Recommendation 1089 (1988)[1]

Improving community relations (European Days "Enjoying our diversity", Strasbourg, 25-27 November 1987)

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Recalling its Recommendation 1034 (1986) on the improvement in Europe of mutual understanding between ethnic communities "Daring to live together", and its Order No. 428 (1986) on the organisation of an event on intercommunity and intercultural experiences;

2. Referring to its Recommendation 968 (1983) on xenophobic attitudes and movements in member countries with regard to migrant workers;

3. Having examined the conclusions of the European Days "Enjoying our diversity", organised by its Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography, in Strasbourg from 25 to 27 November 1987;

4. Supporting the proposals contained in the conclusions of the 3rd Conference of European Ministers responsible for Migration Affairs, held in Oporto (Portugal) from 13 to 15 May 1987, on "Migrants in Western Europe: present situation and future prospects";

5. Underlining the fact that there is widespread agreement on the role that intercultural education should play to contribute to the integration of migrants and ethnic minorities into their host countries;

6. Considering that a solution to the language problem is a prerequisite for, but not itself a guarantee of, a good intercultural education policy based on mutual respect among all groups of a society;

7. Emphasising that, in Europe, cultural pluralism is a reality which has to be accepted and, furthermore, has to become an integral part of educational, cultural and social policies;

8. Believing that intercultural education plays an essential part in combating discrimination in all its forms and eradicating racism and xenophobia;

9. Acknowledging that the media have an important role to play to ensure that the different communities, the different languages and the different ethnic minorities are treated fairly and considerately;

10. Pointing out that, although some progress has been made, the access of migrants and ethnic minorities to the media and the treatment of minority issues by the media are still extremely limited;

11. Stressing the need to refrain from using conflicts involving migrants or ethnic minorities for political propaganda;

12. Considering that, when they exist, unemployment and migrants' poor living conditions impede the development of community relations at local and regional levels;

13. Concerned at the limited knowledge that local and regional authorities have about the problems and specific needs of migrant communities;

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1. Assembly debate on 7 October 1988 (16th Sitting) (see Doc. 5917, report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography, Rapporteur: Mrs Luuk). Text adopted by the Assembly on 7 October 1988 (16th Sitting).

14. Drawing attention to the migrant women's situation -the latter are very often victims of a double discrimination as women and as migrants;

15. Convinced that, to improve community relations, it is necessary to ensure a larger participation by migrants in local public life, in particular by granting them voting rights at local level;

16. Supporting the proposals contained in the resolution on foreigners in the municipality, adopted at the 7th Conference of European Ministers responsible for Local Government;

17. Welcoming the inclusion of an interdisciplinary project on community relations in the Council of Europe's intergovernmental programme of activities;

18. Expressing serious concern at the restrictive measures applying to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, recently adopted by some Council of Europe member states;

19. Noting with satisfaction the appointment in some member states of a commissioner responsible for migrant affairs at national or regional level;

20. Considering that Council of Europe member states share a common concept of human rights, rooted in a profound faith in the inherent dignity of all human beings and their equal value, as a result of which these states are obliged to safeguard foreign communities from racism and xenophobia,

21. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

21.1. consider the extension of Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights, in order to prohibit all forms of discrimination;

21.2. associate representatives of migrant associations in carrying out activities connected with the social changes resulting from migration;

21.3. take into consideration the existence in member states of large minorities from non-member countries when considering the legal and political rights of foreigners;

21.4. finalise the draft convention on the participation of foreigners in public life at local level;

21.5. prepare a comparative study of the media policies pursued by the different member states with regard to migrant communities and ethnic minorities;

21.6. examine the possibility of establishing a European agency responsible for producing and disseminating information on migrant issues at European level;

21.7. take into account the links existing between educational and youth policies when considering activities related to intercultural education;

21.8. devote adequate resources to the project on community relations, and take steps to ensure that all the relevant steering committees make an effective contribution to it;

21.9. invite the governments of member states:

a. to launch initiatives to improve community relations based on Council of Europe projects;

b. to encourage the representatives of the media to facilitate access to the media for the most important associations of migrants and ethnic minorities,

c. to make full use of existing legislation to fight racism and xenophobia;

d. to consider the appointment of a commissioner responsible for migrant affairs at national and regional levels;

e. to regulate by law the right of residence for foreigners, particularly migrant workers (see Recommendation 1082 (1988)), without discrimination between men and women, in order to avoid any abuse resulting from decisions taken by administrative authorities;

f. to inform foreigners, in the appropriate language, of their rights and duties, thus enabling them to plan their lives in the host country.