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For a European policy on diasporas

Report¹

Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons

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Summary

Diasporas and their associations make a positive contribution to the development of countries of residence and countries of origin by enriching cultural diversity and building dynamic and constructive relations for the purposes of economic and cultural exchange and co-development.

This report points out how strengthening diaspora policies represents a decisive opportunity for economic, social and cultural development of both countries of residence and origin, and a greater cohesion and inclusiveness in society.

Countries can benefit greatly from what diasporas can offer if they engage with them, examine and respond to their needs, include them in decision-making and co-operate with them in formulating diaspora-oriented policies.

The recommendations in this report can facilitate the development of such policies and strategies by member States, and these policies can be promoted further by international co-operation on diaspora related issues.

The Council of Europe can play a major role in the process, bringing together the multiple actors that shape national diaspora policies, including parliaments, governments, diaspora associations, NGOs, media and research organisations, and establishing or promoting a European Forum of Diasporas as a platform for international exchanges between diaspora communities.

1. Reference to Committee: [Doc. 14815](#), Reference 4436 of 12 April 2019.



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A. Draft resolution²

1. An increasing number of European States recognise the prominent impact of diaspora communities on European society, and therefore promote their involvement in home policies by developing national policies for engaging diasporas 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. Diaspora members also help new arrivals to cope with psychological factors relating to language barriers, loss of 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 countries of origin or non-State actors for political or other purposes. They can also find themselves labelled as "dangerous". Intolerance, racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism are constant challenges, which hold them back from making positive contributions to the societies in which they live. These challenges pose an obstacle towards their integration and inclusion in host countries. It is thus important to tackle erroneous perceptions and valorise the advantages that different diasporas bring to our societies.
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 fulfillment of the potential of diasporas. This should be done by:
 - 5.1. collecting and processing data and information concerning nationals living abroad in order to facilitate the development of diaspora-related policies, while respecting data protection;
 - 5.2. creating national mechanisms and institutions in charge of diaspora to ensure better co-operation and 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;
 - 5.4. signing bilateral agreements supporting the integration process for migrants, which facilitate the study of the language, culture and legal procedures existing 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 diaspora 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.

2. Draft resolution adopted by the committee on 12 March 2021.

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, making it harder for extremist and populist groups to turn them into scapegoats, 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. Member States should do this by:

7.1. ratifying, if not already done, 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. striving to promote political participation and dual citizenship to the extent possible. In this regard, the organisation of multi-stakeholder consultations at national level between diaspora associations, minority groups, business actors, 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 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, ensuring that they can benefit from taxation, retirement and other economic advantages;

8.3. promoting and fostering diasporas' 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 that target diaspora investors to help them identify opportunities that are in line with the government private sector development policies, and 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 pointing to the value of diversity as a resource for societies, the Assembly underlines that diasporas, representing various cultures and religions, have 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, both from the countries of origin and host countries, have a key role in engaging and co-operating with diaspora members in devising and implementing 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 field of business, tourism, education, 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 good operation of cross-border, inter-territorial 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 inclusion of diaspora in 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 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.

10. The Assembly considers that the creation of strategic partnerships between States, civil society, private sector and international organisations to create a framework for diaspora's empowerment should be a primary task for 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 diasporas members through the organisation of training and educational programmes which should also enable strong connections between diasporas and host communities;
- 10.2. supporting multi-stakeholder 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. allocating 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 diasporas activities, and promoting a positive image of diaspora, as well as knowledge and understanding of the host society among the 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 sports, 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 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to work closely together to develop co-operation programmes involving, *inter alia*, diaspora associations.

B. Draft recommendation³

1. Referring to its Resolution ... (2021) "For a European policy on diasporas", the Parliamentary Assembly emphasises the importance of providing support to European States in order to develop effective diaspora engagement policies by creating a European institutional and political framework for co-operation between governments and diasporas.

2. The Assembly considers that the Council of Europe could play a major role in formulating a European policy on diasporas, taking into account the work of the Special Representative on Migration and Refugees, and the newly established Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI), and by bringing together the multiple actors that shape national diaspora policies, namely parliaments, governments, diaspora associations, NGOs, media and research institutions. In this context it invites the Committee of Ministers to:

- 2.1. elaborate a White Paper on good practices of diaspora engagement within member States;
- 2.2. design a methodology for mapping diaspora and carrying out an evaluation of diaspora engagement strategies, in the light of Council of Europe standards for integration and inclusion;
- 2.3. establish a European forum of diasporas as a platform for international exchanges between different diaspora communities;
- 2.4. encourage the Congress of Regional and Local Authorities to consider the role of local and regional authorities in engaging and co-operating with diaspora members in devising and implementing measures aimed at promoting integration and avoiding exclusion, xenophobia, radicalisation and extremism.

