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## **Educational and cultural networks of communities living abroad**

Report<sup>1</sup>

Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media

Rapporteur: Mr Pierre-Yves LE BORGNI, France, Socialist Group

### **A. Draft resolution<sup>2</sup>**

1. The Parliamentary Assembly considers that communities living abroad ought to be seen as vital bridges between Europe's cultures and as an asset for the countries of residence and of origin. However, integration of migrants and diaspora communities represents a major challenge for European societies today.

2. Problems of marginalisation and exclusion are increasing across Europe. Weak identification both with the country of residence and of origin can create a sense of alienation particularly among second and third generations of young people in quest of identity and belonging. Many feel they are not perceived as equal citizens and can fall prey to fundamentalism, extremism and racism. Such anxieties can further deepen the divide between communities along their linguistic, cultural or religious difference.

3. The Assembly believes that the role of educational and cultural networks of communities living abroad is crucial to build cohesive societies strengthening pluralism and democracy in European societies. These networks play a key role in providing support, solidarity and mutual assistance; they provide a link to the culture of origin and an openness to multiple cultural affiliations; they nurture multilingualism; they provide cultural and educational support to children and youth of the second and third generation. Furthermore they can play an important role as mediators between diaspora communities and public authorities.

4. Notwithstanding, the Assembly considers that their role is not sufficiently understood, recognised and mobilised, particularly in the context of developing national and local strategies that aim at improving social cohesion and the spirit of "living together". Moreover, there is very little research at national and European level, in assessing cultural and social impact of diaspora communities on local societies.

5. The Assembly therefore recommends that governments and parliaments of the member and observer states of the Council of Europe, as well as of the states whose parliaments have Partner for Democracy status with the Assembly:

5.1. when concerned as countries of residence:

5.1.1. involve diaspora associations in the framing and implementation of policies concerning different aspects of the integration process, including educational, cultural and social integration;

5.1.2. consider setting up national platforms, to allow different Ministries and specialised institutions to work transversally and to facilitate drafting and implementation of national integration strategies through a permanent dialogue with organisations that reflect the interests

<sup>1</sup> Reference to committee: Doc. 13404, Reference 4028 of 7 March 2014

<sup>2</sup> Draft resolution adopted unanimously by the committee on 18 April 2016

and opinions of different diaspora communities in the country of residence; encourage the establishment of similar platforms at local level;

5.1.3. provide adequate financial support programs for diaspora associations, intended to help them to professionalise their activities, develop and consolidate their networks and uphold joint initiatives;

5.2. when concerned as countries of origin:

5.2.1. develop stronger partnerships between the relevant public bodies – in particular school establishments and universities, Embassies and cultural and linguistic centres – and diaspora organisations, seeking to encourage their action through knowledge sharing and concrete support (provision of teachers, educational materials and adequate premises) for language tuition and its recognition within the formal education system;

5.2.2. if that is not the case consider establishing a high level office ( possibly at government level) responsible for diaspora issues and/or the election of representatives of diaspora communities to national and, where appropriate, regional, parliaments;

5.3. in co-operation with the Council of Europe and the European Union, seek partnerships to:

5.3.1. set up a European parliamentary network on diaspora policies;

5.3.2. support the establishment by the diaspora communities of a European platform to collect data and assess cultural and social impact of diaspora communities on European societies promote the exchange of best practices and develop joint projects.

6. The Assembly, welcoming the Council of Europe Action Plan on Building Inclusive , Societies (2016-19), calls upon the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to include therein concrete initiatives in the sphere of culture and education which involve diaspora communities.

## B. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Le Borgn', rapporteur

### 1. Origin, scope and objectives of the report

1. In line with the motion, the present report emphasises that *“The communities living abroad are an asset for Europe, the host countries and the countries of origins. They make for valuable economic and human contacts and form vital bridges between Europe’s cultures and between them and the rest of the world. While communities living abroad rarely enjoy political representation, they are often organised in powerful voluntary associations which are particularly active in the field of education and culture. These offer a social framework through which migrants can find ways of integrating in their countries of residence, while retaining ties with their countries of origin.”*

2. We therefore proposed in the motion to *“consider the practical measures which could be taken at national and/or European level to support these voluntary educational and cultural networks and draw more effectively on their contribution to intercultural dialogue and social harmony.”*

3. In my report I pursue the important work undertaken by our colleague Mr Costa Neves in his recent report on *“Identities and diversity within intercultural societies”* (PACE Resolution 2005 (2014) and Recommendation 2049 (2014)).<sup>3</sup> My report also ties in with the Council of Europe activities to promote intercultural skills and to devise policies and instruments in the diversity field<sup>4</sup> and with the longstanding work of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons related to migrant diasporas.<sup>5</sup>

4. I seek to complement this most useful work looking at diaspora communities from a cultural perspective. I explore, in particular, how the voluntary-sector and cultural networks of the communities of Europeans living abroad can help people enjoy, preserve and transmit their culture – i.e. build up a sense of community – and at the same time become well integrated in their country of residence – i.e. promote inclusion, involvement in public and social life and democratic citizenship.

