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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL AND THE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

**ON AN OPEN METHOD OF COORDINATION FOR
THE
COMMUNITY IMMIGRATION POLICY**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Treaty of Amsterdam established Community competence in the areas of migration and asylum. The European Council, meeting in Tampere in October 1999, called for the development of a common EU asylum and migration policy to include four main elements: partnership with countries of origin; a common European asylum system which should lead in the longer term to a common asylum procedure and a uniform status for those granted asylum; fair treatment of third country nationals and the more efficient management of migration flows.¹ Considerable progress has already been made towards the development of the comprehensive approach put forward at this meeting.

In its “*Communication on a Community Immigration Policy*” (COM(2000)757) the Commission set out its ideas for a new approach to the management of migration flows and in particular for a common policy on admission for economic reasons. The success of such a policy depends on effective co-ordination by all those concerned and on the adoption and implementation of new measures, as appropriate at both Community and Member State levels. This must provide not only for an adequate response to immediate short-term needs but must also enable all those involved to place their actions in a medium to long-term framework.

At the heart of this policy will be a common legislative framework, the basis of which has already been agreed by the Member States (Article 63 of the Treaty of Amsterdam). According to the detailed programme established in Tampere and set out in the “*Scoreboard to review progress on the creation of an area of ‘Freedom, Security and Justice’ in the European Union*”², the Commission has already made proposals in a number of areas which provide the first elements of this framework which will underpin the common asylum and migration policy in the four areas identified in Tampere and which should all be in place, according to the agreed timetable, by 2004.

In the field of legal immigration a draft directive on family reunification is under discussion in the Council³. Proposals are being prepared by the Commission on the admission of third country nationals. The first of these is a Draft Directive, which is being presented jointly with this Communication, on the admission of third country nationals for economic purposes.⁴ Once adopted this directive will provide for common conditions for the admission and residence of workers from third countries, which will apply in the Member States. It will be followed by draft directives on the admission of third country nationals for study and vocational training and on admission for the purpose of unpaid activities.

Progress has also been made with the establishment of a legal framework to ensure the fair treatment of third country nationals legally resident in the EU. Legislation has been adopted to promote equal treatment irrespective of racial or ethnic origin

¹ SN 200/99 Presidency Conclusions of the Tampere European Council 15-16 October 1999

² See biannual update COM(2001)278 final of 23 May 2001

³ COM(2000)624 amended version of 10 October 2000

⁴ COM(2001)386 “Conditions of entry and residence of third country nationals for the purpose of paid employment and self employed economic activities”

and to combat racism and discrimination⁵ and proposals for a directive concerning the status of third country nationals who are long-term residents have also been adopted by the Commission⁶. This legislation will provide, for the first time, as requested by the European Council in Tampere, a common status for long-term resident third country nationals.

With respect to illegal migration and the fight against smuggling and trafficking, Council Directives have been approved in the areas of mutual recognition of decisions on the expulsion of third country nationals⁷, on harmonising financial penalties imposed on carriers transporting into the Member States third country nationals lacking the documents necessary for admission⁸ and on strengthening the penal framework to prevent the facilitation of unauthorised entry and residence of third country nationals⁹. In addition a Commission Communication on a common fight against illegal immigration, which will set out a wide-ranging action plan to co-ordinate and reinforce actions in this area, is currently being prepared. This will be followed by a Commission Communication on a Community Return Policy.

In the conclusions of the Communication on a Community Immigration Policy, the Commission proposed that, in view of the multi-dimensional aspects of migratory phenomena the large number of different actors involved in migration management and the continuing responsibility of Member States for the implementation of migration policy, an open procedure for co-ordination of policy at Community level should be established.

