

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 210 (2007)¹

The evolution of extreme poverty in European towns

1. Every year, on 17 October, the World Day to Overcome Extreme Poverty reminds us all of the urgent need for practical responses to the sufferings of human beings who are unable to meet their vital needs;

2. The Council of Europe pays particular attention to the evolution of extreme poverty in Europe. In 2004 it devised a Strategy for Social Cohesion which aims to respond to the new risks of poverty and exclusion that are making their appearance within European society and makes a series of recommendations for implementation, while Article 30 of the Council of Europe's Social Charter provides that everyone has a right to protection against poverty and social exclusion;

3. At the Warsaw Summit of heads of state and government in May 2005 the member states once more pledged themselves to ensuring fair access to social rights, fighting exclusion and protecting vulnerable social groups; to this end the Council of Europe has planned, *inter alia*, the launch in 2007 of a project entitled "Strengthening social cohesion by avoiding exclusion and growing inequalities";

4. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is particularly aware of the need for urgent, effective and concerted action in the face of extreme poverty. Local authorities, particularly large and medium-sized towns, are directly affected by this problem and are often impelled to intervene in emergency situations without having all the necessary resources available;

5. The Congress was therefore anxious for a better knowledge of the responses by some European towns to situations

of severe social distress, and to this end prepared and adopted a report on the role of local authorities in fighting extreme poverty at its 11th Plenary Session in May 2004; Recommendation 154 (2004) stemming from this report called upon member states, *inter alia*, to consider themselves effectively bound by Article 30 of the European Social Charter;

6. The Congress, anxious to give effect to the texts adopted decided, in accordance with its Resolution 182 (2004), to undertake a fresh analysis of the evolution of extreme poverty in European towns and of the action taken in this field at local level;

7. In the light of the above, the Congress recommends that the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe:

i. make proposals aimed at the concrete implementation in member states of the provisions of the Revised Strategy for Social Cohesion particularly concerned with combating poverty and social exclusion;

ii. make the Congress a close partner in the preparation and implementation of the project entitled "Strengthening social cohesion by avoiding exclusion and growing inequalities";

iii. promote citizens' initiatives for combating poverty and exclusion through the European Platform for Dialogue on Ethical and Solidarity-based Initiatives set up by the Council of Europe's Directorate General of Social Cohesion;

iv. invite Council of Europe member states to draw up, in close consultation with local authorities and regions or pertinent infra-national authorities, national programmes to combat extreme urban poverty, including measures and financial resources facilitating effective access to employment, accommodation, social and medical aid, education, training and culture for persons in, or likely to find themselves in, situations of social exclusion or poverty.

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 recommendation presented by E. Van Vaerenbergh (Belgium, L, ILDG), rapporteur).