

CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF EUROPE

Recommendation 128 (2003)¹ on the revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life

The Congress,

1. Recalling the elaboration and adoption in 1992 of the text that was to become the revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life;

2. Bearing in mind all activities carried out to promote the objectives of the Charter since then, notably:

a. the conference “Europe 2000 – Young People and their Towns. What involvement? Comparing Policies” held in Budapest in 1997;

b. the conference “Young People – Actors in their Towns and Regions” held in Krakow in 2002, organised in co-operation with the Directorate of Youth and Sport;

3. Recalling CLRAE Resolutions 43 (1997) on “Opening up Europe to the young: towns and regions in action” and 78 (1999) on “Europe 2000 youth participation: the role of young people as citizens”;

4. Recalling CLRAE Recommendation 59 (1999) on “Europe 2000 youth participation: the role of young people as citizens”;

5. Taking into account Recommendation Rec(2001)19 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the participation of citizens in local public life, the final version of which refers to CLRAE Opinion 15 (2001);

6. Recognising the need for the revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life not to remain a static instrument, but to make it address the changing issues experienced by young people;

7. Conscious that direct involvement of youth in the affairs of society remains essential, as a safeguard for democracy and for sustainable development in the municipalities and regions;

8. Considering that the involvement of young people in decision making, in particular when the matter at hand has a direct impact on their lives, is essential for maintaining the legitimacy of decision making;

9. Believing that early positive experiences of participation are likely to lead to active involvement in community matters at a more mature age;

10. Emphasising that such involvement must be real and effective and not just an inclusion of young people in consultative bodies without any real possibility to participate in the actual decision making;

11. Convinced that the Charter needs to provide guidelines for local and regional authorities on how to pursue policies affecting young people, and to provide the tools for participation by the young people themselves;

12. Aware of the importance of providing necessary and equal access to the new information technologies as these have an enormous potential to increase participation of young people in society;

13. Recognising that education about rights and duties of citizens in a democratic society must be made an integral part of any school curriculum to enable young people to contribute actively to democratic decision making;

14. Holding the view that special efforts must be made to include categories of young people who for one reason or another have difficulty getting involved in local and regional life;

15. Reaffirming its belief that special measures should be introduced to promote real participation of young people where young people participate less actively than elsewhere;

16. Believing that specific instruments should be developed to measure the degree to which young people participate in elected bodies or are active through electoral or direct forms of participation;

17. Recognising the need to find adequate responses to the crime and violence in contemporary society and the need to involve young people directly in combating these problems, as young people often are victims of crime and violence;

18. United in the belief that all means available must be used to protect young people from sexual exploitation as well as any other form of abuse;

19. Marking its full agreement of the updated version of the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life;

20. Invites the Committee of Ministers to:

a. adopt the revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life (see appendix) as a recommendation to its member states;

b. request the appropriate Council of Europe services to continue, in co-operation with the CLRAE, activities in the field of participation of young people in local and regional life.

Appendix

Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life

Introduction

The foundation for what was to become the revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life was laid at the first and second conference on youth policies, organised by the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, in Lausanne (June 1988) and in Llangollen (September 1991) respectively. Soon after, in March 1992, the Standing Conference adopted Resolution 237 and Article 22 thereof on the adoption of the Charter.

To celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, in partnership with the Council of Europe's Directorate for Youth and Sport, organised a conference entitled "Young People – Actors in their Towns and Regions". The general purpose of the conference held in Krakow on 7 and 8 March 2002 was to evaluate the progress made in the field of youth participation during the Charter's ten years of existence, while discussing ways of further promoting youth participation, amongst others by disseminating good practices. The participants at the conference adopted the Krakow Declaration in which they reaffirm that young people are citizens in the municipalities and regions where they live, in the same way as any other age group, and must therefore have access to all forms of participation in society and that reaffirming and promoting the role of young people in the development of a democratic society, in particular in local and regional public life, was endorsed and re-established. Moreover, the conference constituted a contribution to the Council of Europe Integrated Project "Making Democratic Institutions Work".

