

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 233 (2008)¹ Integration through sport

The Congress,

1. Convinced that:

a. our towns should be a place of integration, providing equal access to all sections of the population without discrimination, in order to make it easier for anyone who so wishes to set about becoming integrated into the host society;

b. that sport should be an ideal means of social integration. In particular, it enhances people's ability to become part of a community or social structure, and can help to foster mutual understanding;

c. that the development of sports facilities, playing fields, stadiums, municipal swimming pools, etc. should be an integral part of spatial planning and development and of policy making at local and regional levels in direct consultation with other sectors such as education, health care and social services;

d. that the development of any sports policy in our society requires close co-operation between the private associations and public institutions responsible for matters relating to sport, whether the activities are voluntary or compulsory;

e. that sport and leisure policies have major economic and financial implications and can contribute to local and regional economic development and create jobs;

2. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe invite member states to:

a. encourage local authorities in their desire to promote sport through a system of direct funding and/or tax arrangements designed to meet demand and, at the same time, ensure a transfer of responsibility in the management of sports facilities;

b. introduce provisions to allow the hiring, through sports associations, of the supervisory staff needed to ensure the proper functioning and management of sports facilities and

teams, and encourage access for women to these posts and the training of female staff in order to provide role models for young girls;

c. create an appropriate legal and administrative framework to allow close co-operation and a balanced distribution of tasks and responsibilities between public authorities and voluntary associations;

d. promote sports which emphasise the collective experience of shared effort and achievement that creates social bonds rather than the over-competitive culture of "every man for himself";

e. consider refereeing as an essential aspect of good practice and training referees to enhance their competence as a guarantee of due respect by sports participants;

f. invest in training for supervisory staff to ensure that voluntary associations are properly run, and help these associations to operate in a more professional manner;

g. give special assistance to associations that seek to improve access to sports activities for the most vulnerable sectors of society, such as people from immigrant backgrounds, who have yet to fully find their place in the host society;

h. provide and develop sports facilities, as well as appropriate equipment for people with disabilities who need special infrastructure and trained supervisory staff to help anyone interested in sport to become actively involved;

i. encourage public-private partnership not only in terms of funding but also in terms of political and logistical support in order to involve all sections of civil society in the process of integration through sport, so that our society can really express and make the most of its diversity;

j. encourage participation by elderly people, by improving their access to sports activities that allow them to remain fit and healthy, in the interests of both public health and inter-generational relations;

k. recognise that sport can play an important role in the development of a more democratic society by emphasising the need to observe the rules that are vital to the functioning of community life.

1. Debated and approved by the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Local Authorities on 13 March 2008 and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 14 March 2008 (see Document CPL(14)9REC, draft recommendation presented by H. Zach (Austria, L, EPP/CD) on behalf of W. Schuster (Germany, R, EPP/CD), rapporteur).