

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 319 (2010)¹ **Integration of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods**

1. The transition of young people to adult life can be a very unequal process: while some benefit from new opportunities, others experience vulnerability and exclusion. The challenge to local and regional authorities is to reduce this “youth divide”. In doing so, they need to find a balance between proactive policies and reactive support mechanisms so that these will benefit the most disadvantaged and promote the inclusion of all young people.

2. When devising these youth policies and support mechanisms, local and regional authorities should remember that the active participation of young people at local and regional levels in policies which concern them, as participants, is a key objective of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, as laid down in its revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life. The array of youth parliaments and councils across Europe bears out the importance engaged young people attach to their participation in decision-making processes. Young people’s voices must be heard when policies are formulated – they can contribute to the identification of problems and solutions, as well as to the definition of appropriate responses.

3. Young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods face a variety and often a combination of difficulties: exclusion from the labour market, marginalisation, alienation and lack of self-belief, as well as problems of substance misuse, criminality, lack of decent housing, homelessness, poor mental health, financial exclusion and reduced participation in community life.

4. Local and regional authorities have a duty to guarantee citizens’ human rights, including social rights, and to ensure that these rights are accessible to all through the formulation of relevant, evidence-based policies. In view of the multiple difficulties facing young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, a “one-size-fits-all” approach is inappropriate. Policies must be flexible and reflect the differing needs, ideas and expectations of each individual. They must not only address social and economic problems but also the political, cultural and spiritual dimensions, and rather than have one specific objective, they should work towards a range of desirable outcomes. They must also be devised with the full participation of young people in the spirit of the revised European charter on participation. A framework should be developed to strengthen local capacity for devising and delivering programmes and practice, to produce positive outcomes for young people and to encourage their self-belief.

5. Policies seeking to achieve the social inclusion of young people from disadvantaged areas should be opportunity-focused and support young people’s integration into society, for example by promoting access to education and training, facilitating their entry into the labour market, providing decent housing and health care, access to public services, social rights and services, and to basic services such as transport, leisure, culture, media and communication tools, as well as to legal and financial services such as loans.

6. Whereas motivated and organised youth readily participate in the formulation of policies, it is more difficult to engage young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods. To convince such young people of the capacity of policies to improve their situation requires more time, effort and imagination.

7. Policies and programmes should be designed with the full participation of young people and adapted so as to enable young people from disadvantaged areas to identify with and believe in policy goals, and to be motivated to take responsibility for those goals so as to actively engage in their own transition, gaining new skills, motivation and confidence along the way.

8. In the light of the above, the Congress invites local and regional authorities, in partnership with voluntary sector organisations, to:

a. set up or strengthen municipal and regional youth departments, so they have the capacity and competences to undertake the research necessary to design effective, evidence-based policies and programmes;

b. provide adequate resources to ensure effective implementation and evaluation tools. Evaluation should consider both inputs and outputs, the policy effects on individual cases, and conclusions drawn for future action;

c. engage in dialogue, consultation and collaboration with young people from disadvantaged areas and involve them in planning and decision-making processes, both to motivate them and to ensure policies and programmes respond to their needs and expectations;

d. provide accessible and meaningful opportunities for disadvantaged youth to promote their social integration by establishing frameworks for co-operation and development, proposing advice and guidance, as well as organising activities, and in particular supporting, either financially or in kind, youth-initiated and youth-run projects with a social, economic or human purpose, with a view to building their confidence;

e. ensure the provision of facilities, such as youth or community centres, or recreation areas, and give young people from disadvantaged areas a say in how these spaces are organised and used;

f. explore the possibility of setting up mentoring or “buddy” systems to help young people from disadvantaged areas gain life management skills, or offer away-from-home opportunities, including in different countries, in order that they experience and learn from new horizons and are able to see themselves as part of global society;

g. promote gender equality in youth work and devise methods to prevent and combat violence against women and girls in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in order that they may reach their full potential and integrate into society;

h. ensure information is available to all those working to support social integration (local politicians, managers of services, practitioners) and to young people, using all appropriate means, whether through social networks or more traditional methods;

i. raise awareness of the revised European Charter for the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life and ensure its implementation.

9. With regard to their youth policy relating to young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, the Congress further invites local and regional authorities to:

a. work with the voluntary and community sectors, health authorities, schools, social and prison services, and local businesses to provide specific, youth-focused services and guidance;

b. facilitate access to decent living conditions and housing, and provide information, support and guidance to those who are homeless;

c. co-operate with health authorities and the voluntary sector to ensure access to free health care and information, as well as support and guidance on well-being and healthy lifestyles;

d. ensure the delivery of drug and alcohol education and information programmes and activities, for example in schools, youth clubs or by means of mobile services in disadvantaged neighbourhoods;

e. ensure free access to education, libraries and cultural institutions, free learning materials and free or subsidised transport to educational establishments;

f. work together with civil society, social partners and local businesses to provide work experience opportunities for young people to develop work skills and increase employability;

g. ensure that any training provided for young people is closely linked to job opportunities and job creation, for example in small or medium-sized enterprises and on municipal projects in the construction sector. This training should enable young people to develop their critical faculties and their capacity to reason and gain a better understanding of themselves and the world;

h. provide information, advice and guidance in careers, training and educational possibilities – both formal and non-formal – to facilitate the transition from school or joblessness to active life;

i. promote active democratic citizenship by helping young people to develop citizenship skills, encouraging them to participate in citizen initiatives, associations, organisations such as charitable or sports associations, political parties and trades unions;

j. facilitate access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) to promote e-participation.

10. In the framework of the preparation of a recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on youth policy approaches: access to social rights for young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, the Congress invites its members to provide details of relevant good practices from their municipalities and regions for the expert seminar to be organised in December 2010 on the same theme.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 28 October 2010, 3rd Sitting (see Document [CG\(19\)15](#), explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: E. Campbell-Clark, United Kingdom (L, NR).