

EU TO SPEED UP LABOR MIGRATION TO EUROPE

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The EU “needs to attract new low and medium skilled

third-country national workers ... who cannot find legal ways to reach Europe,” the statement to the legislation argues for establishing a common, simplified residence permit system.

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The European Parliament voted in favor of two directives—during its Strasbourg plenary on April 20th—to create a common residence and work permit policy designed to expedite the application procedures for migrants and attract more labor to the continent.

If the directives are accepted through interinstitutional negotiations, one of the directives would create a short-term, [single permit](#) for migrants who enter the European Union legally as well as for those with approved asylum requests. The legislation limits the processing time to 90 days, while the permit will be issued for up to two years, depending on the individual work contract.

The second directive would create a unified [long-term](#) residence permit for third-country nationals who have been living in the EU for at least three years. This will shorten the average time migrants will have to wait until given a permanent residence permit in EU member states, which is currently set at 5 years in most countries. For the long-term permit, the approval period will be limited to 60 days, and if granted in one country, it would also allow migrants to work and study in other member states as well.

Furthermore, the legislation will automatically grant a long-term permit for minors if their primary caretaker already has it. What’s more, the beneficiaries will be allowed to be absent from the territory of the European Union for up to two consecutive years without

risking losing their status.

“Labor migration is the best instrument to combat irregular migration, therefore it is positive and necessary,” the explanatory [statement](#) attached to the files read, but also admitting that the legislation is more about solving the labor shortage by incentivizing migration than stopping illegal entries:

Our economies need to attract new low and medium skilled third-country national workers, with a common harmonized European framework matching people, skills and labour market needs.

Such migration is not only a way of addressing the drive of the many thousands of people who seek a better and more prosperous life, who want to contribute with their talent to the well-being of our societies and who cannot find legal ways to reach Europe. It is also a way of addressing the needs of our economies and our companies that have an interest in having skilled workers and in finding solutions to the shortage of workers on the labour market.

The parliamentary rapporteurs who spearheaded the files—the social democrat Javier Moreno Sánchez and the green Damian Boeselager—went even further than the Commission’s original proposal to extend the availability of single and long-term permits to seasonal workers as well.

According to [Euractiv](#), the rapporteurs expect that following successful negotiations with the Council, the directives will be approved before Christmas this year, although Boeselager thinks that the negotiations on the long-term permits may move slower than on the other.

On the same day, the Parliament approved a much larger [migration package](#) to be part of the upcoming Asylum and Migration Pact, which would make it easier for asylum seekers to get into the EU as well as allow the Commission to retain its right to mandate compulsory migrant quotas. On the border fence front, however, the Parliament almost made a historic breakthrough just a day before, approving EU funds to be used for building border protection infrastructure—before the entire budget proposal was voted down by the socialists.