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Diasporas: their role in the integration of migrants

Motion for a resolution

presented by Mr Çavuşoğlu and others

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only the members who have signed it

1. Inviting and enabling Diaspora groups to play a more active role in the affairs of both their countries of origin and their countries of current residence can bring many benefits in today's increasingly inter-connected world. The promotion of human rights and democracy are two prime examples. But there are many other ways that their more active involvement can be very beneficial too, to themselves and to others, as individuals and as a group. Enabling Diaspora members to more efficiently mobilise their human capital as well as their financial remittances can make a major contribution to accelerating the economic, social and political development of their home countries. The recent history of European development is a prominent example of such benefits from greater international working mobility.

2. The rapid increase in working migration, the reuniting of Diaspora families, the desire of retired migrants who want to return to live in their countries of origin (or another country), and the wish of many migrants to be able to take a more active part in the political life in their host countries (as well as in their countries of origin), represent new challenges in many policy sectors. These include migration policies, social policies, policies regarding residence and citizenship, electoral policies – at the local and national levels -, and policies of allowing double/multiple nationality. Europe has a rich and diversified experience in this area, which could and should be explored and exploited in a renewed political debate on these issues.

3. Integration and mobility, inter-cultural dialogue and tolerance are part of this rich and complex European reality at the beginning of the 21st century. At the heart of this new European and world citizenship and working mobility debate are the quest for the most appropriate ways to incorporate working migrants and their Diasporas into all of the deliberative phases. The Council of Europe can and should add its concerns regarding human rights and democracy to such a debate.

4. Working migrants in the contemporary world have already become key components in the organizational and developmental dimensions of the creation and evolution of national Diaspora groups and their support organisations. Globalisation of the world economy has greatly expanded the means by which migrants can become and remain actively involved in the economic, cultural, social and political life of both the sending and receiving countries.

5. These Diasporas, therefore, are now becoming a major force for the modernisation of their countries of origin and can even influence the strategy of development of whole regions. Therefore, it has become a matter of major importance to help create, at the governmental level, the means and mechanisms whereby migrants can directly participate in the choices that would optimally support development initiatives in their home countries, and they deserve to be supported in their choices and priorities.

6. Another key role that Diasporas often play is in helping new migrants to integrate into their host society, while also helping them in maintaining contacts with their countries of origin. If correctly guided and encouraged, Diasporas can be an element in enhancing migrants' participation and contribution to their host society. Diasporas may also, unfortunately, play an important role in hampering or blocking the integration of new migrants, which is a problem that must be addressed too in open dialogue with these groups.

7 This dual and beneficial role of Diasporas and their members for development of their host countries as well as for their countries of origin would gain from policies according migrants greater rights and obligations as citizens and/or residents in the countries concerned. The acquisition of greater competence in the language of the host country and the respect of its laws and costumes are prerequisites for this dual feeling of belonging, as are the maintenance of the language and certain non-conflicting and legally accepted cultural traditions of the country of origin. The question of residence and citizenship as well as political and civil rights has been a source of important debates that the Parliamentary Assembly could take further.

8. Therefore, the Assembly calls on the member states of the Council of Europe to:

- participate in a detailed review of the current status and treatment of Diasporas in their respective countries;
- discuss and elaborate new policies to encourage greater Diaspora engagement in development projects in countries of origin;
- create a favourable climate enabling the members of Diaspora to contribute their "human capital" including their reserve of education, knowledge and experience to their countries of origin;
- review national legislation with a view to according a special status to members of Diasporas in their countries of origin and facilitating the return process;
- actively involve the members of Diasporas in the elaboration of integration programmes for working migrants;
- review migration policies with a view to accord to migrants greater rights and obligations as citizens and/or residents in the receiving countries;
- ensure the rights of working migrants and Diaspora members to take part in the political life;
- create all necessary conditions for Diaspora members who return to their home countries to enjoy their economic, taxation and pension rights.

9. The Council of Europe should further harmonise its legislation and practice to protect the human rights of working migrants and diaspora members. It should encourage, where appropriate, Diaspora members in their work for the improvement of democracy and human right in their countries of origin.

*Signed*¹:

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EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EDG: European Democratic Group
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left
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