5. It is important for the purposes of this report to distinguish between first generation migrants who have recently arrived in Europe and more consolidated “diaspora” population, which may include first, second, third and even fourth generation.

6. The concept of “diaspora” is relatively vague. Diasporas are generally dispersed, diffuse, unrepresented and largely invisible. According to the OECD publication “Connecting with emigrants: a global profile of diasporas”, the term covers (in theory) all people who maintain some form of attachment to a specific country of origin in relation to their migration background. I would also like to recall the definition of diaspora given by Professor Gerard-François Dumont (which was also retained in the PACE report on *“Democratic participation of migrant diasporas”* (Doc. 13648)) describing it as “a community of individuals living together on the same territory and having in common the conviction or belief of belonging, themselves or their families, to another territory with which they maintain regular relations.” These people can be migrants themselves or the children or grand-children of migrants. Some of them have the citizenship of the country in question; others have multiple nationalities or only the citizenship of their country of residence. In practice, because of data limitations, quantitative analysis on diaspora is today limited and usually restricted to the first generation of migrants.

7. As statistics remain scarce for 47 member States of the Council of Europe, available data for the countries of the European Union show that about 17.9 million EU citizens live in another EU country, representing around 3% of the total population. 15% of marriages in EU are mixed marriages. In Switzerland for example approximately 30% of new born children have double nationality.

8. In the context of globalisation and greater mobility among European citizens, the notion of diaspora with a permanent place of residence may no longer prevail like it did in 20<sup>th</sup> century; for many people (often with higher level of education and skill) living abroad may mean a temporary residence, moving across countries in pursuit of international studies, jobs and careers, or suitable places for retirement. However, the more “traditional” forms of diaspora communities are also persisting, if not expanding, but their expectations

<sup>3</sup> <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewPDF.asp?FileID=21065&lang=en>.

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.coe.int/t/democracy/topics2\\_en.asp#Intercultural\\_dialogue](http://www.coe.int/t/democracy/topics2_en.asp#Intercultural_dialogue).

<sup>5</sup> In particular the recent report of Mr Andrea Rigoni (Doc. 13648) on *“Democratic participation of migrant diasporas”*; PACE Resolution 1696 (2009) and Recommendation 1890 (2009) on *“Engaging European diasporas: the need for governmental and intergovernmental responses”*; and PACE Recommendation 1410 (1999) on *“links between Europeans living abroad and their countries of origin”*.

are changing, as maintaining ties with the countries of origin has become much easier as a result of rapidly advancing and widely available information and communication technologies and low-cost travel.

9. Notwithstanding such positive changes, I believe that in most European countries the important role of voluntary-sector and cultural networks of diaspora communities in building up a sense of community and bridging different cultures is not sufficiently understood, recognised and mobilised. Particularly in the context of developing national and local strategies that aim at improving social cohesion and the spirit of “living together”, there is very little research at national and European level, in assessing cultural and social impact of diaspora communities on local societies. And yet this is becoming an urgent political priority for most European countries, as tensions, incomprehension and insecurity grow in society. Regrettably, these anxieties further deepen the divide between communities along their linguistic, cultural or religious difference.

## **2. Integration of diaspora communities in the country of residence**

10. Integration of diaspora communities in the country of residence is an important political issue at the core of the work of the PACE Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons. From the perspective of political rights, this Committee underlined the need for greater political participation of migrants, as a way to increase their capacity to promote and transfer democratic values, and recommended that member States elaborate migration policies which promote an institutional role for diasporas. This is something I wholeheartedly welcome as Member of Parliament representing my compatriots living overseas. For example, in his latest report adopted in March 2015 (Doc. 13648 11 December 2014) Mr Andrea Rigoni has dealt with democratic participation and voting rights of migrant diasporas.

11. I therefore wish to take a different angle in my report, looking at how could public authorities in the country of residence (at local, regional and national level) improve their integration policies through closer cooperation with educational and cultural networks of diaspora communities residing in the country. Voluntary associations represent an important point of reference for communities, thanks to their less bureaucratic and more informal nature.

12. I believe that closer and more institutionalised cooperation with voluntary organisations of diaspora communities would enable public authorities to reach more widely the first and second generation of immigrants and also in a more direct way – one which would create a basis for building long term relationships and trust. Moreover, I would argue that public authorities need to actively include diaspora organisations not just in the implementation, but in the framing of policies.

