

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 327 (2012)¹ Youth and democracy: the changing face of youth political engagement

1. The youth unemployment rate has increased substantially since the start of the economic crisis in 2008 and in some Council of Europe countries this rate is currently over 50%. However, this is not the full picture as some young people who have left education do not even appear in labour market statistics, the so-called NEETs (neither in education nor in employment or training).

2. The longer young people are unemployed, the more difficult it becomes to gain a foothold in the job market. Young people are at serious risk of social exclusion and poverty.

3. In times of economic crisis, when job offers decline and qualification requirements remain high, access to the job market becomes increasingly difficult especially for young people who lack general or vocational education. Learning and knowledge, however, are not always recognised with formal certificates and this is the case with competences gained through non-formal education. The knowledge and skills acquired through non-formal learning are obviously important in the fight against youth unemployment and must, as such, be recognised.

4. The changing demographic structure of European societies will result in youth becoming a minority in an ageing society, their influence within the democratic system will decrease, and youth-related subjects and needs will lose

weight in political debates and the decision-making process. This perceived political marginalisation could lead to political frustration and distrust among young people.

5. Young people's political engagement is taking on new forms of citizenship and their participation is through the Internet, signing petitions or spontaneously attending demonstrations. These are forms of participation which are open and accessible to all young people, including those under the legal voting age, which in most European countries is 18.

6. Bearing in mind the above, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe recommends that the Committee of Ministers invite member States to:

a. strengthen the political influence and participation of young people through the offer of more citizenship rights, for example by investigating the possibility of lowering the voting age to 16 as proposed in Resolution 1826 (2011) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe;

b. implement Resolution 1828 (2011) of the Parliamentary Assembly on reversing the sharp decline in youth employment;

c. implement Resolution 1885 (2012) of the Parliamentary Assembly on the young generation sacrificed: social, economic and political implications of the financial crisis;

d. promote the recognition of competences made in non-formal educational settings and venues as advocated in Committee of Ministers Recommendation Rec(2003)8 to member states on the promotion and recognition of non-formal education/learning of young people.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 17 October 2012, 2nd Sitting (see Document [CG\(23\)9](#), explanatory memorandum), presented by H. O. Bozatlı, Turkey (R, EPP/CD) on behalf of E. Ampe, Belgium (R, ILDG), rapporteur.