

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 332 (2011)¹ Education for democratic citizenship: tools for cities

1. The quality of a democracy and its proper functioning are dependent on the attitudes and behaviour of its population. The understanding by citizens of their rights and responsibilities, their proactive civic position in the exercise of these rights and fulfilment of these responsibilities, and their commitment to and participation in democratic processes are central to the progress of modern democracy and indeed of modern society.

2. The level of the civil and political awareness of citizens that is necessary to ensure the health and development of a pluralist democracy is a crucial element of democratic citizenship. Accordingly, education for democratic citizenship (EDC) is a process of providing citizens with the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding, of developing their attitudes and behaviour and promoting their active civic position in order to empower them to exercise and defend their rights and responsibilities in society, to value diversity and to play an active part in democratic life.

3. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe is convinced that local authorities have a duty to promote and facilitate active democratic citizenship, the quality of local democracy being an essential building block for the quality of regional, national and international democracy. Europe's cities have the potential to become catalysts for nurturing, developing and spreading the values that lie at the heart of democracy. By developing robust EDC strategies and making intelligent use of the available tools, cities can play an important role in realising this potential and enable their citizens not only to develop personally but to contribute fully to public life.

4. The Congress reaffirms the crucial link between education for democratic citizenship and human rights education (HRE), on the basis that there can be no democracy without the full understanding of and respect for human rights.

5. The Congress is also convinced that the increasing complexity and diversity of society and the increase in the rate of change has the effect that non-formal education and lifelong learning are becoming an important sector for equipping citizens with the skills and understanding that they need to empower them to play their role in society. To explore EDC in its relation to the city, education is best understood in a wide sense, not confined to school and university, but embracing the whole realm of non-formal education and training and covering a wide range of cultural and awareness-raising activities.

6. The Congress considers that local action for education for democratic citizenship should include elaborating appropriate EDC policies and establishing a framework for their implementation, in particular by integrating EDC into the existing programmes of formal education and vocational training, developing programmes of non-formal education and carrying out awareness-raising activities, as well as action to encourage and promote greater participation of citizens, in particular through public consultations, representative citizens' bodies and participatory budgeting. Citizen participation at local level in general should be considered a crucial EDC element, as it provides learning through experience and practice.

7. The Congress therefore calls on local authorities of the Council of Europe member states to:

a. draw up local policies, strategies and action plans for education for democratic citizenship;

b. establish an EDC policy implementation framework in their communities, in particular by developing, where appropriate, their own programmes to provide EDC through both formal and non-formal education, training, awareness-raising and citizen participation;

c. ensure co-ordination and examine possible synergies with other stakeholders – regional authorities, national governments, educational institutions, non-governmental and in particular youth organisations, parents, the local media, etc. – in defining and implementing EDC programmes;

d. promote human rights awareness-raising activities among local populations as an integral part of education for democratic citizenship;

e. establish a framework for encouraging active citizen participation at local level, including by setting up consultative citizens' structures and tools (citizens' initiatives, referenda, etc.) and introducing, where appropriate, participatory budgeting;

f. make particular use of the following existing policy texts and action tools for achieving these objectives:

– official texts of the Council of Europe and of the European Union;²

– the *Manual on Human Rights Education with Young People* (“Compass”) and the *Manual on Human Rights Education for Children* (“Compassito”), as well as specific Council of Europe EDC/HRE materials (available on the Council of Europe website www.coe.int);

– European Local Democracy Week (ELDW), including by organising and engaging in annual ELDW activities in October, using the week to raise awareness on and communicate their EDC action;

– Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs);

– local youth councils and assemblies, as well as consultative councils of foreign residents and other representative

citizens' bodies, to promote consultations with and participation of citizens, in particular young people;

– tools available in the framework of e-democracy and e-participation.

8. The Congress invites national associations of local authorities to act as a catalyst for promoting EDC initiatives and experience-sharing.

9. The Congress mandates:

a. its Current Affairs Committee to undertake further work on this subject and to encourage good practices of education for democratic citizenship at local level across Europe;

b. its Governance Committee to take education for democratic citizenship into account as part of good governance at

local level, and to propose integrating EDC into governance methods and practices.

1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Local Authorities on 19 October 2011 and adopted by the Congress on 20 October 2011, 3rd Sitting (see Document CPL(21)6, explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: D. Ghisletta, Switzerland (L, SOC).

2. European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122) and the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No. 207); Council of Europe Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level; Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7); Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (adopted by the Congress in 1992 and revised in 2003); EU Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (2006/962/EC).