The purpose of this present Communication is to set out proposals for the adaptation of the open method of co-ordination to the field of migration policy. It is thus an additional contribution from the Commission to the on-going debate on the development of migration policy for the Union which will be further enriched by the two new Communications which the Commission is now preparing on the fight against illegal immigration and on return policy. It is also to be examined in the context of existing Community initiatives in the field of the mobility of workers, such as the Commission's Communication on a Strategy for mobility in the European Research Area¹⁰, and in the follow-up of the High Level Task Force on Skills and Mobility. This Communication is designed, in particular, to provide an input to the European Conference on Migration to be organised by the Presidency on 16-17 October 2001. This itself is a preparation for the discussions to assess progress in the creation of an area of freedom, security and justice, which will take place at the European Council in Laeken in December 2001.

2. APPLYING THE OPEN METHOD OF COORDINATION TO IMMIGRATION POLICY

There are a number of reasons why the Commission considers that the adoption of an open method of coordination would be the most appropriate way to support the

⁵ Directive 2000/43, OJ L 180 of 19.7.2000, and Directive 2000/78, OJ L 303 of 2.12.2000

⁶ COM(2001)127

⁷ Directive 2001/40, OJ L 149 of 2.6.2001

⁸ OJ C 269 of 20.9.2000 p.8

⁹ OJ C 253 of 4.9.2000 p.6

¹⁰ COM(2001)331 of 20.6.2001

development of the Community immigration policy. Prior to 1999 this was an area which had been dealt with largely as an inter-governmental matter. The Amsterdam Treaty (Title IV of the Treaty and Article 63 in particular) transferred competence from the EU's third to its first pillar (albeit all of the first pillar procedures are not yet applicable).

Within this framework, Member States remain responsible for a number of significant issues particularly with respect to the admission of economic migrants and for developing and implementing integration policy. Immigration also raises many sensitive and far-reaching issues which directly affect civil society which need to be discussed openly, at both national and European levels, in order to reach a consensus on policy positions. At the same time, the international nature of migration flows and the inter-connection between different aspects of migration policy necessitate a procedure by which progress in realising the common European objectives can be evaluated and the objectives adapted as necessary.

The use of an open method of co-ordination, specifically adapted to the immigration field, and as a complement to the legislative framework, will provide the necessary policy mix to achieve a gradual approach to the development of an EU policy, based, in a first stage at least, on the identification and development of common objectives to which it is agreed that a European response is necessary. It is proposed that this method should be implemented for an initial period of six years to correspond to cover the period on which the first evaluation of the application of the Directive on the conditions of entry and residence of third country nationals for the purpose of paid employment and self-employed activities must be made. After this "phasing in period" and in the light of the evaluation of the implementation of the coordination method, the Commission reserves the right to introduce additional legislative instruments where appropriate to provide for the coordination of the common policy.

The Treaty sets out clear guidance on the measures to which priority importance must be attached, particularly during the first five years after its entry into force and the Commission is advancing rapidly with the presentation of the legislative instruments called for. However, the principle of subsidiarity, which applies to all aspects of the Union's action, is of particular relevance to the creation of an area of freedom, security and justice as is the need for solidarity among and between Member States and the European institutions in facing the transnational challenges presented by migration movements.

The European Council at its meeting in Tampere set the political guidelines and some concrete objectives for the development of a common EU policy within the key areas identified, namely:

- A comprehensive approach with respect to **partnership with countries of origin** which addresses political, human rights and development issues in countries and regions of origin and transit;
- **A common European asylum system** based on the full and inclusive application of the Geneva Convention;
- A vigorous integration policy to ensure **fair treatment of third country nationals** aimed at granting them rights and obligations comparable to those of EU citizens; and

- Measures to ensure the more efficient **management of migration flows** based on closer co-operation between Member States and with countries of origin and transit

The open coordination method will support and complement the Community legislation called for in the Treaty and will provide a framework for reviewing with the Member States the implementation of these legal instruments. With respect to the admission of economic migrants, for example, national measures will be adopted by the Member States taking account of the criteria set out in the directive. These will *inter alia* concern the number of migrants to be admitted over a particular time period, the establishment of horizontal assessment programmes, determination of the duration of residence permits issued under the directive and other matters which must be notified to the Commission. Procedures are needed, therefore, to ensure coherence and the use of common standards in the practical application of Community legislation in this field and to facilitate the assessment of its impact as key elements in the Community immigration policy.