### *2.1 Role and functions of diaspora organisations*

13. Before looking closer into possible areas of cooperation, let me recall the main components of the integration process from the perspective of an individual. It consists of structural integration (acquisition of rights, access to jobs, education and housing); cultural integration (acquiring the core elements and competences of the culture of host society); social integration (building relations) and identification (feeling of belonging)<sup>6</sup>. Diaspora organisations tend to support and promote integration in all these areas while at the same time nurturing bonds with the country of origin.

14. However, approaches and goals of diaspora associations are not static and they change over time. They follow the dynamics of integration in the country of residence and changes in their relations with the country of origin. When the settlement of diaspora community is a recent phenomenon and most migrants are first generation, organisations aim to satisfy primary needs and priorities. When the community becomes well integrated in the country of residence, needs and priorities change; thus also the roles and the structures of organisations change.

15. In addition, the way in which organisations and networks actually contribute to build integration and social relations across borders can significantly diverge between diaspora groups depending on their history, political or cultural approach, individual characteristics and self-perception of people.

16. Counselling and assistance activities, as well as mediation with public authorities, are particularly relevant for those who have recently arrived. Voluntary organisations, due to their informal structure, are easier to reach than embassies and consulates and frequently serve as initial points of contact. They provide useful information and carry out networking activities. They are important not only to connecting individuals,

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<sup>6</sup> Cfr. Roger Bauböck (2006), Introduction, in Id. (eds.), Migration and Citizenship. Legal Status, Rights and Political Participation, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press: 9-13.

but also to strengthening the community bonds. Today, websites and social media provide additional information and networking tools.

17. Rombel, association of Romanians in Belgium<sup>7</sup>, launched in 2009 a 120 page orientation “Guide for Romanians in Belgium”, as a very useful tool to help the integration of expatriates, while also maintaining cultural links to Romania. The online guide had 80.000 downloads. In addition, 5.000 printed samples were distributed. The association provides a website platform on all aspects of social life in Belgium and promotes networking to involve small isolated communities of expats. There are 120.000 visitors per year.

18. Albinfo, Actualités des Albanophones en Suisse<sup>8</sup>, defines itself as “service and news platform” which was established in 2009 as a trilingual website. The website reached 1.055.109 visits in May 2015, having a strong impact both in Switzerland and in the Balkan media. Services include: putting expatriates in contact with authorities and companies; uploading a database of associations, companies and services; answering a vast number of personal enquiries; etc. Albinfo cooperates with three Swiss federal institutions in charge of migration: Federal Department of Justice and Police – Secretary of Migration, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and Federal Commission for Migration Issues. The association promotes the integration of migrants in Switzerland, based on the assumption that identity is not exclusive and that the media have a relevant role in influencing a change in identity. Albinfo tries to facilitate communication between the “two realities” of migrants (country of residence and country of origin). It also cooperates with other communities of expatriates and regularly organises conferences<sup>9</sup>, with the aim to embed diaspora communities in the political discussion in the country of residence.

## 2.2 Public authorities: policy approaches to integration

19. From the perspective of many states, integration has been traditionally conceived in terms of assimilation, which leads to a progressive loss of links with the country of origin, or pluralism, which allows for a coexistence of different collective identities in the same society, where no change in identity and cultural belonging is required. Today, policy approaches in most European countries are evolving seeking to deal with new forms of mobility, and the explosion of migration flows. The challenge is to build social cohesion on the basis of cultural diversity and positive interaction between people with different and often multiple cultural affiliations. It does not run counter to bonding with the country of origin.

20. Depending on the structure of the state, the issue of integration of immigrant communities may be the competence of the state (centralised states) or of regional or local authorities (decentralised states). In France for example, the role of national institutions is predominant. In other countries, like Italy, policies related to integration of immigrants are largely administered by local and regional authorities. Also, local institutions can more easily cooperate with diaspora organisations and networks, as most of them are active at local level.

## 2.3 Examples of cooperation between public authorities and diaspora organisations

### 2.3.1 Local advisory councils in Italy

21. Town councils of foreign citizens have been created in many Italian cities in order to provide an institutional form of representation for foreigners, who do not have the right to vote. Immigrant councils are advisory bodies, with members who are directly elected by foreign residents or nominated among representatives of diaspora organisations.

22. Such advisory councils are intended, in particular: 1) to empower non-EU citizens by giving them a voice; 2) to promote and support the activities of diaspora organisations; 3) to encourage initiatives and projects aimed at integration of foreign citizens, and to remove every form of discrimination; 4) to build a bridge between local institutions and diaspora communities; 5) to recollect and discuss problems and needs of foreign citizens and to include them in the policy-making process on issues such employment, health, housing, schools, public transport, etc.

