

CONSEIL DE L'ATLANTIQUE NORD
NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL

Registry 1

EXEMPLAIRE N° 229
COPY

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH
12th June, 1953

NATO RESTRICTED
DOCUMENT
AC/31-D/18

WORKING GROUP ON SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CO-OPERATION

THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE
IN THE FIELD OF REFUGEES AND OVERPOPULATION

Note Prepared by the Secretariat of the Council of Europe

PART I

The overpopulation from which Europe is at present suffering is due to the influx of 10 to 11 million refugees, to the accumulation of surplus population due to a stoppage of migration since 1930, the very high birth-rate after the war and the destruction and upheavals caused by the war. This overpopulation has led both to widespread under-employment and excessive structural unemployment accompanied, in the case of receiving countries with large numbers of refugees, by a considerable lowering of social standards. The following are the main overpopulated countries: the German Federal Republic, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey.

2. The Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe at its First Session in August 1949 decided to inscribe this question on its Agenda and gave instructions for studies to be made so as to permit further consideration at its Second Session (Document AS(1)109). As a result, in August 1950, the Assembly adopted Recommendation 50, which requested the Governments to take all possible measures to improve the lot of refugees and to create within the framework of the Secretariat of the Council of Europe a special service "to satisfy the most pressing needs of refugees of all categories, in particular those who do not at present receive assistance from any international organization." (Document AS(2)109).

3. The Council of Europe consists of two organs: the Committee of Ministers and the Consultative Assembly. The Assembly is a deliberative organ of an advisory character which makes recommendations to the Committee of Ministers; the Committee, which consists of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the fourteen members of the Council, is an executive organ which then decides what action shall be taken on these recommendations.

4. The Committee of Ministers, after obtaining the views of the Member Governments on the Recommendation of the Consultative Assembly, convened a Committee of Experts to study the problem more fully, with the assistance of representatives of the other international organizations concerned. This Committee held two sessions in June and September 1951 and was attended by representatives of the ILO, the International Refugee Organization, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the OEEC and (at its second session)

the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The Final Report of this Committee (Document C-M(51)69) contained a general review of the whole problem and has constituted the basis of the subsequent work of the Council of Europe in this field.

5. The Committee of Experts reached the conclusion that: "Because of the population pressure and risks of political and economic instability, this is a problem of a vital and urgent character not only affecting the countries in which it exists but also of direct concern to the European community and the free world. The human and social elements involved should also be considered. Its existence may be regarded as impeding the realisation of the aims set out in Article 1 of the Statute of the Council of Europe".

6. Both the Consultative Assembly and the Committee of Ministers subsequently endorsed this conclusion.

7. As a result of the Report of the Committee of Experts and of subsequent decisions taken by the Committee of Ministers and the Consultative Assembly, the latter organ has now constituted a Standing Committee on Population and Refugees and the two organs jointly have set up a Special Liaison Committee to ensure liaison in this field between the two organs of the Council and between the Council of Europe and the other international organizations concerned. Representatives of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration, the ILO and the CEEC regularly attend the meetings of this Committee.

8. The Council of Europe has attempted to place the problem, which has hitherto been regarded as principally the concern of the national Governments, on a European level. In the past the term "refugee" has been generally interpreted as applying to stateless persons and persons who do not enjoy the protection of the country whose nationality they possess; they are, therefore, persons who need international legal protection. The United Nations and its agencies such as the International Refugee Organization and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees have generally limited their activities to these categories of refugees. There are, however, in Western Europe, besides these "international" refugees, a large number of "national" refugees, that is to say persons who have been forced to leave their homes and have established themselves in another part of their national territory (such as refugees from German territory beyond the Oder-Neisse Line and from the Eastern Zone of Germany, Greek victims of Communist aggression, and Italian refugees from the former Italian colonies) or persons who have been forced to leave their homes and establish themselves in the country to which they ethnically belong (such as refugees of Italian ethnic origin who have returned to Italy, "Volksdeutsche", the former German-speaking minorities from Eastern Europe who have taken refuge in Germany and Turco-Bulgarians who have been expelled from Bulgaria and admitted to Turkey); refugees in the latter category have in most cases been granted the nationality of the country of refuge. They thus enjoy the protection of that state and are therefore not eligible for the international assistance of the United Nations. Even if the question of international legal protection does not arise in their case, however, their economic integration in the receiving areas nevertheless constitutes a problem far exceeding the resources of the countries

concerned. The same applies to the integration of surplus population which exists on account of rising birth-rates and declining possibilities of emigration. Economically speaking, their presence places the countries concerned in the same difficulties as those encountered by the countries which admit refugees; in both cases international assistance is necessary to resolve the problem. These facts have led to the demand for European action in favour of the refugees and surplus population, quite apart from that of the United Nations, seeing that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is only responsible for so-called "international" refugees.

