RECOMMENDATION:

Migration, development and the economic crisis

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The Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly,

A. whereas migration is a global, multidimensional, multifaceted and cross-cutting phenomenon caused by a wide variety of factors, such as economic conditions including changes in wealth distribution and regional and global economic integration, social conditions, labour conditions, political conditions, violence and security conditions, as well as the gradual degradation of the environment and the virulence of natural disasters, and whereas this must be addressed in a humane, coherent, comprehensive and balanced manner;

B. whereas the right to migrate and move freely is enshrined in various international conventions and instruments, and in particular in the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, which grants migrant workers and the members of their families the right to ‘leave any state, including their State of origin’, or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which requires countries to facilitate freedom of movement within their own territory;

C. whereas migratory routes are extremely complex and can often occur within regions as well as between them and whereas international migration is on the rise, despite the global economic crisis; whereas currently nearly 232 million people are considered to be international migrants;

D. whereas over 107,000 Europeans, including people with dual nationality, emigrated to a Latin American country when the economic crisis began between 2008 and 2009; whereas Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela and Mexico figured among the main destinations, while Spain, Portugal, Germany, the Netherlands and Italy were the main countries of origin; whereas it is estimated that 4.29 million Latin American citizens currently reside in Europe, while nearly 1.25 million Europeans live in LAC countries;

E. whereas, between 2008 and 2010 alone, the economic crisis caused migration from Central and South America to Europe to contract by 38% while migration to non-European OECD countries grew by 8%, with Central America being where the highest migration rates were recorded;

F. whereas human rights are inherent to all human beings, without any distinctions being made as to nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status, as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

G. whereas vulnerable groups in particular need to be considered, the most obvious of which are unaccompanied or separated migrant children, pregnant women and the elderly, all of whom are liable to fall prey to human traffickers or be forced into hard labour, sexual exploitation, criminal gangs and militia groups, etc.;

H. whereas the declaration adopted at the end of the second High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in October 2013 set out the goal of identifying
tangible measures designed to increase the benefits of migration for the migrants themselves, as well as for the countries of origin or destination, strengthening migration’s links with development;

I. whereas migration is recognised globally as being a powerful tool for development and the current political, economic and social situation constitutes a unique opportunity to turn migration into a key factor in sustainable and inclusive development;

J. whereas the western hemisphere’s ageing population and constantly falling birth rate mean countries will find themselves forced to resolve the shortfall by turning to foreign labour, which has played a very important role in the economic growth of nations although migrant workers and their families have not seen their contribution endorsed by wider recognition of their civic and human rights and in protection;

K. whereas in the context of the economic, social and political crisis, migration is often wrongfully used in populist discourse and measures as the scapegoat for economic troubles and challenges, an issue that needs to be addressed through both a better integration policy, which also tackles the issue of undeclared work, as well as coherent communication and awareness programmes, that objectively inform about the impact and benefits of migration on the countries of origin and the host countries;

L. whereas these countries have decided to work together to design an agenda on international migration that will incorporate the development aspect and help existing institutions and frameworks to improve their performance while respecting fully human rights;

M. whereas migration has likewise been included as a priority in the post-2015 development agenda, with specific targets as part of the global partnership for development and suitable indicators for migration as a cross-cutting issue;

N. whereas maximising the benefits of migration for migrants, countries of origin and host countries is also a political priority for the EU and forms part of its foreign and development policy, as synergies between development and migration also comprise a key field in the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility;

O. whereas local, regional and provincial governments play an important role in making the most of the opportunities migrants offer as it is locally that the impact of migratory flows is felt most, either through remittances or because migrants are willing to contribute to the development of the regions or communities from which they come or where they reside;

P. whereas labour mobility can contribute decisively to sustainable development; whereas for this to happen it has to be underpinned by three pillars: a rigorous assessment of the labour market and its future potential, better protection of migrant workers’ human rights, fundamental rights and labour rights, and constant dialogue with labour market stakeholders;

Q. whereas World Bank figures show that remittances rose by 6.3% in 2013, reaching an estimated value of USD 550 billion in total; nonetheless, according to the IOM the cost
of sending remittances remains very high at around 9%; were this to be cut by 5%, migrants would save approximately USD 16 billion per year;

R. whereas labour mobility also contributes to the acquisition of new knowledge and work experience, and to the consolidation of diasporas abroad which can in turn help reinforce trade relations and encourage direct investment;

S. whereas the circular migration of qualified professionals in all sectors of the economy and society impacts positively on specialist knowledge and skills transfer, technology development and use, innovation, improvements in productive capacity, accumulation of human capital and the creation of networks, all of which benefits in the long-term both sending and host countries;

T. whereas migrant women tend to focus on 'low-skilled' jobs characterised by insecure working conditions, low wages and no social security cover;

U. whereas, while migration does constitute an opportunity to contribute to development, it also brings certain side effects in the countries of origin which must be taken into account when devising public policies; these include economic dependency or the adverse impact on families, particularly with regard to children who are left behind without their parents;

V. whereas undocumented migrants are most in need of international protection as their lack of any legal status or recognition makes them particularly susceptible to being abused, exploited and refused the most basic of human rights, and whereas this is a challenge which owing to their susceptibility must be addressed with full respect for human life and fundamental rights;

1. Calls on the governments and parliaments of the EU and CELAC countries to respect strictly and fully the human rights of all people, irrespective of their status as migrants, in tackling the challenges of migration;