In addition there are a number of wider issues where the Commission believes that it will be useful to discuss with respect to the common legislation which will help to evaluate their efficacy and identify practice which might be useful in other national situations. These could include the criteria for the establishment of horizontal assessment programmes and the conditions under which they are implemented, the mechanisms put in place in each Member State to involve the social partners in the evaluation of economic need for third country nationals, comparison of recruitment procedures particularly in countries of origin and whether closer co-operation between Member States would be useful. This should be carried out in full compliance with the provisions of the Treaty and in particular of its title VIII on Employment.

The Commission intends to play a full part in the implementation of the open co-ordination method. It will continue to develop the legislative programme agreed in Tampere by ensuring that all the relevant proposals are presented by 2004 according to the timetable set out in the Scoreboard. At the same time, as a complement to the establishment of the legislative framework, the Commission will support the implementation of the open co-ordination method by presenting proposals for European guidelines, ensuring co-ordination of national policies, the exchange of best practice and evaluation of the impact of the Community policy, as well as through regular consultations with third countries concerned.

3. EUROPEAN GUIDELINES ON IMMIGRATION

The key element of the open co-ordination method is the approval by the Council of multiannual guidelines for the Union accompanied by specific timetables for achieving the goals which they set in the short, medium and long term. These guidelines will then be translated into national policy by the setting of specific targets, which take into account national and regional differences. Within the framework of the conclusions of the European Council in Tampere and in the light of the proposals put forward by the Commission in its Communication on a Community Immigration Policy, the Commission proposes that guidelines be established initially in the following areas: management of migration flows; admission of economic migrants; partnership with third countries and the integration of third country

nationals. The first guidelines should be approved by the Council in 2002 and they could be revised on an annual basis as necessary within the framework of the open co-ordination mechanism.

The availability of comparable statistics is of crucial importance for the effective monitoring and evaluation of the common immigration policy. The Commission staff working paper on the exchange of statistical information in the field of asylum and migration¹¹ recommends the establishment of a collection of policy-relevant Community statistics on legal migration for this purpose. At present, Eurostat undertakes a collection of migration data within the framework of its work on demography. Whilst the data in this collection provide information about demographic characteristics of persons intending to enter and reside in the EU, they do not give the reasons for migration nor its duration. Moreover, the collection varies greatly between Member States in terms of sources, definitions and coverage, while the data are collected on an annual basis only. The Commission has commissioned a study on the availability in Member States of statistics on the legal entry and stay of third country nationals with a view to setting up a monthly collection of statistics on legal entry. Given its importance for a common immigration policy, this work will constitute one of the key actions in the Action Plan requested by the Council Conclusions regarding Common analysis and the improved exchange of statistics on asylum and migration.¹² It will be important that Member States support fully this Action Plan.

Suggestions are given below as to the issues, which these guidelines might address. Each year overall European targets could be agreed and within this framework Member States would fix their own national objectives.

3.1. Management of migration flows

The interaction of the different facets of migration policy - humanitarian, economic, illegal migration and trafficking - and the need to deal separately with each one while taking account of the linkages between them, means that measures are needed to promote co-operation both within and between Member States and with third countries and to facilitate exchange of experience and know-how. Given the importance of migration as a factor influencing the demographic situation in the EU, appropriate procedures will have to be established to ensure linkages with policy-making in other areas notably in the economic and social field.

Guideline 1: Developing a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to migration management at national level by ensuring that:

- Due account is taken of the linkages and interactions between different categories of migration flows: persons admitted for humanitarian reasons, for employment or self employment, for study or training, or as tourists or for other non-remunerative purposes. This could include evaluation by the competent bodies of the effects opening up economic migration may have on asylum applications and illegal migration; the relationship between strategies to combat undeclared work and

¹¹ SEC (2001) 602

¹² 7973/01 ASIM 10, adopted by the May 2001 JHA Council

migratory pressures; balancing resources needed to integrate migrants against their contribution to economic and social development. It should also consider coherence with foreign and development policies.

