



Committee of the Regions

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**OPINION
of the
Committee of the Regions**

on

**STRENGTHENING THE GLOBAL APPROACH TO MIGRATION:
INCREASING COORDINATION, COHERENCE AND SYNERGIES**

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- The CoR believes that Regional and Local Authorities are on the front line in elaborating, implementing, evaluating and monitoring migration policy and thus should be considered as central partners in its development.
- It underlines that a stronger inter-institutional partnership is to be promoted, both by the Member States and by the Community institutions.
- Considers that a stronger focus should be placed on the capacity-building of Local and Regional Authorities, because they play a key role in the design and management of migration policy and in particular in fostering cooperation with third-country administrations responsible for employment and immigration; this approach has been recalled by the CoR in its earlier opinions.
- The CoR points out that already existing tools and institutional structures, such as the Committee of the Regions' initiative - Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM), the Council of Europe and other relevant networks, should be involved when dealing with migration issues.
- It stresses the need for enhanced integration of migrants in the host societies, because migrants are key players for the development of both their countries of origin and destination.
- Moreover it stresses the need for common efforts to put in place a better management of external borders in particular of the Southern maritime borders and of all regions confronted with massive influxes of migrants being in critical humanitarian conditions.
- The CoR emphasises the role of the Immigration Liaison Officers Network in achieving the objectives set in the Communication; in parallel calls the Commission to ensure that competent Local and Regional Authorities can have access to and benefit from the exchange of best practices and the information gathered through the Network.
- Finally it welcomes the extension of the Global Approach to other countries and regions, such as Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and encourages the European Commission to proceed further in this direction, emphasising the need to define modalities of the dialogue with these regions and thereby paving the way also for closer cooperation and coordination with Africa, and South and South-Eastern regions neighbouring the EU.

Rapporteur

Arnoldas Abramavičius (LT/EPP), Mayor of Zarasai District Municipality

Reference document

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Strengthening the Global Approach to Migration: increasing Coordination, Coherence and Synergies
COM(2008) 611 final

I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

The role of Local and Regional Authorities

1. Believes that Regional and Local Authorities are on the front line in elaborating, implementing, evaluating and monitoring migration policy and thus should be considered as central partners in its development;
2. Recalls the fact that Local and Regional Authorities hold either shared and/or exclusive competencies in this field; therefore their consultation by the Member States and the European Commission should be compulsory, and should also be done in the prelegislative process as well as in the consultative procedure involving the Committee of the Regions;
3. Underlines that a stronger inter-institutional partnership is to be promoted, both by the Member States and by the Community institutions;
4. Considers that a stronger focus should be placed on the capacity-building of Local and Regional Authorities, because they play a key role in the design and management of migration policy and in particular in fostering cooperation with third-country administrations responsible for employment and immigration; this approach has been recalled by the CoR in its earlier opinions¹;
5. Regrets that the crucial role played by Local and Regional Authorities in cross-border territorial cooperation in the migration field is not sufficiently acknowledged;
6. Points out that a more detailed evaluation should be made for initiatives such as exploration of new scientific methodologies for gathering and exchanging information on migratory routes, as well as on integration policies and their consequences for Local and Regional Authorities in relation to financial and administrative burden;
7. Calls on the European Commission to work to improve the production and dissemination of reliable, up to date, quantitative and qualitative information which is the primary source for drafting individual Member States' immigration profiles;
8. Welcomes the idea that explicit reference should be placed on the need for increasing human and financial resources in the field of monitoring the implementation of existing legislation, as this represents a central element for achieving a better regulatory environment;

¹ CdR opinion on "A Common Immigration Policy for Europe", CdR 210/2008 fin.

