

# COUNCIL OF EUROPE

## COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

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RECOMMENDATION No. R (97) 3

### OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS TO MEMBER STATES ON YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND THE FUTURE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 4 February 1997  
at the 583rd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,  
Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve greater unity between its members ;

Having regard to the relevant conclusions of the Conferences of European Ministers responsible for Youth held in Strasbourg in December 1985, Oslo in April 1988, Lisbon in September 1990 and Vienna in April 1993 ;

Recalling Articles 12 and 13 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child guaranteeing children's right to express views and their right to freedom of expression, and Article 3 of the European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights ;

Reaffirming the crucial role of youth participation in the development of civil society, serving to introduce a resolutely positive perception of young people as a resource for the constant renewal of democratic society ;

Considering that, in the implementation of global and integrated youth policies at national level, participation by young people, particularly disadvantaged young people, is a decisive factor in ensuring social cohesion and upholding democracy and the values of a multicultural society ;

Recalling that any national youth policy must be reflected at local level if it is to respond appropriately and flexibly to the particular needs, aspirations and culture of a specific population, and that youth participation must become one of the guiding principles of local youth policies ;

Alarmed that participation in institutional and community life in Europe today is undergoing a genuine crisis, particularly affecting traditional structures ;

Stressing that development of the voluntary sector makes it possible to institute democratic structures which open the way to real dialogue between political authorities and citizens by exerting democratic influence on the processes of civic life and rebuilding social cohesion within civil society ;

Considering that development of the voluntary sector among pluralist democratic structures in the countries of central and eastern Europe, as a means of realising and encouraging youth participation and by the same token reinstating a civil society, is essential to the establishment and consolidation of democratic security throughout Europe,

- I. Recommends that the governments of member states :
  - a. promote partnership between youth organisations and authorities at national, regional and local levels, and encourage young people to participate in the voluntary sector ;

*b.* promote co-operation between young people and local and national youth structures in the countries of central and eastern Europe within the framework of existing European programmes ;

*c.* strive for the integration of these objectives and their implementation in the framework of global and integrated youth policies ;

and to achieve this :

*i.* support the development at local and regional levels of appropriate structures for political and civic participation ;

*ii.* set up a network of European schemes for young people, particularly those who are disadvantaged ;

*iii.* encourage implementation of the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Municipal and Regional Life adopted by Resolution 237 (1992) of the Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe ;

*iv.* foster the co-operation established by the Council of Europe in research on youth participation ;

*v.* develop suitable training for youth workers and youth researchers, which should encompass as a basic principle the issues of participation and openness to the process of achieving skills enabling young people to manage their own projects ;

*vi.* ensure that :

– the Council of Europe’s work on education for democracy in the school, higher education and vocational training systems be incorporated into the effective practice of democracy ;

– the Council of Europe’s activities on childhood policies be taken into account within the context of a consistent policy to foster participation of young people ;

**II.** Instructs the Secretary General to transmit the present recommendation to the states which are parties to the European Cultural Convention but not members of the Council of Europe.