3. Draft recommendation adopted by the committee on 12 March 2021.

C. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Paulo Pisco, rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. An increasing number of States recognise the role played by diasporas and promote their involvement in home policies by developing national policies for engaging diasporas and by adopting governmental strategies for their implementation.
2. Traditionally, States have pursued two types of policies in relation to their diasporas. Some seek merely to strengthen cultural ties with the community through educational programmes and cultural promotion abroad, without moving towards a genuine inclusion strategy. Others implement measures on political participation, citizenship, identity, and the human capital represented by nationals living abroad, to ensure a genuine bond between them and their country of origin.
3. In a globalised world where migration is constantly on the rise, Europe must promote a streamlining of national diaspora policies, in order to recognise, valorise and dignify its presence either to the countries of origin, either in the host countries. Clearly, thought needs to be given to establishing a common core of practices to be followed by the member States of the Council of Europe when formulating strategies targeting the diasporas in question.
4. This report seeks to draw conclusions from previous resolutions made by the Parliamentary Assembly, pointing out how strengthening diaspora policies represents a decisive opportunity in terms of the economic, social and cultural development of the countries of residence and origin, and a greater cohesion and inclusiveness in society.⁴
5. In the report, I have looked closely at the existing policies in member States, ranking the mechanisms and strategies put in place by States vis-à-vis diasporas. As the factual basis of this report, I have used the replies by the national parliaments of the member States to the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) questionnaire on diaspora related issues. The replies by national parliaments to this questionnaire can be found in document [AS/Mig/Inf\(2021\)02](#).
6. States must create an attractive climate so that these diasporas can contribute to the national interests (of countries of origin and host countries) by safeguarding the position of diasporas in the political decisions that are made. Today, many countries still limit foreign nationals' access to information and maintain legal and administrative barriers to their economic engagement, such as access to employment and property rights. To counter this, interaction between national authorities and diaspora organisations should be strengthened by developing, at European level, various legislative proposals, policy initiatives and administrative measures. Adopting a common policy in this area is imperative in order to capitalise fully on all the opportunities that diasporas bring.
7. A set of concrete recommendations on policy instruments and on improving inter-State co-operation as regards diaspora related policies proposed in this report could be used for the development of a European strategy on diasporas.

2. The Assembly's previous work

8. The Assembly began its work on diaspora issues in 1999, when it adopted [Recommendation 1410 \(1999\)](#) "Links between Europeans living abroad and their countries of origin". The positive role of diasporas has been highlighted in several Assembly reports, resolutions and recommendations, showing that expatriate communities play a crucial role in contributing to the socio-economic development of their countries of origin and host countries, including "Engaging European diasporas: the need for governmental and intergovernmental responses",⁵ "Democratic participation of migrant diasporas",⁶ "Educational and cultural networks of migrant and diaspora communities",⁷ and "Diaspora cultures"⁸ as well as "Integration of migrants in Europe: the need for a proactive, long-term and global policy"⁹ and "Ensuring that migrants are a benefit for European host societies".¹⁰

4. [Res 2175 \(2017\)](#), [Rec 2109 \(2017\)](#).

5. [Res 1696 \(2009\)](#), [Rec 1890 \(2009\)](#).

6. [Res 2043 \(2015\)](#).

7. [Res 2124 \(2016\)](#).

8. [Rec 1688 \(2004\)](#).

9. [Res 2006 \(2014\)](#).

9. Diaspora-related policies differ significantly from country to country. In this respect, the report produced by the Assembly in 2014 on “Democratic participation for migrant diasporas”¹¹ provides a good overview of different practices in member States as regards political participation of diasporas. For example, as regards the right to vote and to stand for election in different types of elections, and the arrangements for voting from abroad, some European countries impose restrictions on their citizens’ right to vote, related to the length of stay abroad or activity performed.¹²

10. These reports remind us that diaspora groups are transnational actors who assist both countries of origin and countries of destination in different ways: building and strengthening peace and development, trade, human rights, or cultural interaction and exchanges of know-how. In addition, diasporas can be key intermediaries in helping migrant workers to become better integrated into their new social environment. Including diasporas in national policies, in the case of both sending and receiving States, does in fact lead, therefore, to economic, social and cultural benefits, as the Assembly has consistently pointed out.

11. The Assembly, and in particular the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, reaffirmed its determination to tackle diaspora-related issues by setting up a Sub-Committee on diasporas and integration, and the Parliamentary Network on Diaspora Policies was tasked with making specific recommendations in this area (see below).

12. In 2009, the Assembly adopted [Resolution 1696 \(2009\)](#) and [Recommendation 1890 \(2009\)](#) “Engaging European Diasporas: the need for governmental and intergovernmental responses”. The Recommendation invited the Committee of Ministers “to give further consideration to the establishment, under the auspices of the Council of Europe, of a Council of Europeans abroad, a body representing European Diasporas at the pan-European level, which could organise a forum of Europeans abroad at regular intervals”. Subsequently, the Assembly adopted [Resolution 2043 \(2015\)](#) “Democratic participation for migrant diasporas”. The result of almost 20 years’ work of the Assembly on diaspora issues thus initiated the establishment of the Parliamentary Network for Diaspora Policies in 2017.

2.1. Parliamentary Network on Diaspora Policies

13. While the Council of Europe is clearly relevant for diasporas in Europe, it has never had the issues of diaspora as a particular focus. The Parliamentary Network on Diaspora Policies has been a timely project to enable representatives from different countries to come together and exchange ideas and examples of best practices in this area. It brings together more than 200 members, of which 110 are MPs (members of national parliaments and/or Assembly members) from 25 countries and 61 representatives of diaspora associations from 26 countries.

14. The network mainly focused its work towards exchanges and co-operation with members of parliaments, diaspora associations, and State institutions from the countries of origin and host countries of migrants, with the aim of building inclusive societies through the introduction and implementation of national diaspora policies.

15. Since the Launching Conference of the Parliamentary Network on Diaspora Policies in 2017 in Lisbon, the Network met at two annual forums and five conferences.

