

CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF EUROPE

Recommendation 59 (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. Partnership between adults and young people is the indispensable component of any youth policy;

16. Youth participation is a means of providing proper answers to the concerns and aspirations of young people;

17. The citizenship of young people is essential to the survival of our democracies;

18. The ability of young people to find new solutions to the problems and situations they face, their participation at every level of society and their search for new prospects necessitate their involvement in decisions concerning them

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

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and democratic recognition of their status as fully-fledged citizens.

Recommends that:

I. The governments of the Council of Europe's member states

19. Foster genuine individual and social independence for young people and recognise their status as citizens, precluding all forms of discrimination;

20. Facilitate education and training for young people in participation and citizenship by promoting the establishment and development of representative, democratic and pluralist youth participation structures at both regional and European level, in keeping with the provisions of Recommendation (97) 3 of the Committee of Ministers on youth participation and the future of civil society;

21. Encourage complementary youth policies at national level and at regional and local level;

22. Acknowledge the importance of the informal education provided by youth organisations as well as others actors;

23. Through informal education:

- foster a climate conducive to greater involvement of young people in decision making,
- encourage dialogue between young people and public authorities at every level on issues that concern them, such as education, housing, environment, work and unemployment, health, etc;

24. Support training programmes on participation, and in particular project design and management, for leaders of youth organisations and youth groups, to enable them to pass on this expertise to their peers;

25. Encourage and support the setting up and development of municipal youth councils and youth parliaments, for example through awareness-raising and co-ordination work with local and regional authorities and the persons in charge of schools and education and training institutions as well as non governmental partners (youth associations and clubs, etc.);

26. Encourage the development of European networks of youth participation structures;

II. That youth organisations and youth participation bodies

27. Take heed of the conclusions adopted at the Budapest Conference on “Youth Participation: the role of young people as citizens” and appended to this Recommendation, and in particular:

- Form networks that provide permanent structural links throughout a town or city or specific region;
- Create unified participation structures which truly reflect the make-up of their geographical areas and the young people who live there;
- Make their efforts to encourage youth participation part of an area or city project, to enable the young people concerned to adopt an overall view for effective action;
- Form regional and national federations so that the concept and practice of participation spread beyond the towns or groups of towns;
- Join together in European associations in order to promote a young people's Europe, Europeanisation and democratic participation;

III. That the managers of the Council of Europe's European Youth Centres and Foundation

28. Give financial support to projects initiated by bodies or structures which foster participation by young people in municipal and regional life;

29. Open the training courses on project design and management at the European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest to young people in charge of bodies which foster youth participation in municipal and regional life;

IV. That the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

30. Promote an interdisciplinary project to foster civic education, involving the Directorate of Culture, Education and Sport (DECS), the Steering Committee for Intergovernmental Co-operation in the Youth Field (CDEJ), the Steering Committee for Equality between Women and Men (CDEG) and the CLRAE.