

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 229 (2007)¹ Local democracy in Turkey

The Congress, acting upon a proposal from its plenary Bureau,

1. Refers to Article 2, paragraph 1.b, of Statutory Resolution (2000) 1 on the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, which provides that one of the objectives of the Congress is “to submit proposals to the Committee of Ministers in order to promote local and regional democracy”;

2. Takes note of the report of the Congress fact-finding mission to Turkey, from 8 to 10 August 2007 (CG/BUR(14)29REV2) drawn up by Mr Anders Knappe (Sweden, L, EPP/CD), Vice-President of the Congress; Mr Hans Ulrich Stöckling (Switzerland, R, ILDG), Vice-President of the Congress; Mrs Irina Pereverzeva (Russian Federation, L, SOC), Vice-President of the Congress Institutional Committee;

3. Thanks the governmental authorities, the elected representatives of the municipalities of Turkey, the national association of local authorities, and the representatives of the non-governmental organisations and the international community in the country for the information provided and comments made during their meetings with the delegation;

4. Considering that Turkey ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government on 9 December 1992, with accession taking effect on 1 April 1993;

5. Notes the following problems in the functioning of local democracy in Turkey:

a. the Turkish authorities permit a restrictive interpretation of “Turkish identity” which limits the cultural rights and freedoms of those Turkish citizens who use languages other than Turkish;

b. the measures taken against local authorities for using languages other than Turkish in the provision of public services are not being applied consistently to all languages;

c. the Municipality Law allows courts to prosecute mayors and municipalities and remove them from office for having made “political” decisions; whereas Article 3, paragraph 1, of the European Charter of Local Self-Government foresees that local government “has the right and the ability (...) to regulate and manage a substantial share of public affairs under their own responsibility”;

d. Turkey has not signed and ratified the Council of Europe’s Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities or the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages;

6. Recommends that the Turkish authorities:

a. permit municipal councils to use languages other than Turkish in the provision of public services when appropriate;

b. reform the Municipality Law to allow mayors and municipal councils to take “political” decisions without fear of proceedings being taken against them;

c. sign and ratify the Council of Europe’s Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities;

d. sign and ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages;

7. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers transmit this recommendation to the Turkish authorities;

8. Recommends that the Parliamentary Assembly take account of the preceding observations and recommendations in monitoring the extent to which the commitments undertaken by Turkey have been honoured.

1. Debated and approved by the Standing Committee of the Chamber of Local Authorities on 20 November 2007 and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 21 November 2007 (see Document CPL(14)10REC, draft recommendation presented by I. Pereverzeva (Russian Federation, L, SOC) on behalf of A. Knappe (Sweden, L, EPP/CD) and H.-U. Stöckling (Switzerland, R, ILDG), rapporteurs).