



Association of  
Netherlands Municipalities

Draft

# Declaration of The Hague

**ON THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL DIMENSION OF  
ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND INTEGRATION**

ON THE OCCASION OF THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL 2007



2007 — European Year of Equal Opportunities for All





## Declaration of The Hague

### ON THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL DIMENSION OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND INTEGRATION

On the occasion of the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All 2007

**We**, mayors and representatives of Europe's local and regional governments, meeting together in the framework of the VNG/CEMR conference on "Equal Opportunities for All and Citizenship", held in The Hague, Netherlands, on 29 November 2007;

**Responding** to the call made in the CEMR Sevilla "declaration on the role of European local and regional governments in relation to migration" (2006) for further exchange of experiences in relation to the integration of migrants in our communities, in the context of the European Year of Equal Opportunities;

**Recalling** that the issue of active citizenship and equal opportunities is above all a question of empowering human beings and giving them the opportunity to fully participate in and feel full member of our societies;

**Affirming** therefore that in all cases the basic principles of human rights and respect for human dignity, as set out in the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, must apply;

**Knowing** that it also essential to recognise the reality of undocumented migrants and the challenge that their situation may represent for local governments;

**Realising** that citizens of Europe, including migrants, are not a homogenous group – on the contrary, they have very diverse needs and demands to which regional and local governments need to respond;





**Aware** that Europe faces major demographic challenges and that inward migration can to some extent help to compensate negative impacts, provided that there is a common understanding on essential values and real intercultural dialogue;

**Stressing** that regional and local governments are the main providers of public services to all citizens, including the most vulnerable, and thus play an essential role in increasing practical equality of opportunity in many key areas of life;

**Considering** that promoting equal opportunities and full participation is a shared responsibility between the host community and the newly arrived and is essential for cohesion and resilient European societies;

**Emphasising** the need for effective European policies and coordination, involving all levels of government, in order to promote active citizenship, integration and social cohesion and aimed at the empowerment of the individual.





## Declare as follows:

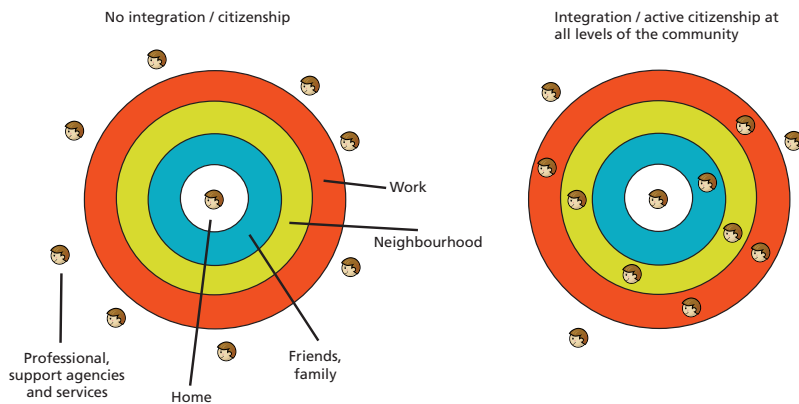
### *Active Citizenship*

1. Promoting **Active Citizenship** and equal opportunities for all is essential to ensure integration in our societies. A positive approach towards migration and active citizenship is most important for the future of our resilient municipalities.
2. **Active Citizenship** is essentially about the empowerment and active participation of all residents, for their own benefit as well as for the benefit of the society and the city, municipality or community in which they reside. It is therefore a key element to ensure a democratic, socially and economically sound foundation in our European municipalities, cities and regions, both for today and for the future.
3. **Active Citizenship and Active Inclusion** go beyond simply ensuring access to the labour market. They also comprise:
  - Equal access to high quality services, including access to education and to qualification and training measures for newly arrived but also of migrants of second and third generation;
  - Comprehensive and well-resourced support programmes for migrants, including language courses.
4. **Active Citizenship** requires equal opportunities for people with different values, beliefs and coming from different cultures, and depends on the commitment of citizens from all backgrounds to contribute to a resilient local community or neighbourhood. It entails equitable and non-discriminatory treatment for all.
5. **Active Citizenship** requires and fosters empowerment, developing the capabilities of individuals to make informed choices and to act on their own behalf. In order to achieve full participation of all residents and to ensure a sense of belonging and of a common future, existing barriers to education and employment opportunities need to be removed.





6. **Active Citizenship** is a shared responsibility of public and private stakeholders as well as residents in their individual capacity, including both newcomers and long-established residents.
7. Developing **Active Citizenship** is one of the essential objectives and tasks of Europe's local and regional governments, and the success of participatory planning and decision-making processes depends on their achievement.



8. We recognize that **Active Citizenship** involves an active engagement of women and men from all communities on a basis of equality, and underline that the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life offers effective policy guidance to local and regional governments.
9. We welcome the commitment of the European Union to the concept of **Active Citizenship**, demonstrated in particular through its programme "Europe for Citizens" which provides financial support to transnational activities in this domain.





## **Governance**

10. There is no single preferable governance model of integration, but a diversity of strategies and approaches may be adopted, according to the specific characteristics and the regional or local context. Regional and local authorities should have the freedom to decide which integration model to use according to their specific realities.
11. Regional and local policies designed to promote active citizenship and integration need to adopt an integrated approach that involves all stakeholders at all levels, and involving partnerships which work on the basis of acknowledged responsibilities and mutual support.
12. Effective European policies on integration, citizenship and equal opportunities are a vital element to assist local and regional authorities in implementing effective local policies. However, these policies must be coupled with a firm commitment for the development of the countries of origin and assistance to countries of transit.
13. In order to discharge their responsibilities for good local governance, local governments must have the necessary competences and financial resources to enable them to carry out their diversity policies and tasks effectively in relation to the successful integration, based on a real sense of active citizenship, of migrants and migrant communities within their localities.





## ***Conclusions***

14. We welcome the designation of 2008 as the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. Dialogue between cultures is an essential tool to forge closer links between newcomers and long-established residents, and more generally between citizens of different cultural backgrounds. Promoting intercultural dialogue is crucial in making our societies more inclusive and to reconcile diversity and social cohesion.
  
15. We invite the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), in co-operation with the European Commission and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE), to organise activities in 2008 for the exchange of experience in relation to promoting Active Citizenship and Community Cohesion, in the context of the European Year for Intercultural Dialogue.
  
16. We confirm that the local level plays a key role in facing the challenges related to integration and therefore we call for a close and fruitful cooperation between the different levels of government, as well as for a better involvement of regional and local authorities in future EU initiatives, such as the creation of the European Forum on Integration.





DECLARATION OF THE HAGUE  
ON THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL DIMENSION OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP  
AND INTEGRATION  
On the occasion of the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All 2007

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