

European Parliament calls for comprehensive EU “integration” policy

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The European Parliament’s Committee on Employment and Social Affairs adopted in late 2003 a report by its rapporteur, Claude Moraes MEP, which welcomed the European Commission’s proposals for an integrated policy approach to immigration, integration and employment.

The Commission’s proposals from June 03 intended to build on the 1999 Tampere European Council conclusions, which called for a “vigorous integration policy” for migrants and set the fair treatment of third country nationals as a European policy objective, in addition to advocating a managed migration approach, joint asylum policies and co-operation with the countries of origin. The Commission’s initiative also came in response to the dominance of immigration control issues over other aspects of the Tampere agenda.

The proposals set out the need for an integrated approach to the issues of immigration, inclusion and labour market needs. They acknowledged racism as a barrier to inclusion and advocated a principle of “civic citizenship” with rights and participation detached from nationality. However, the Commission’s proposals refrained from developing a full-fledged EU inclusion or integration policy. Instead, it called for a harmonisation of national policies in selected priority areas through a network of national focal points and an annual EU report on integration and immigration.

The European Parliament’s report agreed that an integrated approach was essential and that migration policies must be developed in parallel with measures for social, cultural, religious and political integration. The Parliament considered increased EU co-operation on managed migration and integration policies necessary and pointed to the need for more political commitment and leadership, especially in view of current political debates over asylum and illegal immigration acting as an obstacle to progress.

Claude Moraes said: “In the run-up to the European elections, we are sending a clear message in this first-ever report on immigration positively setting out the case for some economic migration, a partnership with the countries of origin and a comprehensive integration policy for both new and existing millions of ethnic minority European citizens.”

The Parliament’s report went a step further than the Commission’s proposals by urging a more ambitious scope for EU policy action, for example through a heightened focus on the inclusion of migrants and minorities in the European Employment Strategy. It strongly urged that measures be taken to remove discrimination in the workplace and ensure fair recruitment, retention and promotion, including measures to improve the ethnic diversity of staff in the EU institutions and other public administrations.

The report also placed particular emphasis on mainstreaming a gender perspective into migration and integration policies at national and EU level, since women are adversely affected by existing policies and practices. For example, it called for immigrant women to be granted individual legal status, with rights and benefit independent from their husbands, and for their priority access to education and training.

A copy of the European Parliament's report and the European Commission's Communication can be obtained from the UK Secretariat on 020 7939 0265.

For more information on "integration" policies across Europe, including a comparison of policies in employment, education, housing and health, a research paper ("Social Integration of Migrants and Ethnic Minorities - Policies to Combat Discrimination") prepared for the European Commission in January 2003 can be downloaded as a pdf file:

www.oecd.org/dataoecd/15/4/15516956.pdf