- Member States give their full support to improving the on-going work on the collection and analysis of statistics on migration in order to implement the Action Plan to be adopted by the Council.

Guideline 2: Improving information available on legal possibilities for admission to the EU and on the consequences of using illegal channels in particular by:

- Developing information services in third countries on legal ways of obtaining admission to the EU for nationals of those third countries, including information on procedures for applications for residence and work permits e.g. through the establishment of websites, information offices, special publicity measures.
- Promoting co-operation and exchange of information between consular services of Member States in countries of origin, in particular with respect to visa policy, with a view to achieving greater efficiency, transparency and coherence between Member States in dealing with applications for admission to the EU.
- Developing, in co-operation with third countries, awareness campaigns on the risks of being a victim of smuggling and trafficking.

Guideline 3: Reinforcing the fight against illegal immigration, smuggling and trafficking by supporting the following measures:

- Promoting an approach based on a proper coherence and balance between humanitarian responsibilities, lawful immigration and the fight against criminal smuggling and trafficking networks.
- Initiating measures to keep track of illegal movements from countries and regions of origin via transit countries to destination countries.
- Based on existing and future EU legislation, adopting adequate levels of sanctions for criminal activities which are associated with illegal migration flows and/or trafficking in human beings and raising the costs of illegal immigration and trafficking by adopting measures depriving smugglers and traffickers of illegally obtained financial advantages.
- Promoting the practical implementation of pre-frontier co-operation and other measures and enhancing controls at the external borders of the Union in the framework of commonly agreed norms and standards.

3.2. Admission of economic migrants

As a response to growing labour shortages, a number of Member States are now actively recruiting economic migrants including high-skilled workers, as for example, researchers and academic specialists. In the context of an ageing and declining population, the Commission believes that reviewing the use of legal channels for the admission of third country nationals to meet labour market needs is necessary while being aware of the potentially damaging impact on countries of origin of the brain drain that this may encourage. For these reasons it is convinced

that the admission of migrants for economic purposes should, as far as possible, be done in partnership with the countries of origin and within the framework of the European employment strategy and in a transparent and coherent way based on the procedures set out in the proposed Community legislation on the admission of third country nationals for the purpose of taking up employment¹³. While this legislation sets out the procedures and the conditions by which third country nationals should be admitted to the labour market it does not include quantitative targets or quotas. Member States continue to be responsible for the selection of economic migrants and for deciding how many are needed to meet national requirements. This entails that the responsibility for dealing with the labour market aspects of immigration should lie with the bodies responsible for the implementation of the European employment strategy at both Member State and Community levels.

In addition the Commission believes that a more open admissions policy should be accompanied by additional measures to eliminate undeclared work which itself encourages illegal migration, smuggling and trafficking.

Guideline 4: Establishing a coherent and transparent policy and procedures for opening the labour market to third country nationals within the framework of the European employment strategy. Member States will need to ensure that:

- The procedures in place to implement the European employment strategy are suitable to deal with the contribution which migrants can make to the labour market. The changes which might be required to that effect should be decided in consultation with the social partners, national, regional and local authorities, non-governmental organisations, migrants associations and other relevant organisations. In this respect, the capacity and resources available for the reception and integration of new arrivals and the situation of third country nationals already residing in the Member State concerned e.g. persons admitted under family reunion, persons granted temporary forms of protection etc. should be borne in mind.
- National legislation is in place or adopted which provides for clear and transparent procedures for selection of applications from third country nationals for entry to the labour market under the different categories established.
- Measures are adopted to ensure compliance with the obligation of notification to the Commission, as required by Article 30 of the draft directive on employment of third country nationals¹⁴, so as to provide for an exchange of views which may lead to complementary action within the context of the Community immigration policy.
- There is full compliance with national and Community legislation on the employment of third country nationals notably with regard to the fight against undeclared work.