16. Four major issues were dealt with by the Network in depth since its creation:

- The question of how diasporas can contribute to the fight against extremism and radicalisation; a sensitive problem, which concerns not only migrants, but also the population of host countries;
- The question of how diasporas can become economic, cultural and social “bridges” between countries of origin and countries of destination and hence contribute to development;
- The question of how public authorities at various levels can (and should) co-operate with diasporas, in particular in countries of origin, in order to tap into the potential that emigration has for communities of origin;
- The question of how diasporas can contribute to the State-building processes of their countries of origin and host countries, in particular how the State authorities can reduce administrative and bureaucratic barriers and remove legal restrictions to diasporas’ active contribution.

10. [Res 1972 \(2014\)](#).

11. [Res 2043 \(2015\)](#).

12. One such country is Ireland where only people carrying out official missions of a diplomatic or military nature can vote abroad. In the United Kingdom, if you live abroad for more than 15 years, you lose the right to vote.

17. All events brought together parliamentarians, high-level officials, experts, academics, members of diaspora networks and civil society on diverse and contemporary diaspora-related topics.

18. In 2018, the Network created a European Diaspora Prize to reward the most outstanding diaspora association each year, with the best accomplishments in supporting integration in host countries, fostering cultural identity, or developing links with countries of origin. The Platform of Women of the Congolese Diaspora of Belgium was awarded the first European Diaspora Prize in 2019.

19. The conclusions drawn from the activities of the Parliamentary Network underline the urgent need to develop a European strategy on diasporas: the differences in national practices regarding diasporas slow down the process of inclusion in the host countries and inhibit the ability of host States and States of origin to mutually benefit from the diasporas.

3. Diaspora's definition

20. Speaking about a future European diaspora policy, it is important to understand how the term "diaspora" is used in different European countries. The replies to the above mentioned ECPRD questionnaire provide clarification of this question. Many countries do not distinguish between the terms "emigrants" and "diaspora". In some countries, like France, Turkey, Italy and the Russian Federation, the members of diaspora are called "French/Italian/Turkish compatriots living abroad". A legal definition of diaspora is given only in a few countries, including Croatia, Georgia, Portugal, Serbia, the Slovak Republic and Ukraine.

21. Generally speaking, migrant workers, refugees and second and third generation immigrant families are referred to as diaspora communities. The movement of these groups is caused by different factors and challenges with which they are confronted. Yet, the communities remain culturally, socially and linguistically connected, regardless of the reasons of their movement, which is calling us to look at the wide range of changes as well as challenges caused by the wave of migration, refugee flows, emergence of transnational networks and, finally, of diasporic communities.

22. Therefore, for the purpose of this report and summarising different existing definitions, the term "diaspora" is used to define a group of people originated from the same country residing abroad and keeping strong cultural, economic and social links with their country of origin.

4. Diaspora contribution to European societies

23. Diaspora members make a positive contribution to the development of European countries and communities in many ways, including by the promotion and transfer of their cultural and democratic values, norms and practices. They can also facilitate the integration of, and provide support to, newly arrived migrants in their countries of destination by upholding their economic, political, legal and cultural interests, by helping them to cope with psychological factors which relate to language barriers, loss of usual social networks, legal uncertainty and inequality of access to social welfare.

24. It is said, that some diaspora members, especially those originating from conflict areas import these conflicts into their host countries. It should however be stressed that diaspora communities are not homogeneous and often include opposing groups. Some critics supporting the discourse of "failing integration of migrants in Europe" accuse diaspora of contributing to the existence of "parallel societies". Personally, I do not support such accusations, notwithstanding that there will always be members of a community who take a different path. It is a task of the State to develop policies which encourage the social cohesion of each community member and accompany the integration process of each migrant.

25. Diasporas' participation in State-building is a multi-layered matter, involving not only international institutions but also national, regional and local ones.

26. National parliaments have a central role to play in determining diaspora policies in their countries along with numerous international organisations such as the United Nations (UN), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which recognise and support cultural, social and political rights of diaspora groups.

27. The IOM refers to the "3 Es"¹³ to better connect the contribution of transnational communities and diasporas: Engage, Enable and Empower: Engage via outreach in the countries of origin through networks, investors, skilled professionals or academics, and in the host countries through embassies and consulates, migration community associations and social media. Enable by guaranteeing their access to essential public services; by ensuring respect of their social rights in return for their respect of local laws and customs. Certain

policies are promoted by the IOM in order to facilitate the integration of migrants in host countries: promoting ethical labour recruitment which protects job-seekers from abuse and exploitation, reducing costs of remittances, and mainstreaming migration into national development policies. Empower by giving diaspora communities the opportunity and capability to establish their own priorities of action between communities abroad and the countries of origin.

4.1. Engage diaspora

28. When we speak about diaspora's engagement, we need to have, first of all, a very clear idea about the general profile of diaspora communities relating to their particular country and their interests, needs and potential. In scientific language this process is called "mapping diaspora". It involves a deep analysis of the number of people represented, their socio-demographic characteristics and the way they are organised and interact with society. This information is essential for the policy making process, as depending on these factors it will be possible to define realistic objectives and calculate necessary resources for the implementation of these policies.

29. The main challenge in mapping diaspora is obtaining reliable information, taking into account that national statistic systems are often unable to provide this. There are different sources of information such as data gathered by statistical offices of governments, diplomatic representations and a range of surveys. However, this information is not centralised and is widely dispersed among different institutions. Moreover, the percentage of registered migrants in consulates and diplomatic representations is very low. In this regard, regular co-operation with host countries is very important, as they can provide information and contacts on different migrant communities, their organisations and their involvement at the local level. In this regard, the main task of policy makers is to compile all this relevant information and to provide its quantitative and qualitative analysis.

