

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 334 (2011)¹ Developing indicators to raise awareness of human rights at local and regional level

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, takes note of:

a. its unique position as a pan-European body of elected representatives closest to the citizens providing services to the community, and guided by the principle of subsidiarity, which stipulates that issues should be dealt with by the smallest, lowest or least centralised competent authority;

b. its long-standing activity in the field of human rights from the 1997 Messina Conference on the creation of ombudspersons to the 2008 Stockholm Conference which gave rise to the Joint Declaration on “Systematic Work for Human Rights” co-signed by the Congress, SALAR² and the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe;

c. Article 1 of the Statute of the Council of Europe, which states that the core objectives of the Organisation should be pursued by its organs “in the maintenance and further realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms”,³ and Article 2 of the two statutory resolutions of the Committee of Ministers which take inspiration from the article of the Statute to set out the objectives of the Congress to promote local and regional democracy;⁴

d. the Final Declaration of the Warsaw Summit which states that “effective democracy and good governance at all levels are essential”;⁵

e. its Recommendation 280 (2010) on the role of local and regional authorities in the implementation of human rights, which stated that “democracy and human rights are interdependent”,⁶ and the Committee of Ministers’ reply thereto which stresses that “local and regional authorities, in their fields of competence, must comply with the human rights obligations which stem from the international commitments of the member States”;⁷

f. the stance taken in Resolution 296 (2010) on the role of local and regional authorities in the implementation of human rights, according to which the Congress is “an ideal forum in which to raise awareness about human rights issues among local and regional political leaders and government officials” and that the “most important way to enable local and regional authorities to take responsibility for human rights is through the systematic training of political leaders and the dissemination of reliable information among citizens about their rights (particularly among vulnerable groups)”;

g. the statement made by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights at the Congress session in March 2011 that “there is now increasing momentum for adopting the rights-based approach at the local level”;⁸

h. the fact that human rights include civil, political, economic and social rights and that the competences of local and regional authorities refer to all these rights;

i. the fact that there is a need for stronger cooperation within the Council of Europe for an optimum use of resources and creation of added value when undertaking activities;

j. the explanatory memorandum prepared by Rapporteur Lars O. Molin⁹ on human rights indicators developed for the use of Congress rapporteurs when gathering and analysing data on human rights issues at local and regional level, and particularly the appendix thereto regarding the relevant rights.

2. Accordingly, the Congress undertakes to:

a. look at the human rights situation at local and regional level in member states by developing an appropriate methodology for collecting data and providing analyses in order to identify the problems facing local authorities in their daily work;

b. develop action plans to raise awareness among local authorities of human rights, through training programmes and exchange of best practices between elected representatives, and integrate these into national planning processes by means of effective consultation, as stipulated by Article 4, paragraph 6, of the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No.122);

c. continue to encourage the establishment at local and regional level of independent complaint mechanisms such as local ombudspersons;

d. ensure that its activities are based on the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and the European Social Charter (ETS No. 35), as well as on the work of the existing Council of Europe monitoring bodies, and provide a complementary effort which does not duplicate but highlights the unique contribution that the Congress can make through contacts with elected representatives in member states;

e. continue its cooperation with the Committee of the Regions and the Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union on issues related to the development of strong self-government at sub-national level and the multi-level protection and promotion of fundamental rights;

f. encourage local and regional authorities to conduct training of local government representatives and administrative staff in order to improve their knowledge of the rights of citizens at their level of government;

g. organise support activities aimed at raising local representatives’ awareness of their responsibilities in the implementation of human rights at local and regional level;

h. convene an international conference on raising local authorities’ awareness of human rights, open to Congress members and other elected representatives at local and

regional level who wish to contribute to the discussion, in order to debate questions relating to the implementation of human rights at local level and to propose a Congress action plan for 2013-2015 on this issue;

i. instruct its Monitoring Committee to take the necessary steps for the preparation of five-yearly reports on the implementation of policies for human rights by local and regional authorities in the member states of the Council of Europe.

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1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 20 October 2011, 3rd Sitting (see Document CG(21)10, explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: L. O. Molin, Sweden (L, EPP/DC).
 2. Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions.
 3. Statute of the Council of Europe, Article 1.b.
 4. Statutory Resolutions CM/Res(2011)2 and CM/Res(2007)6 relating

to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and the revised Charter appended thereto adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 19 January 2011 and on 2 May 2007, respectively.

5. Summit, Council of Europe, Declaration and Action Plan, paragraph 3.
6. Congress Recommendation 280 (2010) on the role of local and regional authorities in the implementation of human rights, adopted on 17 March 2010, Point 1.b. See also Document CG (18) 6, explanatory memorandum.
7. Reply adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 6 July 2011 at the 1118th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (CM/Cong(2011)Rec280 final).
8. See T. Hammarberg's speech "Bringing human rights home: human rights action at the local level", at the link <https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1763257&Site=Congress&BackColorInternet=C3C3C3&BackColorIntranet=CACC9A&BackColorLogged=EFEA9C>
9. Lars O. Molin (Sweden, L, EPP/DC), Congress Rapporteur on Human Rights and Chair of the Monitoring Committee.