

COM-7/035

Brussels, 27 September 2001

OPINION

of the

Committee of the Regions

of

19 September 2001

on the

**Proposal for a Council Directive concerning the status of
Third Country nationals who are long-term residents**

COM(2001) 127 final

The Committee of the Regions

HAVING REGARD TO the Proposal for a Council Directive concerning the status of third country nationals who are long-term residents, (COM(2001) 127 final - 2001/0074 (CNS));

HAVING REGARD TO the decision of the Bureau of the Committee of the Regions of 13 June 2001 under the fifth paragraph of Article 265 of the Treaty establishing the European Community, to instruct Commission 7 - Education, Vocational Training, Culture, Youth, Sport, Citizens' Rights - to draw up the relevant opinion;

HAVING REGARD TO the Draft Opinion (CdR 213/2001 rev.1) adopted by Commission 7 on 29 June 2001 (rapporteur: **Mr Panagiotis Rígas** (EL/PSE));

adopted unanimously the following opinion at its 40th plenary session on 19-20 September 2001 (meeting of 19 September)

Views and recommendations of the Committee of the Regions

The Committee of the Regions

1. Agrees that there is an undoubted need today, and particularly in future, for skilled and

unskilled labour in the European Union, because of the constantly worsening demographic problem. In order to meet that need it supports the Commission's idea of transforming the European Union into an attractive area for third-country nationals to settle in, by guaranteeing legal, economic and social rights equivalent to those enjoyed by citizens of the European Union.

2. Recognises the importance of and the need for the European Commission's efforts to harmonise the situation of third-country nationals who are legally resident on a long-term basis in a Member State.
3. Underlines the decisive role played by the local and regional authorities in the clarification and public promotion of the common values of "European culture" which are linked with migration, such as ethnic and cultural diversity and the need to combat racism and xenophobia.
4. Emphasises the fact that the local and regional authorities are important agents for ensuring equality in working conditions and access to services, as well as for granting individual and political rights to migrants who have settled on a more permanent basis.
5. Welcomes the Commission's present proposal for a directive as an important contribution to the creation of a more coherent policy of the European Union on migration, which aims to bridge the steadily widening gap between supply of and demand for human resources in certain economic sectors, where it is deemed to be necessary.
6. Agrees with the proposed preconditions for the granting of long-term resident status: (a) uninterrupted legal residence for a five-year period; (b) possession of adequate resources; (c) applicants must not present a threat to public order and internal security. It also agrees with the intention to provide equal treatment, regardless of nationality, for residents moving from one Member State to another, because of a change in domicile or employment.
7. Takes the view, however, that local and regional authorities will need to be involved in both the formulation and the application of policies on migration, given their capacity to contribute experience and best practice to the integration of third-country nationals. Of special value in this case would be the creation of networks, particularly involving the participation of local and regional authorities in the dissemination of best practice. The key role played by the local and regional authorities could be made even more incisive by providing training on European culture, especially for those of their staff who act as their relay to the outside world. In this respect the CoR recalls its opinion on training in European affairs, "Eurotraining for Local and Regional Authorities in Europe" (CdR 404/1998 fin).
8. Feels that to this end a framework should be built up for regular consultation of the Committee of the Regions by the Commission of the European Union on migration-related subjects. In this context, it attaches particular importance to ensuring free access to information on the needs of the European labour market for skilled or unskilled workers in the secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy.
9. Expresses its satisfaction with the system of procedural guarantees provided by the present draft directive for the benefit of migrants who expect to obtain long-term resident status, so as to prevent cases of inappropriate action by the relevant authorities of the Member States.
10. Reiterates, in conclusion, the following recommendation contained in its opinion on the procedure for drawing up a Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union:

"... the body responsible for drawing up the Charter of Fundamental Rights should examine the issue of whether long-term residents should be granted a set of rights that resemble as closely as possible those of EU citizens."

Brussels, 19 September 2001.

The President

The Secretary-General

of the

of the

Committee of the Regions

Committee of the Regions

Jos Chabert

Vincenzo Falcone

--

--

CdR 213/2001 rev. 1 EN/o .../...

CdR 213/2001 fin EN/o

CdR 213/2001 fin EN/o .../...

CdR 213/2001 fin EN/o .../...