The participants furthermore called for a response to new challenges faced by young people in contemporary society. Consequently they requested the CLRAE and the Advisory Council on Youth Questions of the Council of Europe to appoint experts to prepare proposals for amending the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life in order also to make it respond to new challenges of the twenty-first century such as the information society and urban insecurity.

The working meetings were convened at the end of 2002 and the beginning of 2003. The deliberations of these working meetings provide the basis of the present version of the Charter. This version of the Charter is divided into three sections. The first provides local and regional authorities with guidelines for how to conduct policies affecting young people in a number of areas. The second part provides the tools for furthering the participation of young people. Finally, the third section provides advice on how to provide institutional conditions for participation of young people.

Preamble

The active participation of young people in decisions and actions at local and regional level is essential if we are to build more democratic, inclusive and prosperous societies. Participation in the democratic life of any community is about more than voting or standing for election, although these are important elements. Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society.

Local and regional authorities, as the authorities closest to the young person, have a very important role to play in promoting youth participation. In doing so, local and regional authorities can ensure that young people not only hear and learn about democracy and citizenship, but rather have the opportunity to practice it. However, youth participation is not solely about developing active citizens or building democracy for the future. It is vital, if participation is to be meaningful for young people, that they can influence and shape decisions and actions when they are young and not only at some later stage in life.

When local and regional authorities support and promote youth participation they also contribute to the social integration of young people, helping them to deal not only with the challenges and pressures of youth, but also with the challenges of a modern society where anonymity and individualism are often predominant. However, for youth participation in local and regional life to be successful, lasting and meaningful requires more than the development or restructuring of political or administrative systems. Any policy or action designed to promote youth participation must ensure that the cultural environment is one of respect for young people and must also take into account the diverse needs, circumstances and aspirations of young people. And it must involve some element of fun and enjoyment.

Principles

1. The participation of young people in local and regional life must constitute part of a global policy of citizens' participation in public life, as set out in Recommendation Rec(2001)19 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the participation of citizens in local public life.
2. Local and regional authorities are convinced that all sectoral policies should have a youth dimension. They therefore undertake to comply with the provisions of this charter and to implement the various forms of participation, which follow in consultation and co-operation with young people and their representatives.
3. The principles and various forms of participation advocated in this charter apply to all young people without discrimination. In order to achieve this, special attention should be paid to promoting the participation in local and regional life of young people from disadvantaged sectors of society and from ethnic, national, social, sexual, cultural, religious and linguistic minorities.

Part 1: Sectoral policies

I/1 A policy for sport, leisure and associative life

4. Local and regional authorities should support organised socio-cultural activities – run by youth associations and organisations, youth groups and community centres – which, together with the family and school or work, are one of the pillars of social cohesion in the municipality or region; these are an ideal channel for youth participation and the implementation of youth policies in the fields of sport, culture, crafts and trades, artistic and other forms of creation and expression, as well as in the field of social action.

5. In order to develop the local and regional youth association sector, local and regional authorities should through appropriate measures lend their support, in particular to organisations which train facilitators and leaders of youth clubs and organisations, as well as youth workers, who play a vital part in life at local and regional level.

6. Local and regional authorities should encourage associations to promote the active participation of young people in their statutory bodies.

I/2 A policy to promote youth employment and combat unemployment

7. The economic and social conditions that young people experience impact upon their willingness and ability to participate in their local community. When young people are unemployed or living in poverty they are less likely to have the desire, resources and social support to be active citizens in local and regional life. Young people who are unemployed are likely to be among the most excluded in society and therefore local and regional authorities should develop policies and promote initiatives to reduce youth unemployment.

8. Therefore, local and regional authorities should:

- i. develop policies and programmes in concertation with young people (including those who are unemployed or at risk of being unemployed), local employers, trade unions, education, training and employment authorities and youth organisations to address the causes of youth unemployment and promote employment opportunities for young people;
- ii. establish local employment centres to provide specialist help and support to young unemployed people in finding meaningful and stable work. Young unemployed people should have the right to be involved in the management of these centres if they so wish;
- iii. support the establishment of businesses, enterprises and co-operatives by young people or groups of young people by providing funding and other support such as premises, equipment, training and professional advice;
- iv. encourage experimentation by young people with the social economy, community self-help initiatives or co-operatives.

