DRAFT OPINION

of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

for the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

on a Common Agenda for Integration: Framework for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the European Union
(2006/xxxx(INI))

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SHORT JUSTIFICATION

The Commission's Communication (COM(2005)0389) is meant to provide guidance for EU and Member States' integration policies. The opinion focuses primarily on the integration of third-country nationals in the labour market, underlining the two way process of integration and the related social aspects. It follows the structure of the Communication, thus separating the guidelines into two levels: national and European.

On the national level, the main preoccupation of the draftsman is the attribution of economic and social rights to all migrants, irrespectively of their legal status, while improving the employability of migrant women. Enhancing the adaptability of the host society to increasing social and labour diversity is another major preoccupation.

Integration is a two way process in which both immigrants and the host society have certain rights and obligations. It implies bringing immigrants' rights and duties, as well as access to goods, services and means of civic participation, progressively in line with those of the rest of the population, under conditions of equal opportunities and treatment. Employment is crucial to the integration of immigrants. The Lisbon strategy's and the European Employment Strategy's objectives to create more and better jobs must therefore include immigrants. The social partners and public authorities must work together to prevent discrimination against immigrants in the area of salaries and working conditions.

On the EU level, the role of the EU in monitoring and assisting Member States to cope with the integration of migrants is pivotal. The EU-25 population is set to shrink from 303m to 297m by 2020 and then to 280 by 2030, almost doubling the old age dependency ration. Since economic growth is the result of growth in employment and productivity, this fall in total employment could have negative effects on economic growth. Consequently, integration and full use of imported skills is of primordial interest to the EU.

The exchange of best practices and increased coordination in a higher level is essential, since different groups of migrants require different policies for integration, including not only newly-arrived migrants but also long term resident and second and third generation migrants and this must be taken into account in policy-making. It is also very important to ensure that an EU migration policy delivers a secure legal status and a guaranteed set of rights to assist the integration of those who are admitted, to promote their integration into all aspects of society, over and above integration in the labour market.

Your draftsman welcomes the Commission's proposal on the ESF (2007-2013) aiming to support specific action to strengthen the social integration of migrants and increase their participation in employment, including guidance and language training and validation of competences acquired abroad, as well as promotion of diversity in the workplace and the combat against discrimination.

He also welcomes the proposed financial instrument to complement ESF, in the framework of "managing migration flows" designed to contribute to the national efforts to develop and implement integration policies enabling migrants of different cultural, religious, linguistic and ethnic backgrounds to settle and actively participate in all aspects of European societies, in accordance with the Common Basic Principles.
SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Calls on the Member States to:
   a. avoid social dumping by adopting clear rules on the legal status of migrant workers, by organising information campaigns on national labour law and social rights for migrants, and by promoting the regularisation of the status of all migrant workers;
   b. provide access to good quality health and social services, including housing, to the levels enjoyed by nationals of the Member State concerned, tailored to the cultural, social and linguistic needs of migrants;
   c. adopt measures to eliminate discrimination in the workplace, such as diversity management, fair recruitment, job-retention and promotion based on merit and irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, religion, or gender, paying particular attention to the employment and integration of migrant women whose rate of unemployment is often higher;
   d. strengthen the ability of the host society to adapt to increasing diversity in the workplace by targeting actions at the host population, thus emphasizing that integration is a two-way process;
   e. boost consular resources in non-EU countries to provide information on entering the EU for work, study or research purposes; introduce combined work and residence permits which allow migrants to change employment;
   f. implement workplace rights and fight child labour through constant inspections; encourage migrants to join trade unions and encourage trade unions to include migrants, whether their papers are in order or not;
   g. ratify the UN's Convention (1990) on the protection of all migrant workers and members of their families;

2. Calls on the European Commission to:
   a. ensure funding through the Structural Funds and initiatives such as EQUAL and URBAN, as well as through the proposed European Fund for the Integration of third-country nationals;
   b. promote the exchange of information and best practice on recruitment and admission policies; engage in ongoing dialogue with NGOs, including migrants' NGOs, on migration-related matters;
c. financially support research activities assisting migrants, whether their papers are in order or not; analyse the effects of regularisations of the status of migrants carried out in Member States;

d. prepare statistical forecasts to enable appropriate predictions regarding EU labour needs and invite the Council of ministers to indicate those matters relating to migration and employment that should be governed by common rules, with a view to the further development of a common European migration policy;


f. undertake campaigns to increase public awareness and knowledge of policies on, interalia, immigration, integration and combating racism and xenophobia at the work place.