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Educational and cultural networks of communities living abroad

Committee Opinion[1]
Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons
Rapporteur: Mr Thierry MARIANI, France, Group of the European People's Party

A. Conclusions of the committee

1. The Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons congratulates the rapporteur of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, Mr Pierre-Yves Le Borgn', on his report, which highlights the value of educational and cultural networks created by diasporas in their host communities, while pointing to the lack of recognition of their potential and the obstacles to their development

2. In order to reinforce the recommendations contained in the draft resolution, the committee proposes three amendments, which serve to further stress the importance of diaspora networks in Europe and the need for their integration into host societies, in order for them to participate in finding collective solutions to contemporary challenges.

B. Proposed amendments

Amendment A (to the draft resolution)

At the end of paragraph 5.1.3, add the following words:

", including social media platforms;"

Amendment B (to the draft resolution)

After paragraph 5.1.3, add the following paragraph:

"encourage the media to convey the positive role of educational and cultural networks of communities living abroad;"

Amendment C (to the draft resolution)

At the end of paragraph 5.3.1, add the following words:

", as already recommended in Assembly Resolution 2043 (2015) on democratic participation for migrant diasporas;"

1. Reference to committee: Doc.13404, Reference 4028 of 7 March 2014. Reporting committee: Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, see Doc.14069. Opinion approved by the committee on 3 June 2016.

C. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Thierry Mariani, rapporteur for opinion

1. The Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons supports the report prepared by the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media and congratulates its rapporteur, Mr Pierre-Yves Le Borgn', on bringing once again the Parliamentary Assembly's attention to the importance of diaspora communities, this time from a cultural and educational perspective.

2. As is rightly recalled in the report by Mr Le Borgn', the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons has regularly addressed the issue of migrant diasporas, in particular in the recent report by Mr Andrea Rigoni on "Democratic participation for migrant diasporas" (Doc. 13648).

3. Mr Le Borgn's report covers two very important fields of diaspora networking: education and culture. These areas are particularly important in the context of the current migration crisis. The involvement of diaspora communities in framing and implementing migration-related policies must become a priority for our governments.

4. Like any other social group, diaspora communities and their associations and networks may be targeted and manipulated by extremist groups. At the same time, these associations can be important partners of local communities and governmental organisations in fighting radicalisation which leads to violent extremism. This is part of their role in promoting integration of migrant communities in the host countries, a role that should be promoted and supported. Regarding the establishment of platforms at national and local level involving diaspora organisations in the development and implementation of integration strategies, one should not forget social media networks, which have recently started to be actively used by migrants. Since communication between people has become easier and less expensive through social media, and more frequent and accessible worldwide, it has facilitated the contacts between diaspora members and their families and relatives in the countries of origin.

5. Social media are used to provide information for migrants, which can facilitate their integration in host countries and provide information on the labour market, migration procedures and legal requirements. In some cases, the diaspora communities raise money through social media for different causes. Therefore, I would like to stress the role of social media in changing the culture of communication within diaspora networks and in facilitating the integration of migrants in general.

6. With regard to the role of the media in general, the committee wishes to emphasise the role of diaspora communities in countering the binary stereotypes of migrants as either "victims" or "criminals", and encourage the television, newspapers and electronic media to portray diaspora associations' positive role as a cultural, economic and political bridge between the country of residence and the country of origin.

7. The committee also welcomes the reference in the draft resolution to the recommendation in Mr Rigoni's report and in Resolution 2043 (2015) on democratic participation for migrant diasporas, regarding the creation of a parliamentary network on diaspora policies, and reiterates that it is very important to support this initiative at the institutional level.