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The Congress proposes measures to meet the challenge of inter-faith and intercultural tensions at local level

Strasbourg, 23.03.2011 – Associating migrant organisations, reducing ethnic stereotypes, promoting intercultural training, employing people from minority backgrounds and setting up local offices to combat discrimination are among the practical measures which the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities called on Council of Europe member states and local and regional elected representatives to implement in a recommendation and a resolution adopted on 23 March 2011.

Sandra Barnes, Congress member (United Kingdom), presented the report and underlined the threat which intercultural and inter-faith tensions pose to social cohesion. The resolution, which was unanimously adopted, asks, in particular, local authorities to take into consideration the religious needs of groups of migrants, while safeguarding the fundamental values of the host community. "We mention, in particular Muslims because Islam is the largest 'new' religion in European countries of immigration. Muslims can sometimes be perceived as disconnected from 'European life' and when compared with other migrant groups, they experience higher rates of discrimination and prejudice", she explained.

The resolution invites, for example, local authorities to respect the specific burial rites of some migrant religions, serve food in public institutions that includes options meeting the religious requirements of migrant religions, ensure that religious holidays of migrant religions play a role in local public life and also comply with the desire of Muslim communities for representative religious buildings. "The permission to build, for instance, a mosque or a temple is a sign of recognition of their religion, a question of acceptance", stated Sandra Barnes.

The recommendation adopted the same day also invited member states, who had not yet done so, to sign and ratify the [Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level](#). This text also called on them to create the legal and financial bases for the institutionalisation of anti-discrimination offices in local authorities with a high level of immigration, and to foster the political and civic participation of migrant groups by increasing their awareness of their political rights.

[Special file 20th Session](#)

The Congress has two chambers, the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions. It brings together 318 full and 318 substitute members representing more than 200 000 European territorial communities.

President of the Congress: Keith Whitmore (United Kingdom, ILDG), President of the Chamber of Regions: Herwig van Staa (Austria, EPP/CD), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities: Jean-Paul Frécon (France, SOC)

Political Groups: Socialist Group (SOC), Group of the European People's Party – Christian Democrats (EPP/CD), Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (ILDG).