

Don't incite fear and hatred of migrants and refugees, MEPs urge EU countries

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EU member states should “refrain from inciting fear and hatred in their citizens towards migrants and asylum-seekers for political gains”, said Civil Liberties Committee MEPs voting a resolution on fundamental rights in the EU on Thursday. The rights to free movement and life-saving abortion are also stressed in the text, which will now be put to a vote by Parliament as a whole.

The non-legislative resolution, drafted by József Nagy (EPP, SK), addresses the key fundamental rights challenges in the European Union in 2015, notably in the fields of migration, protecting children and the online environment.

“This is an exceptional agreement!”, said Mr Nagy. “The mass of unsolved problems Europe-wide cause discontent among the public and fuels extremism. We call on the EU and its member states to provide more help to those in need, show more understanding towards minorities and ensure that institutions work fairly. With regard to the security and migration crisis, we ask for reasonable solidarity and responsibility, more cooperation and effective protection of our external borders”, he concluded. His resolution was passed by 41 votes to 4.

Migration - protecting vulnerable groups

MEPs urge member states to guarantee that reception facilities do not deprive people of their fundamental rights to dignified living conditions and to pay special attention to the needs of vulnerable groups, such as asylum seekers with special needs, and women and children, in particular those who are on their own.

They note that appointing guardians for unaccompanied children is an important safeguard to ensure their best interests and also encourage member states to keep families together

Improving integration, preventing hate speech and fighting radicalisation

MEPs call on member states to develop “positive” public information campaigns to accelerate the integration of migrants and refugees and to share best practices in this field. They stress that access to education is vital for integrating refugees.

They deplore the “increasing levels of hate speech from within certain institutions, political parties and media” and call on the EU to set an example by “opposing hate speech within the institutions”.

MEPs also call on the Commission to support member states’ efforts to prevent radicalisation and violent extremism by promoting European values, tolerance and a sense of community, and by preventing the stigmatisation of any religious or ethnic group.

Protecting children from trafficking and other abuses

Citing a Europol report that at least 10,000 unaccompanied refugee and migrant children went missing in the EU in 2015, MEPs call on member states and EU agencies to step up their information exchanges and joint investigations to fight child trafficking, sexual abuse and other forms of exploitation.

Press release

Member states should register and identify children in a child-friendly way to ensure that they enter national child protection systems and prevent their disappearance, MEPs say. They also recommend reinforcing existing tools for tracing missing children, such as the European hotlines.

Online threats to fundamental rights

To counter risks that children face on the internet, such as sexual exploitation, child pornography or cyber-bullying, MEPs ask that Europol and Eurojust be given appropriate resources to identify victims, fight networks of sexual abusers and accelerate the referral of child abuse material. They also call for awareness raising campaigns and school programs to teach children about potential risks related to the internet and for member states to address cyber bullying.

MEPs recall that all persons have the right to privacy and the right to access personal data concerning them as well as the right to have personal data erased and the right to be forgotten in accordance with EU and national legislation.

Next steps

The draft resolution on the situation of fundamental rights in the EU 2015 is Parliament's reply to the Commission's annual report on fundamental rights in the EU. It is to be put to a plenary vote in December in Strasbourg.

Background

Other topics addressed in the text includes fundamental rights of minorities, in particular the Roma community, LGTBI people, the elderly and people with disabilities.

On 25 October, Parliament called for an EU mechanism on democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights to monitor the situation of these principles in EU member states on an annual basis and in an evidence based, objective and non-discriminatory way.

Further information

- Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs:
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/libe/home.html>
- Profile of József Nagy (EPP, SK): <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/124926.html>
- Video recording of debate (17.11.2016): <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/committees/video?event=20161117-0900-COMMITTEE-LIBE>

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