30. Here we come to a very important tool in the design and implementation of the diaspora related policy of the State, namely an institutional mechanism. Even in the process of diaspora mapping, it becomes essential to have a single institutional body bringing together all diaspora related information and providing regular updates.

31. The analysis of the ECPRD questionnaire shows that in many European countries, such institutional bodies, very often called "offices", are created under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This can be explained by the mandate of this ministry to deal with matters related to foreign countries. However, countries such as Armenia, Bulgaria, Croatia and Turkey, which have important communities abroad, have created separate governmental agencies dealing with diaspora communities.

32. It should be stressed that the diaspora mapping process and the involvement in it of diaspora communities and foreign partners is a rather challenging task, which needs a specially designed methodology and strategy. To my mind, the international organisations, including the Council of Europe could be of great help in designing such a methodology on the basis of existing best practices.

33. The diplomatic representations of the countries abroad, such as the embassies, the consulates, as well as the cultural institutes, have to play an important role in developing good relations with diaspora associations, so that the members of diaspora have trust in governmental bodies and actively contribute to the development of diaspora related policies. The practice of the appointment of a special diplomatic counsellor on diaspora and citizens abroad in each diplomatic representation could facilitate this task.

34. Speaking about diaspora engagement policies, over the past decade, a wide range of different strategies, policies, programmes and projects have been developed and implemented across Europe. Diaspora engagement strategies differ a lot from country to country depending on their goals and motivations; some countries prioritise the promotion of their culture and language abroad, others the economic engagement of diasporas in development, or provide direct support to diaspora organisations abroad. Whatever the approach, leveraging and harnessing the resources, contacts, knowledge, and talents of diasporas from all over the world, is now generally viewed as an effective State policy approach. Therefore, governments should consider their diasporas as an important political, economic, cultural and diplomatic asset, and not simply as migrants, with all the prejudices this consideration involves.

35. In this regard, Portugal, Ireland, or Italy, all countries with very ancient and large diasporas, provide very interesting examples of creation of policies and political and administrative bodies to strengthen the ties with their citizens living abroad.

13. <https://diaspora.iom.int/ioms-strategy-enable-engage-and-empower-diaspora>.

36. As mentioned previously, the diaspora engagement process includes also economic, political, cultural and migration spheres, therefore, the State bodies responsible for these domains should be actively involved in the policy making process. In this respect, the exchange of experience between such bodies in different countries, and their capacity building, could be supported by the work of international organisations.

4.2. Enable diaspora

37. Freedom of movement amongst member States of the European Union (EU), labour mobility throughout Council of Europe member States and conflict-driven migration, past and present, have contributed to the increase of diaspora communities across Europe. Combined with technological advances which facilitate connectivity and information-sharing across borders, this results in diaspora communities having an increasingly prominent role in democratic processes in their countries of origin, as well as in their host countries.

38. In some member States, diaspora communities significantly contribute to the gross national product of their countries of origin by sending remittances. This substantial economic contribution to their countries of origin should be accompanied by the right to participate in political processes.

39. To enable diaspora communities to better contribute to the development of their countries of origin and host countries, member States of the Council of Europe should ensure respect for their rights and create the necessary conditions for the best use of their potential.

4.2.1. Political participation

40. There are two levels of democratic participation which have implications for diaspora: political participation in the host countries where they are naturalised and have the right to political activism, participation and representation; and political participation in the countries of origin, enabling them to participate in national elections and referendums. The host countries should support the right to political participation and representation of the country of origin of diaspora communities.

41. The issue of voting rights and citizenship for diaspora communities with due regard to the integrity of elections and political processes is a main guarantee to their political participation. Council of Europe member States' approaches to voting and dual citizenship rights of diaspora communities are far from uniform. The degree to which diaspora communities are free to vote and enjoy dual citizenship rights varies, with some countries still preventing migrant and diaspora communities from voting in their host countries, while others maintain a restrictive approach by depriving their diaspora of their right to vote once they have left their country of origin. Such differences of approach inevitably create cases where, depending on the policies of a host country or country of origin, certain diasporas will exercise greater political influence than others. Unless properly managed, these discrepancies run the risk of creating tensions amongst countries of origin and host countries due to fears of expansionist policies and negative discourse with regard to the perceived political and cultural loyalties of diaspora communities.

42. 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 democratic engagement with their countries of origin. Without advocating a "one shoe fits all" approach member States should harmonise standards and procedures, so far as possible, to enable diaspora communities, where appropriate, to continue exercising their right to democratic participation in their countries of origin and also in their host countries.

43. Diaspora communities should also encourage political participation of their community members, which includes empowering eligible members of the community to run for election.

44. Member States, parliamentarians and diaspora associations should actively promote and communicate positive narratives about diaspora communities by highlighting their accomplishments as contributors to their host countries and countries of origin and as facilitators of diplomatic and political ties between countries.

45. However, as it is rightly pointed out by Steven Vertovec "for host countries, the dual political loyalties suggested by diasporas may raise fears of "enemies within" and terrorist sleeper cells."¹⁴ Supported by media such rhetoric can provoke xenophobia and discrimination. At the same time, for the countries of origin, diasporas can cause political problems by supporting voices critical to governments or the opposition.

14. "The political importance of Diasporas", Steven Vertovec, *Migration Information Source*, 1 June 2005.