I/3 Urban environment and habitat, housing policy, and transport

9. Together with representatives of youth organisations, local and regional authorities should create conditions for developing an urban environment policy based on a more integrated, less fragmented living environment which is conducive to social interaction and the development of high-quality public spaces.

10. Local and regional authorities should pursue housing and urban environment policies which closely involve young people in consultation arrangements bringing together locally or regionally elected representatives, economic decision makers, leaders of associations and architects. Their aim is:

- i. to draw up programmes for a more harmonious environment conducive to personal self-fulfilment and the development of real solidarity between the generations;
- ii. to develop a concerted policy on the urban environment that takes account of residents' social and intercultural realities in the drawing up of housing and/or housing renovation programmes.

11. In close co-operation with youth organisations, tenants' organisations and/or consumer organisations, social housing agencies and social workers, local and regional authorities should promote the development of, or develop within existing social structures:

- i. local information services on housing for young people;
- ii. local schemes (e.g. low-cost loans, rent guarantee systems) to help young people gain access to housing.

12. The mobility of young people is made possible through easy access to public transport, of which they are the main users. This mobility is indispensable for participation in social life and for being full citizens.

13. Young people should therefore be involved in the organisation of public transport, at both local and regional level. Specially adapted rates should allow the most disadvantaged young people to travel.

14. In rural areas, mobility and transport are a fundamental necessity for quality of life and not just necessary to facilitate participation. Therefore, local and regional authorities should support rural transport initiatives that seek to provide transport services (public or private, individual or collective) and increase mobility in rural areas for groups such as young people who are currently excluded due to lack of means of transport.

I/4 An education and training policy promoting youth participation

15. School is an institution in which young people not only spend a considerable proportion of their lives and where they undertake a formal educational programme; it is also a place where many of their views and perspectives on life are shaped. It is essential that young people learn about participation and democracy while in school and that courses on democracy, participation and citizenship are

available and properly resourced. However school must also be a place where young people experience democracy in action and where their participation in decision making is supported, promoted and is seen as effective. Therefore:

- i. local and regional authorities should actively encourage the participation of young people in school life. They should provide financial and other supports such as meeting facilities to enable young people to establish democratic school student associations. These associations should be independent and self-governing, and if they want to, they should have the right to participate in decisions concerning the management of the school in partnership with the teachers and school authorities;
- ii. where local and regional authorities are responsible for school curricula, they should ensure that students and student associations are consulted on an ongoing basis concerning curricula and their development. They should also ensure that civic and political education is incorporated into school curricula and given the necessary prominence and resources in the educational programme of all students.

I/5 A policy for mobility and exchanges

16. Local and regional authorities should support those associations or groups which favour the mobility of young people (young workers, students, or volunteers) through exchange policies, and develop networking policies and an awareness of European citizenship.

17. Local and regional authorities should encourage young people, their organisations and their schools to participate actively in international twinning activities, all types of exchanges, and European networks. These authorities should be ready to give them financial support, in order to promote language learning and intercultural exchanges, as well as exchanges of experience.

18. They should include young people and/or their representatives in the twinning committees and other organs responsible for implementing these exchanges.

I/6 A health policy

19. With a view to promoting the emergence and implementation of projects that originate from young people and promote both the development of the concept of all-round health and the dynamics of community life, local and regional authorities should create or develop institutional machinery for consultation between youth organisations, elected representatives and all social and professional groups concerned with social welfare and the promotion of health.

20. Faced with the ravages of tobacco, alcohol and drug abuse among young people, local and regional authorities should introduce, develop or promote, together with representatives of youth organisations and of health services, local information policies and counselling facilities for young people affected by these problems, as well as special training policies for young social workers and for voluntary workers and leaders of organisations

operating prevention and rehabilitation strategies for the young people concerned.