¹³ COM(2001)386 “Conditions of entry and residence of third country nationals for the purpose of paid employment and self employed economic activities”

¹⁴ COM(2001)386 “Conditions of entry and residence of third country nationals for the purpose of paid employment and self employed economic activities”

- Special attention is given to the situation and needs of migrant women who form an increasing proportion of migrants seeking admission to the EU to take up employment.

3.3. Partnership with third countries

The EU favours a partnership approach in its relations with third countries which covers the political, economic and social dimensions. The development of the comprehensive approach to migration issues, put forward by the European Council in Tampere, involves the inclusion of human rights and development issues in countries and regions of origin and transit. In order to promote co-operation with third countries with regard to migratory flows within the framework of a structured and coherent dialogue, the European Council has recommended that a partnership approach should be developed at both national and European levels. In a first stage both sides must identify the main areas on which this dialogue should be focussed and the most effective ways of developing it in the framework of existing and future partnership agreements and fora to ensure a comprehensive approach to migration issues.

- ***Guideline 5: Integrating migration issues into relations with third countries, and in particular with countries of origin, inter alia by:***
 - Taking into account the migration dimension on the third country concerned when planning and implementing development and cooperation programmes, *inter alia* with respect to education and training and ensuring equal opportunities for women and men.
 - Supporting measures to maximise the positive impact of migration as a factor for development for the country of origin (e.g. the impact of financial transfers from nationals living abroad) while minimising the negative effects (in particular the brain drain).
 - Seeking ways to support patterns of mobility between EU Member States and third countries so as to encourage migrants to maintain and develop their links with their countries of origin¹⁵. Among the areas which could be examined are:
 - Reviewing legislation which restricts the possibility for migrants to move freely between their country of residence and their country of origin;
 - Encouraging emigrants to take an interest in development projects, business and training ventures in their countries of origin;
 - Financial and other support, including the provision of venture capital, to assist returning migrants to re-settle in their countries of origin.
 - Supporting measures to discourage emigration by third country nationals whose admission to the EU has not been authorised, in particular within a framework

¹⁵ As an example in the Commission's proposal for a new Framework Programme (COM(2001)...), the proposed Marie Curie International Incoming Fellowship Scheme which aims to attract researchers from third countries, will include, in the case of emerging economies and developing countries, provision to assist fellows to return to their country of origin.

which includes the development of policies for legal immigration from the country concerned.

- Supporting third countries efforts to manage migratory flows and to develop legislation and structures in line with international standards.
- Supporting measures to help the social and economic re-integration of victims of smuggling and/or trafficking in their country of origin.

3.4. Integration of third country nationals

The importance of successfully integrating third country nationals into society was stressed by the European Council in Tampere. Given the multi-dimensional nature of integration policies and the extent to which different sections of society are involved in their implementation this is a major challenge for political leaders and civil society alike. It could be said that the success of the Community immigration policy will depend on the extent to which migrants become integrated into their host country. Failure to develop an inclusive and tolerant society which enables different ethnic minorities to live in harmony with the local population of which they form a part leads to discrimination, social exclusion and the rise of racism and xenophobia.

The development of appropriate integration strategies is the responsibility of Member States with authorities and other actors at the local, and municipal level having a very important role to play. As the proportion of non-nationals in the population of Member States develops and with the prospect of further increases, co-ordinated and sustained efforts to ensure the social integration of migrants are more than ever necessary.

They will have to complement national actions within the framework of the Employment guidelines and be in accordance with the objectives endorsed by the Nice European Council as regards social inclusion. Appropriate measures will therefore be required to meet the needs of ethnic minorities and migrant workers as regards their integration into the labour market and national targets will be set where appropriate for this purpose (Employment guideline 7). Member States will also promote the social integration of women and men at risk of facing persistent poverty because they belong to a group experiencing particular integration problems (Nice objective).

