

**Report by Vice-President Margareta Cederfelt
Acting Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration**

Meeting of the Standing Committee
Winter Meeting, Vienna, 20 February 2020

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Dear Mr. President

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have been entrusted by President Tsereteli with the function of Acting Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration due to the departure from the Parliamentary Assembly of my dear colleague Nahima Lanjri. I would like to use this opportunity to reflect on the work of the Committee thus far, to present to you a snap shot of the current migration trends and to share some ideas on how we can continue to make an impact.

Four years ago here in Vienna you, dear colleagues, voted unanimously to establish this special Committee, primarily in response to the Syrian refugee crisis. Ever since, the Committee has actively pursued its mandate to promote discussion within the Assembly on issues related to migration and to contribute to the parliamentary exchanges of best practice with the aim

to enhance the OSCE's work in the field of migration as well as to improve prospects for migrants in OSCE countries.

The Committee has so far carried out **ten field missions** to countries of first arrival but also countries of transit and destination, visiting reception and return centres, refugee camps and schools, holding extensive discussions with authorities and representatives of international governmental organizations as well as non-governmental. Committee members have also regularly met with representatives of the European Commission to keep abreast of reforms in the area of migration and asylum policy.

Each year the Committee has put forth detailed recommendations which have been adopted as part of the PA's annual Declarations in 2017, 2018 and 2019. These recommendations seek to contribute to a coherent, shared responsible and humane migration governance, with a particular focus on vulnerable migrants such as minors, and to enhance policies specifically in the field of integration and returns. I encourage you to read them or to revisit them and to implement the relevant ones in your national settings.

Where do we stand four years later?

Irregular arrivals in Europe are significantly down compared to the year 2015. Roughly 130,000 persons entered Europe in 2019, mostly **by sea to Greece**, followed by **Spain, Italy, Cyprus and Malta**.

Still, we are faced with a number of humanitarian crises in the OSCE area.

In the **Greek Aegean islands**, the increase in arrivals over the past year has compounded overcrowding and suffering. Reception centres in the five islands are currently hosting more than 40,000 asylum seekers, about a third of whom are minors, most below the age of twelve, living in unsanitary and dangerous conditions. Some have even attempted suicide.

It is not enough to boost Greece's capacity to process asylum applications and to carry out returns. There is an urgent need to deal with the roughly 5,000 unaccompanied children currently in the country.

Last November, Greece's Citizen Protection Minister appealed to EU Member States to take some of these children but only a couple have responded so far. I therefore appeal to you all to note Greece's appeal for help and to call upon your respective governments to agree to rapidly relocate a specified number of unaccompanied and vulnerable children and families.

Greece is likely to feel the impact of the humanitarian crisis in Northwest Syria. 800,000 persons have been forced to leave their homes so far. At least 60 per cent are children. They have headed to the camps on the Turkish border which is now sealed.

Turkey, as you know, is already hosting 3.6 million Syrian refugees.

We seized the opportunity of the Autumn Meeting last October in Marrakech to learn more about **Morocco's** migration policy and its efforts to curb irregular migration through the autonomous Spanish cities of Ceuta and Melilla, with the cooperation of the Spanish authorities and EU funding.

More stringent policing by Morocco is most probably responsible for the revival of the North Atlantic migration route which has seen an upsurge in migrants arriving in the **Canary Islands** from the western coast of Africa.

We are also monitoring developments along the **Balkan route**, notably in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** which has been dealing with an upsurge in migrants trying to cross into Croatia. And two weeks ago, about 200 migrants gathered at the border between Serbia and **Hungary** demanding to be let in.

Next Steps

Tomorrow when we meet with the Committee members to outline the further work of the Committee, I will therefore recommend that we pursue our three-pronged approach, namely:

- (1) Field missions designed to monitor the situation on the ground and develop policy recommendations to the OSCE participating States and OSCE Institutions;
- (2) Promoting discussion on the topic of migration within the OSCE PA;
- (3) Strengthening co-operation with the OSCE Secretariat, Institutions as well as with outside actors.

I will recommend a number of additional **field missions** to crisis areas with an awareness-raising and oversight objective.

It is also important to continue to monitor conditions in **detention and return centres**, referring to the previous recommendations of the Committee in this regard.

I also hope that the Committee will have the opportunity to continue its study of examples of **'good practice' in the area of integration**. We have already learned about the experience of **Belgium, Sweden** and **Denmark**. In July we will hear more about **Canada's** system for the private sponsorship of refugees. **Germany** has also achieved good results with respect to labour market integration.

The new President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen has announced the intention to develop a **new Pact on Asylum and Migration**, to be based on 'new forms of solidarity' and which will ensure that all member states make meaningful contributions to support those countries under the most pressure. Indeed, we cannot continue to rely on ad hoc solutions. The Committee wishes her and the new commissioners the best of luck and will continue to follow developments in EU policy.

I look forward to reporting to you at the Annual Session in Vancouver where we plan on presenting our recommendations in the form of a new resolution.

Thank you for your attention.