

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 205 (2005)¹ on cultural identity in peripheral urban areas: the role of local and regional authorities

The Congress,

1. Having regard to Recommendation 177 (2005) on cultural identity in peripheral urban areas – the role of local and regional authorities, which refers, *inter alia*, to the Council of Europe’s work on the subject and should be borne in mind in this context;

2. Having regard to the compendium of good practices appended to the report “Cultural identity issues in peripheral urban areas – the role of local and regional authorities”;

3. Recalling:

a. the provisions of the European Urban Charter and of Recommendation 155 (2004) on the revised European Urban Charter;

b. its Recommendation 17 (1996) on responsibilities and initiatives of cities in respect of education;

c. its Recommendation 59 (1999) on Europe 2000 – Youth participation: the role of young people as citizens;

d. its Recommendation 128 (2003) on the revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life;

e. Recommendation Rec(2002)12 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on education for democratic citizenship;

4. Pointing out to cultural and religious groups that respect for others entails recognition of the fundamental equality of all members of society (the principle of non-discrimination);

5. Convinced that cultural groups which respect the fundamental values upheld by the Council of Europe must have, and must allow each other, the same possibilities of participating in community affairs and expressing their opinions, not least in political bodies at local and regional level, in accordance with the principles of a pluralist, democratic society;

6. Notes:

a. growing signs of hostility and misunderstanding all over Europe, to which areas on the urban fringe are no exception;

b. the emergence in various countries of Europe of particularly regrettable forms of urban violence and, above all, a very significant increase in less serious but repetitive forms of violence, which would even seem to be becoming routine in certain neighbourhoods;

c. the existence of a spectrum of acts of violence ranging from vandalism against equipment or buildings to physical aggressions against people living in troubled neighbourhoods, not forgetting racist acts and violence against young women;

d. the tendency for violence in school to concern children at an increasingly early age, affecting age groups formerly immune to the problem;

7. Considers that violence in school cannot be dissociated from urban insecurity, particularly in peripheral urban neighbourhoods;

8. Expresses concern at the risks which this peri-urban violence poses for our societies through:

a. damage to the image of the neighbourhoods concerned, as perceived by young and other inhabitants of large urban housing estates;

b. a decline in teaching conditions which may lead to increased educational failure among pupils in peripheral urban areas where schooling difficulties are already more common than in other, more prosperous, parts of cities;

c. the risk that the fact that violent behaviour is commonplace will lead the perpetrators to repeat it outside school and, in general, at later stages in their lives upon reaching adulthood;

d. a considerable increase in the number of young people experiencing problems of integration in society because of their behaviour, because of their failure at school or because of both factors combined;

9. Consequently believes that worsening living conditions in the neighbourhoods concerned have a huge social and economic cost and cause considerable suffering and accordingly necessitate that all players in society recognise the problem and take urgent action to tackle it;

10. Is convinced that any policy to combat social exclusion must be based on the following fundamental principles:

a. prevention of peri-urban violence is a key component of education for democratic citizenship, that is to say of education in tolerance, intercultural relations, gender equality, human rights and peaceful means of dispute settlement;

b. policies implemented at local and regional level must strike a balance between prevention and response and must be long-term in nature;

c. young people must be acknowledged as primary stakeholders and key partners in any form of action to foster active, innovative public participation in community affairs within these neighbourhoods;

d. it is first and foremost through dialogue that disputes can be settled and a neighbourhood's inhabitants can become capable of administering without discord the resources made available to them by local and regional authorities;

11. Is convinced that the deep-rooted causes of the lack of prospects of interaction must be overcome by working in partnership with the different parts of the education system, associations and all local community players;

12. Considers that local partnerships along such lines must be developed in a flexible manner, without cumbersome organisational arrangements, so as to prioritise a quick response capacity and co-operation based on relations of mutual trust and on regular dialogue;

13. Is convinced that local authorities are ideally placed to support, or themselves launch, innovative, effective initiatives for the development of such local partnerships, by bringing together their own local departments, civil society, employer and employee organisations and the entire local community and fostering concerted action between them;

14. Calls on the local authorities of Europe:

a. to invest in artistic creation, uniting the inhabitants of these neighbourhoods around joint projects and giving these initiatives appropriate priority and sufficient human, material and financial resources for the implementation of effective, lasting measures;

b. to publicise through their local departments a broad range of cultural activities and include the inhabitants of the neighbourhoods concerned in these new activities with a view to raising awareness, fostering a climate of solidarity and co-operation between different peri-urban entities and mobilising all the relevant local community players;

c. to encourage initiatives and support artists seeking to provide the impetus for multidisciplinary, solidarity-based activities involving all sectors of the local community and the population as a whole;

d. to ensure that young people are given a proper role in defining and implementing cultural and social strategies and programmes and involve them more closely in local policy making and policy implementation;

e. to develop an entire range of supplementary cultural activities restoring people's human dignity;

f. to offer young people more opportunities of learning how to behave in society and as socially committed, responsible citizens;

g. to draw inspiration from the principles and recommendations set out in the European Charter on the

Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life so as to give general encouragement to young people's involvement in community affairs, ensure that greater heed is paid to their problems and proposals and enable them to develop, from the youngest possible age, a sense of active, socially responsible citizenship, the ability to express and defend their points of view and to listen to and understand others' arguments, to accept differences and to settle disputes in a non-violent manner, to make choices and to assume shared responsibilities and build constructive relations with others;

h. to support programmes for the rehabilitation of peripheral urban areas through public transport facilities and the encouragement of sport and leisure activities, particularly in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods;

i. to develop, in partnership with those in charge of schools, innovative measures to make schools more open to local community life;

j. to encourage local and regional media to refrain from sensationalist reporting of acts of violence and also to cover positive prevention and awareness-raising initiatives targeting young people and the public in general, so as to engender a change in the image of the neighbourhoods concerned;

15. Calls on the Congress and notably the Culture and Education Committee of the Chamber of Local Authorities:

a. to disseminate as broadly as possible the work of the Council of Europe on policy for social and intercultural dialogue and to promote, through its network of NGOs, those associations which are particularly active in the sphere of artistic creation aimed at enhancing understanding and interaction between citizens;

b. to contribute to the preparation of a recommendation from the Committee of Ministers to member states;

c. to contribute to drawing up a compendium of good practices, based on real experience and tangible examples of strategies for developing integrated cultural policies;

d. to contribute to the further pooling of experience and the dissemination of good practices in Europe, *inter alia*, through the development of cultural networks, as sources of inspiration and innovation, and thereby overcome the logic of the urban "ghetto", replacing it with cultural spaces open to the world at large and to others.

1. Debated and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 9 November 2005 (see Document CG (12) 24, draft resolution presented by E. Van Vaerenbergh (Belgium, L, GILD), rapporteur).