



Don't use immigrants as a pretext to undermine Schengen, MEPs say

Committees: Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

Using immigrants as a pretext to undermine the Schengen agreement's removal of EU internal border checks is "unacceptable", said Civil Liberties Committee chair Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D, ES) on Wednesday. Proper external border checks are "essential" added rapporteur Carlos Coelho (EPP, PT). The MEPs were commenting on a Commission suggestion that internal border checks could be temporarily reintroduced if a Member State fails in its duty to police its part of an EU external border.

Juan Fernando López Aguilar: "It is unacceptable that the arrival of a few tens of thousands of immigrants at the borders of countries which are among the largest in Europe and are founder members of European integration, each with a population of over 60 million, should serve as an excuse to question Schengen, the free movement of people and our common policy of freedom, security and justice. It is also unacceptable that this is so obviously happening as a result of highly populist anti-European pressures. All this sends a discouraging message, one which is deeply negative and contrary to the Europe that we need.

The EP's Civil Liberties Committee urges that the Schengen system should not be changed, given that all the legal instruments already exist, and points out that the right-course of action is to implement the existing legal instruments. It also urges that the SIS II system should be completed and the evaluation mechanism system should be implemented in co-decision with the European Parliament. Finally, insists that the solidarity clause should be activated to deal with immigration crises and humanitarian emergencies. If Europe wishes to be globally relevant, it must live up to its responsibilities in the Mediterranean".

Carlos Coelho: "I share the feeling that we need more solidarity and a better sharing of responsibilities among Member States. Good control of external borders is essential: when this is not the case, it weakens the Schengen area, undermines the Union's credibility and destroys mutual trust.

I favour a true Schengen evaluation mechanism to verify compliance with the rules and border controls and to identify problems, help resolve them and, if necessary, temporarily reintroduce border controls".

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