46. The media also has a major role to play in the promotion of political and cultural diversity both within and across nations and in countering negative stereotypes about migrant and diaspora communities by displaying their political, economic and cultural potential as active members of society. In this context, media in the host countries directed to its diasporas need to have the necessary attention and support. Additionally, social media serves as an important platform for connecting and mobilising diaspora on the politics of their countries of origin. This is particularly relevant during election and referendum campaigns. Amid emerging concerns about the potentially harmful aspects of online political mobilisation, social media companies should facilitate the online political engagement of diaspora communities while ensuring that community standards relating to online election and referenda campaigns uphold the integrity of the political process and international standards on fair and free elections.

47. Governments should engage diaspora in decision-making processes on issues which directly affect them, notably through recognising and facilitating the possibility for diaspora to elect representatives of their communities to national parliaments. This can be facilitated by the creation of formal institutional channels dedicated to diaspora issues under the remit of relevant government agencies and departments.

4.2.2. Economic development and building cohesive societies

48. The economic development of any country depends upon its capacity to better utilise people's skills and talents and to promote innovative technologies and businesses. In a time of economic and political crisis in Europe and in many other parts of the world, all efforts should be deployed to create cohesive societies, enabling the full and active participation of every member in their development and economic growth.

49. Diaspora's involvement in the State economy is one of the main conditions for building strong and successful cohesive societies.

50. Diasporas have a comparative advantage in their ability to connect with a wide range of potential partners and supporters in countries of origin and host countries. These connections encourage investment, outsourcing and trade in general, as well as fostering strategic partnerships. There are vast diaspora communities of skilled professionals and entrepreneurs all over Europe who have strong economic potential for the region. These diaspora communities are an economic asset for their countries of origin through the sending of remittances, as well as for their host countries who benefit from their skills and expertise. Diasporas can participate in investment projects aimed at attracting investments for the economic development process of the country of origin.

51. Countries with higher levels of diaspora involvement have proved their better prospects for economic growth, and some governments have introduced programmes to encourage diasporas and their families to invest. Some States officially recognise their diasporas as an integral part of national development plans. But despite the obvious advantages of attracting investors and entrepreneurs from diasporas to work with their countries of origin, many countries still impose restrictions on them. For instance, some States place limits on foreign nationals' ownership of real estate property and land, which can hinder engagement for second and subsequent-generation diasporas if they have chosen another nationality. Complicated procedures for diploma recognition, limited access to complex and/or strict financial systems and administrative procedures hamper diasporas integration in the host societies. It is necessary to include provisions in the national legislation which regulate the migrant workforce and their access to working visas and work permits, as well as ensure recognition of their diplomas and professional qualifications.

52. The impact of diaspora's remittances has been internationally recognised and for some countries they represent as much as 10-30% of their gross domestic product. The Covid-19 pandemics has significantly impacted remittances to countries of origin. These remittances may fall by about 20% in 2020, impacting on some of the poorest populations. European governments should facilitate formal remittances by migrants and diaspora members during the crisis by lowering transfer fees and ensuring the security of money transfers.

53. Social security of migrants is one of the most important aspects of their inclusion process and is therefore a good investment in the economic development of the country. The creation of a European mechanism for fostering social security and protection for working migrants and their families would be useful for the social inclusion of migrants and hence the prosperity of host countries.

54. It is important to develop qualification standards and facilitate the recognition of migrants' diplomas and skills. Necessary vocational training for migrants and diaspora members can be promoted by a partnership between governments, business communities and the diaspora associations. More co-operation is needed between various international stakeholders in order to promote economic inclusiveness of diaspora members.

55. Social and economic inclusion can be facilitated by speeding up and facilitating the acquisition of nationality of migrants.

4.2.3. Cultural and social cohesion

56. The experience of many European countries had shown that diaspora could be powerful partners for the States to foster not only economic development but also build cultural and diplomatic bridges between home and host countries.

57. Culture can easily bring together people of different origins and backgrounds. Migrants representing different cultures and religions bring diversity in the society and contribute to cultural exchanges. However, a lack of knowledge of the host society, its culture, language and traditions can create major obstacles for migrants' entrance into the social and economic fabric of the host country.

58. There is growing interest in questions relating to intercultural dialogue in a European and global context where efforts to establish closer ties and collaboration between communities within our societies and between peoples, to build together for the common good, are constantly imperilled by lack of understanding, high tension and even barbarous acts of hatred and violence.

59. Violence, racism and hate speech are not only barriers to migrants' integration but felonies in their own right, and provoke an increased fear of those who have different origins, beliefs or cultures which, in turn, leads to migrants being increasingly discriminated against.

60. Only long-term investment in policies and strategies promoting intercultural and inter-religious dialogue between diasporas and host countries can bring noticeable results in changing the mentality and behaviour of people.

61. Representatives of various cultures and religions have a pivotal role in helping the integration of migrants by offering them a message of moderation and tolerance, by giving them support and help as appropriate and by dissociating from and condemning those who spread a message of hatred and intolerance in the name of a culture or religion.

62. Authorities of both countries of origin and host countries should engage and co-operate with representatives of diasporas in order to devise and implement measures aimed at promoting integration and avoiding radicalisation and extremism of migrants.

63. Local and regional authorities play a pivotal role in helping the integration of migrants, however they are rarely involved in diaspora engagement policy making. In most European countries diaspora related policies are developed at the national level and the main resources are concentrated in the national agencies, while local authorities are responsible for the integration and social inclusion of migrants. I believe it is very important to develop co-operation between the local authorities of countries of origin and host countries and empower local authorities with diaspora policy implementation functions.

