

CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF EUROPE

Resolution 78 (1999)¹ on “Europe 2000 – youth participation : the role of young people as citizens”

*(Extract from the Official Gazette of the Council of Europe
– June 1999)*

The Congress,

Having regard to :

1. The conclusions of the Conference on “Europe 2000 – Young people and their towns. What involvement? Comparing policies”, which took place in Budapest from 23 to 25 October 1997, with the participation of municipal and regional elected representatives and administrators, representatives of local youth bodies and youth organisations, members of the Parliamentary Assembly and representatives of the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) and the Governing Board of the Council of Europe’s EYCs and EYF ;

2. The evaluation report on the implementation of the European charter on the participation of young people in municipal and regional life, following its adoption in 1992 by Resolution 237,

Recalls :

3. Committee of Ministers Recommendation (97) 3 on youth participation and the future of civil society and Resolution (98) 6 on the youth policy of the Council of Europe ;

4. Its own Resolutions 15 (1995) on “Local Democracy: a civic project”, 40 (1996) on “Unemployment/employment: new activities and occupations”, 43 (1997) on “Opening up Europe to the young: towns and regions in action” ;

5. Appendix 2 to the Final Declaration of the 5th Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Youth, particularly section 1 on “Youth participation and active democratic citizenship” ;

6. That participation by young people in society is a constant vector of all Council of Europe youth policy ;

Notes that :

7. The positive qualities traditionally associated with youth (spontaneity, curiosity, enthusiasm, generosity, commitment) have not disappeared at a time when economic, social and political trends in Europe (persistent unemployment, precarious living conditions, loss of faith in politics, increasing numbers of irresponsible acts and

movements, elitism in European construction, etc) bode ill for the future ;

Considers that :

8. While the risk of violence may unfortunately become a purely negative response to the lack of real prospects for the future, the authoritarian models of the past can no longer be considered as a suitable answer to present-day problems ;

9. While the training and education of young people, particularly in citizenship, are essential, as is a sense of individual and collective responsibility, they alone are not the key to the future ;

Is convinced that :

10. First and foremost the “youth” questions require urgent priority attention and a general rallying of society and its representatives in a comprehensive, in depth intellectual effort to decipher the political issues of the future and win back the political ground threatened by the loss of momentum of the traditional political parties and ideologies ;

11. Political and social revival cannot be achieved without a new pact between the generations on the one hand and a general institutional pact with young people on the other ;

Stresses that :

12. Democracy is a permanent goal and a never-ending process that works up from the grass-roots level, ie the newly independent local authorities, the smallest territorial divisions, to the towns and regions and the new generations, making Europe also and above all a political project for young people ;

13. Participation by young people in political life, particularly at municipal and regional level, is a genuine school of citizenship, and the charter on youth participation is the European framework in which it can be tested and implemented ;

14. The setting up of new bodies for youth participation, particularly municipal and regional youth councils and the strengthening of existing bodies, to manage local projects and train responsible citizens genuinely stimulates civic and political commitment in young people ;

Declares that :

15. If local democracy is primarily a project based on citizenship, the civic involvement of young people and their ability actively to participate in society are essential to the maintenance, renewal and development of local institutions ;

16. The implementation of policies for the participation of young people in public life is not a substitute for the sectoral youth policies proposed in the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Municipal and Regional Life ;

1. Debated by the Congress and adopted on 17 June 1999, 3rd sitting (see doc. CG (6) 7, draft resolution, presented by Mr R. Venturini, Rapporteur).

