

CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF EUROPE

Resolution 149 (2003)¹ on social cohesion and regions in Europe: regional policies and action with regard to social cohesion

The Congress,

1. Recalling the terms of reference of the Committee on Social Cohesion, as drawn up by the Congress Bureau in May 2001 (see Document CG/Bur (7) 140);
2. Welcoming the report on this resolution and its conclusions (see Document CPR/SOC (8) 3 revised);
3. Stressing the importance of the Council of Europe's social cohesion instruments policy, in particular the European Social Charter (adopted in 1961 and revised in 1991), the European Code of Social Security (adopted in 1964 and revised in 1990) and the Strategy for Social Cohesion (adopted in 2000);
4. Recalling the statement by the heads of state and government at the second Council of Europe summit (1997) to the effect that social cohesion is a prerequisite for democratic security and therefore an essential part of a policy geared to a more tolerant and caring greater Europe;
5. Considering that any social cohesion policy should be based on the principles of solidarity, subsidiarity and social proximity, citizenship, public-private partnership and social synergy, and should have a spatial dimension in the form of a regional planning policy;
6. Affirming that the regions provide a forum for dialogue and social action and a framework for establishing effective partnerships by pooling the resources and skills of private and public partners, bodies intervening at different levels (European, national and regional), institutions and civil society, particularly with a view to the protection of groups on the fringes of society, minorities and persons deprived of the benefits of technological and economic development;
7. Convinced that the regions of Europe can help to establish "areas of social cohesion" and hence lessen the effects of insecurity, social exclusion, poverty and unemployment;

8. Invites the regions of Europe:

- a.* to promote a social cohesion policy on an ongoing basis and to incorporate it in the various sectoral policies, in particular economic, cultural and territorial policy;
 - b.* to devise, on the basis of examples of good practice and pilot projects for inclusion and integration, social cohesion policies designed to establish partnerships between socio-economic players, public and private institutions and members of civil society, in particular non-governmental organisations and the associations network;
 - c.* to devise, according to the different political systems concerned, the political and administrative tools needed to achieve territorial cohesion, particularly in the context of their regional development and regional planning policies, and with the perspective of a global territorial cohesion in Europe;
9. Invites the Committee on Social Cohesion of the Chamber of Regions:
- a.* to pursue its work on a regional and interregional social cohesion strategy and its practical application, in the light of the work carried out and the strategies devised by the various Council of Europe bodies;
 - b.* to concentrate its future work on the following issues:
 - i. youth, crime prevention and social cohesion at regional level;
 - ii. gender mainstreaming at regional level;
 - iii. balance between urban and rural or suburban areas;
 - c.* to this end, to promote co-operation with the Council of Europe Development Bank and propose guidelines for concrete action to promote social and territorial cohesion in the regions;
 - d.* to analyse the socio-economic and cultural aspects of social cohesion in European regions in order to identify the structural, political, legal, cultural and financial obstacles to access for citizens to social rights, with a view to devising partnership strategies for facilitating the inclusion of the financially deprived sections of society;
 - e.* to identify, in particular, economic and other policies (such as training and the appointment of ombudsmen, mediators and legal and financial advisers) for helping to reduce social division and social exclusion, particularly among the least-well-off members of society.

1. Debated and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 21 March 2003 (see Document CPR (9) 7, draft resolution presented by Mrs D. Ansari, rapporteur).