
“Voting rights at local level as an element of successful long-term integration of migrants and IDPs in Europe’s municipalities and regions”
Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe
Recommendation 419 (2018)

(Reply adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 24 April 2019
at the 1344th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)

1. The Committee of Ministers has carefully examined Recommendation 419 (2018) of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe on “Voting rights at local level as an element of successful long-term integration of migrants and IDPs in Europe’s municipalities and regions”, which it transmitted to the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG) for information and comments.
2. The Committee of Ministers notes that the recommendation highlights the importance of promoting voting rights of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) at local level, with a view to fostering successful long-term integration and sets out a number of steps governments of member States could take in this respect, provided this complies with the constitutional identity of the member States. It also concurs with the position of the Congress that the efforts of member States undertaken for the successful integration of IDPs in Europe's municipalities and regions, shall not be interpreted as restricting or impairing IDPs' fundamental right to return, in safety and with dignity, to their homes or places of habitual residence. The Committee of Ministers recalls that the Secretary General, in his annual reports on the “State of democracy, human rights and the rule of law”, has underlined the importance of inclusive societies as one of the five building blocks for democratic security.
3. As far as the Committee of Ministers is concerned, it adopted several instruments which reflect the same view of the Congress as to the importance of promoting the integration, participation and non-discrimination of IDPs, including through the promotion of the voting rights at local level. For instance, the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No. 207) specifically considers that this right is “one of the democratic principles that is shared by all member States of the Council of Europe” and underlines “the pre-eminent importance of this principle for local self-government”. The Additional Protocol also stipulates that “the States Parties shall secure to everyone within their jurisdiction the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority”. It invites those member States who have not yet done so, to consider the signature and ratification of this Additional Protocol taking into account their respective constitutional or legislative arrangements. Those member States who have not yet done so, may also wish to consider signature and ratification of the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level (ETS No. 144).
4. The Committee of Ministers also wishes to recall the particular relevance of the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance local level which include the principle of “Fair conduct of elections, representation and participation”. It would also draw attention to Recommendation 419 (2018) and Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)4 on the participation of citizens in local public life and, in particular, to the steps and measures set out in section II of the appendix to this recommendation regarding “participation in local elections and the system of representative democracy”, as well as in section IV to “encourage categories of citizens who, for various reasons, have greater difficulty in participating”. Implementation of the measures proposed by the Congress in its recommendation should be in line with this Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)4 as well as the steps and measures outlined in the appendix thereto.