17. Supporting committed citizenship among young people is one of the priorities of municipal and regional youth policies ;

18. Implementation of this priority depends on young people being recognised as partners in community life and involves an active commitment by young people which presupposes a desire on their part to build a society that is theirs ;

19. Support for voluntary activities and participation by young people who are excluded from society by economic, social or cultural factors is a political priority ;

Recommends that the local and regional authorities of Greater Europe :

20. Introduce at local and regional level integrated youth policies based on coherent linking of sectoral policies relating to leisure and voluntary activities, employment, housing and the urban environment, training and education, mobility, social and health protection, information and advisory services, culture, gender equality, the environment and the specific features of rural areas ;

21. Implement these policies with young people (prior consultation and participation in decision making), this being vital to the promotion and development of youth participation in municipal and regional life ;

22. Set up "contact points" for young people, with a toll-free call-in line, to provide young people with information, listen to their problems, offer advice and encourage them in their search for services and participation ;

23. Support and build on the voluntary sector activities that exist in particular municipalities or regions, via contracts covering co-ordinated objectives based on sectoral policies, in order to reach young people who are not involved in the activities aimed at them or who feel excluded from the participation activities offered ;

24. With a view to developing youth citizenship, give priority to setting up and/or supporting participation bodies such as youth councils and municipal youth committees, etc, where young people can discuss and decide on matters of concern to them ;

25. Provide these youth bodies with suitable operating budgets and funds to finance specific projects ;

26. Implement the proposals set out in the conclusions adopted at the end of the Budapest Conference on "Youth participation: the role of young people as citizens", which are appended to this resolution, in particular :

– in order to develop community spirit among young people, to help them to establish venues for meeting other young people, recognising their worth and holding discussions and deliberations, where they can learn to devise projects, to carry them forward in the longer-term and to develop lasting relationships in spheres as varied as leisure activities, culture, mobility, sport and contacts with young people from other neighbourhoods, backgrounds or countries or with older generations, etc ;

– to ensure that an even geographical spread of such venues is established and maintained by making appropriate premises available and deploying, as appropriate, social workers, street workers and youth workers trained in participation and trusted by young people ;

– to treat these places and schools as important breeding grounds for active youth citizenship ;

– to publicise the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Municipal and Regional Life in all appropriate circles, in particular through youth organisations, youth associations and clubs, schools and so on ;

– to this end, to formulate strategies based on the principles of closeness to the locality and progressiveness, young people's home areas and specific individual topics being used as starting points to introduce them little by little to increasingly complex and ever-larger realities such as towns, regions, Europe and so on ;

– rather than confine youth participation bodies to subjects or activities that only concern young people, to involve young people in drawing up a local plan for their own town or region, thereby ensuring that they are recognised as citizens in their own right ;

27. Identify packages of special facilities and services for young people, with the participation of youth bodies (youth organisations, youth councils, municipal youth committees, etc), in order to facilitate the implementation of sectoral and youth participation policies ;

28. Encourage exchanges of experience on youth participation in community life through meetings between young people active in this area, with the aid of twin towns in particular ;

29. Support transfrontier co-operation activities conducted by young people, which are genuine examples of participation contributing towards the building of Europe.

Recommends that the national associations of local and regional authorities :

30. Envisage information campaigns on the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Municipal and Regional Life, in the light of this resolution and the results of the Budapest Conference ;

31. Have this charter translated without delay into their national languages and the minority languages of their respective countries if this has not already been done ;

32. Promote and organise training for local and regional elected representatives and public officials in participation by young people in public life in general and in the implementation of the charter in particular (organisation of seminars, conferences, case studies, etc) ;

33. Envisage organising events, gatherings, activities and possibly awards connected with participation by young people in local and regional life ;

Asks its bodies responsible for monitoring the implementation of the charter and this resolution :

34. To continue in the future to work in close co-operation with the Council of Europe's youth bodies on the question of youth participation in political and social life ;

35. To collect examples of the implementation of the charter and rapidly prepare a practical user handbook on the charter ;

36. To encourage any efforts to publicise the charter and any local, regional, national or European programme or project to implement it ;

37. To consider instituting a European award for participation by young people in local and regional life, in liaison with the national associations of local and regional authorities.