21. In view of the current increase in sexually transmitted diseases, local and regional authorities should intensify information campaigns and preventive measures aimed at young people, thus promoting within the community a spirit of solidarity engendering social relationships in which moral judgments and segregation have no place. Young people and the representatives of local youth organisations and of health services should be closely involved in the design and implementation of these information and action programmes.

I/7 A gender equality policy

22. As part of their policies to create optimum conditions for equal participation by women and men in local and regional affairs, local and regional authorities should take affirmative action in support of the access of young men and women to positions of responsibility within professional life, associations, politics and local and regional authorities.

23. Within the limits of their powers, local and regional authorities should promote, from early childhood onwards, an educational policy of equality between women and men.

24. To promote a policy of equality between women and men, local and regional authorities should:

- i. draw up a medium-term plan with the aim of eliminating inequalities between young men and young women;
- ii. Implement and evaluate measures which promote equal opportunities for girls and young women.

25. In order to achieve this aim, these policies should in particular enable girls and young women:

- i. to receive specific information on training courses leading to professional qualifications;
- ii. to learn occupational skills by offering grants and specific courses of study in professions including those which have traditionally been filled by men;
- iii. to train them in the running of public affairs by entrusting them with responsibilities at the highest level, on the basis of a quota of places reserved for women;
- iv. to introduce financial measures for social services which assist girls and young women.

I/8 A specific policy for rural regions

26. Local and regional authorities need to take into account the different needs of young people in rural areas when developing or establishing actions and activities to promote youth participation. Therefore, they should:

- i. ensure that educational, employment, housing, transport and other sectoral policies reflect and address the special needs of young people living in rural areas. These policies should help young people who want to live in rural areas to do so. Young people living in rural areas should not have

to endure or expect a lower level of social services and provision than those living in urban areas;

ii. provide financial and other support to youth organisations and other community organisations active in rural areas. These organisations can stimulate social and cultural life in rural communities and can be an important social outlet for young people. Youth and other community organisations not only play an important role in encouraging youth participation; they can also enhance the quality of life and combat problems such as rural isolation.

I/9 A policy on access to culture

27. Art and culture exist in forms that are both multiple and constantly changing, according to tastes, places and period. They are, however, part of the past, present and future personal and collective heritage, to which successive generations contribute. They are, in a way, the reflection of each society. Young people, through their practice of culture and their capacity for initiative, exploration and innovation, build and play a role in these cultural developments. It is therefore important to allow them access to culture in all its forms and to promote their possibilities for creative activity including in new fields.

28. Local and regional authorities should therefore adopt, in association with young people and their organisations, policies designed to allow them to become cultural actors, with access to knowledge, the practice of culture and creative activity in places and using methods designed for that purpose.

I/10 A policy for sustainable development and for the environment

29. Faced with an increasingly obvious deterioration of the environment, local and regional authorities should give financial support to educational projects in schools and associations, in order to raise awareness of environmental problems.

30. Aware that environmental problems are of primary concern to the young people who will be obliged in the future to cope with the consequences of past mistakes, local and regional authorities should support activities and projects which promote sustainable development and environmental protection and which involve young people and their organisations.

I/11 A policy to combat violence and crime

31. Bearing in mind that the victims of crime and violence are often young people, and recognising the necessity of finding adequate responses to the crime and violence in contemporary society, as well as the need to involve young people directly in combating these problems.

32. Local and regional authorities should:

i. include young people in crime prevention councils, where these exist;

ii. work in particular with young people who risk being involved in crime or who have already been involved in crime;

iii. combat racist violence by all means available;

iv. tackle all forms of violence in schools. This should be done in co-operation with all relevant actors, such as educational and police authorities, teachers, parents and young people themselves;

v. contribute to the creation of networks of associations and projects promoting non-violence projects and tolerance both in school and out of school;

vi. do their utmost to protect young people from sexual exploitation, abuse or other forms of maltreatment and provide structures that provide psychological and material support and confidential consultation to victims.

33. In implementing the above, local and regional authorities contribute towards building a climate of trust and respect between young people and public authorities such as the police.

