

13th Meeting of the OSCE Economic Forum, ENGLISH only
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Keynote address by Mr Alexander Vladychenko,
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Mr Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to address this meeting of the OSCE Economic Forum as a keynote speaker on behalf of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr Terry Davis. I am particularly pleased to do so just one week after the 3rd Council of Europe Summit during which the Declaration on Co-operation between the Council of Europe and the OSCE was signed. The Declaration says that "the two Organisations need to work more closely together in identifying effective co-ordinated responses to the threats and challenges of the twenty first century". The topics on your agenda are about such threats and challenges and we are looking forward to having a productive discussion on how to respond to them in a co-ordinated manner.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For decades demographers have tried but with little success to draw the attention of policy-makers to a number of worrying and wide-ranging demographic trends in Europe. This meeting is a testimony that they start succeeding in this task.

The latest yearbook of the Council of Europe confirms most of the concerns of demographers. It is increasingly evident that natural population growth has come or will shortly come to a standstill in all European countries. Last year in Europe, more people died than were born. Currently European women have 1.5 children on average, a decline from 1.8 in the nineties and well below the replacement level of 2.1 children.

But Europe needs more people. What can we do? One way out of the situation is through migration. Indeed, migration is now the main component of population growth in a majority of European states. Migration is a daily reality for most of our countries and it is here to stay.

Quite obviously, in a human rights institution like the Council of Europe, the interests of migrants as one of the vulnerable groups are central to our work.

In most European countries migration and asylum laws have been profoundly modified. Legislation regarding legal migrants is evolving generally in favour of the respect of human rights.

Nonetheless, in certain regions of Europe, irregular migration has dominated the migratory flows and the protection of undocumented migrants from abuse has become a major human rights issue. Moreover, as pointed out in the Council of Europe Strategy for Social Cohesion, it is not sufficient to create a strong legal framework for the protection of rights of migrants, minorities and other vulnerable groups. These groups are often badly equipped to claim their rights and this is why this legal protection has to be accompanied by social policy measures. In this respect, a growing role is to be played by local and regional authorities who are in many cases responsible for the provision of these rights.

The changing composition of the immigrant population and the emergence of second and third generations of immigrant background has inevitably put integration high on the agenda of policy-makers. Housing and employment, education and language policies, cultural and religious rights, political participation, access to citizenship and intercommunity relations – all these issues should become key to policy discussions.

The Council of Europe strongly believes that the integration of migrants is one of the pillars of social cohesion. That is why we have traditionally focused on developing policies, measures and initiatives that facilitate the integration of migrants and help the host countries to benefit from the presence of migrants on their soil.

The report '*Diversity and Cohesion*' prepared a few years ago summarises the Council of Europe's position on these issues and puts forward a number of concrete proposals and recommendations concerning specific policy areas.

The report, which is prefaced by the President of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Havel, focuses on policies in two directions: *at one level*, the individual and at *the other level*, the whole society in its complexity. It identifies three challenges for diversity and cohesion in Europe:

- solidarity
- good governance
- multiple affiliations

Solidarity is seen between countries which have to cooperate and tackle root causes of migration and offer international protection to minorities. Not only do we have to look beyond our own national borders in Europe, we also need to have a global approach. This means having increased dialogue, coordination and cooperation between all parties involved in migration processes, including international partners.

Good governance is about empowering immigrants and minorities so that they might address their specific problems in partnership with governments and other actors. It is about people taking more active responsibility for themselves. This opens doors for local initiatives by non-government organisations.

Multiple affiliations is about going beyond legal definitions of for example citizenship and focusing rather on social acceptance of multiple affiliations.

One of the parts of the Action Plan adopted by the 3rd Summit of the Council of Europe is dedicated to managing migration. What do we mean by this? For us the “management of migration” includes not only the migratory flows and the partnership between countries of origin and destination. It is also about the successful integration of immigrant populations, about the full respect of human rights of migrants as well as of their diversity. Only if these conditions are met, will we live in “a win-win” situation in which both migrants and hosting countries can mutually benefit.

Ladies and gentlemen,

However important migration is as a source of the needed growth of the population in Europe, it should not be considered as the only one. Most surveys show that Europeans would like to have more children but they are often discouraged by different kinds of obstacles related to social services, housing, etc. In order to make Europe younger, our countries should develop more child and family-friendly policies.

Ladies and gentlemen,

One week ago, meeting in Warsaw, the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe requested the Council of Europe step up and rationalise co-operation with the OSCE on the basis of their specific tasks and comparative advantages, while avoiding duplication of effort. We are ready to do our best to fulfil this mandate. I strongly believe that the items your meeting is going to discuss are promising areas for such co-operation. Obviously, we would be happy to also see involved in this co-operation the other International Organisations present here today.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.