

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 252 (2008)¹ Improving the integration of migrants through local housing policies

1. Migration between Council of Europe member states, along with immigration from third countries present both challenges and opportunities for Europe's economic, social and cultural life.

2. It is the responsibility of Europe's political leaders to keep an eye on the situation of migrants and to ensure their effective participation in our communities.

3. The integration of migrants falls primarily within the scope of national legislation (national policies, legal and administrative frameworks), but in practice integration takes place in a specific local context. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe has called repeatedly for the involvement of local authorities in the shaping of integration policies and has stressed their important role in the successful implementation of these policies.

4. One of the main objectives of the CLIP network (Cities for Local Integration Policies for Migrants), of which the Congress is a co-founder, is the identification of good practice at local level and the communication of relevant experiences to European decision makers to support the development of a European integration policy.

5. In its first year of work, the CLIP network has focused its attention on the problem of inadequate housing for migrants and the negative effects of segregation on integration from cultural, social, structural and identity perspectives.

6. Reaffirming its belief that adequate housing is not only a basic social right but is equally a crucial element in the integration of migrants into the host society, the Congress fully endorses the work of the CLIP network and recommends, in particular, that member states:

a. ensure that national and regional housing programmes provide cities with the latitude and financial means necessary to deal with the demands of migrant families;

b. ensure long-term provision of housing for the most vulnerable groups by making a controlled amount of public accommodation available in parallel to the open housing market, by:

i. creating the legal conditions at national level that allow cities and communities to:

– take on an active role in the housing market (for example as building contractors, landlords or owners of property);

– introduce forms of rent control;

ii. fostering research on examples of good practice within the field of social housing and establishing national guidelines for social housing in the communities;

iii. organising conditions for access to publicly supported and organised housing in such a way that the prerequisites do not (indirectly) discriminate against migrants;

c. increase and support affordability of housing by:

i. creating legal provisions for offering building grants and subsidies going directly to households, ensuring the appropriate social group is targeted by establishing a low income limit;

ii. using repayable funding (low-interest loans) within the framework of a closed circle of financing to buy new property or to renovate existing accommodation;

iii. linking the provision of subsidies for buildings to social, ecological and planning aims (for example low- or zero-emission houses, interethnic housing projects, etc.);

d. halt processes of urban devaluation by:

i. systematically monitoring the socio-economic development of regions, cities and districts to enable timely implementation of countermeasures such as urban renewal;

ii. using public funding to initiate processes and encourage private investors to become involved (by means of grants and increasing the attractiveness of the location);

iii. accompanying urban renewal and gentrification processes with state funding in such a way that this does not lead to a cyclical “overshoot” which could lead to the local population being displaced and an increase in segregation;

e. ensure that national research programmes devote increased attention to housing policy and its effects on integration processes and make research results accessible to local policy makers;

f. improve stakeholder participation and the efficiency of local governance structures by ensuring that national policy includes:

i. promoting the intercultural and diversity policies of national and local institutions;

ii. fostering co-operation and partnership with local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), welfare organisations, churches, chambers of commerce, unions and landlords' and tenants' associations, especially as regards access to housing, education and the labour market;

iii. promoting preventive measures with regard to segregation of migrants, including support for the development of early warning systems linked to social and spatial indicators.

7. The Congress reaffirms its commitment to continued dialogue with European cities on social inclusion and the integration of migrants and notably its support of the CLIP network and asks:

a. the Committee of Ministers to forward these recommendations to the governments and regional authorities of the member states and to the European Union;

b. the member states of the Council of Europe and of the European Union to support cities as strategic actors in the implementation of European programmes on the integration of migrants, by:

i. considering, where applicable, the use of the new European Fund for the Integration of Third-country Migrants and encouraging cities to apply for funds;

ii. including the integration of migrants in general and their integration into the local housing market in particular into the National Action Plans (NAP) on social inclusion;

c. the European Union, with regard to exchange of experience and networking, to act by:

i. continuing activities such as the creation of a Social Platform for Cities and Social Cohesion by the Directorate-General for Research and further developing the co-operation between the Directorate-General for Justice, Freedom and

Security and the Eurocities network by organising an annual conference on local experience relating to the integration of migrants (Integrating Cities process);

ii. supporting existing city networks such as the city network against racism of the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) or the CLIP network;

d. the European Commission to monitor whether the European Union Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin is being used effectively to protect migrants from discrimination on grounds of race in regard to access to housing.

1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Local Authorities on 28 May 2008 and adopted by the Congress on 29 May 2008, 3rd Sitting (see Document CPL(15)5REC, draft recommendation presented by E. Maurer (Switzerland, L, SOC), rapporteur).