

GRAZ DECLARATION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Recalling Congress Recommendation 280 (2010) REV and Resolution 296 (2010) REV on the role of local and regional authorities in the implementation of human rights, adopted by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe;

Noting with concern the growing threats to democracy and human rights stemming from radicalization and a fragmentary social inclusion in European cities and regions, as outlined in the 2015 Report by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on the "State of Democracy Human Rights and the Rule of Law in Europe";

Confident that diversity is a fundamental characteristic of our society while its actual implementation continues to be a key challenge for authorities at all levels of governance;

Reaffirming the specific role that local and regional authorities have in responding to those challenges and particularly in the effective implementation of human rights and fundamental freedoms, which constitutes a duty directly related to their competences;

Convinced that good governance passes through local and regional representatives, and cannot exist without full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms that together constitute the pillars of the diversity of our European society;

The representatives of the Congress of the Council of Europe, in the presence of local and regional decision makers from 25 countries, coming together on the occasion of the international implementation forum "Focusing on Human Rights" on 28-29 May 2015,

1. Stress the importance to make regional and local authorities more conscious of their role and scope of responsibility in the implementation of human rights and fundamental freedoms and the prospects which rights-based governance offers;
2. Emphasize that the particularly close relationship to citizens make local and regional authorities the most suitable bodies to assess at first hand the human rights situation, identify problems, take effective action to solve them and evaluate their impact;
3. Underline the role of local and regional authorities in raising awareness among politicians and civil servants, while taking a proactive stance on human rights and fundamental freedoms in direct relation to their own work and to tackle already the root causes of social exclusion by designing and implementing policies that effectively put into place a human rights culture within their administration;
4. Invite national authorities to support local and regional politicians to actively embrace human rights and fundamental freedoms when framing decisions, policies and activities as well as to put into place institutions and a coordinated human rights approach to policy making at all levels of governance;
5. Draw the attention of central governments to the importance of allocating sufficient funds to local and regional authorities so that these authorities have the means to properly implement their policies which take into account human rights and fundamental freedoms and review and develop their own activities for compliance with these rights;
6. Further remind national authorities of the repercussions that insufficient policy responses to social exclusion can have on radicalization, which impacts public security and the human rights of citizens and shall thus be a central consideration of any human rights policy;
7. Conclude accordingly that the point of time has come at which it is indispensable to respond to the threats to human rights and fundamental freedoms by means of enforcing the cooperation between authorities at all levels, exchanging best practises and assessing the outcomes of implemented actions in order to pursue a common strategy to enhance inclusion and make human rights a reality in Europe's cities and regions.