Appendix

Europe 2000

Young people and their towns: what involvement ? Comparing policies Budapest, 23-25 October 1997

Conclusions

"Involvement of young people: youth citizenship"

The representatives of local and regional authorities from throughout Europe who participated in the international conference entitled "Young people and their towns: what involvement ? Comparing policies", held by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) at the European Youth Centre in Budapest from 23 to 25 October 1997, in co-operation with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the European Steering Committee for Intergovernmental Co-operation in the Youth Field and the Governing Board of the EYCs and the EYF ;

Having considered firstly the results of the survey carried out by the CLRAE working group on "Youth", with the help of a consultant, on the implementation of the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Municipal and Regional Life, adopted in 1992 (Resolution 237), and secondly Recommendation No. R(97) 3 of the Committee of Ministers to Member states on Youth Participation and the Future of Civil Society, and after being addressed by :

– political leaders of the towns or regions of: Budapest (Hungary), Strasbourg (France), Newham-Borough, London (United Kingdom), Turin (Italy), Lyon (France), Leeds (United Kingdom), Baia Mare (Romania), Cracow (Poland), Herne (Germany), Appenzell-Outer Rhodes (Switzerland), Catalonia (Spain) and Villach-Alpe Adria (Austria) as well as other cities and regions of Greater Europe ;

– young people representing Young People's Councils in Baia Mare (Romania), Devon County (United Kingdom),

Genk (Belgium), Strasbourg (France) and Budapest (Hungary) and representatives of National Associations of Young People's Councils in Hungary, Italy, Switzerland and Romania ;

– representatives of national and European youth organisations ;

– members of parliament, local and regional councillors, experts, national and European officials, and young people of all nationalities and social backgrounds ;

I. Note :

a. On the one hand, generally positive signs, and more particularly that :

1. Young Europeans' essential qualities such as spontaneity, lack of prejudice, openness, generosity and enthusiasm do not seem to have been damaged by the current crisis ;

2. Certain aspects of the European project, such as its embracing the whole continent, are generally considered positive by young people ;

3. New communication and information technologies are opening up real possibilities for individual and collective fulfilment ;

4. On the whole there is great desire among young people to be party to a world shared with adults ;

5. Exemplary involvement in the voluntary sector shows young people's unflagging commitment and solidarity ;

6. Young people whose circumstances and social situation are precarious are showing a great deal of courage and determination in trying to improve their lot ;

7. Community commitment of young people, especially at the local level remains a strong value ;

8. Worthwhile social, cultural and other projects that bridge the generation gap are beginning to be seen ;

9. In several European countries there are increasing examples of young people's successful involvement in local and regional political life ;

b. On the other hand, the existence of several factors which could have a negative influence on the political and social evolution of Europe and European countries, and in particular that :

1. European countries are currently experiencing economic, social and political changes which, firstly, are making it difficult for the whole population and young people in particular to grasp the present and the future, and, secondly, are making living conditions more precarious, particularly for young people ;

2. This is causing many young people to become disenchanted with politics and politicians ;

3. Young people's political and institutional uninvolvement is ultimately and inevitably a temporal and spatial limitation on politics and hence a danger for the future of democracy ;

4. As traditional embodiments of authority weaken, so there is an increase at local level in deviant, irresponsible, vandalistic, indeed criminal behaviour, and at national level a growth in movements which are fanatical, extremist, millenarian, sectarian and xenophobic or clearly racist;

5. Europe seems to have lost some of its appeal for the many young people who think it is becoming elitist: such bitterness could quickly become a backlash disastrous for Europe;

