

Good governance of large metropolises

Author(s): Parliamentary Assembly

Origin - *Text adopted by the Standing Committee*, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 22 November 2013 (see [Doc. 13350](#), report of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, rapporteur: Mr Donaldson).

1. Good governance of metropolitan areas encompasses all forms of co-ordination and regulation that contribute to increased efficiency and transparency of the political and administrative system and that effectively increase the liveability of an urban region. For many years, citizen participation has been recognised as a particularly valuable element of good democratic governance at the local level.
2. Nevertheless, the Parliamentary Assembly is concerned about the need to uphold high standards of democracy and to maintain social cohesion in urban areas, especially in the current times of budgetary difficulties and austerity programmes at all government levels, which make involving citizens and inhabitants in decision-making processes all the more important.
3. Confronted with the multiple challenges of urban growth and redevelopment, large metropolises face particularly complex situations when it comes to democratic governance and citizen participation. Metropolitan areas are therefore amongst the “lighthouses” of local democracy, where developments and innovations, but also obstacles to participation become more visible than elsewhere.
4. The three case studies of Berlin, Istanbul and London have shown that public resources allocated to participation mechanisms are under threat and that citizen consultation is sometimes sacrificed or neglected. Moreover, many citizens confronted with unfavourable economic situations and social exclusion have other priorities than taking ownership of the public space surrounding them.
5. Against this background, the Assembly invites all member States of the Council of Europe to continue to promote good governance at all levels of government, to pay particular attention to large metropolises as democratic “laboratories” and to create legislative and institutional settings that facilitate and foster citizen consultation, participation and involvement at the local level. In this context, the Assembly welcomes the efforts of the Armenian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, in particular in organising, along with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the Conference on “Participatory Democracy at Local Level” on 19 June 2013 in Yerevan, where the issue of citizen participation in decision-making processes at local and regional level were addressed.
6. Good governance at the local level should follow the principles set out by the “Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance at the Local Level” as adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in March 2008. Standards related to the participation of citizens in local public life are also provided in Committee of Ministers Recommendation Rec(2001)19 on the participation of citizens in local public life, as well as more recent texts aimed at fostering participation of different social categories (young people, people with disabilities, etc.).
7. The Assembly, for its part, has for many years underlined the importance of citizen participation mechanisms as an essential part of democratic processes. Most recently, the Assembly insisted on the importance of freedom of assembly and speech by adopting [Resolution 1947 \(2013\)](#) on popular protest and challenges to freedom of assembly, media and speech.
8. With a view to consolidating and promoting good democratic governance and citizen participation at the local level, not least by learning from experiences made in some of the large metropolises, the Assembly calls on member States to:

- 8.1. create a legislative and institutional framework for local democratic structures and processes in a way that allows for effective local self-government of large metropolises;
- 8.2. foster and promote approaches of good governance of large metropolises, in particular by implementing existing European standards and organising exchanges of good practice at both national and international level (including through local government associations);
- 8.3. whenever there is increased national interest in the development of metropolitan areas (as is often the case for capitals or cities which are economic motors), ensure that this interest is made transparent and that local authorities and, through them, local citizens affected by developments are fully recognised as stakeholders in the development process;
- 8.4. give priority to upholding and further developing participatory mechanisms at the local level by allocating sufficient resources, designing appropriate procedures, allowing for the qualification of staff and raising awareness amongst citizens of the various possibilities of getting involved;
- 8.5. along with organising transparent citizen consultation concerning urban developments which are initiated by public authorities or private stakeholders (top-down approach), foster and develop participatory mechanisms in which citizens themselves can be actively involved in local development by expressing their concerns, stimulating developments that correspond to their needs and actively engaging in their local communities (bottom-up approach);
- 8.6. conceive and implement specific awareness-raising and education programmes on democratic citizenship involving young people from an early age in order to help them become interested and active citizens of their communities, irrespective of their level of education or social strata;
- 8.7. promote the use of communication technologies and social media in citizen participation at the local level (dedicated websites, social networks, e-mail, local television) whenever appropriate.