



Recommendation 1261 (1995)¹

Situation of immigrant women in Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Women make up almost half the immigrant population in Europe. The integration policies adopted by the host countries do not appear to be sufficiently adapted to the specific needs and problems of this group.
2. The Assembly recalls its [Resolution 1018 \(1994\)](#) and its [Recommendation 1229 \(1994\)](#) on equality of rights between men and women, as well as the declaration on equality of women and men adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 16 November 1988, according to which "sex-related discrimination in the political, economic, social, educational, cultural and any other fields constitutes impediments to the recognition, enjoyment and exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms". Immigrant women - no more than any other category of women - cannot be deprived of these rights and principles.
3. The Assembly is concerned by the situation of immigrant women, a large number of whom live on the margins of society and are confronted by more serious difficulties than those facing immigrant men. When they are married, they are often confined to the home doing housework and isolated from the local community, without real opportunities to learn the language of the host country, thus further aggravating their isolation. When they are employed, they are often doing menial jobs uncondusive to greater autonomy or to their integration into the host society.
4. The situation of immigrant women often depends on the legal status of their husband or father and under existing policies they are considered to be dependents.
5. Owing to the difficulties that migrant women experience in obtaining a work permit, and when they lose their legal status as a result of divorce or the death of a husband, many of them are obliged to accept illegal work, which deprives them of adequate social protection and of fair remuneration.
6. Increasingly, immigrant women are organising and setting up associations with a view to defending their legitimate rights. Although these bodies do not lack ideas for improving the situation of women, they are in need of support, especially of a financial nature, for carrying out analyses and surveys to back up their demands to the authorities of the host country.
7. The Assembly considers that the member states of the Council of Europe must do everything possible to eliminate the injustice and discrimination suffered by immigrant women and adopt measures aimed at their harmonious integration into society.
8. Consequently, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:
 - 8.1. examine the effect of national laws on the legal status of immigrant women with a view to the elimination of all discrimination against them and to harmonisation in this field;
 - 8.2. study the question of obstacles to the acquisition of the nationality of the country of residence and to the recognition of dual citizenship allowing immigrant women to maintain ties with their society of origin while integrating into the host society;
 - 8.3. examine the question of the application of criteria specific to women in the refugee status determination procedure of the member states;

1. See [Doc. 7251](#), report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography, rapporteuse: Ms Guirado. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 15 March 1995.



- 8.4. foster the setting up of a European system for the collection of data relating to the situation of immigrant women.
9. The Assembly also recommends that the Committee of Ministers invite member states:
 - 9.1. to ensure equality of treatment for immigrant women before the law and in practice;
 - 9.2. to recognise the right to family reunion for immigrant women and men without distinction;
 - 9.3. to adopt legislation giving immigrant women an independent and autonomous right of residence (not tied to the residence status of their husband);
 - 9.4. to grant immigrant women the right to a work permit independently of their family situation;
 - 9.5. to give particular attention to the prevention and repression of violent or degrading customs inflicted on immigrant women or affecting their physical integrity;
 - 9.6. to develop vocational training schemes adapted to the situation and culture of immigrant women;
 - 9.7. to develop specific information programmes for immigrant women covering:
 - a. their rights;
 - b. the educational, vocational training and employment opportunities open to them in the host country;
 - 9.8. to ensure that the social services recruit and train their staff from amongst immigrant women, among others;
 - 9.9. to encourage the participation of immigrant women in social and political life, to involve them in the taking of decisions concerning them and to support associations working towards this;
 - 9.10. to help associations of immigrant women to form networks by making financial means and premises available and through the training of staff from the community of immigrant women;
 - 9.11. to ratify, if this has not already been done, the European Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level, the European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers, the United Nations International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families and the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
 - 9.12. in determining refugee status, to take account of persecution on the basis of gender and of the specific threat to women represented by religious extremism;
 - 9.13. to apply in their refugee policies the principles laid down in Conclusions No. 64 (1990) on refugee women and international protection adopted by the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR);
 - 9.14. to encourage research on the situation of immigrant women.