



**Resolution 1767 (2010)<sup>1</sup>**

Final version

## The demographic future of Europe and migration

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The global population is currently predicted to grow by over 40% over the next forty years unless fertility rates in the developing world decrease considerably. In the same period, the population of the member states of the Council of Europe is expected to drop by about 6%, so reducing Europe's share of the world's population to 7%. In addition, Europe's demographic make-up is going through dramatic changes. These trends will bring new challenges for Europe in terms of competitiveness on the global market and the viability of its existing social security systems.
2. The Parliamentary Assembly recalls its two recent debates on policy measures that influence population trends and on the demographic challenges for social cohesion. It reasserts its support for the recommendations adopted after these debates ([Recommendation 1683 \(2004\)](#) on population trends in Europe and their sensitivity to policy measures, and [Recommendation 1749 \(2006\)](#) and [Resolution 1502 \(2006\)](#) on demographic challenges for social cohesion).
3. The Assembly regrets the discontinuation of the valuable work previously carried out by the European Population Committee. It remains convinced that population- and migration-related issues merit continued intergovernmental attention by the Council of Europe.
4. Population decline, ageing of the population and migration are closely interlinked and need to be looked at together, to assess the future of Europe's population as well as its productivity needs. Fertility, ageing and migration need to be managed through comprehensive policies that are capable of adapting to new demographic realities.
5. The most essential question for European population management today is how to achieve an increase in both fertility and domestic labour force participation, with a view to boosting Europe's productivity and maintaining the efficiency of social protection systems, especially retirement systems. The Assembly believes that European policy makers, businesses and citizens need to combine their efforts to rethink the organisation of the entire life-course perspective of work, parenthood and retirement.
6. Increased immigration is another way to help mitigate the effects of the falling population in the medium term. Currently immigration is the principal reason for positive population growth in several European countries and immigration needs are projected to grow once the economy recovers. Nevertheless, the Assembly is convinced that immigration will not be an adequate instrument on its own – nor is it a desirable policy option – to compensate for population “greying”, and it is no substitute for economic reforms.
7. The Assembly believes that, whereas migration has brought diversity and dynamism to European societies, future movements need to be better managed. These need to be linked to specific demands of the economy, based on a realistic assessment of labour-market needs, as well as implementation procedures to ensure that migration continues to meet these demands while respecting developing needs of countries of origin.

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1. *Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 12 November 2010 (see [Doc. 12429](#), report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, rapporteur: Mrs Hajibayli).*



8. The main challenges to realising the potential of immigration are linked to irregular migration and the integration of migrants and their descendants into European societies. Both are linked to human rights issues, as well as to a danger for European societies of the emergence of a new underclass. Therefore, the Assembly sees targeted migration and opportunities for legal employment as the desired direction for managing migration in the future.

9. The Assembly is convinced that, whereas temporary and circular migration programmes bring more benefits for the countries of origin, as they reduce the impact of the brain drain, maximise remittances and encourage knowledge and technology transfers, many labour needs in the Council of Europe member states will be long term in nature, with job-specific skills that take time to acquire. Demographic and migration-related issues would therefore need to be looked at from both mid- and long-term perspectives.

10. In the light of the above, the Assembly urges member states to combine the following broad policy measures, if they have not already done so:

10.1. with regard to increasing birth rates:

10.1.1. enable individuals and couples to exercise their right to decide freely and responsibly the number of their children and the interval between them;

10.1.2. make it easier for women to combine family and professional life, namely through availability of child care, flexible working hours, teleworking, paternal leave, etc.;

10.1.3. make it easier for young people to start work and found families, for example by promoting a more child- and family-friendly environment in all spheres of society, particularly in urban areas, including housing, child-care programmes, part-time and flexi-time work, fiscal policies and recreational facilities;

10.1.4. develop public-health measures aimed at reducing involuntary infertility;

10.2. with regard to population ageing and with a view to increased labour force participation:

10.2.1. facilitate legal employment through such measures as reducing the cost of employment, liberalising labour codes and removing unnecessary costs linked to termination of employment;

10.2.2. further encourage employment of women through incentives that facilitate combining family and professional life;

10.2.3. introduce necessary legislative changes to gradually increase the retirement age;

10.2.4. promote active ageing by giving those who are still in good health and willing to work the chance to work longer, and by focusing more on the number of years worked rather than age for retirement;

10.2.5. devise a wide range of policies to enable people to work longer in healthy conditions, including by promoting possibilities for lifelong training and retraining;

10.2.6. develop atypical forms of employment for those who cannot or do not want to work full-time;

10.3. with regard to migration:

10.3.1. put in place mechanisms to identify and monitor domestic labour shortages at national level and keep legal avenues open for the entry of immigrants to satisfy these shortages;

10.3.2. communicate publicly the need for continued and possibly even increased immigration across the full range of skilled and unskilled labour, while at the same time ensuring that appropriate policies for the management of migration and integration of immigrants are in place; in particular, develop strategies for attracting migrants with the sought-after profile;

10.3.3. in countries of net emigration, capitalise on the domestic sources of labour and retain top talent by improving academic excellence, introducing salary incentives and possibilities for training and retraining;

10.3.4. develop official means of recruiting migrants so as to reduce the incentive for employers to hire them through the informal labour market, and to prevent trafficking and exploitation of migrants; consider introducing job-search visas as an appropriate recruitment avenue for certain profiles;

10.3.5. look for opportunities to redirect irregular migration and illegal employment into legal channels. Such a system needs to apply to all skill levels, be long term in nature and incorporate incentives for both employers and immigrants to follow the rules;

10.3.6. foster successful integration of migrants and their families, in particular those coming from non-European countries, into their new European host societies; in particular, address the issues of education among immigrants and their children, remedy the problems associated with their geographical concentration and social isolation and help second-generation immigrants to overcome the difficulties they face in entering the labour market;

10.3.7. pay greater attention to having a balanced public debate on immigration that avoids language that justifies or even reinforces discriminatory attitudes against migrants.

11. The Assembly notes that many of these measures are already part of the European Union agenda. It commends the latter for its recently adopted Stockholm Programme and Action Plan, which recognise the valuable role that immigration plays in addressing the Union's demographic challenges and in securing the European Union's strong economic performance over the long term. Considering that European Union policies have a great impact on candidate countries or non-European Union member states of the Council of Europe, the Assembly further encourages the European Union to:

11.1. aim to introduce a genuinely unified admission system for migrants by re-examining the idea of the "Blue Card" system initially proposed in 2001;

11.2. carry out an in-depth study of Europe's labour needs in the short, medium and long term;

11.3. further develop mobility partnerships with relevant member states of the Council of Europe through the Eastern Partnership Programme;

11.4. consider, as a matter of utmost urgency, options for the regularisation of the situation of the millions of irregular migrants who are employed in underemployed sectors.

12. The Assembly also calls on the specialised international organisations to carry out further studies that would incorporate comprehensive data on demographic and migration trends in Europe. Such data will help counteract populist or xenophobic reactions, and help governments to take a more realistic and comprehensive approach when defining national policies.