

# THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

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## Recommendation 510 (2024)<sup>1</sup> Local and regional responses to natural disasters and climate hazards: from risk preparedness to resilience

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:

*a.* its Resolution 455 (2020) “Local and regional elections in major crisis situations” which addresses some of the key challenges of upholding human rights, democracy and the rule of law in times of crisis;

*b.* the explanatory memorandum on “Local and regional responses to natural disasters and climate hazards: from risk preparedness to resilience” (CG(2024)46-17) which is based on three case studies in Belgium, Spain and Türkiye and study visits to the two latter countries that took place from 6 to 8 September and 18 to 20 December 2023 respectively;

*c.* Resolution 2493 (2023) and Recommendation 2251 (2023) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe “Political strategies to prevent, prepare for and face the consequences of natural disasters”, providing guidance for co-ordination between different levels of governance, and underlining the importance of risk prevention and anticipation with regard to the most vulnerable populations;

*d.* Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on cultural heritage facing climate change: increasing resilience and promoting adaptation, which recommends that member States ensure the inclusion of cultural heritage in their policies and strategies for adaptation to climate change;

*e.* the Council of Europe Partial Agreement on the Co-operation Group for the Prevention of, Protection Against, and Organisation of Relief in Major Natural and Technological Disasters (EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement), which offers a platform for co-operation in the field of major natural and technological disasters;

*f.* the United Nations Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030) as an international roadmap for making communities safer and more resilient, by proposing priority action in data collection, knowledge- building and co-operation at all levels;

*g.* the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular SDG 13: “Take urgent action to combat climate

change and its impacts”, SDG 3 on good health and well-being and SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities, three goals which may be relevant for disasters and hazards of all kinds.

2. The Congress considers that:

*a.* even though many local and regional authorities are well prepared for acute crisis situations, the capacities for responding to extreme or multilayered disasters and hazards could yet be increased by reinforcing solidarity between different levels of governance within a State, by professionalising the management of crises, and by assigning the human and financial means needed to the devolved missions of each level of authority;

*b.* co-ordination between different levels of governance and co-operation between different stakeholders within a territory are essential and require constant improvement, notably in the areas of crisis preparedness, communication and professional training;

*c.* gaps in transparency and consistency of decision-making processes may represent threats or undermine human rights, democracy and the rule of law in times of crisis;

*d.* measures employed in response to natural disasters and climate hazards sometimes remain too short-sighted to prevent, mitigate the effects of or respond to such events in the most sustainable manner;

*e.* responses provided to natural disasters and climate hazards should not worsen socio-economic imbalances or the precarious situations of vulnerable persons;

*f.* communication with and the involvement of the population affected remain a huge challenge in the face of extreme natural disasters and continuous climate hazards.

3. The Congress calls on the Committee of Ministers to invite the respective national authorities of the member States of the Council of Europe to:

*a.* co-operate with local and regional authorities and their associations to explore areas for improving vertical co-ordination mechanisms to better prepare for or respond to crisis situations, including natural disasters and climate hazards;

*b.* allocate adequate financial resources to local and regional authorities in order to allow them to provide efficient and sustainable crisis responses within their territories;

*c.* explore ways of improving the mechanisms for mobilising national and international means and resources in the face of extreme disasters that exceed the limits of individual territories;

*d.* support local and regional authorities notably by:

*i.* organising national and international exchanges of good practice at all levels and involving different stakeholders (public authorities, non-governmental organisations, private companies, academia, citizens, etc.);

*ii.* ensuring precise, accessible, continuous and interactive data collection; and

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress during the 46th Session on 28 March 2024 (see document [CG\(2024\)46-17](#), explanatory memorandum), co-rapporteurs Jean-Paul BASTIN, Belgium (L, EPP/CCE), and Christian DEBEVE, France (R, ILDG).

iii. providing specific training to professionals and volunteers involved in emergency response in local and regional territories;

e. set up and promote national platforms to initiate a dialogue on current modes of human land use and consumption patterns and their consequences for natural resources and climate change, as well as disasters and hazards amplified by human factors, in order to develop risk cultures and strengthen the resilience of local and regional territories.

4. The Congress calls on the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to consider this Recommendation and the explanatory memorandum contained in Document CG(2024)46-17 for the future work of the Council of Europe EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement Co-operation

Group, as well as of the Drafting Group on Human Rights and the Environment (CDDH-ENV) and the Drafting Group on Human Rights in Situations of Crisis (CDDH-SCR), subordinate bodies of the Steering Committee on Human Rights (CDDH). It also invites the Committee of Ministers to promote, amongst its member States, the funding mechanisms proposed by the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) amongst the possible responses to post-crisis reconstruction, disaster prevention and adaptation to risks.

5. The Congress calls both on the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to take account of this Recommendation and the explanatory memorandum contained in Document CG(2024)46-17 in their activities on crisis situations of all kinds in Council of Europe member States.