

Doc. 11022

19 September 2006

New trends and challenges for Euro-Mediterranean migration policies

Recommendation 1737 (2006)

Reply from the Committee of Ministers

adopted at the 973rd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (13 September 2006)

1. The Committee of Ministers has taken due note of the recommendations and proposals contained in Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1737 (2006) on new trends and challenges for Euro-Mediterranean migration policies. It welcomes the Assembly's appreciation of the work of the Council of Europe's European Committee on Migration (CDMG) and the North-South Centre in this area, and draws attention to the opinions of these bodies, appended to the present reply.
2. The Assembly's call on member states to join and observe the existing conventional framework relating to migration is shared by the Committee of Ministers, and it agrees that awareness and information are essential in nurturing positive attitudes towards migration and its effects. The shifting focus towards involvement of non-member states from both sides of the Mediterranean in policies and activities is apparent in many areas of the Council of Europe's current work, through a growing recognition of the need for co-operation and dialogue that reach beyond the limits of the member states' boundaries.
3. As regards the Parliamentary Assembly's recommendation in paragraph 12.2 that non-member Mediterranean countries be associated in the activities of the CDMG, and the latter's appended opinion demonstrates that this is already the case. In the framework of the Council of Europe Political Platform on Migration, member and non-member states (including Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and others) meet to discuss issues such as the situation of non-accompanied minors in Europe and co-development. The next session will be focused on the discussion of migration management and co-operation with the countries of origin, including challenges for the Mediterranean countries.
4. The CDMG, in partnership with the North-South Centre, also undertakes joint activities on migration issues, including a series of five technical workshops on migration and co-development, in which non-member states from the Mediterranean have actively participated. The fifth and final workshop was organised in co-operation with the Parliamentary Assembly in May 2006, and a new series is already planned for 2006/2007. The CDMG also organises regional conferences with the participation of non-member states; the conference on "Migration of unaccompanied minors: acting in the best interests of the child" held in Malaga on 27 and 28 October 2005 discussed topics particularly relevant in the context of Euro-Mediterranean partnership.
5. Paragraph 12.3 of the recommendation calls on the North-South Centre to increase its membership. The Centre is in the process of consolidating its membership within the member states, following the accession of Germany and with discussions on the possible membership of Austria and other member states. The North-South Centre's contacts with member and non-member states involve all levels of society – government, parliaments, local and regional authorities as well as civil society.
6. The Committee of Ministers is also conducting extensive work to promote north-south dialogue on migration and co-development, through contacts with the European Commission and with other partners. It recalls the two bilateral agreements of co-operation concluded at the Faro Conference marking the 50th anniversary of the European Cultural Convention (27-28 October 2005) with the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures and the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (ALECSO).

7. The Parliamentary Assembly recommends that member states be encouraged to pursue Euro-Mediterranean higher education and training. In the framework of the Faro Strategy for developing intercultural dialogue, work is also under way to step up youth co-operation activities in the field of training, within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership. In addition, as part of the follow-up to the 116th Session on 19 May, the Committee of Ministers' Rapporteur Group on Education, Culture, Sport, Youth and Environment (GR-C) has been invited, in consultation with the Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research (CDESR) to consider the proposal to establish a network of co-operation between European universities.

8. As regards the question of a Euro-Mediterranean migration observatory, the Committee of Ministers fully agrees with the Assembly that the Council of Europe is an appropriate forum for promoting co-operation between the member states, the European Union and non-European countries. It refers to its reply to Recommendation 1655 (2004) adopted on 13 July 2005, in which the Committee's doubts as to the present added value of such an observatory are expressed.

9. With regard to the last recommendation by the Assembly to give greater visibility to the issue of migrant women by means of special initiatives involving all Euro-Mediterranean countries, the Committee of Ministers refers to its reply to Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1732 (2006) on the integration of immigrant women in Europe, adopted on 21 June. This reply focuses more specifically on activities to promote women's integration in the member states, but also underlines the considerable importance given by the Committee of Ministers to the establishment dialogue between migrants' countries of origin, transit and destination, thus encompassing non-member countries.

* * *

Appendix 1 to the reply

Opinion of the CDMG on Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1737 (2006)

a. The European Committee on Migration (CDMG) welcomes the attention of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to the issue of co-operation between the member states of the Council of Europe and non-member Mediterranean countries on the subject of migration policies. It is also pleased with the acknowledgement of the role that CDMG has played and continues to play in strengthening dialogue and co-operation in the Mediterranean.

b. The CDMG welcomes the call to involve non-member Mediterranean countries in its activities (paragraph 12.2 of Recommendation 1737 (2006)) and wishes to inform the Parliamentary Assembly that significant steps in this direction have already been made. The Council of Europe Political Platform on Migration organised by the CDMG serves as a forum where member and non-member states can discuss the issues of common interest such as, for example, the situation of unaccompanied minors in Europe or the issue of co-development. Non-member Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and others) participated at different levels in the sessions of the Political Platform. The next session of the Political Platform will be focused on the discussion of migration management and co-operation with the countries of origin (including challenges for the Mediterranean countries). This session will be jointly organised with the Committee for Migration, Refugees and Population of the Parliamentary Assembly. The CDMG considers co-operation with the Parliamentary Assembly particularly valuable for promoting dialogue with non-member states and looks forward to effective co-operation with the Parliamentary Assembly in this area.

