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The integration of youth perspectives in local and regional democratic life

Bureau of the Congress

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Draft resolution (for vote)2

¹. L: Chamber of Local Authorities / R: Chamber of Regions.
EPP/CCE: European People's Party Group in the Congress.
SOC/G/PD: Group of Socialists, Greens and Progressive Democrats.
ILDG: Independent Liberal and Democratic Group.
ECR: European Conservatives and Reformists Group.
NR: Members not belonging to a political group of the Congress.

DRAFT RESOLUTION²

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) is convinced that involving young people in public life and enabling them to participate in local and regional decision-making not only improves outcomes and strengthens communities but also empowers young people themselves. The Congress is therefore firmly committed to promoting the integration of youth perspectives in local and regional democratic life.

2. As a pioneer of such commitments, the Congress adopted the European Charter on the participation of young people in local and regional life in 1992 and revised it, with contributions from young people, in 2003. In a world that has seen major transformations over the past decades, the Congress once again launched a process of revision of the Charter in 2024 and is collaborating with youth representatives in various settings to ensure that the revised text reflects the current needs and concerns of young people in Europe. It welcomes the support of the Maltese authorities in this process, which will be completed during their presidency of the Committee of Ministers in 2025.

3. The Congress also launched its Rejuvenating Politics initiative in 2014, bringing together young people aged 18 to 30 from all Council of Europe member States to participate in its plenary and chamber sessions, and in the other activities of the Congress.

4. The Congress welcomes the fact that in the first ten years since the creation of this programme, youth delegates have addressed the Congress and directly contributed to all fields of its action, including for example its work on youth participation, climate change, the environment, promoting diversity, rural regions, the right to water and the impact of artificial intelligence. Congress youth delegates have moreover increasingly been called upon by other Council of Europe entities, both in the youth sector and beyond, to contribute directly to their work across a variety of fields.

5. The grassroots projects run by youth delegates each year have furthermore provided an opportunity for each youth delegate to design and implement a project aimed at promoting the participation of young people in public life in their community through awareness-raising, educational or other activities, and, through both successes achieved and challenges faced, to develop their skills as active citizens.

6. As it celebrates the tenth anniversary of the launch of its Rejuvenating Politics initiative, the Congress reaffirms its commitment to this initiative as a crucial means of promoting the participation of young people in local and regional democratic life, engaging young citizens directly in the work of the Council of Europe, and integrating youth perspectives at all levels of decision-making.

7. The Congress salutes the renewed commitment of Council of Europe member States to supporting the participation of young people in democratic life and decision-making processes, expressed in the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy adopted at the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe member States on 16-17 May 2023. It emphasises that this commitment must be translated by member States into concrete action at all levels, including local and regional levels.

8. The Congress also welcomes the evaluation of the integration of youth perspectives in Council of Europe work that is currently under way in this context and is fully engaged in the process.

9. In the light of the foregoing, the Congress calls on local and regional authorities to:

a. promote the direct participation of young people in local and regional democratic life both as elected members of local and regional assemblies and as voters taking part in local and regional elections;

b. set up if they have not yet done so, evaluate regularly and strengthen wherever necessary co-management structures in line with the model in place in the Council of Europe youth sector, such as youth councils, designed to enable decisions to be made in partnership with young people and youth organisations, not only on youth matters but across all specific policy areas of concern to them; such mechanisms must ensure the participation of marginalised groups, without discrimination;

c. ensure that their channels of communication with citizens include means and forms of communication adapted to the needs and practices of young people, such as online platforms or mobile applications that facilitate youth engagement in policy discussions;

² Draft resolution approved by the Bureau of the Congress by written procedure on 18 September 2024.

d. build partnerships with schools and other educational institutions to promote democratic citizenship and participation in public life and raise young people's awareness of the role they can play in promoting change in their local and regional contexts;

e. actively support young people's projects and initiatives in their communities.

10. As regards national authorities, the Congress:

a. reiterates the invitation previously made to member States of the Council of Europe in its Resolution 346 (2012), Resolution 386 (2015) and Recommendation 450 (2021) to include young people in their national delegations to the Congress, both as representative and substitute members, so that the composition of the Congress reflects that of European societies;

b. calls on them to ensure that youth policies and educational programmes designed at the national level also include effective and adequately resourced measures to promote the participation of young people in public life at local and regional levels, including by establishing youth advisory boards within ministries.

11. Finally, referring to the Council of Europe evaluation process mentioned above, the Congress invites the Committee of Ministers to give effect to the recommendations that will be made in this context in order to strengthen the inclusion of youth perspectives throughout its intergovernmental work, and underlines that these perspectives, reflecting the diversity of young people themselves, are by nature multiple.