

# THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

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## **Recommendation 381 (2015)<sup>1</sup> Fighting the increasing poverty of women: the responsibility of local and regional authorities**

1. The Council of Europe actively supports the idea of a right to protection from poverty, particularly through its European Social Charter (revised) (ETS No. 163), on the basis of the understanding that poverty is not only the problem of the people suffering from it but also the problem of society as a whole. However, it is also true that poverty affects different sectors of the population in diverse ways. Research into poverty over the past few decades has shown that a holistic approach that takes into account all the dimensions involved is essential. It is crucial to take account of the multiple dimensions of poverty in order to develop solutions that are adapted to the particular needs of the more vulnerable members of the population, such as women and children.

2. In 2007 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) alerted its member States to the feminisation of poverty and suggested practical measures to counter this development. PACE also put forward measures for combating poverty and called on member States to tackle the root causes of women's poverty in its Resolution 1800 (2011) and Recommendation 1963 (2011) on combating poverty.

3. The Commissioner for Human Rights in his Issue Paper, *Safeguarding human rights in times of economic crisis* (2014) recommended that member States conduct impact assessments of social and economic policies and budgets on human rights and equality, that they promote equality, and that they work towards social protection floors for all.

4. Today women, who are more vulnerable socially and economically than men, are the first to suffer the effects of the crisis. They are more subject to poverty, which complicates access to food, housing, education and health care, thus causing deprivation, which in turn is an obstacle to the full

enjoyment of human rights, whether civil, social, cultural or political. Women are much more dependent on the measures taken by public authorities, whether nationally, regionally or locally. This fact is ample justification for studying the potential of local and regional authorities to combat female poverty.

5. The Congress, committed to the gender mainstreaming policy of the Council of Europe, and aware of the responsibilities incumbent upon local and regional authorities to uphold human rights and counter the adverse effects of the economic crisis, underlines the need to identify those mechanisms of local and regional policy that are instrumental in "feminising" poverty and to assess the action required to combat poverty at local and regional level, while exploring the available means of protecting women's rights during a crisis, particularly by cataloguing good practice.

6. In light of the above and with a view to improving the economic situation of women, the Congress invites the member States of the Council of Europe to:

*a.* systematically consider any consequences for human rights and especially social and economic rights affecting women when framing macroeconomic policies, in line with the gender mainstreaming guidelines adopted by the Council of Europe;

*b.* take account of any consequences for social assistance at local level when making decisions on social spending;

*c.* consider establishing statistical tools to measure women's income poverty and setting social protection floors or universal (non-contributory) minimum income schemes that can improve women's economic situation;

*d.* review their legislation in order to individualise social and economic rights so as to value women as individuals often responsible for children as single parents;

*e.* support local and regional action in this sphere and adopt a multilevel governance approach in the elaboration and implementation of measures, and when raising the resources required for the introduction of relevant programmes at local and regional level.

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1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 21 October 2015, 2nd Sitting (see Document [CG/2015\(29\)9FINAL](#), explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: Jean-Louis Testud, France (L, EPP/CCE).