Guideline 6: Ensuring the development of integration policies for third country nationals residing legally on the territories of the Member States in particular by:

- Identifying priorities and resources for developing a comprehensive policy to ensure the integration of migrants into society.
- Setting up a framework to ensure the involvement of local and regional actors, the social partners, civil society and migrants themselves in developing and implementing the national strategy.
- Promoting the integration of migrants through information and awareness campaigns in co-operation with all those concerned.
- Developing specific measures aimed at the social and economic integration of women and second generation migrants.

- Developing settlement programmes for new migrants and their families including the provision of appropriate language training and information on the cultural, political and social characteristics of the country concerned including the nature of citizenship and of the fundamental European values.
- Developing measures to provide social, health and economic support to victims of smuggling and/or trafficking during their stay on the territory of the EU.
- Exploring the validity of the concept of civic citizenship by identifying the rights and responsibilities, which would ensure the fair treatment of third country nationals legally resident in the Member State concerned.

4. INSTRUMENTS AND METHODS

4.1. National Action Plans

In order to implement each set of guidelines on immigration, Member States should prepare national action plans which will be reviewed and adapted on an annual basis. These would be in two parts so as to provide both an overview of results of the actions carried out in the previous year in relation to the European guidelines as well as proposals for the implementation of the migration guidelines in the year to come.

In the review section, the National Action Plans would provide statistics on the numbers and situation of third country nationals admitted in the previous year by category including relevant information provided in the National Action Plans on employment. This section would include comments on the co-operation achieved between national, regional and local authorities, the social partners, non-governmental organisations and migrants themselves and on the effectiveness of their participation in the planning and implementation of migration policy. There would also be information on the interaction between the different measures taken and between legal and illegal flows. Information would be given on resources used and attention would be drawn to interesting experiences and good practice which had been identified as well as to problems which had been encountered, in particular where it was felt that solutions should be sought at European level. This part of the report would also include information on the implementation of relevant Community directives, how they had been translated into national legislation and a review of the effects of this legislation in the national situation.

In the second section of their plans, Member States would describe the action they propose to take at national, local and regional level as appropriate, for implementing the guidelines for the year concerned, indicating their national objectives for each one and the time-frame proposed. They would include, when relevant, reference to their projections of labour demand for migrants as set out in their National Action Plans for employment.

The Action Plans will provide the basis of an overall evaluation of the implementation of the common policy and the results obtained and an input into the way in which the guidelines should be developed to reflect changing needs. On the basis of these reports the Commission will prepare a synthesis report drawing attention to common problems and identifying areas where European solutions might

be appropriate. The preparation of this report will be co-ordinated with the corresponding reports on employment and social inclusion.

4.2. Developing and evaluating the Community Immigration Policy

The Commission will play an active role in supporting and developing the common migration policy notably with respect to the presentation of Community legislation which is necessary, preparing proposals for the European guidelines and for promoting co-operation, exchange of best practice, evaluation and monitoring. To this end the Commission will consult widely - by making appropriate arrangements including the setting up of committees and working groups - with senior officials, experts in immigration matters from the Member States, representatives of the social partners and of local and regional authorities, experts on particular topics under review and with other representatives of civil society.

It is important to ensure that candidate countries are informed about this process and are involved at the earliest possible stage in the open co-ordination method before accession, through appropriate arrangements. This will provide a useful preparation for accession by allowing the candidate countries to become familiar with the Community's policies and working methods. This will imply that candidate countries will be involved in the process, in particular by participating in the committees or working groups which will be set up.

The activities of the Commission will include:

- Monitoring the practical application of legislation in the field, notably with a view to ensuring consistency between Member States;
- Making proposals for new legislative initiatives as necessary to implement the common policy;
- Promoting the exchange of information, experience and good practice between Member States;
- Preparing the European guidelines to be approved by the Council;
- Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the guidelines, including by means of a synthesis report for submission to the Council based on an analysis of the national reports, and including recommendations for the future development of the common immigration policy, including the revision of the guidelines.
- Examining the possibility and the suitability of reforming and extending the EURES network to provide information on job opportunities and living and working conditions for third country nationals seeking work in the EU.
- Integrating migration issues into relationships with third countries in particular when developing the country strategies (country strategy papers or others).

