

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 280 (2009)¹ Intercultural cities

1. The intercultural city shapes its educational, social, housing, employment, cultural and related policies, as well as its public spaces, in ways which enable people from different cultural backgrounds to mix, exchange and interact for mutual understanding and benefit.

2. Intercultural cities have undertaken a clear political commitment to develop, promote and protect the cultural identities within their cities. These strong and dynamic identities are a crucial element in a city's development and vitality.

3. Increases in migration and social mobility and the rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICTs) have increased the pace of change of cultural identities and, at the same time, cities and local communities have at their disposal increased means to influence and to stimulate identity formation and development. Economic growth and the integrating forces of the new media offer new tools and opportunities to local authorities, as citizens are more easily able to participate in local networks within their cities and local communities.

4. In promoting identity, a sense of belonging to a community and a sense of place, a balance needs to be found between inclusion and exclusion. City authorities should pay special attention to preserving a sufficient degree of openness. They need to recognise the presence of different cultural groups on their territory and the contribution that these groups can make to the city's social cohesion, including those who are perceived as recent arrivals and temporary residents.

5. Cultural identities have a tendency to define themselves in relation to each other and, often for historical reasons, are not automatically attracted to each other. The Council of Europe needs to develop instruments to ensure the compatibility and positive interaction of regional cultural identities, including awareness-raising activities such as the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue and promotional measures to acquire and improve intercultural communication capacity.

6. In the light of the above, the Congress,

a. bearing in mind the Council of Europe's White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue (adopted at the May 2008 session of the Committee of Ministers);

b. convinced of the importance of an integration policy based on developing community perceptions of diversity as a resource, for the well-being of its citizens and for the social coherence and socio-economic development of the city;

c. convinced of the need to develop multicultural identities which are inclusive of all social, ethnic and cultural groups;

d. believing that one of the key assets of cities and local communities relates to the diversity and cultural heritage of their populations;

7. Calls on local authorities to:

a. express explicitly their common commitment in favour of an intercultural policy approach, and avoid partisan and populist attempts to play with cultural and religious stereotypes, prejudices and fears;

b. ensure that the intercultural policy approach includes an ongoing effort to deconstruct stereotypes and unfounded fears which circulate in public opinion and in certain media about migrants and their religious practices and social behaviour;

c. stimulate the development of multiple cultural identities, taking into consideration the need to develop a pluralistic understanding of one's own identity and to value in a broader sense the "us" which encompasses not only the culture and the traditions of the host community or the members of the majority, but also those who have a different language, religion and culture or have only recently joined the community;

d. publicly recognise the valuable cultural contribution that recent migrants can make to a city's cultural and economic development, and pay due attention to the principles of intercultural dialogue;

e. give active support to migrant associations, socio-economic organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other consultative bodies which contribute to the city's cultural creativity and interaction, through access to facilities and training;

f. take the initiative of entering into dialogue with migrant associations, socio-economic organisations, NGOs and other consultative bodies in order to jointly contribute to the city's cultural creativity and interaction and, if necessary, support training;

g. ensure that local mediators are sufficiently trained in the complex nature of identity formation, so that they can avoid the pitfalls and dangers of exclusion and alienation, help overcome conflicts and build trust among different cultural communities;

h. seek to develop cultural ties between the diasporas and with their countries of origin through joint cultural activities and exchanges;

i. set up intercultural awareness training for politicians and key policy and front-line staff in public services.

1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Local Authorities on 4 March 2009 and adopted by the Congress on 5 March, 3rd Sitting (see Document CPL(16)IREP, explanatory memorandum, rapporteur: J. Nillson (Sweden, L, SOC)).