

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 153 (2004)¹ on a pact for the integration and participation of people of immigrant origin in Europe's towns, cities and regions

The Congress, bearing in mind the proposal of the Chamber of Local Authorities,

1. Noting in particular:

a. the Council of Europe Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level (ETS No. 144), which was opened for signature in 1992 and, to date, has been signed by 10 states and ratified by 7 of the 45 member states;

b. its Resolution 92 (2000) adopted following the Strasbourg Conference on 5 and 6 November 1999, organised jointly by the Congress, the City of Strasbourg and its Foreigners' Advisory Council;

c. its Resolution 141 (2002) on the participation of foreign residents in local public life: consultative bodies, which was adopted following the hearing held by the Congress in Stuttgart on 14 December 2001 at the invitation of the city's mayor;

2. Noting the recent work of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, in particular Recommendation 1500 (2001) on participation of immigrants and foreign residents in political life in the Council of Europe member states, and Recommendation 1625 (2003) on policies for the integration of immigrants in Council of Europe member states;

3. Also noting Recommendation Rec(2001)19 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the participation of citizens in local public life, in particular paragraph 5 of section D of Appendix II thereto concerning foreigners, which urges member states to comply with the machinery provided for in the Council of Europe's 1992 convention, even when its provisions are not legally binding on them;

4. Thanking the Mayor of Stuttgart for hosting on 15 and 16 September 2003 the Conference on "Foreigners' integration and participation in European cities", which was organised jointly by the Congress and the City of Stuttgart with the support of the Council of Europe's Integrated Project on Making Democratic Institutions Work;

5. Taking note of the report by Helene Lund and Wolfgang Schuster (CPL (11) 4 Part II); Resolution

181 (2004); the Final Declaration adopted at the close of the Stuttgart Conference and appended to that resolution; and the proceedings of the conference,

6. Notes the growing diversity of the nationalities of the residents of European cities following past and more recent migratory movements and believes that these flows into Europe are set to increase;

7. Believes there is a need for increased co-operation between all levels of government in order to define a coherent framework for legal and orderly immigration, while effectively combating illegal immigration that encourages trafficking in, and exploitation of, human beings;

8. Underlines that these migratory flows foster the diversity and vitality of our cities and bring numerous advantages in the demographic, economic and cultural spheres, but also constitute major challenges in terms of the integration of the individuals concerned and harmonious coexistence in European societies;

9. Believes that the integration of people of immigrant origin is a shared responsibility that requires national and European solidarity in order to help the local and regional authorities most directly affected by migratory flows;

10. Notes that, while local and regional authorities are key players for implementing integration programmes, they are not sufficiently involved in decision-making on migration and integration and very often have to take measures themselves that seriously undermine their budgets;

11. Believes that integration programmes must be aimed both at the effective integration of people of immigrant origin who are already settled and wish to remain in the local and regional authorities where they live, and also at putting in place specific measures for the integration of new arrivals;

12. Calls for heightened co-operation between the various political levels (national, regional and local) and with civil society in order to achieve the following three priority objectives:

a. integration and participation, which will make possible *de jure* and *de facto* equality of opportunity, and the same rights and obligations for all;

b. peaceful coexistence, ensuring respect, in a spirit of tolerance, for the rights and freedoms of the individual, in particular freedom of opinion and freedom to exercise religion;

c. use of cultural diversity as a resource by opening up urban life and public services in an intercultural manner;

13. Underlines that equality of opportunity can only be achieved through positive discrimination measures in a series of specific areas, which demands adequate human and financial resources;

14. Also underlines that any integration programmes must be accompanied by effective measures for combating discrimination, racism and intolerance;

15. Calls on the Committee of Ministers actively to continue its efforts and its co-operation with other international organisations, especially the European Union, with a view to:

a. ensuring respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law in all European states so as to eradicate forced migration resulting from infringements of these rights and fundamental principles;

b. consolidating a platform for political dialogue aimed at greater co-ordination and increased solidarity between countries of origin and transit and host countries;

c. setting up a European migration agency or monitoring centre that would gather and pool standardised statistical data monitored over time and would therefore serve as an essential tool for defining migration and integration policies;

16. Invites the Committee of Ministers to contact the Council of Europe Development Bank to intensify its programmes designed to improve the living and working conditions of people of immigrant origin in local and regional authorities in member states;

17. Also calls on the Committee of Ministers to attach political priority to the issues of migration and integration and, in connection with the discussions in preparation for a third Council of Europe Summit, give consideration to launching a cross-sectoral programme spanning several years in this area involving the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress and the intergovernmental sector, in particular the European Committee on Migration (CDMG);

18. Calls on the governments of member states:

a. to involve more closely local and regional authorities, having regard to their practical experience and to the principle of subsidiarity, in defining policies on migration, integration and the participation of residents of immigrant origin;

b. to provide greater financial and human support for programmes in local and regional authorities such as those proposed in the Stuttgart Final Declaration, focusing, in particular, on language learning for children and adults, education, training and vocational integration, as well as urban planning and housing measures that enable migrants and their families to be offered appropriate integration conditions in the towns and regions where they live;

c. to ratify without delay, if they have not already done so, the Council of Europe conventions aimed at improving the status and integration of migrants in host countries, in particular the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level (ETS No. 144) and the European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers (ETS No. 93);

d. to facilitate the acquisition of nationality and opportunities for dual nationality and actively inform people of immigrant origin of these possibilities;

e. regularly to assess the results of the programmes and step up exchanges of experience and the dissemination of best practice between the various categories of players concerned by the integration and participation of people of immigrant origin;

f. to step up their efforts to combat discrimination, racism and intolerance through appropriate legislation and rigorous monitoring of its implementation, as well as through public information and awareness-raising campaigns on the issue.

1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Local Authorities on 25 May 2004 and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 27 May 2004, (see Document CPL (11) 4, draft recommendation presented by H. Lund (Denmark, L, SOC) and W. Schuster (Germany, L, EPP/CD), rapporteurs).