

CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF EUROPE

Recommendation 129 (2003)¹ on employment and vulnerable groups

The Congress,

1. Having examined the report on employment and vulnerable groups: the role of local and regional authorities, where three of the vulnerable groups were examined (people with disabilities, persons (previously unemployed) who have set up in business, immigrants and ethnic minorities) presented by the rapporteur Mrs Luisa Laurelli (Italy) of the Chamber of Local Authorities and Mrs Cigdem Mercan (Turkey) from the Chamber of Regions at the present session;
2. Thanking the experts, Mr Francisco Gonzales and Mrs Lina Gavira from the University of Sevilla, Spain for their kind and valuable assistance with the preparation of the report;
3. Recalling that the fifth Plenary Session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) adopted Resolution 72 (1998) and Recommendation 52 (1998) on the regions and employment: contribution to social cohesion in Europe, accompanied by a memorandum prepared by Mr Van Cauwenberghé entitled "For an active policy of the regions on employment and socio-economic development". Subsequently, the sixth Plenary Session of the CLRAE adopted Resolution 81 (1999) and Recommendation 62 (1999) on local authorities and employability;
4. Taking into account the relevant provisions of the European Social Charter (in particular Articles 10 and 15), the Revised European Social Charter (Articles 15 and 27), and the European Employment Strategy of the European Union;
5. Recalling the Malta Declaration on Access to Social Rights, adopted at the Conference on Access to Social Rights held in Sant Julians, Malta on 14 and 15 November 2002 and by the Committee of Ministers at its 825th meeting on 22 January 2003, which calls on governments and other political, social and business partners, to develop and implement policies promoting access to social rights in, *inter alia*, "actively combating discrimination against users with particular attention to vulnerable groups";
6. Recalling that on 20 May 2000 the European Committee for Social Cohesion of the Council of Europe (CDCS) adopted a document setting out its social cohesion strategy, which was ratified by the Committee of Ministers on 13 July 2000. This strategy concentrates particularly on the more vulnerable groups in society, which often need both protection and assistance if they are to achieve social

integration. It also states that appropriate, and appropriately remunerated employment is one of the main ways of promoting social cohesion;

7. Taking into account that the CDCS set up in the autumn of 1999 the Committee of Experts on Promoting Access to Employment (CS-EM) and that at its meeting of May 2001, this committee provisionally approved a document setting out guidelines on local employment initiatives geared to combating and preventing long-term unemployment;
8. Taking into account that the guidelines mainly focus on: local partnerships, equal opportunities between women and men, non-discrimination towards disadvantaged groups, entrepreneurship, education, training and life-long learning, and monitoring and evaluation;
9. Referring to Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1592 (2003) "Towards full social inclusion of people with disabilities and Recommendation 1185 (1992) on rehabilitation policies for the disabled;
10. Taking into account that in the European Union framework, social integration, which is accepted as one of the fundamental principles, gives rise to proposals concerning sustainable development, which is based on four essential pillars: economic dynamism, innovation, striving for full employment, and social cohesion;
11. Considering that in the 1999 European Union Employment Guidelines, specific measures are targeted at underprivileged groups. In 2001 these principles were extended to include anti-discrimination measures and specific recommendations on the promotion of social inclusion;
12. Stressing that, accordingly, a communication of June 2001 from the European Commission sets out a social policy programme according to which employment may not solve all problems of poverty but is the best security against social exclusion;
13. Considering that the agreements adopted at the Lisbon and Nice European Councils also feature the undertaking to associate the various agents participating in the fight against exclusion, particularly non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local and regional authorities, to which a major role is assigned in the implementation of the policies;
14. Recalling the opinion of the Committee of Regions of the European Union adopted on 14 March 2002 on partnerships between local and regional authorities and social economy organisations: contribution to employment, local development and social cohesion;
15. Referring to the results of the study of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Dublin Foundation) on "Access to employment for vulnerable groups" prepared in 2002,
16. Recommends to the governments of the member states to play an important role in seeking the necessary co-ordination between social and employment policies, and

how these policies are co-ordinated at regional and local levels by:

- a.* devising a suitable, balanced regulatory framework for the local and regional tiers;
- b.* harmonising social policies and employment policies;
- c.* providing the necessary resources, looking beyond the short term;
- d.* avoiding excessively complex measures, and trying to define the scope of the innovations needed to ensure that vulnerable groups have access to employment;
- e.* opting for an integrated approach from the social and economic standpoints: social inclusion is achieved through good living and working conditions, and job quality;
- f.* promoting measures of sufficient flexibility to be adjustable to the needs and routines of each specific group in the various phases of their normal existence, not always coinciding with the schedules and objectives of organisations;
- g.* making evaluation a necessary condition for obtaining funds, whatever the type;
- h.* promoting quality standards and evaluation paradigms;
- i.* establishing systems for bottom-up circulation of information;

17. Recommends to the Committee of Ministers:

- a.* to instruct the CDCS, as underlined in the recent decision of the Committee of Ministers at its 825th meeting on 22 January 2003, to continue its activities to ensure effective access to social rights, in particular for vulnerable groups, and to continue the activities of the Group of Specialists on Employment for Marginalised Groups (CS-MA), and in both cases to continue the already well-established involvement of the members of the CLRAE in their work;
- b.* to instruct the Steering Committee on Local and Regional Democracy (CDLR) to update its work on the role of local and regional authorities on employment policies, in particular Recommendation 12 (1987) and to

pay particular attention to the needs of the most vulnerable groups;

18. Recommends that the European Union continues and improves its fundamental role in creating a climate conducive to the integration of vulnerable groups and to enhanced co-ordination between those concerned by:

- a.* promoting the initiatives that specifically target the most vulnerable groups (persons with disabilities, long-term unemployed people aspiring to self-employment, migrants and ethnic minorities);
- b.* offering support to the public and private local and regional entities, usually those most in need of assistance;
- c.* delivering financial aid for a certain period in order to guarantee some stability (in programmes, actions, staff, etc.) and assist long-term planning;
- d.* encouraging participation and co-ordination of the various local and regional operators;
- e.* enhancing the role of those active on the ground, and promoting the organisations that have links with vulnerable groups (the disabled, long-term unemployed aspiring to self-employment, migrants and ethnic minorities);
- f.* ongoing encouragement to the dissemination of good practices among the different countries and regions in order to pool experience;
- g.* promoting training for the technicians and mediators involved in the activities conducted with these vulnerable groups;
- h.* furthering procedures to monitor and evaluate the programmes and policies.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 22 May 2003, 3rd Sitting (see Document CG (10) 7, draft recommendation presented by Mrs L. Laurelli and Mrs C. Mercan, rapporteurs).