

# THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

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## **Opinion 31 (2009)<sup>1</sup> Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-Making Process**

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe welcomes the preparation of the Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-Making Process, by the Conference of INGOs as a response to the request of the participants in the Forum of Democracy held in Sigtuna (Sweden, June 2007).

2. Having regard to the draft code as adopted by the Conference of INGOs at its meeting on 29 April 2009, the Congress recalls that the Preamble of the European Charter of Local Self-Government refers to the civil participation in the conduct of public affairs as one of the democratic principles shared by all member states of the Council of Europe. It emphasises that it has already dealt with the issue of civil participation in the decision-making process, several times in its reports, resolutions, recommendations, and particularly in the context of work on the draft additional protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on democratic participation at local level.

3. The final power of choice lies with the public authorities, unless the decision is taken by a public vote, referendum or a co-decision mechanism.

4. The Congress welcomes this draft code which sets down concrete principles for civil participation at all levels of political decision-making processes in a realistic perspective. It also notes that the code provides practical guidance supporting the implementation of elements of direct democracy; this process is enhanced by the support of co-ordinated actions by INGOs.

5. Therefore, the Congress stands ready to contribute to the promotion of this reference tool, particularly in its monitoring activities of local and regional democracy in Europe.

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1. Discussion and adoption by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 10 June 2009 (see document CG(16)19Opinion, rapporteur: A. Knape, Sweden, (L, EPP/CD)).