

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 247 (2008)¹ Local and regional authorities committed to sustainable consumption

1. Human beings are using up natural resources at an unprecedented rate and it is estimated that we would need two planets' worth of resources every year by 2050 if current trends continue. At the same time, major damage from ecological catastrophes are being recorded throughout the globe.

2. In Europe there is an emerging awareness that collective and individual behaviour need to change rapidly and radically in order to avoid disaster and create responsible societies able to transmit a healthy planet to future generations.

3. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe recommends an approach to citizenship based on rights and responsibilities and on a renewed awareness of the value of a product. It believes that citizens are willing to take into account environmental and ethical criteria in their consumption choices if they are convinced that the information they are receiving is reliable.

4. Until recently, the call to consume more responsibly and ethically has come most strongly from associations and civil society. The Congress is pleased to observe that, given these challenges, territorial authorities are now taking strong, courageous initiatives and intend to play a central role in developing eco-citizenship.

5. It considers that local and regional authorities should mainstream ecological issues into all aspects of their responsibilities thereby contributing to the protection of the environment and resources and modelling examples of eco-responsible and healthy behaviour. They are in a position to act as an interface for both top-down and bottom-up measures.

6. The Congress is worried by the enormous influence of advertising on consumers' behaviour leading to over-consumption or poor consumption whilst provoking feelings of frustration and isolation. Responsible consumption offers an opportunity to create a greater sense of community and develop new economic and social models based on ethical and environmental criteria.

7. Furthermore, diminishing the ecological impact of human activities also leads to reduced expenditure to curb health risks and the preservation of a more pleasant living environment.

8. *The Congress calls upon local and regional authorities in Council of Europe member and observer states to:*

a. implement spatial planning strategies and evaluation methods which support social and environmental sustainability as well as ecologically-sound economic growth. These strategies should:

i. establish integrated transport and mobility policies which facilitate the use of public and "soft" transport (bicycle, walking), "shared space" traffic control and car-sharing;

ii. develop land use policies which reduce the distances between home and workplace through improved cohabitation of businesses, shops and residential areas and which encourage locally-based administrative and commercial services;

iii. support innovative structures and organisation such as eco-zones, eco-services, co-operatives and fair trade organisations;

b. encourage responsible and ecological resource management throughout their areas of responsibility and:

i. reduce and recycle waste and use recycled products throughout its administrations;

ii. ensure that all buildings under their responsibility satisfy high environmental standards for their construction, rehabilitation, maintenance and running and are energy efficient;

iii. replace, wherever possible, physical journeys by electronic and telephone communication;

iv. manage public green spaces within an ecological perspective;

v. use local organic agricultural produce in schools and other canteens thereby encouraging healthy eating habits and raising awareness of food quality;

vi. raise awareness of the issues amongst territorial employees and offer comprehensive training to those responsible for sustainable development;

c. heighten public awareness of the importance of sustainable consumption with the assistance of the local stakeholders concerned, and:

i. offer guidelines and information on responsible, civic-minded consumption;

ii. foster the acquisition of behaviour patterns and fundamental knowledge among young people in their school and out-of-school activities so as to prepare them to consume responsibly;

d. introduce fiscal and financial incentives and disincentives to reinforce environmentally responsible behaviour and lifestyle among citizens and which:

i. ensure compliance with legislation on air, water and noise pollution and penalise polluters;

ii. promote environmental assessments, energy-efficient materials and renewable energy sources;

iii. discourage excessive car use through congestion and car parking charges;

e. ensure that public procurement procedures take into account environmental and social sustainability thereby encouraging growth in these sectors and inciting other businesses to modify their production, distribution and working methods in order to respond to this demand;

f. ensure that citizens participate in public decision making and have the information and services they require to practise responsible consumption;

g. work with the private sector to integrate responsible consumption issues into corporate social and environmental responsibility plans;

9. *The Congress asks its Committee on Sustainable Development to work closely with the Congress Committee on Social Cohesion which is currently examining the social issues relating to responsible consumption and disseminate both committees' findings.*

1. Debated and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 13 March 2008 (see Document CG(14)32RES, draft resolution presented by V. Kadokhov (Russian Federation, R, SOC), rapporteur).