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Restricting citizenship rules: social cohesion and human rights at stake

Motion for a resolution

tabled by Lord Michael GERMAN and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

Some member States are adopting stricter requirements for migrants and individuals benefiting from international protection seeking long-term residency and citizenship.

Governments are implementing policies to regain control over immigration movements, processes, including routes to citizenship. These pathways are frequently characterised as being too permissive – that individuals are being allowed into the community without the necessary identification with the core values of the host society. This trend is viewed by some as a threat to social cohesion and one which alters the fundamental contract between the State and its people.

An important question is whether this policy response is truly effective and if it aligns with a human rights approach.

There are significant risks: they may exclude entire groups of applicants from eventual citizenship – even if those individuals contribute to society; they risk disenfranchising some people from rights already established in international law; they risk denying access to citizenship to people, including children, who may become stateless.

The sovereign right of States to regulate access to citizenship is not in question. But setting conditions for access is fundamentally different from creating deliberate barriers to that access.

There are legitimate concerns regarding social cohesion and the successful inclusion of all members of society. The Council of Europe is the appropriate and natural forum for its member States to discuss these important matters. In this endeavour, they should rely on its established standards and tools, including: the European Convention on Nationality (ETS No. 166); the Committee of Ministers' Recommendations concerning the nationality of children, focusing on avoiding and reducing statelessness; the Organisation's existing programmes on inclusion and integration.

The Parliamentary Assembly should explore appropriate human rights-based responses that are consistent with member States' existing obligations, thereby ensuring that parliamentary work is meaningfully informed.

Signed (see overleaf)



Signed¹:

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