

## THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

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### **Recommendation 170 (2005)<sup>1</sup> on intercultural and inter-faith dialogue: initiatives and responsibilities of local authorities**

The Congress, bearing in mind the proposal of the Chamber of Local Authorities,

1. Having examined the report on intercultural and inter-faith dialogue: initiatives and responsibilities of local authorities presented by Mary Hunt (United Kingdom, ILDG) and Brith Fäldt (Sweden, SOC) on behalf of the Committee on Culture and Education, and Resolution 202 (2005) on the same subject, which proposes a whole series of measures to be taken locally in this area;

2. Recalling:

*a.* its Recommendation 33 (1997) on the local democracy embassies: instruments for peace and democracy in Europe, which draws attention to the participation in the work of the Local Democracy Agencies of partner towns, regions and NGOs, helping to promote democratic security by encouraging dialogue between the various sections of the population, tolerance, peaceful coexistence and the development or preservation of local democracy;

*b.* its Recommendation 117 (2002) on promoting transfrontier co-operation: an important factor of democratic stability in Europe;

*c.* its Recommendation 134 (2003) on tackling terrorism – the role and responsibilities of local authorities, which highlights the responsibilities of local authorities in promoting dialogue between cultures and religions;

*d.* its Recommendation 153 (2004) on a pact for the integration and participation of people of immigrant origin in Europe's towns, cities and regions;

*e.* Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1687 (2004) on combating terrorism through culture, which suggests, among other things, including the cultural dimension in the Council of Europe's work on countering terrorism;

3. Having taken note of:

*a.* the Declaration on Intercultural Dialogue and Conflict Prevention adopted by the European Ministers responsible for Cultural Affairs in Opatija, Croatia, on 22 October 2003, which stresses the need for co-operation between all tiers of government – local, regional and national – and for co-operation with civil society;

*b.* the Declaration on Intercultural Education in the New European Context adopted by the European Ministers of Education in Athens, Greece, on 12 November 2003;

4. Bearing in mind the work of the Congress, in particular the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life and the handbook *Local consultative bodies for foreign residents*;

5. Taking account of the work of the Directorate General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport (DG IV) of the Council of Europe, particularly the Action Plan of the Intercultural Dialogue and Conflict Prevention project (2002-2004) and work in the youth sector to foster intercultural awareness and culture of peace and dialogue among young people in order to prevent conflicts,

6. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

*a.* give priority to the matter in the coming years and support the work of the various relevant sectors of the Organisation that contribute to such dialogue, in particular:

*i.* the proposals related to the project on DG IV Intercultural Dialogue and Conflict Prevention and, in particular, efforts to identify, in conjunction with the Congress, good practice at local, regional and national level and the designation of an “Intercultural City of the Council of Europe” every year on the basis of the pilot project “Sarajevo, Intercultural City of the Council of Europe”;

*ii.* the work currently being carried out by DG IV on impartial history teaching, the preparation and publication of history textbooks and the training of teachers in intercultural and inter-faith dialogue;

*iii.* youth exchange and youth meeting programmes including programmes for young children designed to promote a culture of dialogue, peace and democratic participation among young people;

*iv.* the dissemination of cultural and audiovisual works illustrating Europe's cultural and religious diversity and the reflection of this diversity in the media;

*v.* the work of the Directorate General of Social Cohesion (DG III) on combating social exclusion, improving people's financial and social situation and promoting equal opportunities, especially among minority and vulnerable groups in disadvantaged urban areas;

*b.* ask the relevant sectors of the Organisation to consider the possible further actions:

*i.* holding in the coming years a major European conference with representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress, the European Court of Human Rights, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and all the other Council of Europe sectors concerned, in order to:

– make European policy makers and citizens aware that the mingling of cultures and civilisations, and their mutual enrichment, have contributed – and continue to contribute

– to the building of Europe, its cultural heritage and its values;

– promote recognition for the equal dignity of the various cultural, religious, ethnic and national components of Europe, while condemning radical religious fanaticism and the corrupt use of cultural and regional identities for terrorist/subversive ends;

ii. devising, with the consent of the member states concerned, a special programme for the various parts of Europe that have recently suffered, or are still suffering from, conflicts between representatives of different cultural and/or religious communities in order to foster, among the citizens of those countries, a culture of dialogue, tolerance, negotiation and reconciliation;

iii. actively co-operating with the European Union in the context of its plans to declare 2008 the Year of Intercultural Dialogue, and widely publicise, on that occasion, all the Council of Europe's work designed to help promote such dialogue;

c. invite the Steering Committee on Local and Regional Democracy (CDLR) to:

i. conduct a survey of practices in member states concerning the consultation of foreign residents lawfully settled in those states through referenda and other consultation processes at local level;

ii. disseminate widely the handbook *Local consultative bodies for foreign residents* published by the Congress;

d. invite the governments of member states to:

i. support through voluntary contributions the Local Democracy Agency programmes which, in the countries of South-Eastern Europe, actively promote intercultural and inter-faith dialogue and reconciliation of the communities;

ii. foster transfrontier co-operation, not least in the area of culture and formal and non-formal education, in order to consolidate a more open attitude to other cultures, neighbourly relations and conflict prevention;

iii. sign and ratify as soon as possible, if they have not already done so:

– the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level (ETS No. 144);

– the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ETS No. 148);

– the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ETS No. 157);

– the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities (ETS No. 106) and its Additional Protocols (ETS Nos. 159 and 169).

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1. Discussed and approved by the Chamber of Local Authorities on 31 May 2005 (see Document CPL (12) 4, draft recommendation approved by M. Hunt (United Kingdom, L, ILDG) and B. Fäldt (Sweden, L, SOC), rapporteurs).

