

# CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF EUROPE

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## **Resolution 113 (2001)<sup>1</sup> on the communication and information policy of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe**

The Congress,

1. Having regard to its institutional position as representative body for local and regional authorities responsible for ensuring the participation of local and regional authorities in the implementation of the ideal of a united Europe, as defined in Article 1 of the Statute of the Council of Europe (Statutory Resolution Res(2000)1 of the Committee of Ministers);

2. Having regard to its earlier work to improve information management and communication effectiveness (in particular the three CLRAE seminars on the information society at the local and regional levels organised in 1998-99 by its specialist working group);

3. Having regard to the conclusions of the report "Local and regional information society", CG (6) 3 – 6th Plenary Session of the CLRAE, June 1999, the corresponding Recommendation 54 (1999) on local and regional information society, and the Committee of Ministers' reply to this recommendation (December 2000);

4. After careful examination of Resolution Res(2000)2 of the Committee of Ministers on the Council of Europe's information strategy, laying down the principles and guidelines of the Organisation's information, communication and public relations policy;

5. Basing itself in particular on the report on the information and communication policy of the Congress (CG (8) 10 part II) – prepared by Mr Koivisto (Finland) – and on the corresponding CLRAE Recommendation 93 (2001);

6. Fully endorses the information strategy recommended by the Committee of Ministers in Resolution Res(2000)2 and is determined to implement it in the manner appropriate to its particular characteristics and identity;

7. Is determined to give pride of place to communication and information policy in order to perform its role within the Council of Europe as effectively as possible;

8. Accordingly:

*a.* considering that modern information and communication methods make profound changes possible in relations between governments and those they govern, even at the local and regional levels;

*b.* aware that the new technologies can help to strengthen local and regional democracy;

*i.* by providing elected representatives and public authorities with powerful tools with which to do their job in a more transparent and responsible manner;

*ii.* by providing the population with effective means of supervising the democratic process and participating in the management of public affairs;

*c.* acknowledging that the new information and communication technologies provide local and regional authorities with the means of achieving unprecedented efficacy and transparency in every aspect of their work;

*d.* aware of the exceptional development potential of these technologies, which are used on an ever larger scale in today's world;

9. Agrees on the following guidelines for its own communication and information policy:

*a.* continue using and developing conventional communication and information methods while constantly striving to perfect them and adapt them to its aims;

*b.* attach increasing importance to the new information and communication technologies, which are sure to bring greater efficiency and a great leap forward in terms of quality, but without neglecting the traditional media, in particular in its contacts with accredited correspondents at the Council of Europe;

*c.* combine these two types of communication with a view to achieving optimum efficiency, bearing in mind the very heterogeneous needs and capabilities of its various partners;

*d.* encourage its Committee on Culture and Education to develop activities in the field of communication, which also comes within its competence;

10. In view of the above, proposes, in particular:

*a.* to continue using paper as a means of communication to cater for the special needs of some of its partners;

*b.* to identify the most appropriate distribution/dissemination solutions in each case and improve mailing list management in view of the very large number of documents still sent, at considerable cost, by post (not only the *Bulletin* but also all the other documents regularly sent to Congress members and addressees on the different mailing lists);

*c.* to continue to promote its own institutional image and that of the Organisation through its website;

*d.* to publicise its website by appropriate means: information leaflets sent out with the 4 000 copies of the *Bulletin* distributed in Europe; presentations at diverse events; proper technical information provided on the site itself to enhance its visibility for search engines, web directories, etc.;

*e.* in the short term, to complete the general overhaul of its website and its harmonisation with the rest of the Council of Europe's on-line communication tools while taking care to preserve and develop its identity;

*f.* in the medium and long term, to develop the dynamic, interactive nature of the information it disseminates, in keeping with the principles of transparency and institutional responsibility, by posting it on the website and by distributing it electronically (mailing lists, messaging, notification of documents), in order to cater for the needs of people interested in its work;

*g.* to improve public access to Congress documents (by improved electronic information management and rapid document declassification, in keeping with the Committee of Ministers decision on the subject), including older documents, as they are gradually incorporated into the site;

*h.* to provide access – particularly for Congress members, the secretariat and experts – by login/password to restricted Congress documents and information by setting up an extranet website;

*i.* generally to develop constant dialogue with the members of the Congress and the secretaries of the national delegations;

*j.* to adapt the budgetary resources devoted to this aspect of the CLRAE's work to the objectives set and the means required to achieve them, in order to be able to strengthen its Communication Unit in terms of equipment and manpower, by:

i. improved equipment to keep abreast of technological progress;

ii. more staff, the unit being badly understaffed at present;

iii. the permanent presence of a fully qualified press attaché to advise and provide stimulus to secretariat staff with regard to the communication aspect of their work;

*k.* to foster periodic refresher training for staff involved in defining and implementing the Congress's communication and information policy;

*l.* to work actively with the other communication units in the Council of Europe in the interests of coherent resource use, thereby helping the Organisation to save money while at the same time enhancing the visibility and efficacy of its overall communication and information policy;

*m.* to further develop interaction, co-operation and partnership inside and outside the Organisation by pooling and networking resources, data bases, activity schedules and subjects of common interest;

11. Furthermore, invites the local and regional authorities of the Council of Europe's member states:

*a.* to develop their information and communication policies in order to make the most of all the possibilities offered by the new information and communication technologies (NICT);

*b.* to seek the most effective balance between conventional communication tools and new technologies;

*c.* to foster positive social and cultural attitudes towards the new technologies through their education and information systems, within their spheres of competence, while alerting the public to the possible dangers and abuses;

*d.* to support the development of on-line public services accessible to ever broader categories of the population;

*e.* to develop co-operation and experience-sharing with other local and regional authorities as a matter of importance, as this helps to develop synergies beneficial to the citizen.

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1. Debated by the Congress and adopted on 31 May 2001, 3rd Sitting (see Doc. CG (8) 10, draft resolution presented by Mr R. Koivisto, rapporteur).