

## Statutory Forum

### Developing urban-rural interplay

Recommendation 448 (2020)<sup>1</sup>

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (hereinafter “the Congress”) refers to:

a. Article 2, paragraph 1.b, of the Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities appended to Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2020)1 relating to the Congress, stipulating that one of the aims of the Congress is “to submit proposals to the Committee of Ministers in order to promote local and regional democracy”;

b. the terms of Reference of the Governance Committee of the Congress on Developing Urban-Rural Interplay adopted on 21 May 2019;

c. the European Urban Charter adopted by the Council of Europe’s Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe adopted on 18 March 1992 and the follow-up Resolution 269(2008) European Urban Charter II – Manifesto for a new urbanity;

d. the Priorities of the Congress 2017-2020, in particular paragraphs 119 and 120 on empowering rural areas;

e. Congress Recommendation 406(2017) of the Congress on A better future for Europe’s rural areas adopted 19 October 2017;

f. the thematic debate at the 36<sup>th</sup> Session of the Chamber of Local Authorities of the Congress on Addressing the Urban/Rural Divide: Solutions for Territorial Renewal in April 2019;

g. the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities.

2. The Congress points out that:

a. In recent years, local and regional governments in Europe have been facing a number of issues resulting from the changing interplay between urban and rural areas, both having their own specific assets and challenges, particularly in areas like demographic transition as well as in environmental and social questions;

b. There is a need to pay more attention to the interdependence between urban and rural areas, to strengthen the relationships between them and to foster their linkage to ensure greater territorial cohesion and sustainable local development and prevent further fragmentation;

c. Suburban municipalities and rural areas that are close to urban areas have a specific role to play in developing urban-rural relationships;

d. Local and regional policy-makers need effective strategies and instruments for better integrating rural and urban areas to bridge the gap between them and achieve economic, social and environmental

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<sup>1</sup> Debated and adopted by the Statutory Forum on 7 December 2020 (see Document [CG-FORUM\(2020\)02-03](#), explanatory memorandum), co-rapporteurs: Wilma DELISSEN VAN TONGERLO, Netherlands (L, ILDG) and Matija KOVAC, Serbia (R, EPP/CCE).

benefits for both. They also need to be made aware of the assets of urban-rural cooperation for their societies and territories.

3. In light of the above, the Congress requests that the Committee of Ministers invite the respective national authorities of member States of the Council of Europe to:

*a.* ensure that interplay between the multiple levels of governments be guided by the principle of subsidiarity and to recognise that subsidiarity is crucial not only for national-subnational-local relations, but for relations at the local level as well;

*b.* facilitate formalised urban-rural collaboration by creating incentives for cooperation, for example through a favourable legal context (e.g. mandatory joint special planning) and framework for inclusion of private stakeholders from urban and rural levels;

*c.* strengthen infrastructure links to further develop the urban-rural interplay, for example by road and railway constructions and public transport systems, and guarantee that different kinds of transport infrastructure are established based on different needs on urban and rural levels;

*d.* prioritise initiatives towards “virtual proximity” in order to reduce the digital divide between urban and rural areas by improving connectivity to high-speed and next generation broadband Internet, through governmental incentives for telecommunication providers to invest in internet infrastructure also in areas with lower population density;

*e.* ensure equal access of urban and rural areas to basic public services by, for example, providing funding schemes for projects in areas like health care, spatial planning, local supply and the improvement of physical infrastructure;

*f.* promote urban-rural interconnectedness for development purposes by cooperation between peri-urban regions including, next to agriculture, the setting up of adequate urban-rural infrastructure links or the preservation of a green belt for recreation;

*g.* pursue economic development and employment strategies that rely on multiple strengths of territories, interconnecting urban and rural areas in sectors like food production, local gastronomy and tourism;

*h.* step up efforts in ensuring equivalent living conditions in urban and rural territories, for example, by gradually relocating a portion of government institutions to structurally weaker areas.

4. The Congress calls on the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to take account of this recommendation and the accompanying explanatory memorandum in their activities relating to Council of Europe member States.