2. Urges national governments and parliaments to abolish punitive legal schemes which criminalise migration; calls likewise on governments to implement short, medium and long-term solutions based, in all cases, on shared responsibility and maintaining safe conditions for migrants;

3. Recommends that countries implement a comprehensive approach to preventing or cushioning the social costs of migration, particularly in respect of children left behind by their parents; psychological, medical, social and financial assistance ought to be included in the measures adopted in this respect;

4. Calls on States to tailor the measures taken to protect vulnerable groups, and migrant children in particular, such that the children’s best interests take priority, applying the principles of non-discrimination, non-criminalisation, non-detention, no undue punishment, non-refoulement, family unification, physical and legal protection, right to identity and right to life;

5. Recommends, bearing in mind the special situation of female migrants, that gender issues be incorporated into migration policies to prevent trafficking as well as all other forms of
violence targeting women and discrimination against them;

6. Urges governments also to take measures designed to boost the fight against racism, discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance, including religious intolerance, and to adopt programmes to improve the way their population views migrants; recommends therefore that countries design and implement communication and awareness-raising campaigns on the opportunities migration and migrants can bring to society in both the countries of origin and host countries;

7. Calls for measures to be adopted to improve knowledge of the migratory patterns and routes within and between said regions, and emphasises that reliable statistics are needed on migration between the EU and Latin America, as well as, where possible, on the contribution migrants make to development; reiterates that these figures constitute a key tool in designing public policy in the field of sustainable development;

8. Stresses the need for a holistic and consistent approach to the challenges of irregular migration, with human rights fully respected;

9. Welcomes the introduction by a number of countries of voluntary return programmes and urges governments to work together in this respect and protect migrants in vulnerable situations; recalls that the right of migrants to return to their country of origin is enshrined in international conventions, and calls on countries to ensure their nationals are treated correctly on their return;

10. Takes note of how migration flows between the EU and Latin America are changing, both as regards the numbers of migrants travelling in both directions, and in terms of migratory routes and countries of origin, transit and destination;

11. Calls on the countries of origin, transit countries and host countries to adopt measures that ensure consistency between migration and development policies on the one hand, and employment, education, health and housing policies on the other;

12. Is pleased to see that the Declaration adopted in the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in October 2013 recognises that migration is a phenomenon that has a strong impact on the development of the countries of origin, transit countries and host countries and agrees that migration ought to be addressed in a ‘coherent, comprehensive and balanced’ manner;

13. Considers that EU and CELAC countries ought to act swiftly to take advantage of the current economic, social and political situation in order to maximise the positive impact of migration on the economic, social and human development of their societies;

14. Urges EU and CELAC countries to strengthen coordination, consistency and interinstitutional synergies at all levels, with the aim of increasing the benefits of migration for all parties concerned, whether these be the countries of origin, the host countries or the migrants themselves;

15. Acknowledges the important contribution made by migration and labour mobility to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, in regard to reducing poverty in
particular, and is pleased to note that migration has been enshrined as a priority in the post-2015 development agenda;

16. Reiterates that for labour mobility to have a greater positive impact, it has to be based on a rigorous study of the labour market, fully respecting migrant workers’ human and labour rights, and on constant dialogue with labour market stakeholders;

17. Recommends that when governments design migration and labour mobility policies, they bear particularly in mind issues linked to non-discrimination and equal treatment in regard to salaries and working conditions, to fair hiring practices, social protection and especially to transferability of social security and pension rights, as well as recognition of labour skills;

18. Recognises that remittances play an important role in the economies of receiving countries; urges governments to continue working on lowering remittance prices and to adopt measures making remittances more transparent, competitive and reliable; calls on countries to consider adopting policies that make it easier for those receiving remittances to invest them in family firms and other profit-making activities; considers furthermore that migrants who wish to help their community of origin develop by setting up local development projects ought to be offered support; points out that this will require the creation of structures for decentralised cooperation that link local authorities with migrants;

19. Calls on governments to develop regulatory frameworks to facilitate the movement of skilled labour through instruments and specific actions which can adapt and be flexible in their response to the realities in the different countries; this highlights the need to harmonise existing instruments in both regions, and to adopt in particular measures to facilitate professional training and the equivalence of qualifications both being recognised; reiterates in particular the advisability of promoting circular mobility among students, who are key to knowledge transfer;

20. Asks governments to promote local authority empowerment with the aim of facilitating economic development linked to migration through its impact on the labour market, remittance flow and knowledge transfer; adds that the importance of cultural and educational integration for migrants should also be kept very much in mind;

21. Asks countries to incorporate an approach based on the links between migration, climate change and the environment in their migration management plans, focusing their action on the adoption of measures to reduce the likelihood of natural disasters and help populations adapt to climate change; points to the fact that capacity-building for governments and other stakeholders is essential for this to happen, as is enhancing synergies between countries and governments at all levels;

22. Calls on parliaments and governments to acknowledge the contribution made by civil society to all the work done to protect migrants, especially the most vulnerable groups among them, and asks that civil society organisations be given easier access to direct government funding, including through the EU-CELAC migration cooperation programmes;
23. Instructs its Co-Presidents to forward this recommendation to the Council of the European Union and the European Commission, and to the parliaments of the Member States of the European Union and all the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, the Latin American Parliament, the Central American Parliament, the Andean Parliament and the Mercosur Parliament, the Secretariat of the Andean Community, the Committee of Permanent Representatives of Mercosur, the Permanent Secretariat of the Latin American Economic System and the Secretaries-General of the Organization of American States, the Union of South American Nations and the United Nations.