### 2.3.2. Decentralised cooperation in Germany

23. In Germany, diaspora organisations may contribute to integration on the national level by participating in the integration summits organised in the Federal Chancellery and by working together with the federal

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.rombel.com>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.albinfo.ch>

<sup>9</sup> For example Round Table “The Balkans: 20 years after Dayton – review and prospects”, University of Fribourg, 2 November 2015; Conference “Political changes and democracy in the Balkans: what contribution can diaspora make?”

commissioner for integration on the national integration strategy and the national integration action plan. Most German federal states, especially those with a high proportion of migrants, regularly consult diaspora organisations. For instance they invite them to annual integration conferences (North Rhine-Westphalia, Hessen, Saarland) and include them in the policy-making process. The means through which migrant associations can influence policy and decision making is not always specified. Larger states offer specific (financial) support programmes for diaspora organisations (e.g. North Rhine-Westphalia), other try to integrate them in regular funding schemes (e.g. Hessen). However, not every federal state is able to provide funding due to legal issues and financial shortcomings (e.g. Schleswig-Holstein). Most integration commissioners of the German Länder as well as local authorities and integration centres work closely together with diaspora associations though their cooperation is not institutionalised.

24. The initiative of the Ministry for Integration in Saarland can be considered as an example of good practice in the German context, as it represents the attempt to institutionalize cooperation with diaspora organisations. The Ministry prepared a "Declaration on the Integration Policy in Saarland" which has been signed by diaspora associations, religious institutions, chambers of commerce, charities and local councils. The Minister regularly consults and visits voluntary organisations in order to demonstrate presence and explain the Land integration policy and its support programs, also encouraging associations to network among one another. Most associations are open and support an intercultural approach. The role of the Land Minister is crucial to alleviate the risk that migrant associations isolate themselves by keeping to their own ethnic minority by encouraging them to see themselves as a bridge between diaspora and the majority society.

25. Since the change in German migration policies in the late 1990s, a shift can be observed from isolated and closed diaspora communities to well-integrated organisations seeking dialogue and interaction. Many associations have expanded their activities to cover integration projects, founded larger umbrella organisations and sought cooperation with the authorities and institutions.

### 2.3.3 Swiss model

26. The Swiss model of cooperation with diaspora organisations is highly institutionalised. The Swiss Confederation takes an interministerial transversal approach, based on well-integrated coordination between the Federal Department of Justice and Police, which deals with integration, and the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, which deals with migration inflows by supporting projects in countries of origin. Cooperation is also established with other Departments, which are in charge of specific aspects of integration (e.g. Cultural Department, Department of Health).

27. Transversal and strategic cooperation is also reflected in the funding of diaspora organisations. Projects are not merely submitted for funding but negotiated together with the respective public authorities in order to ensure a positive outcome of the project for the whole society. Diaspora associations approach public authorities with their ideas, so that they may elaborate a concrete plan together, harmonising their expectations with the general integration strategies and structures.

28. An example of good practice, the GGG Ausländerberatung (Foreign Consultant Agency) of Basel<sup>10</sup> provides information, consulting and mediation in 15 languages about various legal and social issues and help individuals to contact public authorities, institutions and employers. The issues may include: employment, residence permit, citizenship, insurance, housing, rent and questions concerning taxes, financial matters, family issues, education, health etc. The GGG Ausländerberatung Basel regularly holds information seminars directly in the premises of diaspora associations.

29. The GGG Ausländerberatung also supports the coordination of practices in different countries. For example, a platform was created to exchange best practices, which provide ideas and inspiration. Cooperation is not only established between diaspora organisations but also with local/native organisations that are involved in exchange projects with border countries (Germany and France).

## 3. Preserving and transmitting cultural identity of the country of origin

*"If we do not give young immigrants a homeland [...], they will create an imaginary one in their own minds. Fundamentalism and fanaticism will do the rest: exclusion often leads to crime and, sometimes, to terrorism."*  
Michel Rocard

30. While, on the one hand, the presence of communities of different origins raises the difficult issue of integration in the countries of residence, on the other hand, for different personal, political or historic

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ggg-ab.ch/angebote-fuer-privatpersonen.html>

reasons, many expatriates may experience difficulty to preserve their cultural and linguistic ties with the country of origin, and they may struggle to transmit them to the next generations. These are interconnected issues as the integration process very much depends on the ability to structure one's own identity. I believe that nurturing the plural identity and cultural ties with the country of origin does not imply denying the integration into the life of the country of residence; on the contrary it strengthens (plural) identity of each individual and gives a solid basis for a successful integration.

