

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 270 (2008)¹ Improving the integration of migrants through local housing policies

1. Social inclusion in the urban context, through housing initiatives and local neighbourhood practices, is a key factor in the search for solutions which promote integration.

2. The quality and type of housing are therefore critical determinants of integration since they affect not only the well-being of migrants but also their community relations and access to local services and opportunities (labour market, education, health care, etc.).

3. Given the importance of housing and the real impact local governance can have in this area, it was chosen as the first topic to be dealt with by the CLIP network (Cities for Local Integration Policies for Migrants), of which the Congress is a founding member.

4. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, confident that the effective implementation of integration policy is increasingly a matter for local authorities and that the exchange of experience of successful measures in this field is therefore essential, gives its full support to the findings of the CLIP network in the field of migrant housing and calls on local authorities of Council of Europe member states to:

a. develop a long-term, centrally co-ordinated local integration policy with a strong emphasis on an integrated and holistic approach to housing matters;

b. ensure the availability of reliable, comprehensive and up-to-date information by establishing a specialist unit within their statistical office which could, in co-operation with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), churches, local research groups and volunteers, work towards:

i. the development of indicators that are systematically monitored to evaluate the qualitative situation of migrant housing, migrants' access to housing and their spatial distribution throughout the city;

ii. a survey of the dynamics of migrant movement in the city through the collection of mobility data, using a narrow spatial focus (neighbourhoods or streets instead of only districts) for deeper, more reliable insights;

iii. integration of the monitoring of housing conditions into an overall monitoring of the quality of life of migrants in their local community;

c. improve the supply of and access to affordable social housing by defining requirements and regulations for access to this form of accommodation (maximum family income, waiting period, family members in need of care), establishing a ranking list and drawing up criteria which would enable emergency cases to jump the queue;

d. ensure that migrants have fair access to housing associations and co-operatives by:

i. providing local publicly-owned land to these associations in exchange for controlled rents and a quota of apartments to be leased directly by the municipality;

ii. co-ordinating the provision of housing for migrants among housing associations;

e. inform migrants of housing opportunities and monitor discrimination through:

i. easily accessible "one-stop" citizens advice centres offering counselling concerning the local housing market, financial and legal issues (for example payment of rent, rental market rates, extortion, rent arrears, legal period of notice) and help with intercultural conflicts;

ii. information documents in different languages linked to volunteer mentors or migrant associations of the same language group;

iii. the setting up of an office that is both welcoming and reassuring, as well as easily accessible, to deal with complaints and systematically monitor discrimination against migrants in the housing market;

iv. the targeting and abolition of official regulations or informal practices which exist in housing associations, social housing and the private housing market, that may directly or indirectly discriminate against migrants;

f. avoid exploitation of migrants by private landlords and overcrowding in cramped accommodation, by:

i. lobbying national governments to give local authorities greater power of approval of rental conditions (licensing system) in particular for properties with multiple occupation;

ii. working in partnership with other agencies that have powers of entry into such properties, sharing information on properties where conditions are unacceptable and taking joint action to address these issues;

g. improve access for migrants to privately rented housing and its affordability, through innovative public-private partnerships by:

i. acting as contractors, renting private property below the market price and subletting these low-priced flats to migrants;

ii. providing local publicly-owned land at below market price to private builders or developers, who then offer a proportion of the apartments at reduced rents to target groups;

iii. acting as mediator for contracts between tenants with a migrant background and (autochthonous) owners;

h. promote migrant home ownership by:

i. providing subsidies or tax reductions to low-income families (including migrants) for house construction, purchase or renovation;

ii. providing local publicly-owned land at a subsidised price directly to low-income families for home construction, or to private developers who must sell housing units below the market price to target groups;

i. adopt a “soft urban renewal” approach which takes social, economic and cultural demands into consideration and allows the planning and implementation process to be influenced by the residents;

j. achieve more balanced neighbourhoods and prevent or reduce segregation, by:

i. spreading social housing around the city to avoid spatial concentration of low-income groups in general and migrants in particular;

ii. implementing quotas for migrants in social housing and possibly opening up access to social housing for middle-income groups.

5. The Congress mandates its Committee on Social Cohesion to continue its work with the CLIP network and asks the European Union Committee of the Regions to continue the valuable activities of its Commission for Economic and Social Policy (ECOS) on the integration of migrants and 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)5RES, draft resolution presented by E. Maurer (Switzerland, L, SOC), rapporteur).