Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 2388 (2021)[1]

For a European policy on diasporas

Parliamentary Assembly

1. An increasing number of European States recognise the positive impact of diaspora communities on European society, and therefore promote their involvement in political processes by developing national policies to encourage their participation and by adopting governmental strategies to implement these policies.

2. Diaspora members make a positive contribution to the development of European countries and of their home countries, including by enriching host countries' cultural diversity and building dynamic and constructive relations with their countries of origin for the purposes of economic and cultural exchange and co-development. They also facilitate the integration of, and provide support to, newly arrived migrants in terms of their economic, political, legal and cultural interests. They also help new arrivals to cope with psychological factors relating to language barriers, the loss of their usual social networks, legal uncertainty and inequality of access to social welfare.

3. Despite this positive impact, diaspora communities are sometimes seen to be manipulated by their countries of origin or non-state actors for political or other purposes. They can also find themselves labelled as "dangerous". Intolerance, racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and antisemitism are constant challenges, which hold them back from making positive contributions to the societies in which they live. These challenges pose an obstacle to their integration and inclusion in host countries. It is thus important to counter erroneous perceptions and valorise the advantages that different diasporas bring to our societies as well as to prevent the manifestation of any forms of discrimination against diasporas.

4. The Parliamentary Assembly reaffirmed its determination to tackle diaspora-related issues in a number of resolutions and recommendations, most recently in its Resolution 1696 (2009) and Recommendation 1890 (2009) "Engaging European diasporas: the need for governmental and intergovernmental responses" and in Resolution 2043 (2015) "Democratic participation for migrant diasporas", as well as by setting up a sub-committee on diasporas and integration and the Parliamentary Network on Diaspora Policies, which was tasked with making specific recommendations in this area. The conclusions drawn from the activities of the parliamentary network underline the urgent need to develop a European strategy on diasporas.

5. Therefore, the Assembly encourages member States to take concrete action at national, regional and international levels to promote diaspora engagement policies and create a positive environment for the fulfilment of the potential of diasporas. This should be done by:

5.1. collecting and processing data and information concerning their nationals living abroad in order to facilitate the development of diaspora-related policies, while respecting data protection principles;

5.2. creating national mechanisms and institutions dedicated to diasporas to ensure better co-operation and the involvement of diasporas in society. These mechanisms should involve countries' representations abroad;

5.3. drawing up road maps to support the engagement of diaspora networks and associations and organise regular formal and informal meetings with their representatives, including by using the opportunities provided by new information technologies;

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1. *Assembly debate* on 24 June 2021 (21st sitting) (see Doc. 15250, report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, rapporteur: Mr Paulo Pisco). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 24 June 2021 (21st sitting).
See also Recommendation 2207 (2021).

5.4. signing bilateral agreements supporting the integration process for migrants, which facilitate the study of the language, culture and legal procedures in host countries;

5.5. engaging with diaspora community leaders and representatives to detect and prevent incidences of intolerance, racism, xenophobia and other forms of anti-migrant discrimination, and support joint activities promoting mutual respect and social cohesion;

5.6. involving diaspora members in policy making, in particular concerning questions of citizenship, as well as those concerning their economic, social and cultural rights;

5.7. organising parliamentary hearings on diaspora-related topics to promote the exchange of experiences and good practices;

5.8. appointing a special diplomatic counsellor on diasporas and citizens abroad in diplomatic representations, where relevant, empowered to build confidence and engage with diasporas by providing specific services and useful information, as well as targeted co-operation.

6. The Assembly underlines the importance of ensuring respect for the political, social, economic and cultural rights of diaspora members, and supporting them to be active and productive members of their communities.

7. The Assembly is convinced that diaspora policies across member States should focus on promoting the political integration of diaspora communities into their host countries, while also encouraging and facilitating ongoing engagement with their countries of origin. When diaspora communities participate in political processes, they become active members of society, thus making it harder for extremist and populist groups to turn them into scapegoats by taking advantage of their political exclusion. Member States should adapt legislation, standards and procedures, as far as possible, to enable diaspora communities to exercise their right to democratic participation. Members States should do this by:

7.1. ratifying, if they have not already done so, the Council of Europe's Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local level (ETS No. 144) and aligning national electoral laws regarding the participation of diaspora communities with the standards set out in the convention;

7.2. working to promote political participation and dual citizenship to the greatest possible extent. In this regard, the organisation of multistakeholder consultations at national level between diaspora associations, minority groups, business leaders, government officials and other relevant actors, should be promoted to inform State policies on political participation and citizenship and disseminate good practice;

7.3. simplifying administrative requirements for diaspora members to exercise their right to political participation, in particular by creating diaspora focal points in national electoral commissions;

7.4. promoting electronic and postal voting across member States to facilitate the democratic engagement of diaspora members who would otherwise be required to travel to their countries of origin to vote;

7.5. granting to diaspora members the right to elect their representatives to parliament in their countries of origin;

7.6. supporting diaspora associations in promoting the political participation of their community members in host countries, and empowering eligible members of their communities to run for election.