### 3.1 *Second and third generations*

31. The needs of second and third generations deeply differ from the needs of first generations. The challenge is how to conciliate full integration in the country where they are born and grew up with the preservation of ties with the country of origin of their parents or grandparents, achieving a fine balance between two cultures and, in certain cases, several cultures.

32. The second generation can be defined as children born by immigrants or born in the country of origin and brought to the country of residence before the age of six<sup>11</sup>. They can preserve the culture and the language hearted by their parents while integrating and bonding with the country of residence, which is their home country. The question where to place the "home country" seems at to be at the core of the problem, particularly if the "host society" is not sufficiently open to fully embrace the second and third generations as equal citizens.

33. Their integration represents a big challenge and a change for European societies. However integration is not always successful and problems of marginalisation and exclusion are increasing in many European countries. Weak identification both with the host society and with the diaspora community creates a sense of alienation among second and third generations, particularly for young people in quest of identity and belonging, who can be easily attracted to fundamentalism, extremism and racism.

34. The search for strong identities leads many to embrace imaginary identities, using references to the past and to the common roots that are distorted. In need of belonging they focus on difference, drawing borders and separating themselves from the mainstream society. Such deep malaise and segregation can easily spark cultural clashes.

### 3.2 *Living together: the perspective of composite or hybrid identities*

35. The role of diaspora organisations and networks is therefore crucial to positively promote the perspective of composite or hybrid identities and to overcome the prevalence of nostalgic, or even regressive, approach to the identity and values of the country of origin. The construction of meaning and value by individuals is largely shaped by the cultural codes they share with the groups they belong to. Open and forward looking diaspora organisations can play a key role in nurturing "composite identities", no more restricted to pre-defined collective identities related to particular ethnic and religious groups.

36. Among diaspora organisations there are many that work with second and third generations, focusing on community and networking, cultural activities, education and language tuition.

37. The association "*A Ta Turquie*" is a good example of a small independent association with limited resources, which succeeded in promoting the encounter between Turkish and French culture and values, building common ground. The association was founded in France in 1989 with the objective to promote Turkish culture for a wider public as well as for young people of Turkish origin. Secularism was the most important trait of the organisation, which demanded an absolutely neutral stance towards Turkey and towards political, religious and ethnical aspects. The association differs from other Turkish organisations, as most people of Turkish origin tend to look for organisations with a clear political and/or religious stand.

38. The association aims to spread knowledge about Turkey (overcoming stereotypes) and to encourage and value the artistic and literary production of talented young migrants. It edits a bilingual bimonthly magazine *Oluşum/Genèse* and manages its website<sup>12</sup>, where general news and information on projects and upcoming events are regularly published. The association also carries out research on the Turkish community in France and in Europe focusing on integration. One of the most important projects undertaken

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<sup>11</sup> Mark Thomson and Maurice Crul (2007), The Second Generation in Europe and the United States: How is the Transatlantic Debate Relevant for Further Research on the European Second Generation? *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 33:7, 1025 – 1041.

<sup>12</sup> [www.ataturquie.fr](http://www.ataturquie.fr)

by the association was a research project on mediation activities to be put in place for the Turkish diaspora community.

39. In Germany nowadays, the Turkish people prefer to define themselves as German ethnic minorities, rather than immigrants or diaspora. The main goal of their voluntary organisations is to act as a bridge between Germany and Turkey, and to create a positive bi-cultural identity by establishing a close social link to the country of residence without losing the connection to the country of origin and its culture. In this respect, they adopt an open transnational approach, arguing in favour of multi-layered, inclusive identities as opposed to the traditional concept of integration.

### 3.3 *Saturday schools and multilingualism*

40. Multilingualism is an asset, both for individuals and for the society. I believe that countries of residence can only get culturally and economically enriched by the spread of multilingualism. Diaspora associations play an important part in informal language tuition of second and third generations. However, they generally lack institutional support, funding and in some cases adequate professional skill for language tuition.

41. "Saturday Schools" is an umbrella organisation created in 1990 in the United Kingdom. The main goal of the twenty two Saturday Schools is to teach German children of German background living in the UK. The teaching of German is important for them, as children of German families living in UK are much less exposed to German at home and they would lose their language skills without special tuition. The schools mainly rely on voluntary work, even though they receive support from the German Embassy and the Goethe Institute. Due to lack of regular funding, they are not sustainable with frequent opening and closure. This informal umbrella organisation substitutes for the fact that Germany has not implemented in the UK a stringent policy to spread the German language and provide language education for expatriates.

42. By contrast, in the UK countries with a history of emigration tend to be more prone to invest in language tuition, as they expect that their expatriates will return. Portuguese and Spanish children, for example, can get free language tuition in many schools in London for a certain number of hours, thanks to the cooperation agreements between institutions and diaspora organisations.

