

# CONCLUSIONS

## of the Regional meeting of the Parliamentary Network on Diaspora Policies

### 1. Background of the Regional meeting

The Rabat meeting of the Parliamentary Network on Diaspora Policies (PNDP), organised by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) at the invitation of the Parliament of Morocco, was the first regional thematic meeting of the network launched in Lisbon, on 7-8 September 2017.

The meeting brought together around 80 participants from 22 countries, including Diaspora NGOs, MPs, high level government officials, experts and diplomatic representatives who came together in order to share their experience on the topic "Which type of integration of migrants can be applied to prevent radicalisation: the role of parliaments and Diaspora associations".

### 2. General challenges concerning Diaspora

The world is becoming increasingly connected: persons, goods, capitals, services and ideas travel more and more freely. Migration can be an asset and an opportunity for both countries of origin and host countries. Diaspora communities can contribute to the development of commercial links, business relations, and transfer of knowledge. As such, Diasporas can constitute a very useful social, cultural and economic bridge between countries.

The rapid increase in migrations has however led to debates on inclusion and discrimination, integration and segregation, multiculturalism and xenophobia, freedom of speech and hate speech, freedom of religion and religious fundamentalism etc.

Discrimination and exclusion can lead to radicalisation and extremism, which can in their turn bring even more discrimination and exclusion. This vicious circle can only be broken by a co-ordinated effort of all stakeholders, international, governmental and non-governmental.

Diasporas need to be actively involved in the policy-planning process in host countries. Countries of origin could also promote diaspora involvement, providing them with double nationality or special legal status and facilitating their free movement and economic activity.

### 3. Conclusions of the panel discussions

#### a. *Cultural and religious differences in the context of integration of migrants*

##### i. *Current situation and challenges*

Migrants representing different cultures and religions bring diversity in the society and contribute to cultural exchanges. However, a lack of knowledge of the host society, its culture, language and traditions creates major obstacles for migrants' social and economic inclusion.

There is growing interest in questions relating to intercultural dialogue in a European and global context where efforts to establish closer ties and collaboration between communities are constantly imperilled by lack of understanding, high tension and even barbarous acts of hatred and violence.

Violence, racism and hate speech are not only barriers to migrants' integration but felonies in their own right and provoke an increased fear of those who have different origins, beliefs or cultures which, in its turn, leads to migrants being increasingly discriminated against.

*ii. Solutions and prospects*

Only long-time investments in policies and strategies promoting intercultural and inter-religious dialogue between Diasporas and host countries can help to change mentality and behaviour.

Representatives of various cultures and religions have a pivotal role in helping with the integration of migrants by offering them a message of moderation and tolerance, by giving them support and by dissociating from those who spread a message of hatred and intolerance. It is very important to ensure that all people have places to practice their religion.

Education plays an essential role in the promotion of democratic citizenship. Education establishments should be prepared to welcome children and students speaking a different language. Special educational programmes should promote knowledge of different cultures, languages and religions. Schools should also promote pluralism and diversity at an early age. Students at all levels must be made aware of the achievements of Diasporas throughout history.

The Council of Europe could conduct a study on how governments interact with their diasporas and how diaspora communities interact with their host countries. The PACE could promote the Intercultural Cities « Policy Lab for inclusive integration » initiative aimed at promoting dialogue, coordination and cooperation among National and local authorities to ensure integration policy consistency and complementarity and enable transfer of innovation and good practice so that all levels of governance reinforce each other.

The international community in general and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in particular have a strong role and responsibility in providing a framework for inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue and in promoting a message of tolerance.

Integration happens first and foremost at local level. Local authorities have a pivotal role in promoting intercultural policies in order to achieve cohesion, equality, inclusion and development in culturally diverse societies. Interculturalism has proven superior to previous integration methods such as "assimilation" and "multiculturalism" and is based on policies such as intercultural dialogue, empowerment of all members of the community, embracing cultural pluralism and managing conflicts positively.

***b. Role of diaspora in preventing extremism and radicalisation***

*i. Situation, problems and challenges*

Migrants are often exposed to discrimination and racism in the host countries. In extreme cases, these xenophobic sentiments of hostility may take the form of physical or psychological violence.

