

Final Conclusions, Kyiv regional Conference, 24 September 2018

1. Background of the regional meeting

The Parliamentary Network on Diaspora Policies met, at the invitation of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in Kyiv, on 24 September 2018, for its second Regional Meeting of 2018 in order to discuss the subject of “**Platform for co-operation policies: role of diaspora associations and synergies with public authorities**”.

2. General conclusions

Diaspora members can make a positive contribution to the development of their countries and communities of origin in many ways, including by the promotion and transfer of their cultural and democratic values, norms and practices. They can also facilitate the integration of, and provide support to, migrants in their countries of destination by upholding their economic, political, legal and cultural interests, by helping them to cope with psychological factors which relate to language barriers, loss of usual social networks, legal uncertainty and inequality of access to social welfare.

The State authorities can benefit from close cooperation with diaspora associations and should therefore ensure necessary conditions for better engagement of diasporas. All public authorities, at national, regional and local levels, as well as international organisations, should take account of good practices and experiences aimed at enhancing relations with diaspora associations, as well as to carry out regular and rigorous evaluations of diaspora engagement strategies and thereby endeavour to foster a culture of critical reflection and constructive reform in this area.

3. Thematic conclusions and recommendations from the panel discussions

After having heard the presentations by panellists followed by intensive debates, the members of the Network reached the following conclusions and made the recommendations below:

a. With respect to the role of parliaments in the development of legal bases for cooperation with diasporas:

- diasporas could usefully be involved in policy making, in particular concerning questions of citizenship, as well as those concerning diaspora members', economic, social and cultural rights;
- diaspora members could be granted the right to elect their representative to the Parliament of the country of origin of which they are nationals;
- the electoral legislation should be simplified with regard to external voting, including the extension of proxy, postal and e-voting to diasporas;
- parliamentary hearings on diaspora-related topics could be encouraged to promote exchange of experience and good practices;
- remittances flows should be encouraged through the adoption of legislation and policies to facilitate and regulate them, and by the use of modern technologies, while avoiding double taxation and creating a legal framework to allow effective use of remittances in the most effective investment areas.

b. With respect to the role of governments in creating the conditions for a greater contribution of diasporas to their countries of origin

- data and information concerning nationals living abroad could be collected, processed and made use of by the governments in developing diaspora-related strategies;

- institutions in charge of diaspora could be created in order to show the State's commitment to engage diaspora in national policies and facilitate its implementation;
- embassies and consulates of the countries of origin could be used for building confidence with and engaging diasporas through the provision of specific services and useful information, as well as targeted co-operation;
- national institutions dealing with diasporas should be encourage to cooperate with countries' representations abroad;
- governments could draw up road maps to support the engagement of diaspora networks and associations and organise regular formal and informal meetings with the representatives of diaspora associations, including by using the opportunities provided by new information technologies;
- governments could involve diaspora members in the preparation and implementation of solutions to crisis and emergency situations, as well as post-crisis and reconstruction efforts;
- policies could be introduced to encourage the permanent or temporary return of diaspora members to their countries of origin in order to benefit from their knowledge and skills acquired abroad;
- returning diaspora members could benefit from taxation, retirement and other economic advantages;
- the movement of diaspora members could be facilitated via various measures such as multiple entry visas, long-term residence permits, entry concessions, etc.;
- diasporas' entrepreneurship could be promoted and fostered through access to investment information, clear customs and import incentives;
- diaspora members' diplomas and education certificates obtained abroad could be efficiently recognised by the country of origin.

c. In respect of the cooperation between local authorities and diaspora associations

- development strategies created at local level could include specific provisions for increasing the link between diaspora members and their communities of origin;
- local authorities could promote the involvement of diaspora members abroad into the discussion of local policies and decisions by disseminating information and maintaining contacts with them and their associations;
- local authorities should facilitate the involvement of diaspora members in the development of the communities of origin, in particular in areas like business creation, education, tourism, social services;
- local authorities could foster the link between diaspora members and their communities of origin by supporting the organisation of cultural and social events;
- an online local Diaspora Toolkit could be elaborated, to help local authorities to reach out and engage with their communities overseas;
- local authorities could co-operate with their diasporas for establishing and ensuring the good operation of cross-border, inter-territorial and city-to-city co-operation agreements;

4. Election of the new Network Co-ordinator

The members of the Network elected Ms/Mr X as new Co-ordinator of the Parliamentary Network on Diaspora Policies. They thanked warmly Mr Andrea Rigoni for his work as Co-ordinator of the Network from September 2017 – September 2018.

5. Other decisions and final remarks

The Regional meeting discussed and adopted the final Conclusions.

Participants thanked the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine for its invitation and organisational support and the Swiss Confederation for its generous contribution which made the creation and the work of the Network possible.

Network members invited the Secretariat to explore, in the light of financial conditions and depending upon the existence of a formal invitation from a national Parliament, the possibility to hold the next Regional meeting in spring 2019.