

## THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

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### **Recommendation 382 (2015)<sup>1</sup> Championing children's rights in times of austerity**

1. The prolonged economic crisis and resultant austerity measures have had a significant impact in many European States in areas of public policy and social welfare, including social programmes affecting children and their families, such as welfare support, education, social services, housing and health care.

2. The poorest children suffer disproportionately as a result of austerity measures. The incidence of child poverty in Europe has increased during the economic crisis. This sorry situation is exacerbated as public services that are essential for mitigating the negative impact of poverty on children's well-being have been reduced in many European States.

3. Public services that offer children protection against harm are under threat. As a result, children are at greater risk of exploitation or abuse. Structures that support children's participation and advocacy of their rights have been undermined. Children are now less likely to contribute to decision making that affects their lives or to be in a position to challenge decisions adverse to their interests. All of this puts children's rights in jeopardy and paints a worrying picture of the situation of children's rights generally in Europe.

4. Human rights should offer protection for those most likely to be discriminated against, excluded, or simply forgotten in times of economic crisis. As a social group

children are vulnerable to violation of their fundamental rights. For some children in particular situations of increased vulnerability the position is even worse. Sadly, not enough has been done in Europe to safeguard children from regressive policies and service cutbacks that undermine rights and guarantees to which they are properly entitled.

5. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe recognises that local and regional authorities are key institutions with regard to children's rights. They are responsible for a number of areas of public policy and programmes that directly or indirectly impact on children or their families.

6. Convinced that decisive action and legislative measures are required to protect children in times of economic crisis and austerity measures, in particular in relation to policy and decision making concerning essential services, the Congress calls on the national authorities of Council of Europe member States to:

*a.* take all legislative and administrative measures to promote non-discrimination and equality in all aspects of child-related service planning and implementation;

*b.* implement a systematic approach to comprehensive data collection and dissemination, paying particular attention to the need for data on children in situations of increased vulnerability, where necessary introducing new social indicators, and ensuring the dissemination of data to all stakeholders;

*c.* ensure that policies concerning children are drawn up in consultation with sub-national public authorities and develop a national strategy for sharing responsibilities between different levels of governance.

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1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 21 October 2015, 2nd Sitting (see Document [CG/2015\(29\)10FINAL](#), explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: Johan van den Hout, Netherlands (R, SOC).