



Respecting the rights of refugees

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MIGRATIONS AND REFUGEES

At a time when the Council of Europe has just reiterated its commitment to the generous vision and human rights values, including freedom from persecution, that inspired its creation, these principles are under threat from governments increasingly intent on restricting the number of refugees and asylum seekers on their territory.

These restrictive policies and practices are reflected and amplified in the intensifying efforts of the European Union to create a Common European Asylum System, which will inevitably affect the policies of the central and east European states.

The Council of Europe member states eschew any policies or practices which threaten the right to asylum, and avoid widening the gap between the members of the European Union, candidate members, and other European countries. To this end, the Committee of Ministers is urged, among other things, to draw up a European Convention on the harmonisation of asylum policies in Europe and to incorporate the right to asylum into the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Organisation should increasingly monitor member states' compliance with international refugee law and with the general principles governing the protection of refugees and asylum seekers enshrined in the relevant international instruments. The objective would be to continue to improve common standards for the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers. Intensified efforts by the European Union to harmonise its member and candidate member states' asylum and immigration policies make this task even more urgent, because insufficient co-ordination between the EU and the Council of Europe in this field may deepen the existing gaps and pose an even more serious threat to the fair implementation of these basic principles.

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The Assembly should recommend that the Committee of Ministers draw up a European Convention on the harmonisation of asylum policies in Europe, in close co-ordination with the European Union. The convention should build on previous work in both the European Union and the Council of Europe with a view to improving the standard of protection for refugees and asylum seekers in Europe.

The Assembly should continue to insist that the Council of Europe incorporate the right of asylum into the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. This would be a fitting achievement to mark the Convention's 50th anniversary in 2000.