

# THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

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## Resolution 227 (2007)<sup>1</sup> Access to public spaces and amenities for people with disabilities

1. In the towns and regions of Council of Europe member states, despite the progress made in recent years in response, in particular, to Article 15, paragraph 3, of the European Social Charter (revised) (1996), people who are disabled, whether as a result of age (the elderly, children in prams), heavy or cumbersome luggage, a particular physical condition (pregnant women) or a disability caused by physical (reduced mobility), cognitive or sensory problems, are confronted daily with obstacles that prevent them from participating fully in community life;

2. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities considers that it is essential that Europe's towns, cities and regions should be designed and adapted to favour accessibility so that as many people as possible can use all public amenities and spaces unhindered;

3. The term "accessibility" covers access to places, amenities and, by extension, to all community services. Accessibility is founded on the concept of "universal design" which promotes the application of integrated standards and technology to public amenities and spaces to facilitate independent living and reduce obstacles to mobility;

4. The Congress is, moreover, convinced that the concept of "universal design" applies to all categories of people and not simply those with disabilities;

5. The Congress considers that, although in many cases action to address disability issues is the responsibility of national authorities, local and regional authorities have a key role to play. It is essential that people with disabilities should be able to live and move around in their environment – their town, city or region – and the Congress therefore calls on local and regional authorities in member states to:

*a.* put in place local and regional accessibility action plans in pursuit of integrated policies founded on the principle of "universal design", which should:

*i.* be based on:

– Article 15 of the European Social Charter (revised), which concerns the right of persons with disabilities to independence, social integration and participation in the life of the community;

– the Council of Europe Action Plan (as set out in Committee of Ministers Recommendation Rec(2006)5 on the Council

of Europe Action Plan to promote the rights and full participation of people with disabilities in society: improving the quality of life of people with disabilities in Europe 2006-2015);

– the various cross-cutting aspects of the Council of Europe Action Plan in order to foster measures to combat all forms of discrimination;

*ii.* facilitate the establishment of a local and regional blueprint or road map covering several years, scheduling measures to make public infrastructure and spaces accessible and providing for the financial resources and investment needed for its implementation;

*iii.* provide for resources and procedures for monitoring, assessing and constantly revising the Action Plan and related programmes;

*b.* promote consultation with organisations of people with disabilities, which is one of the keys to the implementation of integrated social policies, by:

*i.* setting up a regional advisory body to ensure the coherence of regional pluriannual accessibility blueprints. Within this body, non-governmental organisations could be responsible for issuing opinions and making recommendations;

*ii.* setting up, at local level, a committee on access to public amenities and spaces, which should include the most representative local organisations of people with disabilities and would be responsible for drawing up guidelines, particularly in respect of unhindered continuity of movement for people with disabilities;

*iii.* establishing a post of "mediator" at local level. The mediator could be responsible for settling non-judicial disputes and could serve as the key partner for local authorities in the event of conflicting interests;

*iv.* using the United Nations Standard Rules as a working basis and the principles and issues set out in "Agenda 22: Disability policy planning instructions for local authorities" as a basis for the organisation of such consultation;

*c.* to systematically include accessibility requirements in all calls for tender or when awarding public works and service contracts (building, roads, transport) which are their responsibility;

*d.* to take all the measures necessary to put a stop to illegal parking and, more generally, to counteract the lack of public-spiritedness among motor vehicle owners;

*e.* to raise public awareness and inform and train the various parties likely to be dealing with people with disabilities (municipal staff, service providers);

6. The Congress resolves:

*a.* to promote the Council of Europe Action Plan as well as Agenda 22 among the towns and regions in Council of Europe member states;

b. to make known the “Build for All Reference Manual”, supported by the European Commission and partners such as the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and to encourage the voluntary adoption, by European Union member and non-member states, of the recommendations contained therein regarding public tenders launched at local and regional level for public infrastructure works and amenities;

c. to take part in the European Co-ordination Forum for the Council of Europe Disability Action Plan 2006-2015 (CAHPAH), whose terms of reference were adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 13 September 2006;

7. Lastly, the Congress instructs its Committee on Social Cohesion to take into account the conclusions of the forthcoming report of the Committee on the Rehabilitation and Integration of People with Disabilities (CD-P-RR), and more specifically of its Committee of Experts on Universal Design (Accessibility).

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1. Debated and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 27 March 2007 (see Document CG(13)41, draft resolution presented by E. Haider (Austria, R, SOC), rapporteur).