

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 389 (2015)¹ New forms of local governance

1. New forms of local governance are emerging across Europe. While many of these developments are responses to the on-going economic crisis, a new flexibility in methods of governance is also resulting from measures taken by some national governments to encourage local authorities to improve their efficiency.

2. Through new forms of partnership, contracts and co-production, local governments are changing their relationships with national government, civil society, the private sector and with other local governments, in order to improve the planning and delivery of services.

3. These changes are happening in several different ways: in some countries they are initiated by legislative initiatives, in others by new government policies (both local and national), while in other countries local authorities are reforming government on an entirely voluntary basis.

4. Territorial authorities are also developing their approaches to performance management and measurement. In some countries they have embraced this approach of their own accord and are shaping their own performance frameworks, while in others, national governments have imposed frameworks onto local authorities.

5. Performance management challenges local authorities to demonstrate how they are improving their services in terms of efficiency, productivity, quality of service and the impact services have upon the lives of citizens. This approach seeks to drive service improvement and accountability to citizens for the delivery of better local public services.

6. Another growing trend in territorial governance is the rise of inter-municipal co-operation and co-operation between local authorities and other bodies regarding the delivery of services.

7. A key question for advocates of local democracy is whether these changes are beneficial for effective decentralised democracy or whether they constitute a threat to it.

Local elected representatives need to seize the opportunities and challenges that these developments represent for local governance, while ensuring that the democratic base of their towns and cities is not eroded.

8. The Congress, convinced that greater flexibility in forms of local government can improve the lives of citizens, while reaffirming the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122), calls on local authorities and their national associations to:

a. share experiences of these new forms of local governance with local governments in Europe, through the Congress and networks of local and regional authorities;

b. work together to develop performance management systems for local authorities, so that these tools capture better the complexities of local public service delivery and ultimately support local politicians to obtain better outcomes and well-being for their communities;

c. take care that outsourcing local services aims to genuinely improve services rather than simply being a means of cutting local service expenditure to the detriment of the quality of local services for citizens;

d. ensure that local control and accountability play a central role when designing policies aimed at achieving efficiency in public service delivery;

e. work together to better develop methods for measuring outcomes and the well-being of citizens and to share that practice with all local authorities in Council of Europe member States;

f. ensure that efforts to increase citizen involvement and participation in local government and local decision making are properly supported and resourced, so as to enable citizens to get involved in local politics and the voices of the “hard to reach” sections of the community to be heard.

9. The Congress asks its Governance Committee to encourage the exchange of good practices and to return to this topic in the future, to look at how new forms of governance have developed and examine if, and how, they have strengthened local democracy.

1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Local Authorities on 21 October 2015 and adopted by the Congress on 22 October 2015, 3rd Sitting (see Document [CPL/2015\(29\)4FINAL](#), explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: Harry McGuigan, United Kingdom (L, SOC).