Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1482 (2000)[1]

Demographic trends and human potential in the countries of central and eastern Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly expresses its deep concern over the serious adverse demographic trends observed to varying degrees in the countries of central and eastern Europe over the last decade: decline in life expectancy, drop in the birth rate, rising mortality rate, ageing of the population and deterioration of the health situation.

2. These demographic trends, which sometimes have their roots in a period prior to the social and economic changes which have taken place in these countries since the end of the 1980s, have nevertheless been intensified by these changes.

3. Nevertheless, the differing development of the countries of the region must be taken into account when assessing their demographic situation. Certain signs of stabilisation in the demographic process are to be observed in the states which intensively and efficiently implement economic, political and social reforms.

4. The Assembly is convinced that there is a strong correlation between demographic changes and the socio-economic situation in a modern society. If the reforms prove to be successful, they will have a gradual impact on demographic trends.

5. The weakening of social welfare systems (in particular the right to housing, health and family support by the state, and the protection of children) has had a considerable impact on demographic trends. The Assembly believes that the fulfilment of social undertakings and the application of the Council of Europe's standards as regards the guaranteeing of a certain standard of living and quality of life by its member states, and in particular the implementation of an additional protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights concerning fundamental social rights, as advocated in Recommendation 1415 (1999), could have a reassuring effect on the populations of the countries in question and change their view of the future.

6. The Assembly recalls its earlier work, in particular Recommendation 1260 (1995) on the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 5-13 September 1994): follow-up by the Council of Europe and its member states, in which it expressed its concern about the specific demographic problems of the countries of central and eastern Europe.

7. Given that the negative demographic trends appear to persist and to aggravate the problems in this part of the continent and in Europe as a whole, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers invite the member states concerned:

7.1. to continue economic, political and social reforms by devising flexible socio-economic policies taking into account the disturbing demographic trends in their countries;

7.2. to increase the resources which they devote to improving public heath, working conditions and environmental quality;

7.3. to promote better management of existing human resources and intellectual capital;

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1. See Doc. 8463, report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography, rapporteur: Mr Chyzh and Doc. 8578, opinion of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr Gross. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf ofthe Assembly, on 9 November 2000.

7.4. to encourage healthy lifestyles which would reduce the risks of certain illnesses, such as those affecting the cardiovascular system;

7.5. to promote health education and sex education in schools and via the media;

7.6. to improve the welfare benefits system, particularly for large families;

7.7. to introduce a socially oriented approach to the ageing phenomenon;

7.8. to pursue appropriate employment and training policies;

7.9. to make social cohesion one of the aims of economic and social policies with the help of adequate budgetary resources.

8. The Assembly further recommends that the Committee of Ministers invite all Council of Europe member states:

8.1. to increase European co-operation in the field of demography, emphasising above all the exchange of experience and information, the formulation of social and economic policies, and support for research;

8.2. to give full effect to the recommendations of the European Population Conference (Geneva, 1993) and of the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994);

8.3. to devise and support social projects aimed at solving the extremely disturbing demographic problems in the countries of central and eastern Europe, having regard to their impact on the continent as a whole.

9. The Assembly asks the Committee of Ministers to introduce programmes of co-operation country by country, where the needs are greatest, within the context of the intergovernmental programme of activities of the Council of Europe, in particular with a view to combating cardiovascular illnesses, tuberculosis and infant mortality.