I/12 An anti-discrimination policy

34. Local and regional authorities should actively promote human rights and measures to counter discrimination against minorities (including their young members) or against young people with disabilities and other population groups that may suffer discrimination, and should promote the development of multicultural communities through the integration of minorities, taking account of their diverse needs and customs, cultures and lifestyles.

35. In this connection, local and regional authorities should:

i. pass or reinforce anti-discrimination legislation so as to ensure equal access for all citizens to public places, to vocational training, to schooling, to housing, to cultural activities and to other areas of life. Such access should be monitored and guaranteed by joint bodies comprising local government representatives and representatives of minorities and young people themselves;

ii. foster inter-religious dialogue, multicultural, anti-racist education and education against discrimination as part of the school curriculum.

I/13 A policy on sexuality

36. During their transition from childhood dependence on family, school, religious community or other “authorities” towards an autonomous adult life, young people may be faced with a variety of questions on issues connected to their personal relationships (within the family or close circle, with their peers, with their friend or partner). The emergence and exercise of their sexuality is not always easy, even if they are not ready to admit it. In addition, there is a persistent ignorance surrounding issues of sexual health and mistrust towards official attitudes concerning the risks of certain sexual behaviours.

37. In order to help young people find their way in this area towards a healthy and fulfilling affective life, local and regional authorities, in association with parents, schools and organisations specialised in this field, should promote and support:

- i. non-directive sex education in schools;
- ii. organisations and services offering information about relationships, sexual methods and family planning;
- iii. peer group work in this field.

38. Young people should be actively associated with the planning, implementation and evaluation of information and other services aimed at young people in this field.

I/14 A policy of access to rights and law

39. In order to live together, societies are based on rules which must be respected by all. In democratic societies, these rules are discussed and adopted by the citizens' elected representatives and given concrete expression, particularly in legislative texts which bestow rights and obligations upon all persons.

40. As these texts increase in number, it is more and more difficult for the individual to know, respect and apply them, thus creating disparities between citizens. Young people are the most naturally concerned by this phenomenon.

41. Local and regional authorities should therefore facilitate young people's access to their rights:

- i. by developing their knowledge through the dissemination of information, particularly in schools, peer groups and information services;
- ii. by the application of their rights through the support of services designed to work alongside young people who desire this;
- iii. by allowing young people to participate in the drawing-up of new rules.

Part II: Instruments for youth participation

42. In order to achieve real youth participation a certain number of instruments need to be placed at young people's disposal. This entails developing participation training for young people, keeping them informed, providing them with means of communication, supporting their projects, and recognising and giving a higher profile to young people's dedication to community causes and voluntary work. Participation only takes on full meaning where young people's role in political parties, trade unions and associations is acknowledged and, above all, where an effort is made to promote youth associations set up with and by young people themselves.

II/1 Training in youth participation

43. Local and regional authorities, conscious of the dominant role that the school plays in the life of young people, should provide, in the school environment, support and training in youth participation, human rights education and non-formal learning in schools. They should also provide training and support for the participation of young people in associative life and in their local community by promoting:

- i. vocational training for teachers and youth workers in the practice of youth participation;

- ii. all forms of participation of pupils in schools;

- iii. civic education programmes in schools;

- iv. peer-group education, by providing the necessary space and means and by supporting the exchange of good practice.

II/2 Informing young people

44. Information is often a key to participation, and the right of young people to have access to information about opportunities and matters which concern them is increasingly recognised in official European and international documents,² and not only in the context of local and regional life.

45. In order to participate in activities and in the life of their community, or to benefit from services and opportunities aimed at them, young people need to know about them. Participating in activities and projects of interest to them and which they organise themselves is often a step in a process encouraging their deeper involvement in the community, including its political life.

46. Local and regional authorities should therefore support and improve existing information and counselling centres for young people, in order to ensure that they provide services of quality that meet the needs expressed by young people. Where such centres do not exist, local and regional authorities and other relevant actors should promote and assist the creation of adequate information services for young people, *inter alia*, through existing structures such as schools, youth service and libraries. Specific measures should be taken to meet the information needs of groups of young people who have difficulty in accessing information (language barriers, no access to the Internet, etc.).

