

Current Affairs Committee

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March 2016

REPORT

“FROM RECEPTION TO INTEGRATION: THE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES FACING MIGRATION”

In 2015 and in spring 2016 the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe held several debates on refugees its sessions with the participation of European cities, which are concerned by migration and refugee issues. In October 2015, during its 29th session, the Congress adopted a Declaration on the reception of refugees in Europe [Declaration 4 (2015)].

As a concrete follow-up, the Current Affairs Committee undertook the preparation of a report “*From reception to integration: the role of local authorities facing immigration*”, with Ms Yoomi Renström, Sweden (R, SOC) and Mr Gyorgy Illes, Hungary (L, ILDG), as co-rapporteurs. The draft report will be submitted for approval to the Committee in October 2016 and to the Congress for adoption in March 2017.

A Reflexion Group has been set up by the Committee’s secretariat to exchange ideas between elected representatives at local and regional level (the co-rapporteurs and other Congress members), academics, representatives of civil society and relevant intergovernmental organisations.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

TOPIC: “From reception to integration: the role of local authorities facing migration” (working title)		
Political objective (and specific local or regional dimension)	Relevance to the political priorities of the Council of Europe, the Congress and its committees	Proposed follow up
<p>During the recent refugee crisis, much attention has been paid to the national policies, initiatives and programmes that will need to be put in place to facilitate the integration of refugees and how they should be distributed across European countries. Yet the refugee crisis has an equally important local dimension. Local authorities and a range of local organisations are at the forefront of reception and integration efforts, They must provide a rapid response, often in the context of reduced resources and political tensions.</p> <p>The report will look at immigration policies to assess their repercussion for local authorities and examine what local and regional authorities are doing when dealing with refugees and migrants from their reception to their social and economic integration in the countries where they have settled and the challenges they face. The report will also address specific issues related to children, youth, women and minorities.</p> <p>The report will underline the importance of the respect for human rights, the rule of law and the aim to build inclusive, intercultural societies when approaching integration issues. It will give examples of best practices from local authorities on treatment/integration of migrants in the host States. The reasoning will adhere to the principles and texts adopted by the Council of Europe and in particular on existing Congress resolutions and recommendations.</p>	<p>In response to the current migrant crisis in Europe, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe has issued an information document (SG/Inf (2015)33) on migration challenges for Europe and reminded member States of their main legal obligations under the Council of Europe Conventions.</p> <p>In parallel, the Council of Europe Action Plan on Building Inclusive Societies is being set in motion to enhance the ability of European societies to better understand and cope with the long-term impact of the large-scale arrival of migrants, supporting effective integration policies.</p> <p>The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and its Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons Committee in particular has adopted the report “The Mediterranean Sea: a front door to irregular migration” in 2016 and the report “The human tragedy in the Mediterranean: immediate action needed” in 2015. Several reports are under preparation, including the report “Forced migration: a new challenge” and the report “The impact of European populations dynamics on migration policies”.</p> <p>The Commissioner for Human Rights has published opinions advising member states to improve the protection of human rights of migrants and to ensure that undocumented migrants and their children have access to basic rights, in particular the right to health care and education.</p> <p>The present report is in line with these initiatives, adding a local/regional perspective for better social cohesion of European communities and better intercultural relations.</p>	<p>Dissemination of the resolution and a possible recommendation through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - national and European associations of local and regional authorities; - other dedicated networks working on the integration of migrants including international bodies and NGOs <p>The European Local Democracy Week the theme of which for 2016 is “Living together in culturally diverse societies: respect, dialogue, interaction”.</p> <p>Strengthening cooperation with relevant Council of Europe entities concerned with migration and integration issues: PACE Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced people, CDMG, CoE Migration Co-ordinator, ICC, DELI, C4I, EUR-OPA and EPAS.</p> <p>Contribution to the work of the Council of Europe Advisory Group on Migration and the Network of focal points.</p>