43. I believe that native language tuition provided through diaspora organisations could work in a more institutionalised way within the mainstream education system. If the promotion of bilingualism and multilingualism is a shared objective, the implementation cannot be assigned only to diaspora organisations, but requires an active involvement of state institutions. Stronger partnerships should be built between institutions of the country of residence (government, school administration), Embassies or other institutions of country of origin (cultural or linguistic centres), and diaspora organisations in order to fund teachers, educational materials and adequate premises for language tuition and to integrate it in the formal education system (primary, secondary schools), involving also local/national children. This would be an important step towards building multilingual societies in Europe.

44. Native language tuition ought to be better supported and considered not only a resource for diaspora communities but more generally for Europe, as extraordinary tools to achieve better conditions for mutual understanding and living together. A consistent language policy in Europe in terms of promoting and supporting community languages, having access to appropriate language qualifications and official acknowledgement of language skills (exams) could be linked to the European framework of languages.

45. Bilingualism is a way to overcome the presumption that there is a trade-off between identification with the culture of the country of residence and preserving the culture of the country of origin. Instead, by actively encouraging bilingualism and even multilingualism governments can help second and third generations to achieve multiple belongings.

### 3.4 *Diaspora engagement policies*

46. With growing global economy, trade and mobility, governments and institutions in emigration countries are now taking greater interest in diaspora communities. They began to adopt different tools to maintain the relationship with expatriates, including dual citizenship. Support for integration in the receiving country has increased as well, as proved by the presence and the role of dedicated overarching ministries, agencies or ministerial departments.

47. In Turkey for example, the Prime Minister created Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities in 2010 as the umbrella organisation in charge of coordinating Turkey's complex structure of institutional bodies dealing with the diaspora. Some countries introduced strategies and funds to ensure the institutional representation of diaspora.



48. It is important to underline, however, that many diaspora associations wish to preserve their independence and do not accept to depend or to be associated with the government-led institutions in the country of origin as they fear political interference. Such dissociation seems more apparent in cases where the country of residence and the country of origin differ substantially in their cultural, religious or political history. It is important to acknowledge here that modern expatriate communities are hybrids; they look to their origins while also looking forward. Therefore they are not citizens who can be “governed” as an extra-territorial extension of national population. On the contrary, they consist of civil societies and associations with multiple cultural affiliations to sustain, and for this reason they require special forms of partnership to maintain the feeling of trust and confidence.

49. In this context, the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad offers, in my view, a good example. This organisation has been representing the interests of Swiss nationals living abroad for almost 100 years. Although politically independent and neutral, it has close links with the state. The organisation is first and foremost an advisory body, with the ability to issue resolutions, guidelines and opinions. Its secretariat (25 staff) has regular contact with umbrella organisations in the countries of residence and undertakes four main tasks: to inform (mainly via a magazine which comes out six times a year and a newsletter); to advise Swiss nationals living abroad and bring them together; to develop a programme for young people abroad (by offering them activities in their country of origin as well as educational guidance); and to engage in lobbying representing the interests of Swiss abroad. The main challenge for the Organisation is to show that the Swiss living abroad are a potential asset at home.

50. The magazine "Swiss Review" informs Swiss living abroad of the Swiss current themes and provides specific information for the votes and elections. The Swiss Review also periodically contains regional pages that aggregate information related to specific countries or groups of countries and it is published in four languages: French, German, English and Spanish. Once a year, the organisation holds a convention that brings approximately 400 participants around a topic that interests them and government representatives in countries of residence. Since 2010, the OSE has set up a social network<sup>13</sup>, which now has over 30.000 members.

51. The organisation implements specific projects for young people, from leisure activities to training. It also gives youth the opportunity to participate in the federal parliament and to attend a seminar week dedicated to the theme of the Congress of the Swiss Abroad. The OSE has close ties with “Education Suisse” to support Swiss young people living abroad who wish to study in Switzerland.

52. The OSA is recognized as the official voice for the Swiss abroad. The organisation lobbies in parliament and exerts influence on legislation, through the Council of the Swiss Abroad, which has 120 delegates and 20 diaspora members living in Switzerland. Another point of reference is the parliamentary intergroup "Swiss abroad", bringing together 100 federal parliamentarians with an interest in issues of the Swiss abroad.

### 3.5 *Cultural centres as spaces for inter-cultural encounters*

53. Cultural centres can also play a strategic role in promoting inter-cultural dialogue, integration, multilingualism and pluri-culturalism, associating diaspora organisations in a less bureaucratic way. Cultural centres, such as the Goethe Institute, Dante Alighieri Institute, Institut français and the British Council, were created at the end of the nineteenth century in order to preserve and promote national language, identity and culture of citizens living abroad, especially in colonies. In the twentieth century, the focus shifted from cultural imperialism to cultural diplomacy.