In doing so the Commission will ensure that migration policy is complementary and consistent with other internal and external policy areas in particular with the development of the European economy, the employment strategy and with social policies such as social inclusion and the Community's anti-discrimination strategy so

that they are mutually reinforcing within a context of sustainable development. Migration policy should also promote equality between men and women in accordance with Article 2 of the Treaty. On the external side consistency will be maintained with EU external relations and development policies. The Commission will work, therefore, as appropriate, in co-operation with other bodies and committees dealing with relevant policy matters such as the Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee.

4.3. Involvement of the European Institutions

In view of the multi-dimensional aspects of migration policy, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions should be closely involved with the development and implementation of the Community immigration policy. The Commission will also present to the institutions the annual migration report including the European immigration guidelines.

Further consideration should be given, in consultation with the institutions themselves, to the most effective ways in which they can be associated in the co-ordination mechanism at the European level so that they can make their full contribution.

4.4. Involvement of civil society

The active involvement of politicians, the social partners, of regional and local actors and other relevant organisations, such as non-governmental organisations and associations of migrants as stakeholders and of the media, at both national and European levels, is essential to the success of the policy and to the achievement of the goals set out in the guidelines. Member States are invited to take the necessary steps to ensure this at national level. The Commission will put in place measures to establish a dialogue with civil society at European level.

4.5. Supporting measures

The Commission will play an important role in monitoring and evaluating the common policy, in promoting co-operation both between the Member States and between the different actors concerned and in identifying and encouraging the exchange of best practice. This will be an essential part of the process of developing a common approach and in identifying the best standards and encouraging convergence of practice and procedure. Administrative co-operation will be facilitated through the proposed action programme in the field of visas, asylum, immigration and other policies related to the free movement of persons (the ARGO programme¹⁶), the successor to the Odysseus programme.

The Commission believes, however, that a broader programme is necessary to facilitate the exchange of information and best practice among the wide range of authorities and organisations involved, in particular with respect to the integration of third country nationals, and to provide support for actions designed to test and

¹⁶ COM(2001)... “A proposal for a Council Decision adopting an Action Programme for Administrative Cooperation in the fields of visas, asylum, immigration and other policies related to the free movement of persons (ARGO)”

develop European objectives with respect to immigration policy. It intends, therefore, as indicated in its Communication on a Community immigration policy, to put forward proposals for a specific Community Action Programme as a complement to the Community Action Programmes to combat discrimination and to promote social inclusion.

The objective will be to support legislation and policy development within a European framework through the improving of knowledge, the strengthening of the capacity of all the actors involved and the raising of awareness with respect to integration strategies. There will be a focus on a number of key areas and the programme will concentrate on the development of a comprehensive approach and the mobilisation of all those concerned in the implementation of the policy. It will support in particular the evaluation of the effectiveness of policies, legislation and practice and its dissemination, including the development of benchmarks and indicators; aim to develop the capacity of specific actors through the transnational exchange of information and support for European actions; and raising awareness of opinion formers.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND FOLLOW UP

With this Communication the Commission is seeking to set out in more detail the proposals on the implementation of a common policy in the migration field which were sketched out in its Communication on a Community Immigration Policy. In this way it wishes to provide a practical contribution to the inter-institutional European Conference on Migration which the Presidency is organising on 16-17 October 2001.

Once the proposals for the co-ordination mechanism have been considered by the Council and, possibly, at the Laeken summit in December 2001, the first priority for the Commission will then be to review the suggestions, set out in section 4 above, for European Guidelines on Immigration and the outline for the contents of the National Action Plans (section 5.1 above) and to make proposals on these for approval by the Council as soon as possible in 2002. Member States will then be invited to prepare their first National Action Plans for immigration.