c. Referring to paragraph 12.6 of Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1737 (2006), the CDMG wishes to inform the Parliamentary Assembly that it has established an effective partnership with the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity in Lisbon (North-South Centre) and undertakes joint activities with a view to collaborating with non-member states (mainly from Africa) on migration issues. In particular, the CDMG organised, in co-operation with the North-South Centre, a series of technical workshops on migration and co-development. Four workshops took place in 2004-2005. The fifth (and final) workshop was organised in co-operation with the Parliamentary Assembly in May 2006. Non-member states from the Mediterranean actively participated in the workshops. This co-operation will continue with a new series of workshops that will be organised in 2006/2007.

d. Regional conferences on migration organised by the CDMG are also important fora where migration issues are discussed with the participation of the non-member states. The regional conference on "Migration of unaccompanied minors: acting in the best interests of the child" that was held in Malaga (Spain) on 27 and

28 October 2005 discussed topics that are particularly relevant in the context of Euro-Mediterranean partnership. Following this conference, the CDMG decided to establish the Ad hoc Advisory Group on unaccompanied migrant minors (life projects) that should prepare proposals for a draft recommendation in 2006. CDMG wishes to express its strong interest in co-operating with the Parliamentary Assembly on this issue in the future.

e. Issues relevant to the subject of Euro-Mediterranean partnership are also addressed by the Committee of Experts on the Countries of Emigration (MG-R-PE). This committee was established by the CDMG in 2005 with the task to review the Migration Management Strategy of the CDMG in the light of the current challenges faced by countries of emigration in Europe. It prepared a report that made proposals to improve the quality of the dialogue and co-operation between countries of destination and origin, and identified some areas of major interest for countries of origin in achieving an improved management of migration. The report prepared by the MG-R-PE was approved by the CDMG in April 2006.

f. CDMG also welcomes the recommendation of the Parliamentary Assembly to encourage Council of Europe member states to sign and ratify the European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers (paragraph 12.1).

* * *

Appendix 2 to the reply

Comments by the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (North-South Centre) of the Council of Europe on Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1737 (2006)

The North-South Centre has taken note of the fact that the Ministers' Deputies decided at their 959th meeting on 22 March 2006 to communicate Recommendation 1737 (2006) on new trends and challenges for Euro-Mediterranean migration policies to the North-South Centre for information and possible comments by 15 May 2006.

The North-South Centre agrees with the Parliamentary Assembly that migration should be considered a phenomenon and not a problem and has made this idea the focus of its action.

The North-South Centre notes that the Parliamentary Assembly considers that the Centre is a useful forum for the discussion of Euro-Mediterranean migration policies. Indeed, the issue of migration is one of the priorities in the North-South Centre's programme.

The activities undertaken in this framework are intended to achieve the following goals:

- Promoting North-South dialogue on migration extended to the members of the quadrilogue (governments, parliamentarians, local and regional authorities and civil society);
- Favours the inclusion of human rights in the management of migration;
- Promoting co-development policies;
- Helping to reinforce the expertise of the Council of Europe in this field.

Promoting North-South dialogue on migrations

As indicated in paragraph 1 of Recommendation 1737 (2006), in the last decade, the Mediterranean region has become a centre for intense migratory flows towards Europe. The countries in the south are both countries of origin and transit areas for migration from sub-Saharan Africa.

One of the greatest challenges in managing migration is setting up a coherent North-South regulatory framework based on law and common parameters for the countries of origin, transit and destination. Meeting this challenge is of great strategic importance to the region.

Aware that the challenges of migration cannot be overcome effectively by isolated, unilateral action by the countries in question, the North-South Centre has begun a process of informal dialogue between government members and players from local authorities, civil societies and NGOs from the North and South.

The aim of this dialogue is to facilitate the exchange of information and the preparation of common approaches on issues of mutual interest.

Favouring the inclusion of human rights in the management of migration

During this dialogue, the North-South Centre focuses on the importance of respect for international commitments, as stipulated in paragraph 8.3 of Recommendation 1737 (2006), on the subject of the rights and protection of migrants and their families, the treatment of human beings and discrimination. Indeed, in spite of the existence of countless international conventions and obligations protecting migrants' rights, certain categories of migrants, especially illegal ones, are often the victims of ill-treatment and violations of their human rights in transit and host countries.

Promoting co-development policies

The North-South Centre notes the Parliamentary Assembly's invitation to the states participating in the Barcelona Process to actively pursue their partnership practices and co-development strategy (paragraph 11). Considerable efforts have been made in recent years to draw up an EU policy on immigration. The North-South Centre welcomes the recognition in this EU approach of the link between migration and development and, more particularly, of co-development as a strategic element of migration management.

The Centre is working towards the promotion of co-development policies and the recognition of the role of diasporas as players in the development of their countries of origin. The Centre's work on the subject shows the need to increase decentralised co-operation and strengthen the role of NGOs and improve support for women's and young people's initiatives in the success of co-development policies.

Helping to reinforce the expertise of the Council of Europe in this field

A good migratory policy is indissociable from a better understanding of the complexity of migration, from the follow-up and regular evaluation of challenges and effect of migratory flows. This effort requires good knowledge of the main data on migration and the ability to conduct a prospective analysis of migration. In order to help improve knowledge of data on migratory flows, the North-South Centre is working on a migration atlas, which will collect, summarise, process and analyse as yet scattered sources. It provides information on the history, routes, trends, structures, development and effects of migration. It also analyses assimilation policies in host countries.

This year, the North-South Centre has also adopted a policy of undertaking and publishing research works on migration in general and the role of diasporas in the development of their countries of origin in particular.