

# COUNCIL OF EUROPE

## COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

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RECOMMENDATION No. R (81) 18

### OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS TO MEMBER STATES CONCERNING PARTICIPATION AT MUNICIPAL LEVEL

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 6 November 1981  
at the 339th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage and facilitating their economic and social progress, and that this aim can be pursued, *inter alia*, by common action in social, legal and administrative matters and in the maintenance and further realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms ;

Having regard to the resolution concerning citizen participation at the municipal level adopted by the European Ministers responsible for Local Government at their 3rd meeting (Stockholm, 7-8 September 1978) ;

Having seen the conclusions for the 4th Conference of European Ministers responsible for Local Government (Madrid, 21-23 May 1980) ;

Re-affirming its devotion to representative democracy at all levels as part of the common heritage of member states and the basis of citizen influence on government ;

Convinced that municipal autonomy is one of the cornerstones of democracy in European countries ;

Considering that the conditions in which municipal democracy has to operate have been modified considerably in recent years as a result of structural and fundamental changes in local authority organisation and economic and political factors affecting local life ;

Judging it necessary to strengthen representative democracy at the local level by bringing decision-making as close as possible to the citizens and involving citizens more directly in the management of the affairs of their community while safeguarding efficiency in the conduct of local affairs ;

Recalling Resolution 101 (1978) of the Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe on the participation of the individual in local public life ;

Noting the proposals made in Assembly Recommendations 712 (1973), 799 (1977) and 903 (1980) concerning the specific position of migrants with respect to involvement in community life ;

Considering that in a general manner foreign residents are integrated into local communities to a degree which varies according to their term of residence ;

Taking into account that their often considerable contribution to the economic life and prosperity of the local community, their share in the taxes levied on all residents, the family links sometimes created with native families and their general contribution to the social and cultural life of the community, have generated a legitimate aspiration to fuller participation in the management of local affairs,

Recommends the governments of member states :

1. to adopt a policy for promoting participation in public local life ;
2. to invite local authorities to consider taking the measures set out at the appendix to this recommendation ;
3. to consider establishing legal frameworks where they do not already exist enabling local authorities to take such measures.

#### Appendix to Recommendation No. R (81) 18

##### **Measures to be taken at local level for developing participation in the management of local affairs**

1. *The strengthening of the interchange of information and communication at local level between citizens and their elected representatives thus providing improved opportunities for citizen influence and in particular :*
  - 1.1. by promoting the expansion of municipal information activities and encouraging local authorities to adopt comprehensive information policies involving particularly information officers, bulletins, brochures, local meetings and public meetings on local affairs ;
  - 1.2. by pursuing an active information policy towards young persons, for example in schools and via youth organisations ;
  - 1.3. by taking into account the situation of the local mass media by encouraging local authorities to facilitate their work and by drawing upon the experience of new broadcasting media such as cable-vision and videograms in order to develop future policies in this area ;
  - 1.4. by permitting and facilitating public access to municipal meetings and by providing publicity to ensure the maximum openness of local administration ;
  - 1.5. by making it easier for elected municipal representatives to carry out their functions by increasing the possibility for them to devote more time to their work and relieving them from certain economic constraints.
2. *To improve opportunities for participation by citizens in general and, in particular, by those who, for various reasons, have at present great difficulties in participating in municipal affairs and to develop their political capacities, and in particular :*
  - 2.1. by providing efficient consultation procedures and improving those already existing ;
  - 2.2. by using municipal referenda in certain situations ;
  - 2.3. by improving the participation of voluntary organisations (particularly of young persons) by means of better procedures for their consultation and by facilitating their co-operation in joint bodies ;
  - 2.4. by encouraging the participation of women in local politics ;
  - 2.5. by ensuring that groups socially and economically under-privileged in local life, for example elderly and handicapped persons, the unemployed and, in general all those, such as women and young people who, for various reasons, have difficulty in participating in local life, are able to make themselves heard especially through representative organisations and through consultation procedures and consultative bodies.

**3. To deepen citizen influence in municipal planning in general on long-range and strategic decisions and in particular :**

- 3.1. by giving citizens the opportunity of participating in the various phases of the decision-making process by dividing the decision-making process, if possible, into different phases, for example programming, drafting and alternative phases and implementation ;
- 3.2. by illustrating planning material lucidly and intelligibly (maps, models, audiovisual techniques and films) and to the greatest possible extent by making it available to the general public throughout the course of planning work.

**4. To strengthen citizen influence on the local environment and to place municipal activities on a stronger local footing and in particular :**

- 4.1. by facilitating the working conditions of voluntary organisations especially in urbanised areas and in rural communities ;
- 4.2. by encouraging the creation within sub-municipalities of bodies of various kinds where possible elected or composed of elected members which could be given advisory informative and possibly delegated executive powers ;
- 4.3. by taking every possible opportunity of functional decentralisation for example in according more responsibilities in the field of schools, day nurseries, hospitals, sport and recreation centres, theatres, libraries, etc. ;
- 4.4. by setting up local service and administrative offices to facilitate contacts between local authorities and citizens ;
- 4.5. by facilitating within the existing authorities the establishment of an integrated neighbourhood approach to the provision of local services.

**5. To encourage participation in local life by foreign residents, and in particular :**

- 5.1. by providing for them a specific and active information policy ;
- 5.2. by ensuring that account is taken as far as possible of their needs and wishes ;
- 5.3. by promoting the creation of local representative bodies for foreign residents to be consulted whenever appropriate ;
- 5.4. by taking whatever steps are necessary to promote, in so far as possible, equal opportunities for foreign residents and to promote good relations between all residents, whatever their nationality, with a view to integrating foreign residents into local life ;
- 5.5. as regards those member states which already provide for the participation by some foreign residents in local elections, by considering the extension, if necessary on a reciprocal basis, of such right to vote to all foreign residents who are nationals of member states.