

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 448 (2020)¹ Developing urban-rural interplay

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 of the Council of Europe appended to Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2020)1, which stipulates 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”;

a. the terms of reference of the Congress Governance Committee on Developing Urban-Rural Interplay, adopted on 21 May 2019;

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

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

a. Congress Recommendation 406 (2017) on a better future for Europe’s rural areas, adopted on 19 October 2017;

a. the thematic debate at the 36th Session of the Chamber of Local Authorities of the Congress entitled “Addressing the urban/rural divide: solutions for territorial renewal” in April 2019;

a. 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 such as demographic transition or in environmental and social questions;

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

1. 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).

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

a. local and regional policymakers need effective strategies and instruments for better integrating rural and urban areas in order to bridge the gap between them and achieve economic, social and environmental benefits for both. They also need to be made aware of the advantages of urban-rural co-operation for their populations and territories.

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

a. ensure that interplay between the multiple levels of government is guided by the principle of subsidiarity and recognise that subsidiarity is crucial, not only for relations between national, subnational and local levels, but also for relations at the local level;

a. facilitate formalised urban-rural collaboration by creating incentives for co-operation, for example through a favourable legal context (such as mandatory joint planning) and a framework for inclusion of private stakeholders from urban and rural levels;

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

a. 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 also invest in internet infrastructure in areas with lower population density;

a. ensure equal access of urban and rural areas to basic public services by, for example, providing funding schemes for projects in areas such as healthcare, spatial planning, local supply and the improvement of physical infrastructure;

a. promote urban-rural interconnectedness for development purposes by co-operation between peri-urban regions in areas other than agriculture, including the setting up of adequate urban-rural infrastructure links or the preservation of a green belt for recreation;

a. pursue economic development and employment strategies that rely on the multiple strengths of territories, interconnecting urban and rural areas in sectors such as food production, local gastronomy and tourism;

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

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 explanatory memorandum (Document [CG-FORUM \(2020\)02-02](#)) in their activities relating to Council of Europe member States.