

PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION
PABSEC

THE SEVENTH PLENARY SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Doc. GA 1982/96

RECOMMENDATION 14/1996¹

**on Social Guarantees during the Transition Period
in the PABSEC Member Countries**

1. The Assembly notes with concern that economic transformations currently under way in those PABSEC Member Countries that undergo a transition have brought about considerable social hardships. Though the pace of reform and its success in different countries of the region vary, the economic crisis and a fall in production which accompany the transition from a centralised to a market economy have caused a dramatic decline of the living standards and a large rise in unemployment and poverty among large sections of the population. The most vulnerable groups of society - children, the elderly and the handicapped - have been particularly affected.
2. The changes under way are also negatively affecting the functioning of public institutions in the fields of education, health care, social security, science and culture.
3. Market transformations and structures on their own cannot solve the problem of social guarantees and their ill implementation may work against the stability of society. The implementation of the principle of the rule of law is going slower than the redistribution of the national wealth, leading to negative phenomena such as injustice, public discontent and a potential for social unrest.
4. All this is resulting in a sharply increased need for governmental social guarantees and new, clearly defined social policies. Social guarantees have to be part of all economic and political reforms since in the long run it is people who are both the initiators and targets of these reforms.
5. While elaborating its social policies, each country naturally takes into account, first of all, its own specific conditions, traditions and available resources. However, during transition, the countries should ensure that adequate systems of social guarantees are introduced to prevent unacceptable hardships for the citizens.
6. Internationally recognised social standards set in such documents as the European Social Charter, UN and ILO conventions may provide a basis for a legal framework of new social policies during transition.
7. The collapse of totalitarian states and the transition to democracy have been accompanied in

¹The Assembly debate on 13 June 1996 (See Doc. CC 1981/96 "Report on the Social Problems of the Transition Period in the PABSEC Member Countries" adopted by the Sixth Meeting of the Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee in Tbilisi on 13 March 1996; Rapporteur: Mr. M.Baramidze)

some of the Black Sea countries by tensions and conflicts resulting in migrational flows and a growing number of refugees. This problem calls not only for political steps to prevent and resolve the conflicts in the Black Sea Region, but also for a comprehensive package of urgent social measures both at national and international level to provide refugees and immigrants with humane living conditions and with opportunities for repatriation, local integration or resettlement.

8. The Assembly recommends that the Parliaments and Governments of the PABSEC Member Countries:

- i. accompany privatisation and economic reform with adequate social guarantees, particularly for the most vulnerable sections of the population;
- ii. formulate new social policies and objectives taking into account new economic realities; to that end, reviewing and upgrading the legislation in the social field should be constantly in the focus of the Parliaments' attention as a matter of utmost importance;
- iii. ensure that these new policies encourage mutually responsible cooperation on social issues among parliaments, governments, trade unions, employers, workers and all citizens in the name of well-being, stability and civil accord;
- iv. reaffirm policies designed to achieve the fullest possible employment; along with encouraging the private sector to generate new jobs, consider such measures in the public sector as reduced working hours and support to enterprises that are most important from the social point of view;
- v. regard granting adequate state-guaranteed pensions to elderly people as one of the priorities of social policies; at the same time, private insurance schemes can be promoted as a longer-term alternative; study and improve the pension legislation in the PABSEC Member Countries;
- vi. improve education and training to enable individuals to find their proper place in the new society, as well as to guarantee the future economic prosperity; provide all children with opportunities for pre-school, primary and secondary education;
- vii. provide universal access to care as a top priority of the government policy in the field of health; while introducing new health care schemes, provide compulsory, free vaccination for all children;
- viii. develop international cooperation in the social field within the BSEC and PABSEC framework, as well as with the European Union, the Council of Europe, OECD, the World Bank, EBRD, UN Economic Commission for Europe, UNDP, ILO and other international bodies concerned with economic and social development.

9. The Assembly invites the BSEC Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs to consider this Recommendation.