Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1625 (2003)[1]

Policies for the integration of immigrants in Council of Europe member states

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Since its very creation, the Parliamentary Assembly has devoted considerable attention to the issue of the integration of immigrants. In this regard, it has adopted Recommendation 712 (1973) on the integration of migrant workers with the society of their host countries, Resolution 631 (1976) on the integration of migrants into society as regards education and cultural development, Recommendation 1206 (1993) on the integration of migrants and community relations, Recommendation 1500 (2001) on participation of immigrants and foreign residents in political life in the Council of Europe member states, and Recommendation 1596 (2003) on the situation of young migrants in Europe.

2. The Assembly also recalls the importance given to the integration of immigrants in the overall activities of the Council of Europe, especially in the Directorate for Social Cohesion, through the works of the European Committee on Migration (CDMG) and its Committee of Experts on Integration and Community Relations, as well as the numerous activities in the area of the fight against racism and discrimination, in particular the campaign "All different, all equal".

3. The Assembly regrets that since 11 September 2001 the immigration debate has been dominated by questions of security and border controls, to the detriment of integration policies, and that a certain rhetoric has developed in the media and public opinion often stigmatising immigrants.

4. Such attitudes and political choices overlook the fact that millions of immigrants enjoy legal residence in Council of Europe member states and want to participate fully in the life of the host country and respect its democratic rules and values. If terrorism poses a threat to democracy, governments and public opinion, however, should also be aware that the failure to devise and implement effective integration policies for immigrants will pose an equal threat to the values which are at the heart of European society, namely equality, democratic representation and social cohesion.

5. The Assembly therefore reaffirms its vision of Europe as a multinational and multicultural society, where immigrants take part as equal members, on the basis of equality of rights and opportunities in return for equality of obligations, whilst respecting the rules of democracy, cultural diversity and the rule of law.

6. Equality of rights and opportunities in return for equality of obligations can only be obtained through an overall strategy aimed at establishing an appropriate legal framework, ensuring effective implementation of the law and the existence of the opportunity to appeal in the case of alleged violations. The elaboration and implementation of this strategy must involve immigrants, and the entire population should be informed of its objectives and principles.

7. Integration policies should have the dual aim of providing immigrants with the means to function in the society where they live and develop their potential while preserving their cultural and ethnic identity, and familiarising the non-immigrant population with the rights of immigrants, their culture, traditions and needs. Council of Europe member states should highlight the value of cultural, social and religious differences, but

1. Assembly debate on 30 September 2003 (29th Sitting) (see Doc. 9888, report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, rapporteur: Mrs Zwerver). Text adopted by the Assembly on 30 September 2003 (29th Sitting).

under no circumstances should it be possible to justify violations of human rights on the grounds of cultural tradition or religion. The respect for cultural and religious differences must rest on the respect for human rights by all those who live in a country, immigrants and non-immigrants.

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

ask its relevant committees, and in particular the European Committee on Migration, to conduct research on a Council of Europe strategy for integration and propose recommendations to this end;

further promote, through its Directorate General on Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport, activities to foster intercultural dialogue between immigrant and non-immigrant communities;

encourage the Council of Europe Development Bank to consider applications for integration projects favourably;

call on member states to:

a. create interministerial task forces on integration to steer and monitor the integration of immigrants working in consultation with the voluntary sector, community organisations and immigrants;

b. establish integration programmes for those immigrants who have recently arrived. Such programmes should:

be accessible on a voluntary basis;

be open to immigrants in possession of a residence permit which is valid for at least one year;

be tailor-made to the individual needs of each beneficiary;

include language tuition, information on the way of life and customs of the host society, including access to basic services such as health, housing and legal advice;

provide vocational orientation and guidance on entering the labour market of the host country as well as information on immigrants' rights;

provide for financial inducements to encourage participation;

c. grant immigrants who have been legally living in the country for at least three years the right to vote and stand in local elections and encourage activities to foster their active political participation;

d. adapt their legislation so as to allow dual or multiple citizenship;

e. facilitate family reunion;

f. encourage the active involvement of immigrant women in all aspects of the host society, including political life, as well as their access to education, vocational training and the labour market;

g. establish and implement a clear and transparent legal framework to fight against discrimination of racial or ethnic origin and ensure effective access to appeal against alleged violations of these principles;

h. ensure the wide circulation of information on legal recruitment channels for recruitment and on job offers, especially in community and immigrants' organisations and other places habitually frequented by immigrants;

i. promote intercultural activities and other events aiming at improving knowledge of the culture of immigrants' communities and provide adequate funding for them.