64. Non-governmental actors working at the local level and playing an important role in the integration of migrants, such as civil society organisations, churches, ethnic professional associations, educational associations should also be involved as partners of the authorities in the implementation of diaspora related activities and benefit from appropriate resources.

65. Education plays an essential role in the promotion of democratic citizenship. More generally, education is a defence against the rise of violence, racism, extremism, xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance.

66. Schools and other education establishments should be prepared to welcome children and students speaking a language other than that of the host country. Special educational programmes should be developed to promote knowledge of different cultures, languages and religions.

67. Schools should also promote pluralism and diversity at an early age. Students at primary, secondary or graduate levels must be made aware of the scientific, literary and political achievements of diasporas throughout history.

68. The international community, in general, and the Assembly, in particular, have an important role and responsibility to provide a framework for inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue and promote a message of tolerance.

4.3. Empower diaspora

69. Diaspora associations contribute greatly to the creation of a positive image of their country of origin abroad. Many European governments use the potential of their diasporas as an important foreign policy instrument, whereby active support from the country of origin allows diaspora communities to influence the policy of their host countries. However, it is important to prevent any manipulation of diaspora communities as vehicles for promoting expansionist policies and violating the sovereignty of other countries. At the same time, it is also true that many countries lack knowledge of diasporas and their interaction with their countries of origin, therefore these countries cannot respond to the needs of diasporas and effectively support their activities. The establishment of trust between governments and diasporas is also a challenge. It is important to understand how States can empower diasporas by providing necessary support to their associations and contributing to their successful integration in host countries.

70. Many experts believe that the future of a globalised society is the creation of global networks of people, united with the same ideas and the same social, cultural or economic interests. Diaspora networks are good models contributing to the humanistic aim of creating better societies. The tremendous work done by diaspora organisations in helping during crisis situations and supporting post-crisis recovery processes in their countries of origin is only one example of their positive contribution.

71. In recent years, diaspora associations have been active in developing civil society in many European and other countries. Diaspora communities play an important role in the adaptation of migrants to the social, cultural and political environments of their host countries. They also act as lobby groups for the interests of migrant communities. At the same time, diaspora members bring the democratic experience with civil society organisations of their host countries back to their countries of origin. Thus, they help in the development of social, humanitarian, educational and cultural sectors and help to promote democratic values, norms and practices.

72. With the development of new information technologies, the role of diaspora associations has become even more important, as it creates new ways for these groups to contribute to their countries of origin without physically having to return there.

73. Diaspora associations also provide an opportunity for empowerment of migrant women. In the last decades, there has been a global trend in terms of feminisation of migration and many migrant women are joining or even creating diaspora associations to keep closer ties with their countries of origin. The Platform of Women of the Congolese Diaspora of Belgium, is one such diaspora associations, which became the first winner of the European Diaspora Prize awarded by the Parliamentary Network on Diaspora Policies of the Assembly in 2019 for its work on the integration of migrant women in Belgium.

74. The significant potential of diaspora members is often overlooked by decision makers. Diaspora representatives are rarely consulted on matters relating to their activities; diaspora associations are frequently excluded from official funding programmes in the context of civil initiatives; there is a lack of information on different diaspora initiatives and on their different forms of contribution; there are a number of legal limitations to diasporas' involvement which could be easily lifted.

75. On the other side, diaspora communities are very diverse and have different needs and, in some countries are very numerous. There is still a lack of co-operation between "old" diaspora organisations and newly arrived migrant organisations. Also, co-operation between diaspora associations is often insufficient or even replaced by competition over influence with authorities and the limited resources available.

76. Therefore, the development of strategic partnerships between States, civil society, the private sector and international organisations to create a framework for diaspora empowerment to facilitate the transfer of resources and knowledge sharing, should be a primary task for the development of the European diaspora policy.

77. To facilitate this process, member States can promote special platforms on social media to connect with diaspora populations, both in countries of origin and host countries, and organise open online platforms for all diaspora-related projects and initiatives for the co-ordinated and effective cultural, voluntary or philanthropic engagement of diaspora members.

78. Diaspora communities should be encouraged to organise themselves in regional/inter-regional networks and establish appropriate mechanisms that will enable their enhanced participation in social and political life of both their countries of origin and their host countries.

79. The State authorities can benefit from close co-operation with diaspora associations and should therefore ensure necessary conditions for better empowerment of diasporas. Public authorities, at national, regional and local levels, as well as international organisations, should take into account good practices and experiences aimed at enhancing relations with diaspora associations, as well as carry out regular and rigorous evaluations of diaspora engagement strategies and thereby endeavour to foster a culture of critical reflection and constructive reform in this area.

80. National and international donors should discourage competition for access to resources among diaspora representative organisations and support partnerships and networks of organisations which co-operate effectively and leverage each other in order to obtain practical results.

81. Accessibility to consular services is the key to institutional and administrative contact between diaspora residing in the host countries and the institutions of the country of origin. The more effective and accessible these services, the better can diaspora representatives fully enjoy their rights and duties when living abroad. Diaspora should feel a sense of belonging in both the country of origin and in the country of residence.

82. The experiences of countries such as Portugal, Georgia, Ireland, Poland and Ukraine show the potential of diaspora communities for mobilising public opinion in the host countries and creating a positive image of the country of origin abroad.