II. *Consider that:*

1. The future of democratic freedoms is closely linked to that of new generations;
2. If young people are deprived of the tools to build their future, the door is opened to violence, the last resort against a world which does not recognise you and in which there is no place for you;
3. Authoritarian models inherited from the past are crumbling, but it would be dangerous as well as futile to replace them with other forms of coercion, including that resulting from adaptation to a market economy;
4. Adult society must not abandon young people in a world which is becoming more and more complex, difficult to cope with and ruthless;
5. Training and especially education of young people are essential for the future and are both an individual and collective responsibility;
6. With the decline of ideologies, traditional political parties are no longer young people's one and only channel for civic and political involvement;
7. The eclipse of politics is opening the door to sectarian, demagogic, extremist, irresponsible and millenarian movements which may help resuscitate totalitarianisms;
8. Young people's potential and courage have not yet been fully explored, far less made constructive use of;
9. The media, enlightened public opinion and all those holding responsibilities in society should give urgent attention to young people and their future, which should be the key concerns in politics today;
10. Political and other institutions as constituted at present are inadequate to tackle the youth issue;
11. The threats the future holds need parrying by means of two ground-breaking steps:
 - a pact between the generations: *intergeneration citizenship*;
 - an institutional pact with young people: *youth citizenship*;
12. The rehabilitation of politics and the renewal of democratic freedoms must begin at the bottom, with young people in the regions, cities and towns and in the even smaller administrative units;
13. The most urgent task today is to develop a genuine political project which will open the minds of all young people to the concept of Europe;

III. *Declare that:*

1. The time has come for clear recognition to be given to young people's "political right" – the right to contribute a new dimension to our world;
2. Political recognition of each person's – in particular each young person's – uniqueness, together with collective action, is the most effective antidote to the powerful processes which are at work and which tend to make human beings superfluous;
3. The teaching of citizenship needs rescuing from its functionalist impasse so that it can be rooted in mutual respect, equality between women and men, social justice, quality and beauty of the environment, friendship and co-operation between peoples;
4. At the same time, efforts should be increased to make vocational training for young people truly democratic again;
5. Involving young people in political life, starting with municipal and regional life, as recommended by the European charter and anticipated by Youth organisations, teaches mutual respect, freedom and solidarity; in short, it provides a schooling in real citizenship;
6. The aim of this involvement is to construct a decent, mutually supportive community which can be a source of new local, regional, national and European pride;
7. If public-spiritedness is the best introduction to active, freely assumed citizenship, it is essential that power is truly shared with the younger generation in order to give them a taste for involvement at local, regional, municipal, national, European and world levels;
8. Gradually involving young people in political life provides genuine training for citizen participation, anticipates an increasingly open and democratic community and benefits all generations;
9. If the European idea and European practice are divorced from the realities actually experienced by people, particularly the young, they will become technocratic and elitist, and in this way will lose their democratic foundations;
10. Europe must be built from the grassroots, but this is impossible without first the civic commitment and then the active citizenship of young people of all origins and social backgrounds, even in the smallest administrative units;
11. The European idea and European practice can once again become a source of civic involvement and committed citizenship if a large-scale project aimed at progressive Europeanisation based on genuine promotion of multilingualism and systematic contact between young Europeans is urgently set in motion;

IV. *Recommend:*

- a. That municipalities and regions throughout Greater Europe:
 1. Publicise the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Municipal and Regional Life in all the

