THE CONGRESS
OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 180 (2004)[1]
on local policing in Europe

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

1. Welcoming the current resolution on local policing in Europe prepared by the rapporteurs, Sandra Barnes (United Kingdom) and Pascal Mangin (France), as a further step in the development in its work on crime prevention in Europe;

2. Recalling the reports and the series of annual conferences held on different aspects of crime prevention, and the manual on urban crime prevention, which have focused on this political and public priority;

3. Recalling the Round Table in Charleroi (22-23 November 2002) which examined the role of local police in Europe; the distribution of political and police responsibilities; local police on the ground and prospects for the development of local police in Europe;

4. Recording its satisfaction and gratitude for the support of the Council of Europe's Integrated Project II (Responses to violence in everyday life in a democratic society) in the organisation of the Charleroi Round Table and the organisation of meetings to help define the work on local policing carried out by the Chamber;

5. Recording its thanks to the group of consultants, particularly Adrian Beck (University of Leicester, UK) and Francine Biot (District Commissioner of Charleroi Police, Belgium) in the development of this work,

6. Wishes to underline the following considerations:

a. Towards local policing

i. policing in Europe is characterised by considerable differences, reflecting local policing traditions;

ii. some countries have only a national police forces, while others also have regional and/or local police. In some countries, there are even variations in local policing from town to town;

iii. there is none the less an increase in the establishment of local, neighbourhood or community police forces in many countries. Answerable to the local political authority, they have been set up on account of their familiarity with neighbourhoods; their responsiveness to local needs; their closeness to citizens; and the need to reinforce national police;

iv. the experience has shown positive results, in terms of reduction of crime and in the strengthening of social cohesion;

b. Partnerships for community policing

i. there are an increasing number of multi-agency strategies implemented by local authorities for meeting the community safety needs in increasingly heterogeneous societies;

ii. local communities are now considered as responsible for their own safety, through partnerships with local authorities and the police;

iii. local policing is an approach that recognises the importance of seeing issues of crime and community safety within a broader social, economic and political setting; in partnership structures which are transparent, respect human rights, enhance democratic accountability and result in meaningful co-operation with other professional categories and specialists who deal with the community and its social and built environment, for example architects and town planners;

iv. for the police, this has increasingly meant a move away from a highly centralised and largely reactive model to one that encourages them to be physically and philosophically closer to local communities;

c. Challenges and opportunities within a greater Europe

i. for some of the countries of central and eastern Europe, particularly those currently joining the European Union, developing models of local policing will be a significant challenge and opportunity;

ii. their ability to learn from the experience and expertise of the European societies with established traditions of local policing is of considerable importance;

d. Patterns of crime

i. irrational fear of crime and insecurity by the public not only causes unnecessary anxiety but also brings in its wake a waste of resources, namely the excessive development of private security; and can distort responses by local authorities, police and others who have a responsibility for crime prevention;

ii. in most European countries, recent crime statistics show a relatively stable situation;

iii. none the less, the public is directly affected and feels at risk of assault, drug offences, burglary and car theft;

iv. using police statistics to make comparisons of the rates of crime in different countries can be misleading, because of differences in definition and methods of reporting and recording crime; and the impact of the social and cultural context within which the police operate;

v. noting that there are differences between police-recorded data and victim-provided data;

e. Victimisation surveys

i. victimisation surveys are often considered a more reliable indicator of crime, given that they include crimes that have not been reported to the police and are unaffected by changes in police recording practices;

ii. particularly, victim surveys provide the local context and specific detail that national crime data cannot offer, act as a conduit channelling local needs and concerns; and can play a valuable role in achieving local accountability and transparency;

7. In the light of the above considerations, the Chamber encourages local authorities in Europe to establish local police forces and, in so doing, to recognise the following principles:

a. local police forces must be directly answerable to the local authority of the community they serve;

b. in order to establish good relations with the local population, the police need to be able to show their commitment to responding to the expectations and views of a broad cross-section of the local population;

c. specifically, there is a need for policing agencies to be aware of public expectations in reporting crime and, where possible, develop their services to meet them;

d. it is essential for police to understand and respond to public dissatisfaction;

e. local police must be a key partner in a multi-agency approach for community safety which: recognises crime and safety as quality-of-life issues; works across jurisdictional boundaries both horizontally and vertically; recognises the vital role of political leadership; adapts strategies to local needs on the basis of good analysis and targeted plans; builds capacity; and develops tools and measurements of success;

f. police must be both accountable and answerable to the local community; be responsive to local needs and develop local solutions;

g. a key element of local policing is the need to use a variety of sources to collect information about the needs and concerns of specific communities, on which further action should be firmly based;

h. local police can have a beneficial effect in reducing fear of crime through a number of proven methods, for example partnership and consultation with the media; direct contact with local communities through consultative neighbourhood councils; and regular organisation of

meetings with professional categories concerned with the social development of difficult neighbourhoods;

i. local policing requires above all the protection of human rights;

j. local policing must be proactive in ensuring community safety through reaching out to members of local communities, offering crime prevention advice and guidance;

8. Asks local authorities in member countries to encourage their national authorities to:

a. foster the establishment of local police;

b. establish the legislative structure which defines the relationship of local police with other levels of police;

c. prescribe a code of good practice which clarifies norms of behaviour and standards to be followed by local police;

d. foster respect for the capacity and role of local police in jointly ensuring security and prevention, through, for example, parity of salaries, pensions, career development, training possibilities with national police forces;

9. Concerning the future work of the Congress, ask the Bureau of the Chamber of Local Authorities to:

a. promote the establishment of bilateral contacts in Europe between local authorities, local police forces and specialised academic institutions for the training and establishment of local police forces;

b. consider the preparation of a compendium of good practice, together with some general principles on local policing in Europe, building upon the work carried out by the consultants and covering a maximum number of member countries;

c. support the establishment of a network of heads of local police in Europe;

d. encourage the establishment of a European observatory for crime prevention;

e. consider the organisation of a future round table, similar to the Charleroi event on specific aspects of policing in Europe.

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1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Local Authorities on 25 May 2004 and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 27 May 2004, (see Document CPL (11) 3, draft resolution presented by S. Barnes (France, L, EPP/CD) and P. Mangin (France, L, EPP/CD), rapporteurs).