

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 229 (2007)¹ The evolution of extreme poverty in European towns

1. European towns are often called upon to respond to situations of great social distress in the fields of employment, accommodation and medical and social aid, or even in education and training; this phenomenon has become even more acute because responsibility for social services rests increasingly with local authorities;

2. However, action by local government in this area tends to be dictated by urgency, particularly with regard to food distribution, the ad hoc provision of accommodation or financial aid, sometimes to the detriment of co-ordinated policies for the longer term;

3. Although action by local government in combating extreme poverty is still the basic requirement, the rapid development of the charitable social sector or the private sector in the measures taken involves envisaging improved consultation of all parties affected by this process;

4. In the report adopted on this topic at the May 2004 Plenary Session, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities emphasised the necessity for quick, effective and concerted action to deal with extreme urban poverty and, in its Resolution 182 (2004) on the role of local government in fighting extreme poverty, the Congress recommended that towns in member states should develop a whole series of practical measures in this area;

5. The Congress laid particular stress on the need to ensure a balance between emergency and longer-term measures, particularly recommending local one-stop shops with the aim of simplifying administrative formalities for persons in great social distress, the signing of agreements with companies providing basic amenities (water, electricity) seeking

to take account of the situation of these persons or even the development of joint municipal guarantees in favour of the disadvantaged seeking accommodation;

6. Convinced of the value of ensuring that these recommendations are followed up and, to this end, of updating the available data, the Congress has decided to conduct a fresh analysis of the evolution of extreme poverty in large and medium-sized European towns and of the action taken at local level in this area;

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

a. to implement in full the recommendations in Congress Resolution 182 (2004) on the role of local authorities in fighting extreme poverty;

b. to set up “local partnership committees” to bring together the municipal officials and charitable organisations involved in projects to combat extreme urban poverty in order to guarantee better co-ordination of the action taken;

c. to take immediate practical measures such as, for example, making free municipal travel generally available to the disadvantaged, in particular the unemployed, for whom the possibility of free travel cannot fail to make their search for jobs easier;

d. to develop “dual action” measures involving the organisation of projects for victims of social exclusion that focus on their integration in the local job market and at the same time on international solidarity action in favour of developing countries;

8. The Congress asks its Committee on Social Cohesion, *inter alia*, through its participation in the European Dialogue Platform on Ethical and Solidarity-based Initiatives set up by the Council of Europe’s Directorate General of Social Cohesion, to consider how European towns can further promote responsible consumption and fair trade, because these sectors employ many persons in the process of integration.

1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Local Authorities on 27 March 2007 and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 28 March 2007 (see Document CPL(13)8, draft resolution presented by E. Van Vaerenbergh (Belgium, L, ILDG), rapporteur).