47. Information services for young people must conform to certain professional principles and standards.³ Public authorities are encouraged to guarantee such standards and to promote their continual improvement, where possible in accordance with a set of nationally (or regionally) agreed quality measures and standards. Young people should have the possibility to participate in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the activities and products of youth information centres/services and be represented in their governing bodies.

II/3 Promoting youth participation through information and communication technologies

48. Information and communication technologies can offer new possibilities for informing and allowing the participation of young people. They can be used to exchange a wide variety of information, and thanks to their inter-activity, to increase the participation of young people. Local and regional authorities should therefore use these technologies in their information and participation policies, on the condition that access to them is guaranteed for all young people in terms of places of access to and training in these new tools.

II/4 Promoting young people's participation in the media

49. Whilst young people are major media consumers, they can also be actors in this field by increasing the possibilities they are given to express themselves and participate in the production of the information supplied by the media. Through their way of dealing with certain subjects, they allow different and often more accessible information to be provided for their peers. This participation also allows young people to understand the construction of information and to develop the necessary critical faculty.

50. Local and regional authorities should therefore support the creation and the functioning of the media (radio, television, the written and electronic press, etc.) developed by and for young people, as well as relevant training programmes.

II/5 Encouraging young people to undertake voluntary work and dedicate themselves to community causes

51. Young people should be supported and encouraged to engage in voluntary activity. At a time when young people are under increasing pressure to perform and succeed as individuals in education and in the world of work, it is important that volunteerism is promoted and recognised. Therefore, local and regional authorities should:

- i. support the establishment of volunteer centres and develop initiatives aimed at supporting and promoting the involvement of young people in voluntary activity such as information and promotional campaigns;
- ii. in partnership with young people, voluntary organisations, educational authorities and employers, develop systems which recognise and validate voluntary activity in the formal education system and in employment.

II/6 Support for young people's projects and initiatives

52. Through their hopes and their desires, young people have many ideas which can be translated into projects and local activities that are beneficial to all. Given proper support, these projects, and their successes as well as their failures, can also help young people to develop their sense of responsibility and their autonomy, thus becoming social actors. Local and regional authorities should therefore facilitate the implementation of these projects, be they small- or large-scale, by allowing them to be accompanied in their execution by professionals and to have access to financial, material and technical assistance.

II/7 Promoting young people's organisations

53. Youth organisations are unique in that they are primarily focused on reflecting the views and serving the needs and interests of young people. They also provide a space where young people can learn and experience the opportunities and challenges of participating in decisions and actions with other young people. They can be structured organisations or they can be informal groups of young people. It is important that young people have the opportunity to join a youth organisation of their choice

in their community if they so wish. Young people should also have the right and be supported to establish their own organisations if they want to. Therefore:

- i. local and regional authorities should have a specific budget designated solely for supporting youth organisations that run activities or provide services or act as the voice of young people in the community and advocate on their behalf. Preference should be given to organisations that are run by and for young people and/or have policies and systems in place to enable active youth participation;
- ii. local and regional authorities should develop the Council of Europe co-management principle and system of decision-making in partnership with young people and youth organisations in policy areas of relevance to young people. It is important that where such co-management structures are put in place, young people and youth organisations are respected as full partners and also have the choice not to participate if they so wish.

II/8 Youth participation in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and political parties

54. A vibrant, independent and active non-governmental sector is an essential element of any truly democratic society. It is also important that other sectors of civil society such as political parties are strong and active at a local and regional level. Participation in the democratic life of any country, region or locality is about more than voting every few years. That is why participation in NGOs and political parties is so important, because they help citizens to be involved in, and influence, decisions and actions on an ongoing basis. Therefore it is crucial that young people are encouraged and supported to participate in associative life in their communities.

55. Local and regional authorities should provide financial and other resources to NGOs which actively promote the participation of young people in their activities and democratic decision-making structures and procedures.

56. Local and regional authorities, in partnership with political parties and in a non-partisan manner, should promote the involvement of young people in the party political system in general, and support specific actions, such as training.

