomes** the willingness expressed by the Commission in its document to strengthen the role of the European Job Mobility Portal, which provides information, via the Internet, from the EURES (European employment services) cooperation network. This offers information, advice and employment (job search) guidance to workers and employers, to inform, guide and advise candidates on mobility, job opportunities and working and living conditions in the European Economic Area and help employers who wish to hire workers from other countries; the CoR could contribute by informing the Commission of web portals managed by local and regional authorities that could be important sources of information for all those involved⁶;
- 2.11 **supports** the European Commission's proposal that Europe should make itself attractive to skilled workers, outstanding students and researchers. It should also be possible (contrary to the current situation in some Member States) for students to work during their studies, as this could help them to make the transition to the labour market. It would be useful to set up specific mobility programmes for foreign students, as has been done throughout the EU with successful schemes such as Erasmus and Leonardo da Vinci, in order to prevent brain drain and facilitate training, since these students are an invaluable human resource for their countries of origin;
- 2.12 **believes** that the possibility of jointly issuing work and residence permits should be examined, as this would reduce red tape and increase control; therefore, **proposes** that work and residence permits be standardised throughout the EU;

⁶ COM(2005) 669, item 3.1.

- 2.13 **supports** the Commission's belief that migration is not the solution to Europe's ageing population; it is only a tool that can relieve, but not resolve, the demographic deficit in Europe;
- 2.14 **welcomes** the importance that the Commission's Communication places on cooperation with countries of origin, and supports the strengthening of existing financial instruments relating to migration, and the creation of other, specific instruments;
- 2.15 **points out** that, on an internal level, the management competences of regional and local authorities mean that they are directly involved in immigration issues; **stresses**, therefore, that they could bring real added value to the experience-sharing activities and discussions planned by the Commission for 2007 in the fields of awareness-raising, information and training⁷;
- 2.16 **offers** to help the Commission conduct the impact analyses that it intends to carry out before putting forward concrete proposals on legal migration, and to help it in the systematic consultation of local and regional authorities⁸.
3. **Communication from the Commission on policy priorities in the fight against illegal immigration of third-country nationals (COM(2006) 402 final)**

The Committee of the Regions

- 3.1 **supports**, in particular, the need for cooperation with third countries in order to prevent illegal migration and, in this context, supports the European Council's decision of 15 and 16 December 2005 to allocate 3% of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument_ to the increase of financial aid in areas directly linked to migration;
- 3.2 **considers it necessary** to promote association agreements with countries of origin, which should be concluded before there are migratory and humanitarian emergencies, and which should cover cooperation in combating illegal migration and in returning and repatriating illegal migrants, along with aid for development and for the creation of job opportunities for the native populations of these countries;
- 3.3 **believes it essential** to develop all the sources of information available in the countries of origin relating to migration, its scale, existing legislation and possibilities of channelling this through legal avenues;

⁷ COM(2005) 669, item 3.1.

⁸ COM(2005) 669, Annex I.

- 3.4 **supports** the European Commission's aim to set up a rapid assistance mechanism for Member States experiencing severe pressure on their external borders; and **urges** the Council to grant the Commission the resources it needs to carry out this task properly;
- 3.5 **emphasises** the proposal in the Commission document relating to the need to bring an end to human trafficking and the mafias which carry it out, and asks that this be made a priority for the EU and given the necessary financial resources. It is important to be aware of the scale of the humanitarian disaster this represents: figures from various international organisations suggest that one in three migrants does not survive the journey to the destination country;
- 3.6 in this context, **warns** that European countries receiving migrants must avoid delegating the task of returning them to border countries that do not show sufficient respect for human rights, so as to maximise the control of human rights;
- 3.7 **emphasises**, in this context, that the European Employment Strategy and general guidelines must encourage legal employment through steps such as the reduction of non-wage labour costs and the easing of tax pressure on low-paid or low-skilled workers, as this could help to reduce the appeal of undeclared work and thus the hiring of illegal migrants. These measures to flexibilise the labour market should boost the legal employment of migrants;
- 3.8 **supports** the promotion of information campaigns on the advantages of legal migration and the dangers of illegal migration, and the Commission's initiative to launch a study in 2007 on current practices and the effects of regularisations in Member States, which will form the basis for future discussions and the establishment of a legal framework for Europe-wide regularisation.
- 3.9 **believes it necessary** for Member States' diplomatic representations, as well as intelligence services, to be coordinated at EU level so as to be able to identify and combat, in cooperation with the competent local authorities, the criminal organisations carrying out illegal trafficking of migrants.
4. **Green Paper on the Future of the European Migration Network (COM(2005) 606 final)**

The Committee of the Regions

- 4.1 **supports** the future EMN's mandate to provide the Commission, Member States and the general public with objective, reliable and comparable information in the field of asylum and migration, and **agrees** that it should be made publicly available (except where confidential), in accordance with the data protection agencies;
- 4.2 **concurs** that concrete tasks such as data collection and analysis, research, publishing of opinions and recommendations, and awareness-raising activities should be allocated to a

single body, as such streamlining generates economies of scale and facilitates coordination;
and