4.3.1. Promotion of intercultural dialogue

83. Policies and strategies aimed at promoting intercultural dialogue between the host countries and the countries of origin have already been developed. The essential task is to promote transnational resources, modernise the link between national institutions and diaspora, invest in economic, social, educational and cultural exchanges and emphasise the importance and amplify the role of diaspora communities around the world. It is from the viewpoint of “recognition” and not “paternalism” that initiatives should be promoted by and with diaspora.

84. The exercise of citizenship, representativeness of communities, solidarity with diaspora communities around the world, investment, entrepreneurship and internationalisation will help keep alive the culture and foster intercultural dialogue between diasporas and host countries.

85. Some countries have signed bilateral agreements supporting the integration process for migrants, which facilitate the study of the language, culture and legal procedures existing in the receiving countries. On the other hand, policies promoting the study of the native language, culture, historical heritage, religion, traditions and customs are indispensable for maintaining the national identity of diasporas.

86. The governments should recognise the significance of cultural identity for diaspora members and support diaspora’s initiatives aimed at maintaining the cultural links with their countries of origin. A legal framework for granting support in promoting the language and culture, social inclusion, training and professional development should be created.

87. The development of a plural identity and of cultural links with the country of origin builds the basis for successful integration of migrants. The challenge to preserve links with the country of origin is especially felt by the youth of second and third generation migrants. Diaspora networks and associations, supported by the authorities, have an important role to play in this regard.

88. The media has a major role to play in the promotion of political and cultural diversity and in the cohesion and awareness of diasporas. To counter stereotypes portraying migrants as victims or criminals, the media should provide more opportunities for migrants to speak about their success stories, and to present the intellectual and economic potential of migrants as a benefit for their host countries and their countries of origin. Media in host countries dedicated to diasporas play a major role that needs to be recognised and supported.

5. Good practices

5.1. Portugal

89. Portugal is one of the countries which since the beginning of its new-found democracy, in April 1974, has always followed and supported the Portuguese diaspora with a number of political and administrative instruments, in order to recognise the importance and dignity of diaspora for the country. In this sense, in 1974, during the first democratic government, the Office of the Secretary of State of Emigration was created, under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour. Only one year later, in July 1975, the Secretary of State of

Emigration was transferred to the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where it currently remains. Today, it is the Office of the Secretary of State of the Portuguese Communities, that is responsible for public policy relating to the Portuguese diaspora, namely promotion of the Portuguese language and education in Portuguese, consular services, support for associations, programmes to involve Portuguese entrepreneurs abroad and cultural policies.

90. In fact, relations with the diaspora is one of the main vectors of Portuguese foreign policy, together with relations with the European Union, transatlantic relations, co-operation with the Portuguese language speakers, the internationalisation of the economy and culture and the promotion of multilateralism.

91. On the other hand, the Portuguese diaspora deserves constitutional consideration. In the Portuguese Constitution, Article 14, concerns “The Portuguese Abroad”, and establishes that Portuguese citizens living abroad have the protection of the State for the exercise of their rights and they are also submitted to duties not incompatible with their absence from the country.

92. In this sense, it is of major importance for the relationship which exists with the diaspora that since the beginning of Portugal’s new democracy in 1974 the legislators decided to give parliamentary representation to Portuguese citizens living abroad, with 4 members elected to the parliament to represent Portugal’s diaspora in the world, 2 persons representing the diaspora in Europe and 2 outside of Europe. In this context, Portuguese abroad also have the right to vote for the Portuguese Parliament since 1975 and the President of the Republic since 2001, and also take part in referenda. They can also vote for members of the European Parliament, even if they live outside the space of the European Union. Since 2018, all those in possession of a Portuguese identity card, living abroad, are automatically entitled to the right to vote in elections.

93. The government also created a consultative body of the government, composed of 60 directly elected members, called the Council of the Portuguese Communities, representing Portuguese citizens spread all over the world. There is also specific financial support given to Portuguese diaspora entrepreneurs to invest in Portugal, and financial support also to the activities of diaspora associations.

5.2. Georgia

94. Georgia, as an example, has well-developed global diaspora communities accounting for 5 million people. According to official statistics, there are over 300 Georgian diaspora organisations abroad. The Georgian authorities, with the assistance of international organisations active in the area, have developed a comprehensive diaspora strategy. Since 2018, the Constitution of Georgia contains a provision on State care for maintaining and developing connections with diasporas. Both the government and the parliament have special organs within their structures dedicated to diaspora-related policies.

5.3. Italy

95. Italy being a country welcoming a wide range of migrant and diaspora communities, has made several important steps to ensure better co-operation between diasporas and national and local authorities. In 2014 it adopted Law n.125,¹⁵ on international development co-operation, which created the conditions to allow diaspora associations to actively participate in development policies. In addition, ad hoc bodies have been set up in order to enable and facilitate dialogue with diaspora organisations and associations.

96. With the aim of its implementation, the Italian Government created the National Summit of diasporas, an annual meeting between the members of the institutions, foundations and associations working on diaspora related projects. Diaspora organisations and associations also participate in economic development and they can collaborate with civil society organisations and/or local authorities.

97. Speaking about the Italian policy towards its citizens abroad, specific provisions were included in the Italian legislation to ensure the possibility for Italian diaspora to contribute to the development of their home country.

98. Italian citizens living abroad for more than 12 months can register in the AIRE (Register of Italians living abroad). It is managed by the municipalities on the basis of data and information furnished by the consular representations abroad and it is a prerequisite for the use of a range of services provided by consular representations and for the exercise of important rights (such as the right to vote). According to the law of 16 August 1992 n. 91, the acquisition of a foreign nationality does not mean the loss of Italian nationality, unless the Italian citizen formally renounces it.