Part III: Institutional participation by young people in local and regional affairs

57. In order to carry out the sectoral policies set out in part two, local and regional authorities should undertake to put in place the appropriate structures or arrangements enabling the participation of young people in the decisions and debates affecting them.

58. These structures will take on different forms according to the level at which they are established, be it that of a village, a town, an urban neighbourhood within a city, or even a region. They should create the conditions for genuine dialogue and partnership between young people and local and regional authorities and they should enable young people and their representatives to be full actors in the policies affecting them. Such structures should

normally be representative and permanent, dealing with all matters in which young people express an interest. In addition it can be envisaged that an ad hoc structure can be made to debate or act upon a specific issue. On occasion it may be appropriate to combine different forms.

III/1 Youth councils, youth parliaments, youth forums

59. Effective participation of young people in local and regional affairs should be based on their awareness of the social and cultural changes taking place within their community, and requires a permanent representative structure such as a youth council, a youth parliament or a youth forum.

60. Such a structure may be composed by election, or by appointment from within organisations of young people and/or on a voluntary basis. Its membership should reflect the community's sociological make-up.

61. Young people should assume direct responsibility for projects and play an active part in the related policies. For this purpose, local and regional authorities should create or support structures for active participation.

62. These structures provide the physical framework for the free expression by young people of their concerns, particularly as regards the raising of such concerns with the authorities, and the possibility of making proposals to them. Issues to be raised might reflect those laid out in Part I of the present Charter.

63. The roles of such a structure might include:

- i. providing a forum for the free expression by young people of their concerns, relating, *inter alia*, to proposals and policies of the authorities;
- ii. offering the possibility for young people to make proposals to the local and regional authorities;
- iii. enabling authorities to consult young people on specific issues;
- iv. providing a forum where projects involving young people are developed, monitored and evaluated;
- v. providing a forum to facilitate consultation with young people's associations and organisations;
- vi. facilitating the participation of young people in other consultative bodies of the local and regional authorities.

64. By giving young people the opportunity to speak and act on the problems affecting them, such structures provide training in democratic life and the management of public affairs.

65. Young people should therefore be encouraged to participate in such structures and the activities undertaken within their framework, in order to promote their capacities for learning about and practicing the principles of democratic citizenship. Particularly for those young people who are instigators of projects and dialogue with the authorities, such structures should also provide a forum for training in democratic leadership.

66. The local and regional authorities, and the young people themselves, will also benefit from the multiplier effect that the act of participation by young people in such structures can bring, particularly in terms of encouraging young people in the exercise of their civic rights, such as participation in elections and other forms of polling including referenda.

III/2 Support for structures of youth participation

67. In order to function effectively, institutional structures of youth participation (whether they are formal or informal) require resources and support. To this end, local and regional authorities should provide such structures with the space, financial means and material support necessary for the purpose of ensuring their smooth and effective operation. The provision of such means does not exclude such structures from seeking additional financial and material support from other sources, such as private foundations and companies.

68. Local and regional authorities should ensure that the provision of support to structures of youth participation is guaranteed. To this end, they should appoint a guarantor – a person or group of persons – to follow implementation of support measures, to whom the structures can address themselves in case of need.

69. Such a person or group of persons should be independent from the political structures and from the structures of youth participation, and nomination is agreed upon by both of the above.

70. In addition to guaranteeing the above-mentioned support, the functions of this person(s) could include:

- i. acting as the interface between young people and the elected local and regional representatives on any issue raised by either of these;
- ii. acting as the advocate for young people vis-à-vis the local and regional authorities in situations of tension between the two;
- iii. acting as a channel through which local and regional authorities can communicate with young people;
- iv. preparing regular reports for the attention of young people and the local and regional authorities in order to evaluate the level of participation by young people in local and regional life, for example through the implementation of projects or involvement in structures of youth participation, and the impact of their participation.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 21 May 2003, 2nd Sitting (see Document CG (10) 6, draft recommendation presented by Mrs B. Fäldt, rapporteur).
2. See for example Recommendation No. R (90) 7 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe concerning information and counselling for young people in Europe, adopted on 21 February 1990.
3. See for example the European Youth Information Charter adopted by the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA).