Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1277 (1995)[1]

Migrants, ethnic minorities and media

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Immigration and the presence of ethnic minorities are integral parts of the European identity. Large communities of immigrant origin have now settled permanently in our societies and contribute to their wealth and diversity.

2. Media presentation of subjects connected with immigrants and ethnic minorities has a significant influence on public opinion. Although the media constitute an important means of combating racist and xenophobic views, prejudices and preconceived ideas, they can also have a role in the emergence or strengthening of such views.

3. Migrants and ethnic minorities are entitled to be portrayed comprehensively and impartially in the media. This is a pre-condition if all citizens are to take a more rational view of immigration and multi-culturalism and accept persons of immigrant origin or members of ethnic minorities as their equals. An objective image can primarily be achieved through a responsible approach by media professionals and improved media access for migrants and ethnic minorities on all levels. The Assembly considers it of prime importance that the media and the competent authorities should do their utmost to attain these objectives.

4. The media are also an important means of informing migrants about their host country, its culture and its language and contribute to forging links between them and the host society. They likewise allow migrants to keep in touch with their country of origin and give them a means of expression and of communication with members of their community.

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

5.1. through the relevant bodies of the Council of Europe, encourage media professionals' associations to prepare, in so far as they have not already done so, codes of conduct laying down the ethical principles that should guide the work of these professionals;

5.2. provide institutional and financial backing for the creation of a pan-European prize to be awarded annually to media professionals or organs which have distinguished themselves in the fight against intolerance and racism, for example by giving an objective and balanced picture of migrants or ethnic minorities;

5.3. instruct the European Committee against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) to pay particular attention to member states' legislation and policy for combating racism and intolerance in the media;

5.4. invite the member states:

a. to enforce vigorously the legislation prohibiting incitement to racism and fascism in the media or, where necessary, to enact or reinforce such legislation;

b. to further the education and labour market access of persons belonging to immigrant communities or ethnic minorities;

1. Assembly debate on 30 June 1995 (24th Sitting) (see Doc. 7322, report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography, rapporteurs: Mrs Aguiar and Mr Vázquez). Text adopted by the Assembly on 30 June 1995 (24th Sitting).

c. to establish, in co-operation with the media industry, teaching and training programmes designed for persons of immigrant origin or belonging to ethnic minorities so as to give them a genuine chance of a career in the various media sectors;

d. to encourage the organisation of seminars and training courses for media professionals on the subject of intercultural education, and the teaching, in journalism schools, of questions of ethics relating to the problem of intolerance;

e. to evaluate the quality of media output on migrant and ethnic-minority matters from time to time and award prizes to outstanding examples of media coverage of this area;

f. to encourage both public and private media to play a responsible role in combating racism and xenophobia through objective coverage of migrant and ethnic minority issues and the provision of opportunities for the balanced involvement of representatives of migrant and ethnic communities in mainstream radio and television programmes;

g. to ensure that official public relations services provide full, unbiased information on subjects connected with migrants and ethnic minorities;

h. to assist the production and broadcasting of programmes on intercommunity relations and immigration, including programmes in migrants' own languages;

i. to encourage action by local media to improve migrant integration into, and participation in the local community;

j. to promote, through the Eurimages Fund and the European Convention on Cinematographic Co-Production, the co-production of films with producers from immigrant communities' countries of origin, including films dealing with migrants and ethnic minorities;

k. to ratify, if this has not already been done, the European Convention on Transfrontier Television.