54. Nowadays, cultural centres pursue various other goals, besides promoting national culture abroad. Among these, expanding the use of their language and retaining links with diasporas. They have the potential to become spaces of inter-cultural encounters, holding activities that involve both diaspora and citizens of the host country. Such activities can help diaspora be visible and recognised by the host society, providing them with opportunities to introduce and value the culture of their country of origin and to creatively interact with other cultures.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> [www.swisscommunity.org](http://www.swisscommunity.org)

<sup>14</sup> Cfr. Sonia Gsir, Elsa Mescoli (2015), Maintaining national culture abroad: countries of origin, culture and diaspora, INTERACT Conceptual Paper, RR 2015/10.

#### 4. Future perspectives

55. Let me draw on the conclusion made by Mr Costa Neves in his report on "*Identities and diversity within intercultural societies*" that cultural diversity is becoming an essential condition for human society, brought about not only by increased mobility and cross-border migration, but also by the cultural effects of globalisation. As a result, new generations with multiple cultural references and composite identities will inevitably prevail in most European societies in the future, no longer restricted to homogenous collective identity. This scenario is not that of multicultural societies, where collective identities coexist, but that of composite or hybrid identities, where diversity coexists inside individuals.

56. I share a strong conviction with Mr Costa Neves that this deep societal change urgently requires a rethinking of the processes, mechanisms and relationships that are needed to counter racism and intolerance and strengthen pluralism and democracy in Europe.

##### 4.1 *Political recognition: diaspora as a bridge between cultures*

57. In this respect, the first and particularly the second, third and fourth generations of diaspora populations - who carry within them different cultural references - can act decisively as leading actors of cultural change. They represent not only a bridge between cultures, but can enrich the society further by synthesising new ones. However, in order to feel and act positively they need support and due recognition. At political level, we need to value the role of different cultures in the building of national identities and of a European identity. These identities are today evolving and ought to positively feature diversity, pluralism and respect for human rights and dignity.

##### 4.2 *The issue of funding, sustainability and resilience*

58. The role of diaspora associations and networks in bridging cultures and building up of a cohesive society (living together) is still not adequately understood, recognised and encouraged.

59. Most organisations are based on voluntary work, strong enthusiasm and commitment of a few individuals. While they actively seek cooperation, they generally lack adequate structures, sufficient and sustainable funding and human resources. Despite the fact that they are increasingly entrusted with important tasks related to integration, education and culture, most associations desperately lack financial support and struggle to "survive". Some have even ceased to exist.

60. Many are forced to spend long hours competing for basic funding and advertising their projects. As a consequence, it is difficult for them to strike the right balance between time spent on concrete project work and advocacy. Consequently to important cuts in public expenditure in most European countries, they increasingly depend on international funding with cumbersome procedures and requirements that are often perceived as too complex and time consuming. Smaller associations complain about lack of information on EU support programs and funding schemes or other supranational institutions and indicate that they are discouraged by bureaucratic procedures.

61. I believe that within national and local strategies for integration, public authorities should provide adequate financial support programs for diaspora associations in order to draw on this important resource and reach diaspora communities more effectively. A more systematic form of cooperation and funding would improve cooperation between associations, helping them to professionalise their activities, prevent fragmentation and better structure joint initiatives and events.

##### 4.3 *Cooperation between diaspora organisations and public authorities*

62. Local authorities are often the main partners for diaspora associations. However, in most cases this partnership remains informal. In order to make it sustainable and effective in the long term, I believe that these partnerships ought to have a more institutionalised form. This could be achieved for example through setting up of advisory councils and election of representatives of diasporas in local councils.

63. There is widespread consensus among representatives of diaspora organisations that the role of public authorities in valuing and supporting their activities and in promoting integration policies through closer cooperation with educational and cultural networks of different communities could be much higher.

64. Diaspora organisations could play an important role of mediators between diaspora communities and public authorities. The creation of a public interface, a platform for exchange between public authorities and diaspora associations, would provide a point of reference and make these partnerships more structured,

more transparent and efficient. Such platforms would at the same time create opportunity for building synergies between different diaspora communities locally.

65. Likewise, a public interface (platform) could be established nationally to allow different Ministries and specialised institutions to work transversally and to facilitate drafting and implementation of national integration strategies through a permanent dialogue with organisations that reflect the interests and opinions of different diaspora communities in the country of residence. The issue, however, is to address the problem of representativity, as diaspora associations are very different with regard to political stands and value systems they defend, to the topics they cover and the services they provide. It is also important to avoid the risk to empower organisations which lack a real constituency and reflect the personal opinion and interests of a few.

