

3rd European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT) (Bari, Italy: 21-23 October 1976) on "Urbanisation and regional planning"

Resolution No. 3 on Public participation in the planning process

The ministers,

1. Wishing to reiterate their view, as expressed at their second session at La Grande Motte, on the democratic character that regional planning should be given;
2. Stressing the necessity of increasing public participation in the formulation and implementation of urban and regional policies and hence underlining the importance of improving the procedural and technical methods of participation;
3. Convinced that participation of the population concerned is a necessary element in a genuine democratic process;
4. Considering that there is a clear obligation on public authorities, their elected representatives and officers, to consult and inform the population for which their responsibility is engaged on planning decisions;
5. Consider it essential
 - A. That schemes and decisions be made public so that they are known, discussed and appreciated by the population:

In closely associating the population with decisions affecting their environment, public authorities have a duty to seek and take account of the views of citizens in an area covered by a plan and should ensure that these plans are discussed openly.

There should also be appropriate forms for appeal within the planning and decision process.

B. That the methods and techniques for informing and consulting interested groups of people should be improved:

In order to achieve genuine participation, plans and projects should be rendered comprehensible in such a way as to enable members of the public to appreciate the inter-related factors in them; greater use should be made of exhibitions and public meetings. The development of institutions such as citizens advice bureaux and urban information centres should be encouraged.

Information should be orientated to and, where appropriate, directly or indirectly channelled through all groups of citizens (for example political organisations, trade unions, educationalists, tenant societies, resident associations, community groups, amenity societies and other groups).

C. That the views of citizens in planning be better understood, encouraged and accepted:

Public authorities should increasingly encourage and take into account the views of the public in the formulation and implementation of plans. The views of the public on any given scheme may not only take the form of objections to specific issues, but fundamentally challenge the policy on which the plan might be based and may result in alternatives that have as much right to be considered as the original proposals. In this respect, it is necessary to recognise the role played by spontaneously formed groups putting forward the demands of a community.

For urban renewal schemes, local authorities should consult in advance with the population concerned, to justify the scheme, and should keep them informed of its progress; similar consultation is necessary for proposals affecting the built-up environment, for housing schemes and for renewal programmes that involve the removal of inhabitants.