

PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE UNION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

Committee on Improving Quality of Life, Exchanges between Civil Societies and Culture

RECOMMENDATION

Immigration as a growth factor in the Mediterranean

The Committee on Improving Quality of Life, Exchanges between Civil Societies and Culture:

1. Underlines that migration is the greatest challenge of the present day, and that the failure to resolve long-standing conflicts - such as the conflict between Arab nations and Israel - and the emergence of new crisis areas, such as in Libya and Syria, along with the highly parlous economic situation, have led to unprecedented migratory pressure;
2. Notes that the human trafficking that has resulted from the above and the subsequent tragedies at sea are an essential priority that needs to be tackled resolutely through the development of joint strategies, especially with third countries, countries of transit and countries of origin, coordinated by the European Union;
3. Expresses its solidarity with the countries on both shores of the Mediterranean that are most affected by migratory flows, and strongly affirms that tragedies such as the recent one, where over eight-hundred migrants heading for the Italian coast lost their lives, should never be seen again; underlines that logistical and financial duties and responsibilities concerning the Mediterranean crisis should be shared among all UfM member States as well as EU institutions, which should launch a new migration policy strongly focused on solving the crises at the origin of migration, as well as on the rescue and reception of refugees and asylum-seekers, also in cooperation with the United Nations;
4. Holds that, more generally, the EU needs to rethink its migration policies for the Mediterranean area, move beyond the vision of two Mediterranean shores, and enter into a joint development and partnership programme that is capable of responding to emergency situations, transforming migratory waves into opportunities for growth, promoting exchanges between people and the sharing of knowledge, and encouraging freedom of movement and respect for different cultures and religions, ensuring at the same time equal treatment in terms of economic, cultural and social rights and the recognition of fundamental rights. Economic, social and cultural exchanges

are politically and strategically opportune for countries of both the northern and southern shores, as they contribute to the creation of a solid and cohesive region that can exert influence on the world stage;

5. As migration is a cross-cutting issue that can be effectively dealt with only if its economic, social, and human rights dimensions are also taken into consideration, the Committee urges a shift from an "administrative" to a more comprehensive approach, taking account both the humanitarian and socio-cultural as well as the economic dimension by facilitating the granting of visas on humanitarian, academic, artistic or professional grounds to engender an authentic culture of immigration in which it is made clear that migrants represent a social, cultural and economic asset not only for the receiving society but also for the society of origin; and condemns the criminal stereotyping of migrants and the political exploitation of the phenomenon;
6. Reiterates that, in the main, the income generated by foreigners in receiving countries exceeds the amount allocated to integration policies, and that the chief source of aid to developing countries comes from migrants' remittances, which amount to about three times the total value of aid that Western countries allocate to developing countries. In many countries, a third of households depend on these remittances to escape poverty;
7. Calls on Member States and EU institutions to facilitate migration flows from south to north and from north to south. A genuine policy of business co-localization will generate demand for mobility, particularly for training purposes. At the same time, the current increasing trend of north-south migration seems likely to continue thanks both to the combined effect of the entrepreneurial dynamism of the countries of the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean and to their accessibility;
8. Also calls for the development of partnerships of mobility and circular migration to facilitate the temporary entry of third-country nationals into the EU, so as, among other things, to stem the flow of illegal immigration, bring some of the positive effects of migration to the countries of origin and mitigate the negative effects of the "brain drain". The Committee therefore welcomes the mobility agreements between the EU and Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia, and hopes that the model will be extended to the entire Mediterranean region;
9. Calls, therefore, on Member States to take all necessary steps to ensure a better integration of migrants into receiving societies, fostering intercultural and interfaith dialogue, and actively involving them in the social, cultural and political life of local communities, as well as through a structured dialogue;
10. Emphasises that education is the most effective means of promoting integration and countering intolerance and discrimination. An intercultural perspective in schools and universities that promotes dialogue and exchanges with other cultures and religions is the most effective tool to overcome barriers and build a new vision of citizenship with shared values that nonetheless leave room for the respect of differences.
11. Notes that education is an essential tool for preventing social exclusion, whose dangerous consequences include the emergence of "foreign fighters". With respect to the foregoing, the Committee calls on Member

States and third countries to monitor social groups most at risk and to counter terrorist propaganda by promoting the inclusion and recognition of young people in society;

12. Therefore calls for education and training to become a priority for all countries of the Mediterranean area, which should be increasingly considered as a shared area of knowledge. This will require the enhancement of university, cultural and professional exchange programmes, the aim of which must be to increase the ease of access and improve synergies;
13. Accordingly welcomes "Erasmus+", which unites a series of EU educational exchange initiatives under the banner of a single programme, and marks a great step forward for the mobility of students, researchers and professors. The Committee, however, also stresses the indispensable need for greater effort to be expended on making the programme more accessible to those who experience most difficulty in taking part, especially with respect to the participation of women and young people;
14. Also welcomes the statement issued in Madrid in March 2015 by the Ministers of the 5+5 Dialogue nations regarding the synergies in the field of higher education, research and innovation to be generated by the launch of a 2015-2016 Work Programme, for which the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean has been invited to serve as the institution responsible for overseeing the implementation and follow-up of the proposed initiatives;
15. Given the importance of projects such as this and the constant liaison between our Assembly and the UfM Secretariat, with a view also to framing a common agenda for the Mediterranean, invites the Secretariat to report regularly to the Culture Committee of the PA-UfM regarding developments in the application of this and other "labelled" programmes, with particular regard to: the Euro-Mediterranean University in Fez, whose launch is planned for the 2015/2016 academic year; the High Opportunity for Mediterranean Executive Recruitment (HOMERe); the Development of Cultural and Creative Industries and Clusters in the Southern Mediterranean; Forming responsible citizens: Equal citizenship education to prevent school violence; Higher Education on Food Security and Rural Development;
16. With respect to the last mentioned of these, highlights the opportunity to connect the project with the World Expo 2015: "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life", and urges raising awareness of the significant and vital contribution that numerous immigrant workers provide to the agricultural economy of many countries through a campaign that will emphasise how foreign workers are an essential element to ensure the leading position of the Euro-Mediterranean food and agricultural industry in the world;
17. In order to make this recommendation effective, invites the European institutions to consider with attention the revision of the European Neighbourhood policy.