- 4.3 **adds a further task:** the EMN should also coordinate the transposition of Community legislation by the different countries;
- 4.4 **suggests**, in line with the European Parliament⁹, and with a view to guaranteeing close cooperation between stakeholders and the bodies responsible for data collection, appointing a liaison in each one, and setting up a web for use by stakeholders and specialised users only. There should also be a link between the national and international organisations which deal with these matters, and which need to seek cooperation methods in order to solve problems;
- 4.5 **advises**, as regards the structure of the network, selecting option one, i.e. "attaching the network to the Commission", as it would facilitate monitoring, coordination and relations with other European institutions. With regard to the operation of National Contact Points, the national representatives should be responsible for data collection and studying problems. The role of contact points should be to collect, analyse (where possible) and transmit data to the network and national players in accordance with national provisions on the tasks and activities of the contact point. The network should have guaranteed independent status vis-à-vis the governments of each country, and its structure should include regional and local bodies. In all events, the fluidity of information transmission must be guaranteed;
- 4.6 **considers it essential**, through this network:
- to highlight information above all in relation to the labour market;
 - to improve statistical information by improving coordination via the European Migration Network;
 - to harmonise statistical calculation methods in order to allow for comparison and coordination.

5. **Second report on migration and integration**

- 5.1 **considers** it necessary to step up annual migration and development reports, which would provide statistics to help plan migration and implement a suitable migration policy. Public policy cannot be planned without sufficient information, particularly in this field;
- 5.2 **calls for** information exchange to be stepped up through existing networks and the future European Migration Network, between Member States and with their local and regional bodies. All players should have access to as much information as possible;

⁹

Report on the Proposal for a Council Decision on the establishment of a mutual information procedure concerning Member States' measures in the areas of asylum and immigration (COM(2005) 480 – C6-0335/2005 – 2005/0204 (CNS)).

- 5.3 **stresses** that any idea to be implemented must translate into programmes, and that any programme or legislation to be developed must subsequently be analysed in order to assess its utility and quality of management; **welcomes**, therefore, the Commission's initiative to draft an annual assessment report on migration and integration;
- 5.4 **supports** the Commission's proposal to set up an annual integration forum in which experts, migrants, public administration staff (including local and regional levels) and all other stakeholders can share best practices and obtain workable conclusions. The Committee considers it vital to exchange best practices, whereby local and regional authorities can make a concrete contribution, in order to drive forward and standardise the results of policies applied in this area. In any case, the necessary steps must be taken to obtain extensive and accurate data about migration, which will be taken into consideration when these policies are implemented. The forum should also take annual reports into account, and contact should always be maintained with all the players involved.
6. **Conclusions**
- 6.1 **Recommends** that a common European policy on migration be recognised, paving the way for closer cooperation and coordination between the Member States and third countries;
- 6.2 **considers** it essential to boost the quantity and quality of available data and to accurately assess labour market requirements, if a European policy on immigration and control of migration flows is to be implemented in an effective manner;
- 6.3 **recommends** promoting codevelopment as a means of harnessing the potential offered by immigrant communities living in EU countries with a view to boosting development in their countries of origin, and **calls** for the study of creative alternatives for channelling legal immigration through the removal of existing obstacles to taking on migrants in their countries of origin;
- 6.4 **recommends** the adoption of all measures needed to put an end to human trafficking and the mafias which carry it out, and asks that this be made a priority for the EU and given the necessary financial resources. It is essential to prevent illegal migration and combat the informal economy that encourages it;
- 6.5 **stresses** once again that, on an internal level, the management competences of regional and local authorities mean that they are directly involved in immigration issues; **proposes**, therefore, creating a mechanism for following up opinions on immigration in order to ensure that the Committee is represented, by the chairman of the Constitutional Affairs Commission or the rapporteurs, in the European Commission's various initiatives in this field.

This mechanism would enable the Committee to be actively involved in the different stages of the legislative process:

- a) pre-legislative phase (consultation as interested party, impact analysis);
 - b) policy evaluation phase (annual reports on migration and integration, annual integration forum);
- 6.6 **requests**, therefore, to be represented on the Commission's formal and informal working groups on migration policy; **believes** that this follow-up would enable the Commission to benefit from the practical experience acquired by local and regional authorities in the field of migration;
- 6.7 **calls for** the inclusion of regional and local authorities in the European Migration Network;
- 6.8 **asks** to contribute to the web portal on immigration that the Commission wishes to set up, by informing the Commission of web portals managed by local and regional authorities that could be important sources of information for all those involved;
- 6.9 **calls for** the existing legal and financial instruments to be stepped up, and for a new instrument to be created in order to ensure the integration – particularly through education – of recent immigrants and their descendants (children and grandchildren);
- 6.10 **proposes** that a first summit be held on "The role of European regions in managing migration flows", facilitating exchange of opinions and experience between regions in this field.

Brussels, 13 February 2007

The President
of the
Committee of the Regions

The Secretary-General
of the
Committee of the Regions

Michel Delebarre

Gerhard Stahl
