



OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

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Working Session 5 'Humanitarian Issues and other commitments'

Contribution of the Council of Europe

MIGRATION

RECENT ACTIVITIES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Introduction

The **European Committee on Migration (CDMG)** is the principal intergovernmental organ of the Council of Europe responsible for activities in the migration field. CDMG is responsible for the development of European co-operation on migration, the situation and social integration of populations of migrant origin and refugees and on community relations.

The current programme of activities of CDMG is guided by the recommendations adopted by the European Ministers responsible for Migration Affairs at their 7th Conference (Helsinki, September 2002).

In their final declaration, the Ministers recommended the implementation of an Action Plan focusing on the following key elements – the **Helsinki Action Plan**:

- Regional and international co-operation
- Integration policies in the light of demographic changes in Europe
- Access to minimum rights for the migrants
- Implementation of a comprehensive migration management strategy.

Strengthening cooperation with the non-member states is a major challenge. Two initiatives are worth mentioning in this respect – (1) the creation in 2003 of the Political Platform on Migration, and (2) the regular holding of regional conferences designed to examine the Council of Europe Migration Management Strategy through the analysis of migration issues that are specific for different European regions.

Migration management – a political platform for dialogue

With a view to promoting dialogue and partnership between countries of origin, transit and destination the Political Platform on Migration brings together Council of Europe member states and interested countries from Africa and Asia.

The Political Platform provides a forum within which representatives of governments, parliaments, local authorities and NGOs as well as other international organisations can develop common policy and set standards on migration with a human rights approach.

The Political Platform meets for one day per year during the autumn session of CDMG. Since October 2005, the 5th Session of the Political Platform has been held in Athens on 21 October 2005. The main theme debated was the portrayal of images of migrants in the media and the information that should be made available in countries of destination in order to improve the reception of migrants.

The 6th Session of the Political Platform will take place on 6 and 7 November 2006 and will discuss the challenges for countries of origin and the regional co-operation with special focus on Euro-Mediterranean region and West Africa.

Ministerial Conferences

Ukraine will host the 8th ministerial conference of European Ministers responsible for migration affairs CDMG in Kiev in 2008. The provisional general theme is “*Improving and strengthening the co-operation and partnership between countries of destination, origin and transit in the context of labour migration (integration and migration management)*”. CDMG is the organising committee for this conference.

Regional Conferences

The 2005 regional conference was hosted by Spain and took place in Malaga on 27-28 October 2005 on the theme of “*Migration of unaccompanied minors: acting in the best interests of the child*”.

On the basis of five case studies the participants examined the different migratory cycles of separated and unaccompanied children and discussed ways to protect and promote their interests and to create for them the best life prospects. The proceedings are available from the Secretariat and on Migration Website.

As follow-up to the conference CDMG is preparing a draft recommendation on life projects for unaccompanied migrant minors. It is hoped to finalise the text in 2007.

Previous regional conferences:

- Conference on “*Migrants in transit countries: sharing responsibility for management and protection*” - Istanbul (Turkey), from 30 September to 1 October 2004;
- Conference on “*Migration policies on the eve of the EU enlargement: what challenges for future co-operation within the East European region*” - Kiyv, 9 and 10 October 2003;
- Conference on “*Migration in the Mediterranean: Prospects for the future*”, George’s Bay, Malta, 10-11 April 2003;
- Conference on “*labour migration in Europe: an alternative to irregular migration?*” - Sofia 24 - 25 October 2002;
- Conference on “*Irregular migration and dignity of migrants: Co-operation in the Mediterranean region*” - Athens, 3-4 October 2001.

A Migration Management Strategy

The Migration Management Strategy of the Council of Europe is comprehensive and based on principles of orderliness, protection, integration and co-operation (Report “*Towards a Migration Management Strategy*”). One of the key issues is the establishment of a regular dialogue and partnership between countries of origin, transit and destination on ways of ensuring orderly migration, social cohesion and the rights of the individual.