9. Considers that the Commission's intention to support local organizations working with migrants in the countries of origin should be directly geared to local and regional contexts, in order to improve the awareness of opportunities in the home countries; therefore, recommends to involve Local and Regional Authorities and their national associations particularly in partner countries and other third countries developing a common migration policy implementation;
10. Points out that already existing tools and institutional structures, such as the Committee of the Regions' initiative - Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM), the Council of Europe and other relevant networks, should be involved when dealing with migration issues;
11. Recommends, with regards to defining migration policies, to adopt an inclusive approach so that the European Commission's Communication should explicitly mention all actors concerned at local, regional and central levels contributing to the conception of policies and ensuring their effectiveness in the implementation stage;
12. Points out that the conclusions of the 2009 Summit of Regions and Cities held in Prague called for an integrated and comprehensive approach to migration and integration, based on the efforts of Local and Regional Authorities.
13. Believes that a common European migration policy in those areas in which Member States believe it is justified, must not prevent more generous rules from being introduced in Member States;

Steps towards strengthening the global approach to migration

General recommendations

14. Considers that EU migration policy is an inherently cross-cutting, multifaceted phenomenon and is thus a shared responsibility of the European Union and the different levels of governance in the individual Member States and third countries; they should act together according to the principles of democracy, subsidiarity, solidarity and mutual trust, to the specificities of different regional and local contexts, respecting human rights and the fundamental values lying at the core of the EU;
15. Welcomes the aim to promote a coherent Global Approach to Migration, where reinforcement of political dialogue and practical cooperation among EU Member States and third countries and regions is an essential issue, but consistency with the basic principles and the overarching objectives of EU social, economic and foreign development policies should be ensured;

16. Emphasises that the guidelines identified in the earlier EU documents² remain valid, particularly as regards the three components (good management of legal migration, fight against irregular immigration, the relationship between migration and development) and the need for their balanced implementation;
17. Points out that only European and national levels are emphasised in the European Commission's draft Communication; stresses that greater emphasis should be placed on the Local and Regional Authorities and their role in implementing a global migration policy;
18. Calls for greater attention to be devoted to the particularly vulnerable circumstances of immigrant women, which has been addressed in the Committee of Regions opinion in 2007 (CdR 296/2007) ;
19. Supports the conclusions of the Council of the European Union of December 2008³, recalling the need to ensure greater coherence in funding so as to ensure the swift implementation of the foreseen measures; recommends to make use of the existing Community funds to improve cooperation between EU Local and Regional Authorities and their counterparts in the countries of origin;

Concerning Legal economic migration and mobility

20. Agrees that mobility should remain one of the crucial elements of legal migration and stresses the need to be further promoted by Local and Regional Authorities, including the extension of pilot Mobility Partnerships such as with Moldova and Cape Verde;
21. Invites Local and Regional Authorities to be fully involved in the collection of information on regular migratory flows, disseminated through interactive portals such as the forthcoming EU Immigration Portal, the European Job Mobility Portal, the EURES Network and the European Researchers Mobility Portal and the European Migration Network, which would contribute towards ensuring the local and regional specificities are properly reflected in the development of migration policies;
22. Supports the Commission proposals to step up initiatives aimed at fostering more flexible and efficient solutions for migrants related to the labour market, by exploring inter alia new initiatives on the portability of pension rights, recognition of foreign qualifications and social inclusion of migrants;

² COM(2007) 248 final; COM(2007) 780 final; COM(2008) 359 final; Council of the European Union, "European Pact on Immigration and Asylum", No 13440/08, ASIM 72, Brussels, 24.09.2008, Lima Declaration, May 18, 2008

³ 2914th General Affairs Council Meeting, Brussels, 8 December 2008

23. Stresses the need for enhanced integration of migrants in the host societies, because migrants are key players for the development of both their countries of origin and destination;
24. Welcomes the creation of a network of migration observatories, as foreseen in the General Affairs Council conclusions adopted on 8 December 2008, as it increases further the standing of the Migration Profiles as a key tool for the common EU immigration policy; in this respect Local and Regional Authorities should be directly involved in the work of these observatories and act as key players in setting them up and implementing their activities.

Concerning fight against irregular migration

25. Welcomes the extension of the FRONTEX mandate to support third countries on border control, as already foreseen in a previous CoR opinion (CdR 210/2008);
26. Supports the idea put forward in the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum, of examining the possibility of setting up a European system of border guards;
27. Points out that a reference should be made in the EC Communication on the involvement, in the Rapid Border Intervention Teams, of local and regional administrations, in particular of those most affected by migratory inflows;
28. Stresses the need for common efforts to put in place a better management of external borders in particular of the Southern maritime borders and of all regions confronted with massive influxes of migrants being in critical humanitarian conditions;
29. Emphasises the role of the Immigration Liaison Officers Network in achieving the objectives set in the Communication; in parallel calls the Commission to ensure that competent Local and Regional Authorities can have access to and benefit from the exchange of best practices and the information gathered through the Network;
30. Agrees with the Commission's proposal to give priority to the implementation of the Ouagadougou Action Plan on fighting human trafficking, in particular of women and children where the role of local and regional associations is crucial in developing anti- trafficking strategies and action plans.