15. www.aics.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/LEGGE_11_agosto_2014_n_125_ENGLISH.pdf.

99. The law of 27 December 2001 n. 459 allows Italian citizens living abroad a right to postal vote in parliamentary elections and in referenda. On the contrary, the same possibility is not provided in local and regional elections; in this case, Italian legislation is limited to facilitating the return to Italy in order to take part in elections.

100. The law of 6 November 1989 n. 368 created the General Council of Italians Abroad (Consiglio Generale Italiani all'estero). It is the highest representative body of expatriate Italians and its main function is to inform the government and the parliament on the major issues and concerns of the Italian communities in the world. In addition, the Committees of the Italians abroad are bodies representing Italians abroad in the context of relations with diplomatic-consular representations. Created in 1985, they now have 101 elective committees and 5 nominated by the consulates (47 are in Europe, 42 in the Americas, 10 in Asia and Oceania and 7 in Africa). Furthermore, on 27 November 2019 a bill was presented for the establishment of a Bicameral Parliamentary Commission on emigration and mobility of Italians in the world.

5.4. Spain

101. In Spain, between 2008 and 2014, almost three million people left the country to look for a job or better opportunities, most of them young people. In contrast to previous migratory flows, those migrating in this period were highly skilled professionals. Their countries of destination were the United Kingdom, France, the United States, Germany and Switzerland.¹⁶

102. The Secretary General of Immigration and Emigration (SGIE) promotes cultural links and educational programmes for young diaspora members. Through its Youth programme it provides grants to young people for training and career guidance, language learning and return programmes.

103. The SGIE also supports mobility projects aimed at reducing unemployment in the country. It established on-line information on job opportunities abroad for unemployed young people by providing information on job opportunities, work and accommodation possibilities in different countries. It offers information on international agreements relating to youth mobility, double citizenship, recognition of diplomas, taxation, etc. It funds projects through the diplomatic missions for NGOs and diaspora associations helping Spanish citizens integrate in their host countries. Many of them target young Spanish migrants, supporting their training or social integration or return back to Spain. Spain also signed more than 20 bilateral agreements with host countries on the portability of social security benefits.¹⁷

5.5. Turkey

104. Starting in the 1960s, Turkey signed a number of labour agreements with various European countries, which resulted in the creation of a Turkish diaspora in Europe when many Turkish workers migrated to European countries. Though Turkish workers initially did not consider permanently settling in their host countries, gradually they began the process of integration.. Family reunification allowed many Turkish family members to reunite in the host countries, which laid down the foundations for the Turkish diaspora which now numbers almost seven million, the majority of whom are living in European countries.

105. Turkey has a diaspora policy which considers integration as a two-way process in which migrants and host country governments have responsibilities in encouraging active participation. To this end, Turkish diaspora policy encourages the active participation of the Turkish community in the social, economic, cultural and political life of host countries while maintaining their ties to the motherland. Support is given to education in the mother tongue and cultural activities are encouraged. In co-operation with host countries, Turkey provides Turkish language and culture teachers, as well as religious officers who are assigned by the Presidency of Religious Affairs and who perform religious services for the benefit of the Turkish community and help them accomplish their religious duties.

106. In 2010, the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) was established with the purpose of responding to the challenges faced by Turkish diaspora members, facilitating their links with their homeland and their integration within host countries. YTB aims to protect the family structure, socio-cultural values of the Turkish diaspora and to support civil society activities in these fields.

107. In 2012, the Turkish Parliament adopted an amendment to the Election Law which enabled Turkish citizens living abroad, for the first time to cast their votes in the 2014 presidential election.

16. "Encuesta de Poblacion Activa", INE, accessed 7 July 2015.

17. "Spain: New Emigration Policies Needed for an Emerging Diaspora", Joaquin Arango, MPI, March 2016, p. 10-12.

108. Turkey also gives importance to easy access of its diaspora members to consular services, having 248 diplomatic missions (embassies, consulate generals, permanent missions) abroad. This also allows Turkey the opportunity to support its diaspora community, in particular in the fields of education and social services. The legal advisors working at the Turkish Embassies and Consulate Generals provide Turkish citizens living abroad with free legal assistance on a variety of issues and problems, primarily linked to any kind of discrimination they may face.

6. Conclusions

109. Diasporas by their nature are actively involved in globalism, cosmopolitanism and multi-culturalism. They make a positive contribution to the societies in which they live and through their dynamism can be at the forefront of new developments including new technologies. Countries can benefit even more from what diasporas can offer if they work closely with relevant stakeholders including diasporas and their associations, authorities from the host countries, of countries of origin, as well as local authorities, non-governmental actors and others. Diasporas and their organisations can only play a positive role when the authorities of the countries concerned engage with them, examine and respond to their needs, include them in decision-making processes and co-operate with them in formulating diaspora-oriented policies. The recommendations provided in this report can facilitate the development of such policies and strategies by member States and these policies can be promoted further through international co-operation on diaspora related issues.

110. Integration of diaspora should be promoted via democratic participation, access to education and the labour market, and strong dialogue between the host countries, diaspora and countries of origin. The Council of Europe can play a major role in this process by bringing together the multiple actors that shape national diaspora policies, including parliaments, governments, diaspora associations, NGOs, media and research organisations, and establish a European Forum of Diasporas as a platform for international exchanges between different diaspora communities.