

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 393 (2015)¹ Conditions of office of elected representatives

1. While trust towards the political class has been decreasing across Europe, elected representatives are having to work harder than ever to meet the unsatisfied needs and expectations of their constituents. Although most local and regional politicians have to combine their elected political responsibilities with another full-time job, they are at the same time expected to be available quasi full-time for their political work, often at the expense of their family responsibilities and leisure time.

2. Interest in and respect for the work and role of local and regional representatives is declining. This may be due to the fact that in many countries it is considered a voluntary rather than a professional role. The low levels or absence of pay for local and regional elected representatives is also an important factor, as is the lack of appropriate training for them.

3. Representative democracy works best when it is truly representative of the community. The closer the composition of a municipal council reflects the make-up of the constituency that it serves, in terms of age, social status, occupation, or cultural background, the better it will be placed to gain the trust of citizens. Local and regional authorities have a responsibility to ensure that the way in which political business in councils (assemblies and their executive bodies) is conducted (times of meetings, etc.) does not deter citizens from standing for election.

4. Local media and municipal information services have a role to play in promoting a positive image of the diversity and representative nature of the city council, which can serve to encourage people from a wide range of backgrounds to seek political office at local and regional level.

5. While public scrutiny and criticism are necessary aspects of holding public office, municipal councils have a duty to protect local and regional elected representatives, as well as employees, from harassment and threats of violence.

6. The Congress therefore asks local and regional authorities, as far as is possible, and recognising that there are differences in the range of duties and responsibilities of elected representatives, to:

a. provide them with the facilities, equipment and policy support in order to perform their roles satisfactorily;

b. provide new local and regional representatives with a training programme on the role, obligations and expectations inherent in the post of elected representative. This should be

structured around a regionally and nationally-based training module describing the workings of local government and the responsibilities of local and regional elected representatives, tailored according to the particular circumstances of each local and regional authority. It should also cover the code of ethics of cities and regions, which, in the interests of transparency, should be available for public consultation;

c. introduce performance indicators and provide continuous training for the professional development of local and regional elected representatives, covering changes in relevant legislation and matters that affect the management of local and regional authorities. Consideration should be given to building this into a formal and recognised qualification, which would give added value to the role;

d. assist representatives who frequently work from home by providing them with suitable Information and Communication Technology ICT and related equipment. Such assistance would be limited to the use of equipment purely for the discharge of their public work;

e. schedule meetings in such a way as not to restrict those who wish to serve as elected representatives at local or regional level, in particular those in full-time employment and those with family or care responsibilities;

f. encourage political parties and municipal offices to develop initiatives to stimulate the interest of a broader range of people in civic and public affairs, with a view to encouraging citizens from all sectors of the population to stand for local and regional election;

g. ensure that clear guidelines are available on how to deal with cases of harassment and threats of violence to elected representatives and their families, and that appropriate support and guidance are given to elected representatives, in liaison with the police, including assistance with any legal steps that need to be taken.

7. The Congress asks national and regional associations of local and regional authorities to:

a. ensure that induction training is given to all elected representatives at the start of their mandate, which covers the responsibilities and obligations of elected representatives as well as instruction on the municipality's and region's code of ethics;

b. lobby for further training, in those countries where it does not exist, to ensure the continuous professional development of elected representatives. Consideration could be given to building this into a formal and recognised qualification;

c. draw up guidelines, with the appropriate authorities, on how local and regional authorities should deal with cases of harassment and threats of violence to elected representatives of local and regional authorities and their families.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 22 October 2015, 3rd Sitting (see Document [CG/2015\(29\)15FINAL](#), explanatory memorandum), rapporteurs: Frida Johansson Metso, Sweden (L, ILDG) and Tracey Simpson-Laing, United Kingdom (R, SOC).