8. The Assembly believes that the involvement of diasporas in the economies of countries of origin can help in building strong, successful and cohesive societies. Member States should encourage actions that maximise the positive contributions of diaspora communities in national and local development and poverty reduction strategies in countries of origin, with a focus on supporting investment, entrepreneurship, knowledge transfer, innovation and philanthropy. This should be done by:

8.1. involving representatives of diasporas in the preparation of annual development strategies and implementation mechanisms;

8.2. creating incentives for returning diaspora members, by ensuring that they can benefit from taxation, retirement and other economic advantages;

8.3. promoting and fostering diaspora members' entrepreneurship through access to investment information, along with clear customs and import incentives;

8.4. facilitating the recognition of diaspora members' diplomas, education certificates and professional qualifications obtained abroad;

8.5. adopting legislation and policies facilitating and regulating remittance transfers, using modern technologies and avoiding double taxation;

8.6. supporting the formation of diaspora business networks through trade fairs and business summits, training programmes on international trade regulations and procedures for diaspora-owned businesses;

8.7. creating one-stop shops to help diaspora investors identify opportunities that are in line with the government development policies for the private sector, accompany diaspora investors through the necessary administrative procedures and help to address any complaints and mediate conflicts.

9. Recalling Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on intercultural integration, which points to the value of diversity as a resource for societies, the Assembly underlines that diasporas, representing various cultures and religions, play a pivotal role in helping migrants integrate by acting as a bridge to help newcomers understand the customs, codes and values in the host countries. Local authorities, from both the countries of origin and host countries, have a key role in engaging and co-operating with diaspora members in order to devise and implement measures aimed at promoting inclusion, in particular of new migrants, by:

9.1. involving diaspora members in local policy debates and decision making;

9.2. engaging diaspora members in local development processes, *inter alia*, in the fields of business, tourism, education and culture;

9.3. supporting diaspora initiatives in the organisation of cultural and social events in the spirit of intercultural exchange and co-creation;

9.4. establishing and ensuring the effectiveness of cross-border, interterritorial and city-to-city co-operation and co-development agreements;

9.5. holding regular training and information sessions on the political systems of their host country and their right to democratic participation, as electors and potential political candidates;

9.6. supporting, with information and education, the access of diaspora members to public-sector jobs, including in expert and management positions;

9.7. simplifying administrative obligations for diaspora associations, including their registration process, and allocating public space and access to public and international funding;

9.8. developing effective partnerships with diaspora organisations to promote social inclusion and integration of newly arrived migrants in their communities as well as by creating strong connections of mutual respect and trust with host societies;

9.9. supporting policies promoting the study of the language of the host country, as well as the mother tongue of the diaspora.

10. The Assembly considers that the creation of strategic partnerships between States, civil society, the private sector and international organisations to create a framework for the empowerment of diasporas should be the primary objective in the development of a European diaspora policy. Therefore, it encourages member States to provide the necessary support to diaspora associations by:

10.1. promoting leadership among diaspora members through the organisation of training and educational programmes, which should also enable strong connections between diasporas and host communities;

10.2. supporting multistakeholder platforms and civil society coalitions, which are essential for:

10.2.1. facilitating greater dialogue and consultation between the host society and diaspora associations;

10.2.2. co-ordinating technical assistance and capacity building;

10.2.3. implementing special grant programmes for projects promoting links between host society organisations and diaspora associations and encouraging their interaction;

10.2.4. promoting social media platforms to connect with diaspora populations, both in countries of origin and host countries, and organising open online platforms for all diaspora-related projects and initiatives;

10.2.5. encouraging media coverage of the activities of diasporas and promoting a positive image of diasporas, as well as knowledge and understanding of the host society among the members of a diaspora;

10.2.6. facilitating better understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity that diaspora and migrant communities bring, through supporting intercultural activities in the fields of sport, music, arts, culinary festivals and other social events.

11. The Assembly invites international organisations, in particular the Council of Europe, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the European Union and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), to work closely together to develop co-operation programmes involving, *inter alia*, diaspora associations.