



Stockholm programme : MEPs seek balance between liberty and security

A European Court of Cyber Affairs, mutual recognition by EU Member States of same-sex couples, and a set of prisoners' rights in the EU should be incorporated in the 4-year Stockholm programme of laws to consolidate EU citizens' rights, said MEPs at a joint meeting of the Civil Liberties, Legal Affairs and Constitutional Affairs committees on Thursday.

Members agreed on the need to strengthen the EU's common policy on the fight against terrorism, organised crime, illegal immigration, human trafficking and sexual exploitation. A comprehensive set of legal remedies should be offered to victims of crime and in particular trafficking in human beings and gender violence. Ethnic minorities are especially vulnerable, as they also face the risk of becoming victims of discrimination and racist crime, MEPs say.

The committees called for a European strategy aiming at eradicating violence against women, including prevention measures, policies on the protection of victims, in particular young girls, and concrete measures to prosecute perpetrators.

A European Court of Cyber Affairs

Members highlighted the increase in identity theft and called for a strategy to combat cyber-crime, to be developed in co-operation with internet providers. The setting up of a European Court of Cyber Affairs, specialising in matters related to cyber crime should be examined.

A legal framework should be established to facilitate transfers of criminal proceedings and the resolution of conflicts of jurisdiction between Member States. Furthermore, an instrument should be created to deal with the admissibility of evidence in criminal proceedings in cross-border cases.

Mutual recognition applied to same-sex couples in the EU

The committees called on Member States to ensure that the principle of mutual recognition is applied to same-sex couples in the EU – notably married couples, partners or de facto couples – at least in relation to rights relating to freedom of movement.

Immigration and asylum: towards more solidarity

Members proposed that illegal immigration be reduced via preventive measures. Obstacles to the exercise of the right to family reunification should also be addressed. "Circular" migration should be promoted, but should not lead to wage or social dumping, or deny the necessity for integration measures.

They call for an evaluation of Member States' capacities in this field, and for a system of "compulsory and irrevocable solidarity" between them, as well as greater co-operation with third countries, and notably neighbouring ones. Regional and specialized FRONTEX offices should also be set up.

A set of prisoner's rights in the EU

Press release

EU citizens should be able to challenge disproportionate or unclear rules and the inappropriate implementation of rules, MEPs say. Minimum standards for prisons and detention conditions and a common set of prisoners' rights in the EU should be established, including appropriate compensation rules for persons unjustly detained or convicted. EU funding should be provided for construction of new detention facilities in Member States affected by prison overcrowding.

Data protection

Clearer and tighter limits should be placed on exchanges of information between Member States and the use of EU registers. Members add that building up large registers at the EU level may pose a threat as the risk of leaks and corruption will increase. EU citizens' rights and rights of protection, especially data protection, must be preserved and the common justice and home affairs policy must remain subject to parliamentary supervision, MEPs say. (AM 20)

A common frame of reference for European Contract law

MEPs called on the Commission to step up its work on European contract law, with a view to adopting a common reference framework to enable parties to a contract to choose to have it governed by EU rules.

The draft resolution by Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D, ES), Carlo Casini (EPP, IT), and Luigi Berlinguer (S&D, IT) was adopted with 29 votes in favour, 18 against and 37 abstentions. The text will now be put to a plenary vote at the 23-26 November session in Strasbourg. It will then be adopted by the European Council on 10-11 December.

In the chair : Klaus-Heiner Lehne (EPP, DE), Juan Fernando López Aguilar (S&D, ES)

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