

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 304 (2011)¹ Meeting the challenge of interfaith and intercultural tensions at local level

1. The population structures of European cities have been significantly shaped by recent migration processes. The resulting ethnic, religious and cultural plurality challenges social cohesion and relations between groups and thus raises new issues for local politics.

2. Local authorities have a vested interest in identifying and sharing successful local integration practices. For this reason, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe launched the European Network of Cities for Local Integration Policies (CLIP) together with the City of Stuttgart and the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions in 2006.

3. The CLIP Network identified the current challenges regarding intergroup relations as a matter of grave and increasing concern to local authorities and catalogued the different means at their disposal for promoting intergroup relations and addressing potential conflicts and tensions.

4. Moreover, the Congress welcomes the close co-operation between the Council of Europe and its organs and European Union bodies in such networks as CLIP and Intercultural Cities and considers that both organisations should continue to:

a. improve their co-operation and synergy and monitor manifestations of discrimination, racism and xenophobia;

b. support good practice exchange between local and regional authorities that is systematic, supported by research and results in a series of good practice recommendations.

5. The Congress is convinced that improving intergroup relations at local level is the key to present and future social cohesion and to this end recommends that the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe call on member states to:

a. foster the political and civic participation of migrant groups by increasing their awareness of their political rights;

b. sign and ratify as soon as possible, if they have not already done so, the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level (ETS No. 144);

c. create the legal and financial basis for institutionalising local anti-discrimination offices in local authorities with a high level of immigration. National legislation should set basic standards for the working of such offices;

d. promote the establishment of, and establish regular contact with, migrant organisations' umbrella organisations which strengthen co-operation between member associations and support members in developing competences and establishing networks;

e. seek to improve relations between public servants, including the police, and migrant groups through intercultural training of staff, joint workshops with personnel and migrant representatives, setting up integration liaison units and encouraging public administrations to increase the recruitment of staff with a migration background.

1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Local Authorities on 23 March 2011 and adopted by the Congress on 24 March 2011, 3rd Sitting (see Document [CPL\(20\)2](#), explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: E. Maurer, Switzerland (L, SOC).