THE CONGRESS
OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL
AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 365 (2014)1
Promoting diversity
through intercultural education
and communication strategies

1. The population of Europe is rapidly diversifying, and it is
now the case that not just major cities, but also small munici-
palities and authorities more and more frequently have
local populations of a very wide range of ethnic, cultural
and religious origins. Ethnic minorities, foreign residents,
migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees and residents of migrant
origin form a European population which is not only grow-
ing more strongly than in the previous decades, but has also
become an integral part of the fabric of our societies. They
are now a major force, thanks to their economic, social and
cultural contribution.

2. Their diversity represents a wide-ranging resource for
innovation, growth and local economic, social and cul-
tural development, making possible an opening up to other
cultures and an inflow of new knowledge, methodologies,
skills and ideas which increase a society’s creativity and
make it better able to face up to new situations, crises and
challenges. In the cultural sphere, diversity is a source of
enrichment which is perceptible in literature, cinema, the
arts, sport, cookery, fashion, and in many forms of expres-
sion and types of activity. That creativity is also a source
of job creation, attracting industries and firms in search of
innovative ideas.

3. Thus the paradigm for society-building in Europe has
changed. Whereas, in the past, we sought to achieve social
cohesion on the basis of homogeneity, we now find our-
selves in an intercultural society. The Report of the Group of
Eminent Persons of the Council of Europe entitled “Living
together. Combining diversity and freedom in 21st-century
Europe”2 identified European diversity as the main challenge
facing modern democracy. That same report highlighted
the crucial role played by local and regional authorities in
responding effectively, as well as their role in building har-
monious intercultural relations between the different popu-
lation groups.

4. When it comes to accepting cultural diversity as an enrich-
ing factor, there is still a degree of resistance and reluctance
among the local population, fuelled by prejudice and misin-
conceptions based on rumours, stereotyping and misinformation. That prejudice, often stemming from ignorance of
other cultures, continues to affect the way in which peo-
ples regard others. That resistance also comes from a more
subjective and unconscious perception that the concept
of cultural diversity is linked to the idea of the “foreign”,
“immigrant” or “minority” culture constituting a threat to
the majority culture. Ignorance of the benefits of diversity is
thus a major obstacle to intercultural action.

5. The Congress is certain that the diversity and cultural
heritage of populations represent two of the main assets of
European societies, and that a precondition for a change in
attitudes to diversity is a better knowledge of its advantages
in both populations and authorities, necessitating the devel-
opment of policies encompassing all social, ethnic and cul-
tural groups and an educational effort based on intercultural
communication and teaching.

6. In this respect, the Congress reaffirms the relevance of
its Recommendations 261 (2009) on intercultural cities,
304 (2011) on meeting the challenge of inter-faith and inter-
cultural tensions at local level, 347 (2013) on migrants’
access to regional labour markets and 343 (2013) on inte-
gration through self-employment: promoting migrant
entrepreneurship in European municipalities., as well as of
Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7 on the Council of Europe
Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and
Human Rights Education3 and of Parliamentary Assembly
Recommendation 2005 (2014) on identies and diversity
within intercultural societies.

7. The Congress notes the work under way within the
Council of Europe to draft a recommendation to member
States on intercultural integration, and awaits with inter-
est its adoption by the Committee of Ministers, in the firm
belief that its implementation will also contribute to local
and regional action in this sphere.

8. In this context, the Congress draws the attention of the
Committee of Ministers to the initiatives already started at
local and regional level, amongst them its own European
Local Democracy Week (ELDW) and the Council of
Europe programme on “Intercultural cities”; The inter-
cultural city step by step – Practical guide for applying the
urban model of intercultural integration4 produced in the
framework of that programme, as well as associated pro-
jects such as: Shaping Perceptions and Attitudes to Realise
the Diversity Advantage (SPARDA), Communication for
Integration (C4I) and Diversity in the Economy and Local
Integration (DELI).

9. The Congress also refers to the project “Attitudes
to Migrants, Communication and Local Leadership
(AMICALL)” and to the action plan drawn up by the
European Coalition of Cities against Racism (ECCAR),
as well as to numerous other campaigns and initiatives by
authorities, such as the Cosmopolitan Strasbourg in France,
the “anti-rumour” campaign in Barcelona and in other cit-
ies in Spain, as well as other “demystification campaigns”,
“radio diversity” projects, and so on.

10. In the light of the foregoing, the Congress asks the
Committee of Ministers to adopt as soon as possible the rec-
ommendation to member States on intercultural integration,
and to invite the member States of the Council of Europe to:

a. produce an overall intercultural vision based on the expe-
rience of, and with a contribution from, the authorities;
b. formulate intercultural communication and education strategies of a general nature, with a view to promoting a consistent approach to diversity amongst the different government structures and the different levels of governance, and to raise society’s awareness of the advantages of diversity in order to derive maximum benefit from it;

c. to develop the curriculum, textbooks and teacher-training courses for schools, higher education establishments and schools of journalism, so as to improve intercultural skills and the vision of diversity;

d. set up a system of intercultural mediation at every level of governance, with a sustainable budgetary allocation;

e. stop using political discourse about immigration as an instrument, and emphasise instead in politics and discussions about migratory movements the processes of mutual adaptation and migrant integration;

f. encourage the commitment of cultural and arts institutions to the promotion of diversity, and provide support to cultural projects which highlight diversity;

g. establish partnerships for the introduction of programmes relating to diversity, inter alia with authorities, players from civil society, national media and businesses;

h. support local and regional action in this sphere and provide continuity of budgets for the introduction of relevant programmes on the ground;

i. work in general against negative stigma, taking account of different dimensions which affect social reality, both objective (work, housing, access to public services) and subjective (feelings of belonging).

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 15 October 2014, 2nd Sitting (see Document CG(27)6FINAL, explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: Nawel Rafik-Elmrini, France (L, SOC).

