Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 865 (1979)[1]

Implications of demographic change for social and migration policy

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Observing the profound changes in the population structure of European states which have taken place in the last quarter of a century ;

2. Noting that, while fertility rates have in recent years remained high in some member countries, they have declined sharply in nearly all others, so that the present level of fertility in many of them will not be enough to ensure the maintenance of population on the present level ;

3. Considering that emigration from certain countries and declining fertility in others have affected the balance between the active and inactive groups in the population in several immigration and emigration countries alike ;

4. Considering the implications that these developments have on social, economic and cultural relations within the countries concerned ;

5. Noting that some countries have attempted in the past to meet the demand for labour by admitting migrants, particularly in the most active age groups, leading to large-scale immigration, which would not necessarily be the best solution for the future ;

6. Stressing the importance of facilitating the integration of the immigrant population in the society of the host country, while preserving its original identity, by granting the same rights and opportunities as the members of the host community enjoy, subject to normal national qualifying periods, and allowing participation in community life, as urged in Recommendation 799 (1977) on the political rights and position of aliens,

7. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers invite the governments of all member states, and in particular those with abnormally high or abnormally low fertility rates :

7.1. to establish as necessary an effective system to identify population change at national level ;

7.2. to pursue a conscious population policy, and ensure inter alia that public opinion is made aware of the present demographic situation and its implications ;

7.3. to create in countries with abnormally low birth and fertility rates a climate more favourable to fertility, in particular by adopting measures in the field of family policy such as the progressive adjustment of fiscal and social security advantages in favour of households with children, and by ensuring that other facilities, such as housing, offer adequate provision for families ;

7.4. to reduce in such cases the factors which may operate against fertility, for example by ensuring that women should not be handicapped in their professional lives by childbearing, and by making it less difficult for parents to combine their family responsibilities with a full participation in the labour market ;

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1. Assembly debate on 11 May 1979 (8th Sitting) (see Doc. 4262, report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography). Text adopted by the Assembly on 11 May 1979 (8th Sitting).

7.5. to encourage in all countries, particularly those with high fertility rates, the free flow of information on family planning methods- with due regard for personal religious beliefs- so as to ensure that couples have the effective right to choose freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children ;

7.6. to avoid measures dictated by short-term considerations of an essentially irreversible character, which may so affect the limits of working life as to lead in the long term to an unacceptable reduction of the working population ;

7.7. to ensure that pay, working conditions and social status of all employment is brought to a level acceptable to migrant and national workers alike ;

8. Further recommends that the Committee of Ministers establish, in close co-operation with member countries, an effective mechanism for monitoring population change in Europe and investigating the mechanisms involved, so as to ensure that its implications throughout the fields of social and economic policy are taken into account by those responsible for formulating decisions in these areas.