

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 228 (2007)¹ Intergenerational co-operation and participatory democracy

1. Europe's towns, cities and regions currently face the major challenge of promoting social cohesion among the different generations while providing practical remedies for the specific problems encountered by each age group;

2. The challenge is made all the greater by the fact that the different generations are currently under particular pressures, which are widening the gap between them and undermining social cohesion. This is particularly true of the most disadvantaged sections of society: many elderly people feel isolated and concerned about the future of their pensions, while young people have difficulty in finding a job and are becoming disenchanted with politics;

3. At the same time, local and regional authorities have a duty to involve the different categories of the population regularly and increasingly in decisions that concern them, as this principle is considered the cornerstone of any local democracy worthy of the name;

4. The Congress is aware that towns, cities and regions, being closer to the public, have a key role to play both in fostering solidarity among the generations and in establishing participatory mechanisms that involve the various age groups in devising and implementing measures which affect their living conditions;

5. In this connection, the Congress would point to the experience that the Council of Europe has amassed where it comes to involving young people in decision making and promoting youth participation, particularly through the revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life;

6. The Congress would also point out that a motion for a resolution on participatory democracy and the development of intergenerational co-operation was tabled at its 11th Plenary Session (25-27 May 2004). This motion for a resolution put particular emphasis on the benefits of setting up a participatory European body to monitor co-operation among the generations and train managers and other people involved in such co-operation;

7. On this basis, the Congress drew up the Manifesto on Intergenerational Co-operation set out in the appendix, which comprises seven sections outlining the principles and activities to which towns, cities and regions determined to take part in this process are invited to subscribe;

8. In view of the foregoing, the Congress calls on the local and regional authorities of the member states of the Council of Europe:

a. to sign the Manifesto on Intergenerational Co-operation and set in motion a programme of activities based on the principles and proposals for action contained in it;

b. to establish, if one does not already exist, a local or regional participatory body representing the different generations so as to foster intergenerational co-operation over matters of common interest and joint monitoring of the honouring of commitments entered into under the manifesto;

c. to co-operate and exchange good practices with other towns, cities and regions in member states which have signed the manifesto;

d. to consider establishing a voluntary service to promote intergenerational solidarity, which, as in the case of the experiments already conducted in certain towns and cities, would be aimed in particular at elderly people and young people in extremely vulnerable situations;

e. to establish forums for intergenerational communication drawing on previous experiments, especially intergenerational housing projects based on the principle of two age groups sharing a home;

f. in the area of education and culture, to bring the generations closer together through the handing down of knowledge and cultural heritage, for example by means of such activities as the restoration of artistic heritage;

g. to run campaigns to raise awareness of intergenerational solidarity in co-operation with non-governmental organisations;

h. to incorporate the principle of intergenerational co-operation into training courses for local and regional government staff;

i. to introduce personal assistance services based on intergenerational arrangements, for instance schemes whereby young people assist dependent elderly people and pensioners help with homework supervision and childminding.

Appendix

Draft Manifesto on Intergenerational Co-operation and Participatory Democracy

The local authorities and people of the town/city of, the region of

Being resolved to foster social cohesion and economic development by means of an intergeneration approach in a context of solidarity and respect for the individual, regardless of age or status;

Being resolved to combat the exclusion and marginalisation of any section of the population and promote understanding and reconciliation between the generations,

undertake to:

1. promote the participation and integration of all generations and for that purpose:

– establish or promote participatory bodies representing various age groups (youth councils, senior citizens' councils, joint councils) so as to develop intergeneration co-operation through mutual understanding and solidarity;

– guarantee fair representation of citizens in local and regional decision-making bodies by ensuring that democratic rules are observed, particularly those on equal opportunities;

2. ensure that everyone receives social recognition in accordance with Section III of Resolution (76) 32 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the relevant provisions of the European Code of Social Security and its protocol and the European Social Charter and for that purpose:

– draw up rules conferring special status on bodies engaged in non-profit action to improve citizens' quality of life and social and health protection;

– recognise the economic value of voluntary work, putting it forward as an alternative and laying down measures to protect those who perform work of this kind as part of approved or recognised projects;

3. disseminate the principles of intergeneration dialogue and mediation throughout the education system and the voluntary sector and for that purpose:

– introduce intergeneration co-operation courses (in formal school education and classes offered by the voluntary sector) in areas for which local authorities are directly or indirectly responsible;

4. promote training of intergenerational co-operation specialists and for that purpose:

– train both public-sector and volunteer workers in community and social work or activities based on an intergenerational approach;

– negotiate agreements between public and private bodies so that staff with social work, health, culture and education

expertise can be made available on temporary contracts or secondments (which may be part-time);

– encourage the establishment of a voluntary public service to promote intergeneration solidarity and which, as in experiments already conducted in certain towns and cities, would in particular be for the benefit of elderly people;

5. promote better communication between the generations and for that purpose:

– create opportunities for intergeneration communication (restaurants, bars, homes) based on past experience;

– make preferential aid available to civil society organisations which put forward intergeneration projects;

6. support international intergeneration projects or activities and for that purpose:

– establish local, regional and international advice centres to help people or bodies planning intergenerational projects deal with administrative formalities;

– co-operate with other towns, cities or regions in states members of the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities which have entered into the commitments set out in this manifesto;

– support the scheme for an intergenerational centre to take stock of activities run by local and regional authorities, assess the results achieved and foster useful exchange of good practices;

7. regularly assess whether authorities are honouring their commitments under the manifesto and for that purpose:

– promote the setting up of local and regional bodies representing civil society to jointly assess whether commitments entered into under this manifesto are being honoured.

1. Debated and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 27 March 2007 (see Document CG(13)40, draft resolution presented by J.-M. Bourjac (France, R, SOC), rapporteur).