
“A better future for Europe’s rural areas”
Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe
Recommendation 406 (2017)

(Reply adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 7 March 2018
at the 1309th meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies)

1. The Committee of Ministers has carefully examined Recommendation 406 (2017) of the Congress on "A better future for Europe’s rural areas", which it has transmitted to the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG).
2. The Committee of Ministers welcomes the efforts of the Congress to make the member States' national, local and regional authorities aware of the diversity and assets of rural areas in Europe, to support their development and ensure greater social, economic and environmental well-being for those living in them.
3. It recalls the resolution on "Promoting territorial democracy in spatial planning"¹ and the resolution on "Functional areas – capitalisation of local potential in territorial development policies over the European continent,"² adopted in 2014 and 2017, respectively, by the Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Spatial/Regional Planning.
4. Aware of the diversity of rural areas and the disparities between them, it encourages the designing of rural development support policies geared to the specific features of each area and drawing on the measures listed in paragraph 6.b of the Recommendation.
5. The Committee stresses the importance of providing high-quality public services in rural areas to make them more attractive places of residence and work. In particular, it emphasises the need to prevent digital divides through the judicious use of new technologies, enabling all to develop the skills and knowledge required to fully benefit from connectivity.
6. Finally, the Committee recalls that many member States have opted for inter-municipal co-operation systems or mergers of municipalities making it possible to guarantee a sustainable offer of high-quality public services and reinforce competencies and build capacities at the level of local and regional authorities. The Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform is available to assist member States in implementing appropriate reforms.

¹ CEMAT, 16th session, Nafplion, 17 June 2014, document CM(2014)91.

² CEMAT, 17th session, Bucharest, 3 November 2017, document CM(2017)151.