



Resolution 1696 (2009)¹

Final version

Engaging European diasporas: the need for governmental and intergovernmental responses

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Migration from other continents and from eastern to western Europe has long existed and will continue to spread as long as disparities persist between living standards, incomes and political situations. However, policies to manage the many challenges and opportunities that emerge with these movements have not kept pace with the development of this phenomenon.
2. The Parliamentary Assembly has been engaged in dealing with the issue of Europeans living abroad and their links to their homelands for the last fifteen years. It regrets that in the particular aspect of the establishment of links with European diaspora communities, policy making has been lacking.
3. There is nevertheless a growing understanding in Europe that labour mobility, if well managed, can be advantageous both for destination countries and countries of origin. How best to manage mobility, multiple identities and diversity in a way that can maximise engagement of diasporas both in countries of origin and host countries is a challenge that governments need to tackle today.
4. The Assembly considers it essential to strike and maintain a proper balance between the process of integration in the host societies and the links with the country of origin. It is convinced that seeing migrants as political actors and not only as workers or economic actors enhances the recognition of their capacity in the promotion and transference of democratic values. The right to vote and be elected in host countries and the opportunity to take part in democratically governed European non-governmental organisations can enable diasporas to endorse an accountable and democratic system of governance in their home countries. Policies that grant migrants rights and obligations arising from their status as citizens or residents in both countries should therefore be encouraged.
5. The Assembly regrets that, notwithstanding its long-standing calls to revise the existing models of relations between expatriates and their countries of origin, relations between member states of the Council of Europe and their diasporas are far from being harmonised. Many member states from central and eastern Europe are only beginning to recognise the potential development and other benefits of engaging their diasporas in a more institutionalised manner, especially in the context of the current global economic crisis.
6. The Assembly reiterates that it is in the interest of member states to ensure that their diasporas continue to actively exercise the rights linked to their nationality and contribute in a variety of ways to the political, economic, social and cultural development of their countries of origin. It is convinced that globalisation and growing migration may have an impact on host countries in many positive ways by contributing to building diverse, tolerant and multicultural societies.
7. The Assembly acknowledges that states have particular responsibilities towards their expatriate communities where such communities form a significant national minority in another state. However, it disapproves of all forms of political manipulation of diaspora communities, including as a means of promoting

1. *Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 20 November 2009 (see [Doc. 12076](#), report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population, rapporteur: Mrs Bilozir). See also [Recommendation 1890 \(2009\)](#).*



expansionist policies. For example, the Assembly maintains that any large-scale “passportisation” should be regulated by bilateral agreements between the states concerned and must abide by the principles of international law.

8. In the light of the above, the Assembly calls on the member states of the Council of Europe to focus on elaborating migration policies that are comprehensive and regard diasporas as vectors of development, to promote an institutional role for diasporas through dialogue and regular consultation and to offer policy incentives to diaspora communities or representatives willing to engage in homeland development.

9. In particular, the Assembly encourages member states, as countries of origin, to adopt the following policy incentives:

9.1. civil and political incentives:

9.1.1. develop institutions and elaborate policies for maximum harmonisation of the political, economic, social and cultural rights of diasporas with those of the native population;

9.1.2. ease the acquisition or maintenance of voting rights by offering out-of-country voting at national elections;

9.1.3. involve diasporas in policy making, in particular concerning the issues of nationality and citizenship, as well as political, economic, social and cultural rights;

9.1.4. gather information on nationals living abroad and allow them to have their own representation in domestic politics, through the creation of ministries of representation for diasporas;

9.1.5. use the channel of embassies and consulates abroad to build confidence with diasporas through the provision of specific services and useful information;

9.1.6. promote diaspora networks and associations by drawing up a road map for supporting their establishment, and discuss the ways in which home and host countries can become active partners with diaspora networks;

9.2. fostering return:

9.2.1. put in place policies to encourage permanent or temporary return and promote “brain gain”;

9.2.2. create all necessary conditions for diasporas willing to return to their home countries to foster adaptation and ensure full enjoyment of their tax, retirement and other economic benefits;

9.2.3. facilitate the movement of diasporas (multiple-entry visas, long-term residence permits, entry concessions for diasporas with host country nationality);

9.3. encourage remittance flows through proactive legislative and regulatory policies, which avoid the application of double taxation, create proper legal and regulatory frameworks allowing effective use to be made of remittances in various investment areas and link remittances to other financial services (savings accounts, loans, social insurance, etc.);

9.4. promote diasporas’ entrepreneurship through transparent customs and import incentives, access to special economic zones and to foreign currency accounts, and inform them about investment opportunities;

9.5. develop policies for bona fide recognition of diplomas and certificates obtained outside the country of origin.

10. The Assembly encourages member states, as countries of destination, to:

10.1. review migration policies with a view to according migrants greater rights and obligations, harmonising as much as possible the rights of non-citizen diasporas with those of citizens in the host countries;

10.2. consider the possibility of granting migrant workers the right to vote and to stand in local and regional elections after a residence period of five years;

10.3. adopt a more flexible legal framework that offers regular migrants the possibility of unrestricted movement between country of origin and destination country, while preserving their immigrant status in the destination country;

10.4. elaborate policies allowing migrants to participate in the development process in countries of origin; promote training and capacity-building programmes, transfer of competence, know-how and flows of foreign capital and conduct development projects coupled with development aid;

10.5. actively involve members of diaspora communities in the elaboration of integration programmes for labour migrants.

11. The Assembly encourages the international community, and in particular the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), to stay actively involved in the issues relating to diasporas and development. In particular, it calls upon relevant partner organisations to:

11.1. clarify the different concepts, classifications and definitions concerning diasporas with a view to harmonising the concept at European level, taking into account the evolving and dynamic nature of the concept of diaspora;

11.2. facilitate collaboration between diaspora organisations, including professional organisations, and other European development non-governmental organisations through incentives such as partnership funds, which could make it possible for the mainstream development agencies and the diasporas to engage with each other;

11.3. encourage collaboration among academic institutions and support international research projects related to diasporas and the migration-development nexus issues.