Such a climate of mistrust, isolation and discrimination can only generate or strengthen tendencies of radicalisation and extremism both among members of the host society and among migrants.

Those diaspora communities which live in democratic countries are usually eager to promote in their countries of origin the values which they consider positive in their country of residence.

The radicalisation of Muslims in diaspora is often triggered by a crisis of identity, linked to "cultural marginalisation", discrimination and alienation. The individuals are more prone to establish a new identity by rediscovering their religious roots. Under certain circumstances, this can lead to an Islamic counter

culture among young Muslims who embrace radical interpretations of Islam. Extremist ideology may offer them a sense of recognition and a new identity.

Failure of integration and marginalisation, particularly economic and social deprivation, are considered as important factors for the violent radicalisation of young Muslims in Western societies. Many of them live in segregated areas or parallel societies, characterized by poverty, social exclusion and dissatisfaction. Also, integrated, well-educated middle-class individuals have been involved in several of the recent terror plots in Europe.

*ii. Solutions and prospects*

Diasporas and their associations can contribute to the shattering of pre-existing negative stereotypes held in either the origin or destination countries and be a reconciling force.

The fight with radicalisation should not be linked to any religion. It is very important to stop anti-Muslim rhetoric, which reinforces the Da'esh anti-Western messages addressed to migrants and young people in Europe. Religious leaders have a key role to play in tackling the problem of radicalisation of a vulnerable population. The interreligious councils should be created at the national level to develop joint preventive strategies.

Diasporas and their organisations can encourage a change of attitudes in the host countries by promoting exchanges with host communities, by isolating extremists and by helping authorities of these countries to devise and implement policies which promote tolerance, dialogue and inclusion.

However, Diasporas and their organisations can only play this positive role when the authorities of these countries engage them in decision-making processes

National and international donors should discourage competition for access to resources among diaspora representative organisations and support partnerships and networks of organisations which co-operate effectively and leverage each other in order to obtain practical results.

Social measures such as integration policies are necessary. Governments should engage with Muslims as equal citizens, not only through their religion, in order to create a sense of being part of a society with shared values. Building resilient communities and stronger social ties may also play an important role in reducing the risk of radicalisation, especially of young people, helping neutralise the appeal of terrorist propaganda. Special focus should be given to formally recognized Islamist NGO's and institutions and their potential impact on Muslim identity in the European Muslim diaspora.

Public diplomacy should to a larger extent focus on the domestic audience and seek to challenge myths and misperceptions about foreign policy within the Muslim population. Diaspora communities and local media need to be involved in this process.

Stakeholders can take inspiration in their efforts of engaging, enabling and empowering diasporas from the work conducted and conclusions reached by the PACE, and in particular Recommendations 1410 (1999) and 1890 (2009) and Resolutions 1696 (2009) and 2043 (2015).

***c. Social and economic inclusion as a key element for successful integration***

*i. Situation, problems and challenges*

The economic development of any country depends upon its capacity to better utilise skills and talents of all of its residents and to promote innovative technologies and businesses.

Many migrants have achieved outstanding social and economic success in their host countries, while still maintaining strong links with their cultures and countries of origin. However, many migrants are still facing with a number of legal and administrative barriers which prevent their access to the labour market and expose them to exploitation and discrimination.

Youth unemployment among Diaspora remains a huge problem in an ageing Europe.

*ii. Solutions and prospects*

It is necessary to include provisions in the national legislation which regulate the migrant workforce and their access to working visas and work permits, as well as ensure recognition of their diplomas and professional qualifications, as well as to ensure effective provisions for mitigation in cases of exclusion and discrimination.

Social security of migrants is important for their inclusion process and is therefore a good investment in the economic development of the country. The creation of a European mechanism for fostering social protection for working migrants and their families would be very useful. The intercultural competences of staff members of mainstream institutions for dealing with migrant clients should be developed and monitored.

Social and economic inclusion can be facilitated by speeding up and facilitating the acquisition of nationality of migrants. Necessary vocational training for migrants can be promoted by a partnership between governments, business communities and the diaspora associations.

#### **4. Decisions**

The Regional meeting discussed and adopted the final Conclusions.

The annual Forum of the Network should be convened on 7 May 2018 in Geneva.

The regional meeting supported the launching of a European diaspora Prize in order to celebrate the most prominent Diaspora association

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