

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 226 (2007)¹ The development of social cohesion indicators – the concerted local and regional approach

1. European societies are currently facing various tensions related to economic and social changes and the disparities in individual wealth these changes are creating;

2. Against this background, it is the duty of the different tiers of government, in particular central government, to seek continuously to strike a balance between economic constraints and social justice in order “to ensure the welfare of all members of society, minimising disparities and avoiding polarisation” in accordance with the Council of Europe’s definition of social cohesion;

3. However, it is now acknowledged that this is no longer solely a matter for the authorities but is a shared responsibility for all stakeholders in society, including the public, and also NGOs and businesses, in a process of consultation and dialogue that takes account of the specific objectives and expectations of those involved;

4. In this context, local and regional authorities have the task of organising the dialogue with the various institutional players in their areas with a view to clarifying the respective perceptions, objectives and responsibilities regarding social well-being; the relevant dialogue should lead to common parameters and the identification of social cohesion indicators which can be used subsequently to assess whether the social policies conducted have satisfied the expectations conveyed during the consultation and dialogue phase;

5. The *Methodological Guide to the concerted development of social cohesion indicators* drawn up by the Directorate General of Social Cohesion of the Council of Europe is a valuable tool here for fostering exchanges and dialogue on concepts and practices between all players concerned with social cohesion;

6. Recognising the benefits of implementing the principles set out in the guide at local and regional authority level, the Congress decided to conduct a trial of the concerted development of social cohesion indicators in conjunction with the city of Mulhouse (France), which highlighted the contribution an approach of this kind can make to strengthening social cohesion and democracy at local and regional level;

7. In the light of the above, the Congress calls on local and regional authorities in Council of Europe member states:

a. to draw up, in a process of consultation and dialogue, at local and/or regional level, social cohesion indicators based on the principles set out in the *Methodological Guide to the concerted development of social cohesion indicators* and, to this end:

i. set up, as a first step, representative co-ordination groups comprising the various stakeholders concerned (elected representatives, public services, associations, businesses);

ii. favour citizen participation, in particular with regard to the identification and ratification of indicators, the final objective being the well-being of society as a whole;

b. to invite public and private stakeholders in the municipalities and regions, including members of the public, to jointly seek solutions and undertake to respond together to expectations in terms of well-being and social cohesion, subscribing to the “Social Cohesion Areas” approach which would be supported by the Congress;

c. regularly to check whether the social policies and concerted actions implemented at local and regional level actually help to increase social cohesion in accordance with the selected indicators;

d. to organise exchanges between towns and regions which have developed social cohesion indicators;

8. The Congress instructs its Committee on Social Cohesion, in particular in the framework of increased co-operation with the Directorate General of Social Cohesion of the Council of Europe, to establish a monitoring mechanism for towns and regions which have gone ahead with the concerted development of social cohesion indicators.

1. Debated and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 27 March 2007 (see Document CG(13)39, draft resolution presented by V. Prignachi (Italy, L, EPP/CD), rapporteur).