

Press Release

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On eve of International Migrants Day, PACE committee head slams EU proposals for irregular migrants

Strasbourg, 17.12.2007 – An EU proposal to fix at 18 months the maximum period of detention for irregular migrants in Europe “flies in the face of humanity”, according to the Chair of the Migration Committee of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE).

Speaking on the eve of International Migrants Day, 18 December, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu (Turkey, EDG) said the EU’s Returns Directive was equivalent to “locking up irregular migrants and throwing away the key”. Parliamentarians from the Council of Europe – whose broader membership of 47 member states include both countries of origin and destination – recently urged European governments to consider regularisation programmes and praised Spain’s recent use of one.

“Europe cannot turn a blind eye to its responsibility towards these persons,” said Mr Çavuşoğlu. “It should regularise and integrate them sooner rather than later. Many of them have made substantial contributions to the economy, are well integrated into society and have children born and brought up in Europe.” It is estimated that there are 5.5 million irregular migrants in the European Union and a further 8 million in the Russian Federation alone.

“Migrants are not just resources, they are people,” he continued. “You cannot turn on and off the migrant tap at will, and expect only skilled workers to emerge from it. Europe needs migrants with a multitude of different backgrounds, and the growing number of irregular migrants is evidence that Europe’s regular channels for migration are totally inadequate.”

PACE’s [resolution](#) and [recommendation](#) on regularisation programmes for irregular migrants.

The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 318 members from the national parliaments of the 47 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).