Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
https://pace.coe.int

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

**Recommendation 1163 (1991)**[1]

# Arrival of asylum-seekers at European airports

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Most European countries are facing the arrival of an increasing number of asylum-seekers, who come from a wider range of countries and for a greater variety of reasons than before.

2. These developments are causing serious difficulties for the competent authorities, notably the immigration services, and in particular have led to alarming situations at many European airports

3. These developments are causing serious difficulties for the competent authorities, notably the immigration services, and in particular have led to alarming situations at many European airports

4. These developments are causing serious difficulties for the competent authorities, notably the immigration services, and in particular have led to alarming situations at many European airports

5. The rights of refugees under the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, its 1967 Protocol and the European Convention on Human Rights are not always sufficiently known to immigration officers and are not always fully respected. The competences and training of the various officials receiving and interviewing asylum-seekers vary from country to country.

6. The sometimes incoherent and generally time-consuming procedure of examining asylum requests often causes undue hardship to asylum-seekers.

7. At some European airports no accommodation centres exist and asylum-seekers are obliged to wait in overcrowded transit halls for a decision on the admissibility of their request.

8. Other airports provide reception centres, but the application of internal law and international conventions by the authorities concerned is not always guaranteed.

9. Several European countries have imposed restrictive measures in an attempt to control the inflow of asylum-seekers.

10. Stricter visa requirements have increased the use of forged travel documents, as it is difficult for a genuine asylum-seeker fleeing persecution to acquire them through legal means.

11. There is clear evidence that racketeers in some countries of origin organise systematic departures of asylum-seekers and provide them with forged travel documents.

12. Some countries have imposed airline sanctions which undermine the basic principles of refugee protection and the right of refugees to claim asylum while placing a considerable legal, administrative and financial burden upon carriers and moving the responsibility away from the immigration officers.

13. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers :

13.1. prepare, before 1 January 1993, an agreement on the harmonisation of member states' policies and practices concerning the reception of asylum-seekers, in particular at airports ;

---

1. Assembly debate on 23 September 1991 (14th Sitting) (see Doc. 6490Doc. 6490, report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography, Rapporteur : Lord Mackie of Benshie). Text adopted by the Assembly on 23 September 1991 (14th Sitting).

13.2. prepare a European code on information, to be distributed very widely in asylum-seekers' countries of origin and neighbouring countries and to be provided by all practical means to asylum-seekers upon their arrival, concerning their rights and the relevant procedures, at the same time informing them of the strict conditions in defining asylum-seekers:

13.3. invite the governments of member states:

*a.* to ensure that respect for the European Convention on Human Rights and specific international instruments for the protection of asylum-seekers is guaranteed in the reception centres and transit areas at European airports, which implies that the legal authorities do not relinquish any of their responsibilities resulting from their international obligations:

*b.* to provide sufficient accommodation and acceptable humanitarian treatment for asylum-seekers awaiting the first decision on their request ;

*c.* to involve representatives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and voluntary organisations in the structures responsible for the reception of asylum-seekers at their airports.