Concerning migration and development

31. Supports twinning programmes between public and private sector employers and institutions from EU member states and countries of origin, aiming to support circular migration and fight the "brain drain"; recommends that Local and Regional Authorities could put forward their valuable expertise and knowledge in order to help migrants reintegrate in home country labour markets;

32. Agrees with the Commission proposal to acquire a better understanding of the scale and impact of “brain drain” which is in line with the specific requests voiced by the Local and Regional Authorities in a previous CoR opinion (CdR 296/2007);
33. Stresses that further efforts exploring the link between climate change and migration should be made;
34. Stresses the importance of Local and Regional Authorities in fostering territorial economic development, building democracy and good governance, as well as of their involvement in the elaboration and implementation of cooperation programmes in the migration field;
35. Welcomes the EC-UN Joint Migration and Development Initiative (JMIDI), supporting civil society organizations and local authorities seeking to contribute to linking migration and development with a view to maximising positive synergies between local and regional actors;
36. Emphasises that the participation of Local and Regional Authorities, through their national and regional associations, in networks and platforms of cooperation and involving Local and Regional Authorities and associations of third countries, would contribute significantly to the achievement of more effective cooperation in the training of law enforcement officials, twinning programmes, data collection and dissemination, monitoring of migratory flows and similar projects;
37. Stresses the significance of establishing permanent platforms of cooperation, dialogue and exchange among Local and Regional Authorities and associations, particularly of the northern, southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean; the establishment of the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly could serve as an example for further development;
38. Emphasises that the role and the contribution of diasporas to the development of their countries of origin, for example through remittance transfers and the development of associations and their networking, require more systematic attention.

Concerning geographical approach

39. Supports the position of the Council of the European Union⁴ on the establishment of a tripartite dialogue between countries of origin, destination and transit in different geographical areas, which must be explored while using and extending existing tools such as mobility partnerships, bilateral channels, cooperation frameworks such as ECOWAS, the Rabat process, pilot mobility partnerships and others, while concrete tools and means should be diversified according to the practical needs of the regions and third countries and their practical needs and possibilities;

⁴

2914th General Affairs Council Meeting, Brussels, 8 December 2008, para. .22

40. Welcomes the extension of the Global Approach to other countries and regions, such as Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and encourages the European Commission to proceed further in this direction, emphasising the need to define modalities of the dialogue with these regions and thereby paving the way also for closer cooperation and coordination with Africa, and South and South-Eastern regions neighbouring the EU.

Brussels, 17 June 2009.

The President
of the Committee of the Regions

Luc Van den Brande

The Secretary-General
of the Committee of the Regions

Gerhard Stahl

II. PROCEDURE

Title	Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Strengthening the Global Approach to Migration: increasing Coordination, Coherence and Synergies
Reference(s)	COM(2008) 611 final
Legal basis	Optional referral, Article 265 al.1
Procedural basis	-
Date of Commission letter	08/10/2008
Date of President's decision	20/10/2008
Commission responsible	Commission for Constitutional Affairs, European Governance and the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (CONST)
Rapporteur	Arnoldas ABRAMAVIČIUS (LT/EPP), Mayor of Zarasai District Municipality
Analysis	DI 2/2009
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Previous Committee opinions	Opinion on Applying the global approach to migration to the European Union's Southern maritime borders and to the Eastern and South-eastern regions neighbouring the European Union CdR 64/2007 fin ⁵ COM(2006) 735 final - COM(2006) 733 final - COM(2007) 247 final Opinion on the Policy Plan on Legal Migration, Fight Against Illegal Immigration, Future of the European Migration Network CdR 233/2006 fin ⁶ COM(2005) 606 final - COM(2005) 669 final - COM(2006) 402 final

⁵ OJ C 305, 15.12.2007, p. 43.

⁶ OJ C 146, 30.6.2007, p. 1.