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Migration and mobility in the Eurasian region – Prospects for the future

Reply to Recommendation[1]: Recommendation 1852 (2008)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has examined with interest Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1852 (2008) "Migration and mobility in the Eurasian region – Prospects for the future". It has transmitted the recommendation and the Resolution 1639 (2008) to member states and to the European Committee on Migration (CDMG). The Committee of Ministers welcomes the thorough consideration that the Parliamentary Assembly has given to the particular challenges faced by, if not exclusively, countries in the Eurasian region. It would encourage member states, where appropriate, to bear in mind Recommendation 1852 (2008) in the framework of their national migration policies.

2. The Council of Europe continues to take a co-ordinated approach to migration management. It focuses on both the development of policies on migration and on the integration of migrants that are founded on the principles of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, with a view to ensuring orderly migration, social cohesion and the respect of the individual. The Committee of Ministers would also draw the Assembly's attention to the Final Declaration and in particular the Action Plan adopted at the 8th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Migration Affairs (Kyiv, 4-5 September 2008) which will be used as a basis for the activities in the field of migration for the coming years.

3. The Committee of Ministers highlights the fact that promoting and protecting the human rights of migrants and facilitating integration remains an ongoing challenge for the governments of all member states. With regard to the specific recommendations by the Assembly, it would refer to the CDMG comments appended to the present reply. These outline the relevant current and projected activities of the Council of Europe in the field of migration and which respond concretely to the suggestions of the Assembly.

4. The Committee of Ministers would also refer to its replies to Assembly Recommendations 1755 (2007) on "Human rights of irregular migrants", 1782 (2007) on "The situation of migrant workers in temporary employment agencies (TEAs)" and 1807 (2007) on "Regularisation programmes for irregular migrants", of which a number of elements are relevant to the present recommendation.

5. With reference to paragraph 2.3, the Committee of Ministers would also draw particular attention to the relevance of its Recommendation Rec(2006)6 on internally displaced persons.

6. Finally, the Committee of Ministers would invite those member states that have not already done so, to consider signing and ratifying the relevant Council of Europe instruments likely to improve the situation of migrants including Protocol No. 12 to the European Convention on Human Rights, the revised European Social Charter, the European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings as well as the UN International Convention on the Protection of the rights of all migrant workers.

1. adopted at the 1057th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (20 May 2009)

Appendix – Opinion by the European Committee on Migration (CDMG)

1. The CDMG welcomes the interest of the Parliamentary Assembly to the issue of migration and mobility in the Eurasian region and fully shares the view that regional and bilateral co-operation in Eastern Europe should be strengthened.

2. Migration has recently grown into an important and highly debated issue for Eastern European countries, most of which are simultaneously countries of origin, transit and destination. An important phenomenon is also the regional cross-border migration which involves many people engaged in seasonal work or small trade. It has been repeatedly noted that many Eastern European countries were not always prepared for the challenges of migration. They often lacked coherent and well-developed migration management and integration policies as well as an effectively working information exchange mechanism (between different agencies within these countries and with other states).

3. The 8th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Migration Affairs that took place in Kyiv (Ukraine) on 4 and 5 September 2008 drew attention to the migration challenges faced by Eastern European countries and to the specific nature of migration flows in that region. The CDMG also took into account the priorities of the countries of region in the course of preparing its projects for 2009-2012 and identified by them in the course of a series of meetings in the region. Many activities that will be implemented as parts of these projects will directly address the challenges faced by Eastern European countries.

4. In particular, the CDMG considers that providing assistance to these countries in developing and implementing effective migration policies capable of addressing the new emerging migration challenges is among its most important tasks. Moreover, this task reflects the decision of the 8th Ministerial Conference to devise an integrated approach to migration, development and social cohesion and assist member states in its implementation.

5. Indeed, the CDMG intends to undertake various activities to accomplish this in 2009-2012. Among these are the work aimed at strengthening the role of employment services in the management of short-term migration and the protection of migrants' rights, activities dedicated to enhancing contribution of migrants to the development of their countries of origin and facilitating the return of those migrants who decided to do so, and development of mechanism to facilitate regular exchange of information both within and between the countries of Eastern Europe.

6. As a part of the Council of Europe Social Cohesion Programme for Ukraine (2008-2011), the CDMG will provide assistance to the Ukrainian authorities in developing an integrated approach to migration management and translating it into practical policy instruments (including measures to protect the rights of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, to establish an effective system to combat irregular migration, to design a comprehensive integration policy and to offer a viable reintegration mechanisms to returning migrants).

7. The CDMG also regards very seriously the issue of integration of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and intends to address in it in the framework of the implementation of the project "Protecting the human rights and dignity of vulnerable migrants". In the context of post-conflict settlement in Georgia, the CDMG believes that it is important to offer assistance to the authorities of Georgia in their efforts to facilitate local integration of people who fled the zone of conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia and is prepared to provide such assistance.

8. Finally, the CDMG will continue to promote the implementation of the European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers (ETS No. 93), which now has 11 signatures with Moldova and Ukraine recently joining the Convention. The CDMG regards the convention an important international legal tool to protect the rights of migrant workers and intends to encourage its use by the member states. In particular, it is hoped that the Consultative Committee will be able to resume its work in 2009.