

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 442 (2019)¹ Social rights of young people: the role of local and regional authorities

1. The fundamental social rights of the citizens of the member States of the Council of Europe are guaranteed by the European Social Charter (revised) (ETS No.163, the “Social Charter”); it was opened for the signature of member States in 1961 (ETS No. 35), subsequently coming into force in 1965, and was then revised in 1996.

2. The Social Charter is an essential guiding document, setting the ground rules on fundamental social and economic rights at the pan-European level. It guarantees a broad range of human rights related to employment, housing, health, education, social protection and welfare. The Social Charter explicitly refers to young people as being entitled to social rights in terms of education and labour market integration, or benefits for the newly married.

3. In order to develop concrete guidelines to facilitate the implementation of the rights set out in the Social Charter, in particular with regard to young people, the Council of Europe adopted a series of texts over the last decade highlighting public authorities’ responsibility in facilitating young people’s access to fundamental rights.

4. The recommendations of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on young people’s access to fundamental rights (2015 (2013)) and “Towards a European framework convention on youth rights” (1978 (2011)),² along with Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on young people’s access to rights, provided the opportunity to underline that rather than adopting a specific treaty on the rights of young people, the aim should be to take measures facilitating the access of young people to fundamental rights as enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5) and the Social Charter (ETS No. 163).

5. The Council of Europe Youth Department prepares guidelines, programmes and legal instruments for the development of coherent and effective youth policies, along with practical tools, such as the *Self-assessment tool for youth policy*, for the use of member States. Following Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights, regular reviews will be carried out to look at the measures taken by member States, but also at the projects and initiatives implemented by youth organisations and local and regional authorities.

6. The implementation of the Social Charter and the case law of the European Committee of Social Rights provide a wide range of good practices concerning young people’s

access to social rights and the exercise of these rights and, consequently, constitute a source of inspiration for local and regional action in this field.

7. Local and regional authorities, along with social partners and civil society organisations, play a key part both in disseminating the Social Charter and in implementing it, with regard to young people’s access and enjoyment of the social rights enshrined in it. This crucial role of local and regional authorities in making the Social Charter effective in legal terms (in line with the “social” responsibilities that form part of the core of each government level’s respective autonomy), should be supported by national, European and international action plans and programmes.

8. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, having drawn up resolutions and other instruments to strengthen the integration, participation and commitment of young people at local and regional levels, intends to focus on the social rights of young people guaranteed by the Social Charter in order to ensure its implementation and to give concrete expression to the rights of young people.

9. Since 2014, the Congress has involved Youth Delegates in its own work by inviting young people from different backgrounds to participate in its sessions, to give their views during debates and to have exchanges with Congress members. In 2015, the Youth Delegates presented a motion at the 29th session of the Congress on the resolution concerning the promotion of young people’s access to social rights by local and regional authorities,³ drawing attention to the fact that access to quality education, secure employment, decent living conditions, transport, health care, technologies, and opportunities for social, cultural and economic participation are prerequisites for the inclusion and active citizenship of all young people. They highlighted the usefulness of creating a tool kit for local authorities to facilitate young people’s access to their rights, providing good practice examples and an overview of relevant policy instruments.

10. In light of the above, and following the work of the Congress on human rights at the local level, the debate organised by the Congress’s Chamber of Regions on the implementation of social rights at the regional level (2016), and the proposals of the youth delegates, the Congress invites local and regional authorities and the associations that represent them (within the framework of the powers conferred on them), to:

a. put pressure on the national authorities of those member States which have not yet done so, to sign and ratify the Social Charter, and to accept, in the spirit of the “Turin process”, the collective complaints procedure, so that the Social Charter and its complaints mechanism are perceived as awareness-raising spaces where not only public authorities (for example, social services), but above all young people themselves can show greater solidarity and involvement in the defence of their social rights (in particular with regard to young people in a more vulnerable situation: the unemployed, migrants, people with disabilities, etc.);

b. disseminate the text of the Social Charter on the website of each local or regional authority and design a “user-friendly”

version (accessible online) entitled, for example: “The Social Charter explained to young people” (or “The place of young people in the European Social Charter”), by means of competitions, for example for the drafting and illustration of such a user-friendly version, organised at the local and/or regional level (this version would also serve as a guide for normative, political and financial action by local and regional elected officials);

c. consider the social rights of young people to be a priority for their policies, and to develop concrete actions relating to the exercise of certain social rights by young people (active measures to support employment, health education measures, prevention of gender violence among young people, etc.), which could be disseminated and promoted via social networks. Such dissemination and promotion (online and potentially face-to-face) would be likely to stimulate young people’s participation and their commitment to social rights;

d. invest in improving public access to information technologies through existing public services (youth centres, public libraries, media libraries, youth information and guidance centres, etc.), in the spirit of Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3;

e. raise awareness of the social rights of young people through initiatives such as the celebration, in each local and regional community, of International Youth Day (12 August) or European Social Charter Day (18 October);

f. take part in the review that the Council of Europe Youth Department will carry out in 2019, which will be based upon the Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3, looking, *inter alia*, at projects and initiatives implemented by local and regional authorities.

11. Taking into account its previous work, the Congress recommends that local and regional authorities implement the recommendations contained in Resolutions 414 (2017), 386 (2015), 346 (2012), 319 (2010) and 259 (2008).⁴

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 3 April 2019, 2nd sitting (see Document [CG36\(2019\)12](#), explanatory memorandum), co-rapporteurs: Liisa ANSALA, Finland (L, ILDG), and Piero FASSINO, Italy (L, SOC).

2. Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1978 (2011), “[Towards a European framework convention on youth rights](#)” (adopted on 24 June 2011).

3. [CG/2015\(29\)23](#).

4. Resolution 414 (2017), “Forever young? The role of youth policies and youth work at local and regional levels in supporting young people’s transition to autonomy and working life”; Resolution 386 (2015), “Bringing down barriers to youth participation: adopting a lingua franca for local and regional authorities and young people”; Resolution 346 (2012), “Youth and democracy: the changing face of youth political engagement”; Resolution 319 (2010), “Integration of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods”; Resolution 259 (2008), “Integration and participation of young people at local and regional level”.