

# THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

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## Resolution 259 (2008)<sup>1</sup> Integration and participation of young people at local and regional level

1. The Congress believes that the active participation of young people in the political and social life of a region and municipality is a fundamental factor in the overall development of democratic institutions and is an essential contribution to social cohesion. This potential is not yet fully utilised.

2. Local and regional authorities are strategically placed to encourage the development of a culture of democratic participation in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. Developing and preserving a sense of local and regional belonging and identity among young people enables them to integrate fully into a region by improving their quality of life at local and regional level. Local and regional authorities, as political institutions, are the public authorities closest to citizens. They are responsible for promoting, in the interests of efficiency, understanding and awareness of democratic functioning. They must help young people understand that ultimately they can play a key and irreplaceable role.

3. The revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life highlighted three key principles regarding policies relating to young people's participation that should be promoted and implemented by local and regional authorities:

*a.* the participation of young people in local and regional life should be part of an overall public participation policy, as advocated in Recommendation Rec(2001)19 from the Committee of Ministers to member states on the participation of citizens in local public life;

*b.* local and regional authorities are convinced that all sectoral policies must have a "youth" dimension. They therefore undertake to comply with the principles of this charter and implement the different forms of participation promoted therein in close consultation and active co-operation with young people and their representatives;

*c.* the principles and the various forms of participation set out in the charter are intended for all young people, regardless of their social, sexual, cultural, religious or linguistic identity.

4. Nonetheless, today it is acknowledged that this responsibility no longer lies with the local and regional authorities alone but must be shared by all of society's stakeholders, not only young people and the youth organisations representing them but also non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

They must work hand in hand, taking on board the expectations and specific objectives of these different players.

5. In this context, local and regional authorities have a duty to put in place a *modus operandi* providing for structured and institutionalised exchanges with the various players. This structured dialogue between young people and local and regional authorities should result in common objectives, with youth participation becoming a goal to be achieved across all sectors.

6. The challenge facing local and regional authorities is to work closely with the different youth organisations in order to ensure that the potential for youth commitment and participation will benefit the whole community. Local and regional authorities have a major role to play in developing networks and partnerships between youth organisations, NGOs and local government.

7. In the light of the above, the Congress recommends that the municipalities and regions of Council of Europe member states:

*a.* acknowledge the contribution that young people can make to improving local and regional democracy;

*b.* seek to harness the potential of youth organisations, using their ability to channel and draw together the various forms of expression of a specific youth culture in order to optimise active participation in the consultation and decision-making processes of direct relevance to young people;

*c.* encourage a partnership between elected representatives and youth organisations as part of a regular and open dialogue, leading to active forms of participation such as co-management of youth policies at local and regional level;

*d.* encourage wider knowledge among young people of the democratic processes of the surrounding regions by intensifying inter-regional exchanges at their level;

*e.* encourage new partnerships and new forms of co-operation between municipal councils and youth councils, children's councils, etc., so that the latter may be fully involved in the decisions of direct relevance to them;

*f.* ensure that young people are represented on all bodies addressing cultural, sport and artistic developments at local and regional level;

*g.* pursue and promote common training initiatives to enable representatives of local and regional authorities, municipal and regional government staff, local and regional representatives of young people and representatives of youth councils to meet in a spirit of co-operation and on an equal footing, thereby making it possible to create a climate of trust which is so essential for effective collaboration between the players concerned.

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1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 29 May 2008, 3rd Sitting (see Document CG(15)8RES, draft resolution presented by S. Kirichuk (Russian Federation, R, SOC), rapporteur).