66. With increased mobility, many countries in Europe are nowadays becoming both countries of immigration and emigration, having to deal with integration of different diaspora communities residing in the country and also maintaining links with expatriate communities living abroad. They will increasingly need to coordinate many different policies and initiatives to deepen integration nationally by opening up a more systematic dialogue with diaspora communities and, at the same time, to help second and third generations establish connections with countries of origin of their parents which has the potential to create opportunities and benefits to the country of residence.

67. Moreover, governments need to develop policies and partnerships also with expatriate organisations. Electing representatives of diaspora communities (with national or dual citizenship) to national parliaments may represent a viable solution to give voice to these communities living abroad. For example, in France, Croatia, Italy and Portugal, the legislation provides political representation of citizens living abroad in national parliaments.

#### 4.4 Synergies at European level

68. At the European level, the concept of “diaspora” and “expatriates” ought to be fully integrated in European policies. A possible solution could be the appointment of commissioners in charge of relations with diaspora communities at national and European level, following the example of the Swedish Commissioner responsible for European expatriates.

69. A European platform for diaspora associations, committed to coordination and exchange of best practices could play a strategic role. Several organizations state that regular contact among diaspora organizations is particularly important, because they face similar issues and questions. The annual conference of the Scandinavian umbrella organisations for expatriates could serve as a model for a larger conference organised at the European level.

70. Dialogue and cooperation should be further promoted by holding meetings at national and European level and by regular exchange through online platforms, easy to access, and cost-effective, devoted to sharing information, holding debates, and the exchange of best practices. On-line platforms could contain general information on funding and requirements of associations, material for cultural programmes, case studies with experiences of specific diaspora communities. The sharing of information and a better communication could also encourage different local diaspora communities to work together, for instance by launching joined cross-national events and projects.

71. The Council of Europe could facilitate coordination and promote the exchange of good practices in the cultural and educational fields. I believe that the information provided at the level of the European Union and the Council of Europe could help expatriates and other citizens on their rights and opportunities and promote a positive image of cultural diversity.

## 5. Conclusions

72. Facing tensions in society and under pressure to react quickly, governments today review their policies and make important political choices: whether to strengthen integration and national identity? Or whether to build social cohesion on the basis of cultural diversity and positive interaction? As Mr Costa Neves already argued in his report on *“Identities and diversity within intercultural societies”*, cultural diversity is a social reality in most parts of Europe and therefore inevitable. The question remains how to treat it positively. I share his belief that in this new cultural era, we will need to innovate and multiply the “laboratories for cultural exchange”, to nurture cultural diversity and with time develop a European cultural space that will encourage creative expression of multiple cultural affiliations and identities.

73. Associating voluntary-sector and cultural networks of diaspora communities in this process will be therefore vital. They play a key role in providing support, solidarity and mutual assistance; they provide a link to the culture of origin and an openness to multiple cultural affiliations; they nurture multilingualism; they animate cultural and community life; they provide cultural and educational support to children and youth of the second and third generation; they positively value the "difference" of plural identities; with social activities and cultural events they can open to local society, develop common projects and create opportunities for interaction.

74. However, beside many opportunities in bridging cultures, there are also risks of segregation, nurturing the "old values" that have not necessarily evolved with contemporary societies; risks of growing extremism, fundamentalism and intolerance. The questions are therefore: which type of policies in the field of culture, education and youth should be developed at local, national and European level to ensure that opportunities prevail over risks? And how to build synergies?

75. I believe that countries of residence will need to pull resources to acquire more accurate quantitative and qualitative data on diaspora communities (to get to know them better) to open up a dialogue with them and to develop suitable mechanisms and partnerships to involve diaspora communities in a more systematic and structured way. In chapter 4, I have considered some practical measures which could be taken at local, national and European level.

76. Likewise, countries of origin could also largely benefit from stronger ties with expatriate communities that may generate closer cultural, economic and political links with other countries and having also the potential to contribute with investments, with transfer of knowledge, with new cultural models and skills to socio-economic development at home. There is a growing importance of young people of the second and third generation who have greater mobility, dual culture in particular with respect to language and who are ready to connect with countries of origin of their parents. However, their involvement will hinge very much on economic, social and political conditions in the country of origin, as well as on the type of partnership and the extent of support that is provided to them.

77. Today my own country France is under pressure to react quickly to terrorist massacres perpetrated in Paris on 13 November 2015. Besides the issue of security and combating terrorism in the short term, we need to look also at prevention in the long term. I strongly believe that as a matter of political priority in France but equally throughout Europe, we need to engage in more concerted action, take stock of existing integration policies and best practices, exchange experience, pull resources and cooperate more intensively to build better synergy with voluntary sector of diaspora communities nationally, bilaterally between countries of emigration and immigration, and multilaterally at European level.