
Recommendation 1500 (2001)^[1]

Participation of immigrants and foreign residents in political life in the Council of Europe member states

1. The Assembly acknowledges that lawful residence of non-citizens on national territory is now a permanent feature of European societies and that the number of long term immigrants and foreigners legally settled in Council of Europe member states is rising.
2. The Assembly underlines that the respect for human rights in Europe is independent of citizenship and country of origin. Principles of non-discrimination have been laid down in numerous international instruments binding for Council of Europe member states.
3. The Assembly is of the opinion that the presence of immigrants and foreign residents is an enriching and positive factor in our societies and everyday life.
4. The Assembly also stresses that democratic legitimacy requires equal participation by all groups of society in the political process, and that the contribution of legally resident non-citizens to a country's prosperity further justifies their right to influence political decisions in the country concerned.

5. The Assembly notes that many rights in Council of Europe member states, and most political rights in particular, may be enjoyed only by their own citizens. Moreover, non-European Union citizens living as foreigners in a European Union country are granted fewer rights than European Union citizens in the same situation.
6. Restrictive criteria may prevent legally resident non-citizens from acquiring the citizenship of the host country, depriving them of full participation in the life of the community and, in the worst case, pushing them to the margins of society.
7. Although the integration of immigrants and foreign residents has considerably increased in economic, social, cultural and educational terms, political participation has always given rise to controversy. Yet their participation in the political decision-making process promotes their integration in general, and facilitates their harmonious co-existence which is in the interest of both citizens and non-citizens in the host society. The lack of integration can be a source of social tension and conflict.
8. The Assembly is particularly concerned by the situation in some member countries of the Council of Europe, where the percentage of non-citizens in the population is high, and where no adequate structures or opportunities exist for their political participation.
9. The Assembly recalls and reaffirms its Recommendation 769 (1975) on the legal status of migrants, Recommendation 712 (1973) on the integration of migrant workers with the societies of their host countries, and Recommendation 799 (1977) on the political rights and position of aliens.
10. The Assembly welcomes the action of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) in this field, and in particular its Resolutions 243 (1993), 236 (1992), 183 (1987) and 134 (1982).

11. The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

- i. reappraise the desirable minimum standards for the treatment of non-citizens residing in a country, in particular concerning their political participation at all levels, with a view to granting the right to vote and stand in local elections to all legally established migrants irrespective of their origin, and invite member governments to take all appropriate action to ensure their implementation;
- ii. pursue and organise exchanges of experience and information between the member states on this subject with the participation of representatives of immigrant communities;
- iii. give greater priority to programmes aiming at the integration of foreign communities into the host society, with a particular view to preparing them for political participation and to promoting such participation by showing its positive effects for society as a whole;
- iv. urge the governments of member states:
 - a. to grant the right to vote and stand in local elections to all migrants legally established for at least three years irrespective of their origin;
 - b. to review their national legislation with a view to making it more flexible and adequate to the needs of immigrants and foreign residents, giving particular attention to:

- the criteria for granting citizenship;
 - the organisation of political participation at all levels;
- c. to promote the action of migrants' organisations and associations and encourage the networking of their activities;
- d. drawing from the positive experiences, to develop programmes aiming at the promotion of the political participation of migrants;
- e. to ratify, if they have not yet done so, the European Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level and the European Convention on Nationality.

12. The Assembly calls on the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) to continue its action to promote the participation of immigrants in public life.

[1] *Assembly debate* on 26 January 2001 (8th Sitting) (see Doc. 8916, report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography, rapporteur: Mr Luis, Doc. 8947, opinion of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, rapporteur: Mr Akçali, and Doc 8940, opinion of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mrs Hoffman).

Text adopted by the Assembly on 26 January 2001 (8th Sitting).