PART II

9. The proposals made by the Consultative Assembly, the discussions in the Special Liaison Committee and the decisions of the Committee of Ministers over the last year have produced the following results:

A. Integration in Countries of Residence

(i) Investment Projects

10. The Committee of Ministers has invited Member Governments and the competent international organizations to grant priority, as far as possible, to any investment project likely to encourage the integration of refugees and of surplus population; it has also invited Member Governments to co-operate with the Assembly Committee on Population and Refugees in the elaboration of limited but concrete plans of this nature (Resolution (52)75 of 2nd December, 1952).

(ii) Berlin Refugees

11. Having regard to the particularly pressing nature of the problem of housing for refugees from Eastern Germany seeking refuge in the German Federal Republic, the Committee of Ministers in May 1953 invited Member Governments to support the action undertaken by the UN High Commissioner on behalf of the Berlin refugees and to instigate measures which might facilitate the liquidation of refugee camps and the construction of appropriate living accommodation (Resolution (53)21).

12. The Special Liaison Committee also has under consideration a project for the construction on a larger scale of low-cost housing in the Federal Republic for Berlin refugees.

B. Integration in Other Countries in Europe

(1) Intra-European Migration

13. The Committee of Ministers has called for a study of the possibilities of improving the organization of migration within Europe by limited but concrete plans to settle workers from over-populated countries in other countries which are ready to receive them (Resolution (53)19).

(ii) "Hard-Core Refugees"

14. The Committee of Ministers has recommended that Member Governments should consider the generous grant of visas to the 1,500 so-called "hard-core" refugees in Trieste (Resolution (52)10).

(iii) Agricultural Workers

15. A Sub-Committee of the Assembly is examining the possibilities of the settlement of refugee or surplus farmers and agricultural workers in the other European countries.

(iv) Vocational Training

16. A Working Party of experts is examining, with the help of ILO and OEEC, the problem of the vocational training of young refugees and unemployed persons.

C. International Financing of Projects of Integration

17. The Consultative Assembly is also examining the problem of raising capital for the financing of integration projects both in countries of residence and in other countries of Europe. The establishment of a European Investment Bank, which is being considered by the Committee on Economic Questions, would be of valuable help in promoting European economic integration while it would, at the same time, facilitate the integration of refugees and surplus population. On the other hand, the possibility of obtaining loans for integration projects from existing international financial institutions, such as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, is under consideration. As these studies mainly touch upon the long-term aspects of the problem, the Assembly has, as an immediate short-term measure, called for the creation of a Special European Fund made up from contributions by Member States and private gifts (Recommendation (52)35). The Committee of Ministers has deferred consideration of this proposal until the Assembly has elaborated some limited but concrete projects which the Fund will be called upon to finance (see paragraphs 10 and 18).

D. Resettlement Overseas

(i) Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration

18. In September 1952, the Consultative Assembly adopted Recommendation 34 calling for steps to be taken to maintain and increase emigration and recommending that all Member Governments should support the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration and extend its mandate.

(ii) Emigration

19. The Committee of Ministers in May 1953 appealed to the Governments of extra-European countries to facilitate the immigration of Europeans as an element in development programmes designed to bring about an expansion of world economy and draw their attention to the advisability of increased financial support for international organizations concerned with migration (Resolution (53) 20).

E. General

(i) Appointment of a "Special Representative"

20. The Committee of Ministers has decided to appoint for a period of one year an eminent European personality whose special interest will be European refugee and overpopulation problems. His function will be to stimulate and coordinate the action of the Council of Europe in this field, in close co-operation with the other international organizations concerned (Resolution (53)22).

(ii) Arousing Public Opinion

21. The Committee of Ministers has under examination a proposal to stimulate public opinion to a greater interest in the problem of refugees and overpopulation.

(iii) Convention on the Status of Refugees

22. In order to support the work of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the Committee of Ministers has invited Member States to ratify as soon as possible the Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees of 28th July, 1951 (Resolution (53)76).

(iv) Turkish Refugees from Bulgaria

23. In view of the particular problem of Turkish refugees from Bulgaria now resident in Turkey, the Committee of Ministers has recommended that Member Governments should give sympathetic consideration to such plans for their assistance as the Turkish Government may submit to the international organizations concerned (Resolution (53) 9).

(v) Social Security and Assistance

24. The Council of Europe has drafted two Interim Agreements on Social Security and a Convention on Social and Medical Assistance which provide that, as a general rule, each Member of the Council of Europe will treat the nationals of the other Members on a basis of equality with its own citizens as regards social security benefits and social and medical assistance. In collaboration with the UN High Commissioner protocols to these instruments have been drafted which will have the effect of extending the benefit of their provisions to refugees.