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The state of democracy in Europe - Specific challenges facing European democracies: the case of diversity and migration

Committee Opinion[1]
Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men
Rapporteur: Ms Nursuna MEMECAN, Turkey, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

A. Conclusions of the committee

The committee supports the draft resolution and the draft recommendation tabled by the Political Affairs Committee, but would like to propose a number of amendments aiming to ensure that the gender dimension of the challenges posed by diversity and migration to European democracies is better reflected. The committee would like women migrants – a large group within the population, but one mostly not integrated into the community – to have every chance to fully integrate into our European democracies and to access decision making in them. The more migrant women, both as wives and daughters, and as individuals in their own right, who are involved in the community, the more the whole family, including men and children, will become participants in their new societies and contribute to the improvement of democracy.

B. Proposed amendments to the draft resolution

Amendment A (to the draft resolution)

In paragraph 5, add the following sentence after the second sentence:

> *"The arrival of migrant women, in particular, introduced new issues that need special attention with respect to human rights."*

Amendment B (to the draft resolution)

Add at the end of paragraph 10:

> *"Equal opportunities must also be given to migrant women, irrespective of their legal, marital or financial status."*

Amendment C (to the draft resolution)

In paragraph 11, add after "in political life": ", especially of migrant women,".

Amendment D (to the draft resolution)

Add the following sentence at the end of paragraph 11: "These barriers need to be removed."

1. See Doc. 11623, tabled by the Political Affairs Committee.

Amendment E (to the draft resolution)

Add at the end of paragraph 13:

> *"Easy access and motivation for language learning should be provided to migrant women. Cultural and educational policies should be developed to make migrant women aware of constitutional values and the principles of human rights."*

Amendment F (to the draft resolution)

Add the following new sub-paragraph after subparagraph 17.1.4:

> *"consider giving migrant women a legal status independent of that of their spouse."*

Amendment G (to the draft resolution)

Add at the end of sub-paragraph 17.4.1: "also taking into account the specific needs of women migrants".

Amendment H (to the draft resolution)

Add at the end of sub-paragraph 17.4.2: ", including gender-disaggregated data;".

C. Proposed amendments to the draft recommendation

Amendment I (to the draft recommendation)

Add at the end of sub-paragraph 3.2: "taking into account the specific 'dependent' status of many migrant women;"

Amendment J (to the draft recommendation)

In sub-paragraph 3.3, add after "length of required residence": ", also considering the 'dependent' status of many migrant women,".

Amendment K (to the draft recommendation)

In sub-paragraph 3.6, add before "research": "gender-sensitive".

D. Explanatory memorandum, by Ms Memecan

1. The Political Affairs Committee has tabled a report on "specific challenges facing European democracies: the case of diversity and migration" (Doc. 11623), which needs to be read in conjunction with the report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population on "measures to improve the democratic participation of migrants" (Doc. 11625). The two reports propose a number of both guiding principles and concrete measures aimed at making European democracies more inclusive of migration.

2. This committee prepared a detailed report on the "integration of immigrant women in Europe" in 2006, leading to the adoption of Assembly Resolution 1478 (2006) and Recommendation 1732 (2006). A large part of the report was devoted to measures to facilitate the integration of immigrant women, including their access to decision making.

3. Allow me to briefly enumerate some of the most important measures recommended in the resolution, which are still as valid now as they were two years ago:

Regarding the legal status of immigrant women:

> *"7.1.1. granting immigrant women arriving under family reunification arrangements a legal status independent of that of their spouse, if possible within one year of the date of their arrival;*

7.1.2. establishing a legal framework guaranteeing immigrant women the right to hold their own passport and residence permit and making it possible to hold a person criminally responsible for taking these documents away;

7.4. show resolve in combating all forms of violence suffered by immigrant women and ensure that all administrative measures are taken to protect them, including effective access to assistance and protection mechanisms and expedited granting of a legal status and residence permit, independent in particular of those of their spouse or their employer, in cases of violence;".

Regarding language-learning possibilities:

"7.6. offer courses targeting both immigrant women and men, especially on the local level and free of charge if possible, to teach the receiving country's language through tailor-made, functional language courses taking their main interests in life into account, as well as to facilitate awareness of the rules of law, democratic values and fundamental human rights in the receiving countries and fundamental democratic principles, including equality between men and women, adapted to the specific needs of immigrant women, and to ensure that such mechanisms are properly evaluated;".

Regarding data collection:

"7.7. collect gender-disaggregated data on migration flows to enable a better understanding of women's migration patterns, the needs of immigrant women and the specific actions which could accelerate their integration into the host society;".

4. While it is not necessary, in my view, to repeat these recommendations in the texts to be adopted now, I do think it is necessary to ensure that the recommendations made now are gender-sensitive, and that the general tenor of the resolution already adopted by the Assembly is adequately reflected.

5. Thus, for example, all data collected should be gender-disaggregated and research undertaken should be gender-sensitive (Amendments H and K). Since women migrants face additional barriers to learning the language(s) of the host country (Amendment E) and to accessing decision making, due to the "double/triple discrimination" phenomena (migrant women are often discriminated against as women in both the host society and their own migrant community, and are often discriminated against as migrants in the host society), it is particularly important to identify and remove these additional barriers (Amendments C, D, and G). It should also be kept in mind that the legal status of many migrant women (especially of those arriving under family reunification arrangements) is dependent on that of their spouse, which may put them at a disadvantage when it comes to obtaining "independent" residency permits or citizenship (Amendments B, F, I and J).

6. I hope that these amendments will be supported by both this committee, the Political Affairs Committee and, ultimately, the Assembly, in the interest of better reflecting the gender dimension of the challenges posed by diversity and migration, and of ensuring that women migrants – a large group within the population – have every chance to fully integrate into our European democracies and to access decision making in them.

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Reporting committee: Political Affairs Committee.

Committee seized for opinion: Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

Reference to committee: Bureau decision of 17 December 2007, Reference No. 3413 of 21 January 2008 and of 29 May 2008.

Opinion adopted by the committee on 24 June 2008.

See 24th Sitting, 25 June 2008 (adoption of the draft resolution and draft recommendation); and Resolution 1617 and Recommendation 1839.