

32nd SESSION

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Debate of the Chamber of Regions on:

Border regions facing migration flows

Information document submitted by the Secretariat of the Congress.

This debate: “Border regions facing migration flows” fits into the strategic direction towards “Building safe and inclusive societies that respect diversity – integrating refugees and migrants, promoting intercultural dialogue and citizen’s participation, in particular among young people –”, in which the Congress has engaged itself for 2017-2020.

The Congress believes that dialogue and exchanges between political practitioners from regional authorities facing the same issues is of utmost importance for the promotion and dissemination of efficient solutions that can be implemented regardless of national legislation and practices.

This debate aims to collect examples and illustrate the major problems encountered by the regions and how in practice they are coping with a long-lasting emergency situation. It is also intended to be a platform for peer to peer dialogue and exchanges of good practices for dealing in a sustainable way with migrant crisis.

In the recent years, local and regional authorities in Council of Europe member States have faced the arrival of increasing number of refugees and migrants coming to Europe. In the absence of a European comprehensive strategy on migration, the daily management of the reception, transit and integration of the migrants falls with subnational authorities’ competences.

This phenomenon creates an unequal situation putting most of the burden on the countries and regional authorities situated on the borders of Europe without necessarily having appropriate powers and resources at their disposal. Regions stand at the frontline for the reception of migrants and are thus faced with the challenge of providing migrants with basic services upon their arrival.

In the absence of a consistent answer to the crisis, the reactions have sometimes been drastic solutions such as the construction of walls and barriers at the external as well as internal borders of Europe. Those reactions and situations that follow may jeopardise public order within and between countries in Europe.

Internal migration within Europe is then another challenge for border regions. It is due to the waves of migrants arriving from other States within Europe. This additional issue also challenges the ability of regions to co-operate together.

Furthermore, the competences assumed by the regional authorities in particular in the fields of social care, education and employment, make the regional governments instrumental for addressing these issues since those are key elements to a successful integration of the migrants in their host society.

The debate will allow guest speakers to illustrate concrete situations and specific actions undertaken while highlighting main issues and good practices to address the challenge. In addition, members of the Chamber of Regions will contribute to the debate by sharing their experiences and their vision.