

Press Release

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Tolerance in practice: PACE President calls for fair and balanced coverage of migrant issues in the media

Strasbourg, 20.03.2007 – To mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 21 March, Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) President René van der Linden today made the following statement:

"Europe represents, for millions of people from around the world seeking a better life for themselves and their families, a land of human rights, values and opportunities. Yet for many the reality is instead harassment from authorities desperate to send them home, discrimination in the work place and xenophobia and intolerance from local populations.

Our Assembly recently [debated](#) the image of asylum seekers, migrants and refugees in the media and called on European governments to pay particular attention to the legislation impacting on racism and intolerance in the media and to promote the production of films dealing with issues relevant to migrants and produced by persons coming from these groups.

In the combat against populism, hostility and fear, the media plays an essential role in ensuring that issues linked to migration, refugees and asylum are portrayed in a fair and balanced way. It is therefore the media's responsibility to also reflect the positive contribution to society made by these persons, and to protect them from negative stereotyping.

Our governments should adopt and implement legislation prohibiting incitement to hatred, violence or discrimination where this is lacking, and enforce such legislation where it exists. Also, the media should refrain from revealing the ethnic origin or nationality of migrants when arrested or convicted of crimes where such information is irrelevant.

In the years to come, Europe will need greater numbers of migrants to fill empty jobs and counterbalance declining fertility rates. The fight against racism, discrimination and every form of intolerance requires the constant vigilance of the Council of Europe and its Assembly. And the media, supported by member states, play an essential role in this fight."

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Note to editors

John Greenway (United Kingdom, EDG), who is preparing a report for PACE on "Regularisation programmes for irregular migrants", ended a [visit to Spain](#), yesterday, Monday 19 March, to draw lessons from the Spanish experience of regularisation.

The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 315 members from the national parliaments of the 46 member states.

President: René van der Linden (Netherlands, EPP/CD); Secretary General of the Assembly: Mateo Sorinas.

Political Groups: SOC (Socialist Group); EPP/CD (Group of the European People's Party); ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe); EDG (European Democratic Group); UEL (Group of the Unified European Left).