



**Recommendation 968 (1983)<sup>1</sup>**

## **Xenophobic attitudes and movements in member countries with regard to migrant workers**

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Noting the appearance of xenophobic attitudes and movements in various member countries of the Council of Europe, sometimes taking the form of acts of violence with dramatic consequences ;
2. Observing that those xenophobic attitudes and movements have been considerably aggravated by the rise in unemployment resulting from the economic recession affecting most of the member countries ;
3. Noting that the aggravation of such movements is also sustained by allegations :
  - a. of an economic nature : foreign workers are said to be taking jobs which could go to nationals ;
  - b. of a social nature : foreign workers and their families are said to be enjoying social benefits financed by nationals and occupying housing which could be allocated to nationals ;
  - c. of a moral nature : foreign workers are said to be the reason for the increase in violence and delinquency ;
  - d. of an educational nature : the children of foreign workers are said to be holding up the normal progress of the classes they attend ;
4. Affirming that these allegations are unfair since they take no account of factors determining the situation of migrant workers or of the rights defined in the European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers ;
5. Noting that these allegations are sometimes exploited for electoral purposes to the detriment of the most rudimentary respect of human rights ;
6. Affirming that it is essential to remember, in attempting to take a balanced view of the problems ; a. the reasons for emigration : firstly, the relative poverty of countries of origin appeared to some extent intolerable when seen against the prosperity of the host countries ; secondly, in times of economic prosperity the host countries have called on foreign labour ; b. the important role migrant workers have played in the economic development of host countries ; c. jobs open to migrant workers are not wanted by nationals, either because they are unattractive or because they entail a willingness to move ; d. the inadequacy and occasional absence of policies to help migrant workers adapt to the language and customs of the host country, settle in decent material conditions and send for their families ; e. the special difficulties which migrant workers' wives have to contend with, because of their ignorance of the language of the host country and consequent isolation ; f. the difficulties faced by the children of migrant workers in adapting to the educational system in the host country which, for a number of them, provoke discouragement, rejection and alienation, plus a feeling of rootlessness, so that it is much more difficult for them to return to the country of origin than it is for their parents, and possibly problems caused by those difficulties in the running of schools ; g. the connection between the shortcomings of these policies and some of their consequences, in particular the creation of conditions which encourage introversion, alienation, the concentration of large numbers in slum areas and delinquency ;

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1. Assembly debate on 27 September 1983 (11th Sitting) (see [Doc. 5107](#), report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography). Text adopted by the Assembly on 27 September 1983 (11th Sitting).



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7. Denouncing the tendency to lay considerable blame on foreigners for delinquency, which is belied by court statistics ;
8. Denouncing the abuse of special status, such as that of seasonal workers, granted to foreign workers who ought to have the benefit of a more favourable status ;
9. Considering :
  - a. that many of those responsible for the economy in host countries are concerned by the possibility of foreign workers leaving en masse, because of their role and numerical importance in various sectors of activity ;
  - b. that Europe is having to cope with a demographic decline which threatens the normal generation replacement ;
  - c. that, as a result, the mutual nature of past and future interests should lead xenophobes to reconsider their view of the links between the presence of foreign workers and current difficulties ;
  - d. that, quite apart from the reciprocity of interests, the respect of rights of all workers, and hence of migrant workers, is required of all countries, particularly European countries signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter ;
  - e. that the formation of multicultural societies within Europe is, by virtue of the fundamental right of freedom of movement, an irreversible and indeed a desirable phenomenon in terms of furthering the European ideal and Europe's world-wide mission ;
  - f. that flourishing exchanges of all kinds, including economic exchanges, within Europe and between Europe and the other continents depend, as is demonstrated by certain phenomena of rejection of technological civilisation in some parts of the world, on familiarity with the cultures of other peoples ;
  - g. that the presence of foreign cultural communities within Europe therefore constitutes a very important medium- and long-term asset, provided that policies are carried out which foster open-mindedness and the understanding of differences ;
10. Believing the development of intercultural understanding, both in schools and in communities, to be a positive and important contribution to the general encouragement of tolerance in Western society and therefore to represent an important objective of education policy in member countries ;
11. Recalling its [Recommendation 963 \(1983\)](#), on cultural and educational means of reducing violence ;
12. Recalling its [Recommendation 786 \(1976\)](#), on the educational and cultural development of migrants, and welcoming the attention paid to migrants by the Council for Cultural Co-operation and by the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education ;
13. Realising, nonetheless, that the percentage of foreign workers in specific places is so high that it is productive of tension and conflict, for want of adequate structures ;
14. Believing that migrant workers leave their own countries because they are unable to earn a decent living there, and that an effective policy of aid to the underprivileged areas of Europe and the Third World would accordingly :
  - a. enable more workers from such areas to achieve their ambitions there instead of seeking an uncertain fortune elsewhere ;
  - b. make the task of receiving countries easier by bringing the flow of migrant workers down to levels in keeping with their reception structures and capacities ;
15. Believing that the countries of origin are also partly responsible for difficulties in the host countries through their failure to take adequate steps to prepare their emigrants for a prolonged stay abroad, merely enjoying the benefit of the lower unemployment level appearing in their own statistics and of the foreign currency remittance from their nationals,
16. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers :
  - 16.1. invite the governments of the member states :
    - 16.1.1. to ratify the European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers and the European Social Charter, if they have not already done so ;

- 16.1.2. to work, in the framework of multilateral cooperation at European and international level, for the development of underprivileged areas in Europe and the Third World, so as to reduce the unplanned mass exodus of migrants which contributes to the appearance and continuation of xenophobic movements ;
- 16.1.3. to take steps against employers who encourage the illegal entry of migrant workers and take advantage of their recruitment, and to see to it that the regulations and legislation governing wages and social rights in force in their countries are applied in full ;
- 16.1.4. to enact or strictly apply legislation to prevent or punish discriminatory or xenophobic activities ;
- 16.1.5. to promote understanding between the nationals of host countries and foreign workers by :
- a. organising a campaign linking the mass media and trade unions and employers' associations to explain objectively the factors which determine emigration, the amount of prejudice and error in the allegations against foreign workers, their contribution to past economic development, their supporting role in the current economic situation, and their contribution to the replacement of generations which, because of present and probably future imbalances, could result in serious social difficulties ;
  - b. developing bilateral co-operation with a view in particular to :
    - 1. distributing information in the countries of origin on the real employment situation and reception facilities in host countries, in order to prevent ill-considered departures on a mass, unplanned scale ;
    - 2. teaching workers, before their departure, the basics of the language and customs of the host country ;
    - 3. carrying out activities in the host country to enable local public opinion to appreciate the culture of emigration countries and gain a better understanding of the mentality of migrant workers ;
    - 4. carrying out the proposals on migrants' education put forward by the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education, and in particular the resolution adopted by the conference in Dublin in May 1983 ;
    - 5. making it possible for the spokesmen of these foreign communities to be heard by bodies where their specific problems could, as appropriate, be thrashed out and solved (radio, television, committees for problems facing foreigners, etc.) ;
    - 6. granting priority to those activities aimed at a clear, objective appreciation of the situation of migrant workers and an inter-penetration of cultures reaching far beyond folklore and the commonplace, without which the sanctions provided for in paragraph 16.1.iv above could aggravate the emotional situation and make the cure worse than the disease ;
- 16.2. make provision at European level for :
- 16.2.1. a programme of multilateral activities such as the European Prize for the best television programme for the promotion of cultural understanding ;
  - 16.2.2. an outline programme providing a basis for initiatives to be taken by member states as part of the national campaign recommended in paragraph 16.1.v.a above, and co-ordinating those initiatives.