- appropriate settings (schools, youth organisations, clubs, associations, youth forums, etc) and ask their national associations to have it translated into their languages without delay if this has not already been done;¹
2. Formulate a strategy for implementing the charter in the light of the study carried out by the CLRAE, successful participation experiments in several European countries and the conclusions of this conference;
 3. Base the strategy on the principles of closeness to the locality and progressiveness so that the immediate area and a given topic are used as a starting point, introducing young people little by little to increasingly complex and ever larger realities (towns, regions, countries, Europe, the world, etc);
 4. In order to develop community spirit among young people, provide venues suitable for meeting, mutual recognition, discussion and deliberation (clubs, schools, youth clubs, forums, associations, local youth organisations, etc) where they can learn to devise small projects as members of a group, work towards longer-term aims and develop lasting friendships (in spheres such as leisure, sport, culture, tourism, group travel, contact with young people from other neighbourhoods, backgrounds or countries or with older generations);
 5. So that no urban or rural area and no group of young people is left unprovided for, ensure that an even spread of such venues is created and maintained by making appropriate premises available and deploying, as appropriate, social workers, community workers and youth workers trained in participation and who have young people's trust;
 6. Implement CLRAE Resolution 43 of March 1997, "Opening up Europe to the Young: Towns and Regions in Action";
 7. Develop youth citizenship and recognise young people as partners in community affairs;
 8. Promote the setting up of organs of political debate for young people (youth councils, youth parliaments, youth forums, etc.) with the same even geographical distribution as mentioned above;
 9. Treat social facilities and schools as important (but not the only) places for raising young citizens of the future;
 10. Ask mayors and town councillors to show a constant willingness to help, listen, talk and follow up, recognising the young as serious people entitled to a say and making a room in the town hall available to the representatives or delegates of youth participation organs;
 11. Rather than confine youth participation bodies to specific subjects, involve them in drawing up a local plan which produces tangible results and which they will discover to be an ongoing and open-ended responsibility. The progressive involvement of young people in a medium

or long-term project makes them responsible citizens in their own right;

12. Relaunch in every village, town and region the policy of openness to Europe and the world in the manner suggested in CLRAE Resolution 15 (1995), "Local democracy: a civil project";
 13. Gradually open up adult institutions (local councils, municipal and extramunicipal committees, etc) and administrative bodies, particularly those with planning responsibilities, to young people's representatives and establish a variety of links and liaison (for example, joint working parties) between the adult institutions and the young people institutions, in a spirit of complementarity and joint decision making;
 14. Devise a policy for youth participation in public life which is not a substitute for the general and specific youth policies referred to in the first part of the European charter;
 15. Treat the regions as providing a framework for youth participation in building a united Europe and begin by implementing bilateral programmes based on an active policy of multilingualism that show states the way forward;
- b. That youth participation institutions and bodies:
1. Form networks that provide permanent structural links throughout a town or city or specific region;
 2. Unity in diversity: in order to effectively combat the two forms of segregation – geographical and personal – which threaten us, gradually open up to young people from other neighbourhoods and all backgrounds by establishing permanent two-way links with similar bodies in other neighbourhoods and areas so as to create a unified participation structure in each medium-sized or large town or group of small towns which truly reflects the make-up of the locality and is representative of the young people who live there (horizontality);
 3. An overall view for effective action: to be achieved through all forms of appropriate liaison between different participation bodies at each territorial level, and between the different levels (verticality);
 4. Form regional or national federations so that the concept and practice of participation spread beyond the towns or groups of towns;
 5. Join together in European associations, in order to promote a young people's Europe, Europeanisation and democratic participation;
- c. That towns, regions, states and European institutions:
1. Put youth participation on the political agenda, particularly by providing the necessary financial means for its development;
 2. Recognise the importance of the informal education provided by youth organisations;
 3. At last implement a proposal the CLRAE has now put forward several times, for a major effort to Europeanise the young by promoting multilingualism;

1. The charter currently exists in the following languages: French, English, German, Italian, Russian, Ukrainian, Romanian, Polish, Portuguese, Bulgarian, Hungarian and Catalan.

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4. Examine CLRAE Resolution 40 (1996), “Unemployment/employment: new activities and occupations” with a view to implementing along it in partnership with youth representatives;
5. Develop contact between the generations, adopting the approach suggested in CLRAE Recommendation 5 (1994), “Europe and its elderly people: towards a pact between generations”;
6. Update their youth policies and administrative methods in the light of the new concept and practice of youth participation in public life;
7. Develop by every possible means voluntary work at all levels;
 - d.* That the managers of European Youth Centres and the European Youth Fund examine the possibility of giving financial support to projects initiated by bodies or structures for the participation of young people in municipal and regional life.