



AS/Mig/Inf (2017) 31 FINAL

8 December 2017

aminfdoc31 FINAL_2017

Original English

Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons

International Migrants' Day, 18 December

Declaration adopted by the Committee on 8 December

On International Migrants' Day, the PACE Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons calls on Council of Europe member States to put the humanitarian situation of migrants, refugees and IDPs back at the top of their agendas. Council of Europe countries must work more urgently and more coherently to finally end the migration management crisis, brought on by structural inadequacies in dealing with the sharp increase in migratory flows since 2011, while addressing the root causes of irregular migration.

Almost 3 000 people are estimated to have died or gone missing at sea in 2017 and another 57 were reported dead along land routes in Europe or at Europe's borders. Many women and girls fleeing war and famine are victims of trafficking, and more than 15 200 unaccompanied and separated children arrived in Europe just this year. The way in which these highly vulnerable people are treated, from their reception to accommodation conditions and basic assistance, is often in contradiction with the values and humanitarian standards to which our nations have subscribed and betrays their human dignity.

Furthermore, many asylum seekers still face obstacles in accessing fair asylum procedures, in line with international human rights standards, in particular the Geneva Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights. In this respect, the Committee calls on the member States of the Council of Europe to fully comply with their human rights obligations.

The continuing lack of solidarity with countries receiving the highest numbers of refugees, the reactions of "shutdown" of some governments and the reluctance to improve mechanisms such as swift asylum processing (including efficient and fair returns of people to whom asylum is not granted) and to facilitate family reunification come at a great cost to human dignity and internal social cohesion, as well as actually increasing national expenditure. The European Union's focus on border security and its cooperation with certain non-EU countries where human rights are not secured are worrying developments, as they risk relegating humanitarian considerations to second place.

Internal displacement within national borders is another important dimension of migration for Council of Europe member States: global figures show that at the end of 2016 conflict and violence had created 40.3 million IDPs. The problems of the more than two million internally displaced persons in Europe do not receive the attention they deserve. More efforts are needed by all member States, international organisations and NGOs to ensure respect for the rights of IDPs under international humanitarian law.

The Assembly has also constantly emphasised the real added value of migrants to host communities and the necessity of renewing Europe's dwindling population while ensuring cultural and social diversity. The sustainability, progress and future development of our societies depend upon successful integration policies.

The PACE Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons draws attention to all these issues in its reports and debates and ensures the relevance of its work by maintaining constant dialogue with international organisations on the ground, such as UNHCR, IOM, MSF and Human Rights Watch. Parliamentarians from member and partner countries will continue to disseminate the Parliamentary Assembly's recommendations and promote best practices at home.