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Migration as an opportunity for European development

Reply to Recommendation¹: Recommendation 2109 (2017)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has examined Parliamentary Assembly [Recommendation 2108 \(2017\)](#) on “A comprehensive humanitarian and political response to the migration and refugee crisis and the continuing flows into Europe” and [Recommendation 2109 \(2017\)](#) on “Migration as an opportunity for European development”. Given the fact that both recommendations refer to the future activities of the Organisation in the field of migration, and more specifically the possible creation of bodies or committees to assist in that work, the Committee of Ministers has chosen to provide a joint reply.

2. With respect to Parliamentary Assembly [Recommendation 2108 \(2017\)](#) on “A comprehensive humanitarian and political response to the migration and refugee crisis and the continuing flows into Europe”, the Committee of Ministers has taken note of the Assembly’s view that the Organisation would benefit from “*a common platform for exchange, experience sharing and policy making among member States, as well as a solid basis for directing the Council of Europe’s activities*” and the call for a steering committee on migrants and refugees.

3. It has also taken note of the proposal in Parliamentary Assembly [Recommendation 2109 \(2017\)](#) “Migration as an opportunity for European development” that “*the Committee of Ministers consider the feasibility of creating, possibly as a enlarged partial agreement in co-operation with the European Union, a European migration and intercultural development observatory, which would assist Council of Europe member States in the development of strategies, legal frameworks, action plans and specific projects in the field of migration*”.

4. The Committee of Ministers welcomes the extensive work that is carried out by the Assembly in the field of migration and would also draw the attention of member States to the various resolutions mentioned in the above recommendations which contain valuable suggestions for member States. It will bear the Assembly’s above-mentioned recommendations on the creation of a platform for exchange on migration, of a steering committee and an observatory in mind, although it does not envisage taking such steps in the present context.

5. Ensuring the implementation of relevant commitments under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), whilst managing overwhelming numbers of refugees and migrants, represents today a significant challenge for all member States of the Council of Europe. However, the Assembly will be aware that the Council of Europe is among many other organisations and institutions working in the field of migration. Its activities are therefore focused on priority areas which fall within its area of competence, where it can bring of real added value and which do not unnecessarily duplicate the work being carried out by other bodies.

6. In this context, for the Programme and Budget for 2018-2019, the Council of Europe’s work regarding migrants and refugees will continue to be mainstreamed in activities under the operational pillars where relevant. This work is co-ordinated by the Special Representative of the Secretary General on migration and refugees (SRSG), who is also responsible for gathering information on the fundamental rights of migrants and

1. Joint Reply to Recommendations [2108 \(2017\)](#) and [2109 \(2017\)](#), adopted at the 1302bis meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies (13 December 2017).



refugees in Europe, including through fact-finding missions, and making proposals for action. This is done in liaison with international partners such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organisation for Migration, UNICEF, the EU and FRONTEX. The SRSG also promotes the sharing of best practices and makes recommendations, where appropriate, for improving the conditions of migrants and refugees, in line with Council of Europe standards.

7. During the next biennium, special focus will be put on children and unaccompanied minors through the implementation of the actions foreseen in the Action Plan on protecting refugee and migrant children (2017-2019). In this respect, member States will be assisted in providing effective responses to challenges relating to the protection of refugee and migrant children's rights on the basis of the Council of Europe's standards and of recommendations of the various mechanisms of the Organisation as well as in developing human rights' compatible integration policies of refugees and migrants.

8. Finally, the Council of Europe Action Plan on Building Inclusive Societies (2016-2019), which aims to support member States in managing Europe's diversity, is a further contribution in assisting in the integration of refugees and migrants. It focuses more particularly on education, combating intolerance and anti-discrimination and on support for effective integration policies. The implementation of this action plan will continue in the coming on biennium, with activities streamlined across the sectors concerned, including for instance on the recognition of qualifications and the linguistic integration of adult migrants, on fighting stereotypes, promoting diversity in media and stimulating migrant entrepreneurship. The action plan relates to all levels of governance, in particular the local level, with the involvement of the Intercultural Cities (ICC) network.