Managing migration is also one of the parts of the Action Plan adopted by the 3rd Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe (Warsaw, 16 - 17 May 2005). An important part of this is the successful integration of immigrant populations with particular attention paid to the full respect of human rights of migrants as well as of their diversity. These are essential conditions for a win-win situation in which both migrants and host countries can mutually benefit.

As stated in the report for last year’s meeting, CDMG has undertaken a number of activities related to the Migration Management Strategy. During its April 2006 session CDMG adopted a report on “*Towards a management strategy for migratory flows: challenges for countries of origin*” which emphasises the importance of improving the quality of co-operation between countries of origin and destination and identifies nine major challenges for countries of emigration.

CDMG is currently preparing guidelines to member states to support migrants’ associations and organisations in the development of their countries of origin. It is hoped to finalise the text in 2007. In co-operation with the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity of the Council of Europe (North-South

centre) a series of workshops have been organised since 2004 on theme of migration and co-operation. The last two workshops were on:

- Co-development and democracy – the socio-political role of migrants (Lisbon, 18-19 May 2006);
- Financing co-development (Lisbon, 7-8 October 2005).

Integration and Community relations

Through its work on integration and community relations, CDMG aims to promote the process of integration based on the following principles:

- Promoting diversity in multi-cultural and ethnically diverse societies and respecting individual human rights
- Pursuing a holistic approach that places emphasis on the interaction between migrants and host societies, and directing policies at society as a whole
- Promoting equality of opportunity and equal access to rights and services.

A framework for integration policies prepared by CDMG covers legal measures; employment; housing; health and other services; religion, culture and language; education; the media; government functions; and monitoring and evaluation.

The mini-seminar held at the last session of CDMG (April 2006) was devoted to Norwegian and Swedish policy and practice in relation to the integration and social inclusion of immigrant populations.

CDMG is currently pursuing activities on the integration of migrant children and the access of migrants to the labour market. A select committee of experts has been established to prepare guidelines on the integration of migrant children. It focuses on four specific issues: (i) the integration of newly arrived children of migrants into the educational system; (ii) national policies aimed at providing children with adequate language skills at a pre-school level; (iii) the means of achieving a successful transition from school to labour market; and (iv) the situation of migrant children living in segregated/disadvantaged areas. The committee should complete its work at the end of 2006 and submit the draft guidelines to the CDMG in spring 2007.

A second select committee of experts has been established to prepare guidelines on the access to employment for legally residing migrants and persons of immigrant or foreign origin. These cover a wide range of issues such as (i) recruitment practices, (ii) preparing the young with labour market skills, (iii) promoting the dispersion of female labour market opportunities, (v) preventing the risk of unemployment, and (vi) promoting equal treatment and opportunities. The Committee will complete its work in 2007.

Foreign students

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted on 12 July 2006 Recommendation Rec(2006)9 to member states on the admission, rights and obligations of migrant students and co-operation with countries of origin. This recommendation covers the reception and the rights of migrant students, namely admission conditions and procedures, residence permits, administrative appeals and employment. The Recommendation also underlines the importance of co-operation between countries of destination and origin in order to facilitate the return and the reintegration of students.

Irregular migrants

CDMG is currently undertaking a review of national policies with regard to irregular migrants. Five national reports have already been commissioned (Armenia, Germany, Greece, Italy and Russian Federation). Further reports might follow. It is possible CDMG might, on the basis of these reports, prepare recommendations on the improvement of migration management and strengthening of human rights and dignity of irregular migrants.

Publications

The following reports have been published during 2005/6:

- Proceedings of the Regional Conference on “Migration of unaccompanied minors: acting in the best interests of the child”, Malaga on 27-28 October 2005 (2006);
- Proceedings of the Regional Conference on “Migrants in transit countries: sharing responsibility for management and protection”, Istanbul (Turkey), 30 September – 1 October 2004 (2005);
- Current trends in International Migration (2005);
- Irregular migrants: access to minimum social rights, (2006);
- The legal status of migrants admitted for employment - A comparative study of law and practice in selected European states (2005).

Contacts

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