

Second European Forum of Local Authorities

Final resolution

With the 21st century, a hope-bearing phenomenon has arisen. Since the 1st World Social Forum held in Porto Alegre (Brazil), an unprecedented citizens world movement has been opposing the inevitable ultra-liberal dogmas of current globalization and declaring that « another world is possible ». It has been developing based on a new culture of collective discussion, elaboration, and decision.

Since the very appearance of this movement, many local authorities found themselves in keeping with the movement and initiated a parallel Forum of local authorities for social inclusion. Their populations and territories are also subject to the political and economic policies of neo-liberalism which go together with a growing negation of all human rights – economic, social, cultural, and environmental.

Right from its origins, the Forum of local authorities expressed its deep concern for peace values and its commitment, together with the global « civil society » and local governments organized in networks of players on the international arena, to building a more democratic solidarity world, by promoting a culture of peace and of social inclusion starting at local level. In this regard, we wish peace to be adopted as the founding and key value of Europe.

Locally, resistances, solidarities, new practices of citizens involvement have been invented in order to preserve rights and give birth to new ones, as opposed to ruling rationales of competition and merchandizing of all human activities. Local public policies aim at preserving and developing jobs, opposing casual jobs for the youth and for frailest populations, fighting exclusion in all forms, policies of privatization and deregulation of public services, promoting culture, health, education as common goods accessible to all... These are as many commitments for sustainable development, for a world where acknowledging everyone and everyone's well-being can guarantee our planet's collective security and future.

Cities and territories, whatever their competences, more and more appear as consistent and effective frameworks to materialize political and citizen's practices that combine representative and participative democracy in a productive way. The right to vote and to be elected for all residents is key to the success of approaches of the co-elaboration of public management policies with « civil society ».

It is necessary to solution for the discrepancy between local democratic practices and the more rigid national and European legislative framework. We claim for the European constitution to guarantee local authorities with the space and rights to develop innovating public policies warrant of fundamental rights, thus meeting emerging aspirations on our continent. We are concerned that the European constitution will mention these rights clearly.

We also expect the upcoming constitution to secure the place and role of local authorities, given their current de jure and de facto responsibilities, in particular as regards organizing and managing services meeting citizens needs. We would also like EU structural policies and European subsidies to fully include cities needs since the population on our continent is a more and more urban one.

Our multicultural cities and territories are genuine spaces of citizenship and integration. They stir up alternative quests, prospects for political transformation and constructions, from the local to the global, for another possible Europe and possible world.

In a common dynamics within the Social Forum, the European Forum of local authorities is a space for discussions and collective elaborations. The new public space is a useful part and parcel of a strengthened network of local authorities for social inclusion which, together with the social movement, intends to be a driving force of concrete proposals and effective mobilizations. In this prospect, we welcome the constitution of a single voice for cities and local authorities with the future organization of United cities and local governments, to be created in Paris in May 2004.

Based on preparatory work, exchanges and discussions in the seven thematic workshops of the FLA, the following analyses, recommendations, and action avenues have emerged ;

➤ **Regarding public policies to turn culture into a common good :**

Local authorities take action to make sure that the right to cultural development for all turns true. They take this objective as central. They facilitate cultural innovation, guarantee its plural character, its diversity and its autonomy against market pressures, against any form of social, religious, or political censorship, and against all forms of “communitarian fallback”. They proclaim the legitimacy of public intervention on the cultural arena as well as their rights to develop adequate public services and spaces.

Based on these principles, participants in the 2nd European FLA in Saint-Denis :

- Support UNESCO action for an international convention on cultural diversity
- See to it that European construction materializes these principles, and that nothing in the fundamental texts (the Constitution) or their institutions will restrict its implementation and that Europe will act to acknowledge culture diversity to the benefit of all peoples worldwide
- Take action for culture and education to be banned from the sphere of the WTO and the GATS ;
- Reassert their concern for the principle of secular public action.

➤ **Regarding peripheral cities, their issues and specificities :**

The growth of metropolises must be based on all the cities they comprise to develop their identity, their social and human wealth. It is therefore necessary to give a new balance to financial means.

The democratic practices developed in them are an asset to pervade 21st century urban world with participative democracy. Given their diverse local populations, they play a decisive role against identity fallback, racism, and divisions.

Building another world is an urgent task. In this respect, based on their issues and specificities, peripheral cities must no longer be marginalized but rather essential spaces for human development.

➤ **Regarding citizenship and participative democracy :**

Experiences of existing democratic participation vary, from co-government (participative budget) to reach-out approaches such as dialogue and reports or preliminary consultation where trust in the institution is involved.

Participative democracy is developed based on the political willingness to hand over power to citizens. We believe this framework is consistent and effective for social inclusion and to build another world.

Made more transparent through this process, democracy has been revitalized. This contributes to fully acknowledging representative democracy. It is also a privileged means to strengthen political and citizens demands and avoid neo-liberal and populist drifts.

Participative democracy is guided by principles of solidarity (classes, genders, ethnics, etc.) It must be combined to a constitutive process of all citizens, in order to avoid particularism.

Participants in the 2nd European FLA believe this process must be started and developed in all local authorities and that regular contacts among them should be sustained on this issue, so that experiences be beneficial to each and everyone.

➤ **Regarding public services, services of general interest :**

Services of general interest must be spared from merchandizing and therefore banned from the negotiating area of the GATS. It is for local authorities to determine the characteristics of local public services. This role should be acknowledged and guaranteed by legislation and by the European constitution.

In compensation for public service obligations determined by local authorities, the community must be able to provide funding to supply services in the conditions it set up : the funding cannot be considered as State subsidy in the sense of the European directive 91-69.

Local authorities must be able to choose the management modes of the general interest services they are responsible for, including for services of general economic interest and by making the direct management of local public services a priority. They must remain free to change this management mode which must be reversible.

The participation of citizens – users of services of general interest – should be encouraged ; they are the main users of the services and have an unavoidable vision to monitor how the service is provided and assess its quality.

➤ **Regarding the sustainable and solidarity-based development of territories :**

Economic, environmental, and social issues are nowadays separate processes, presented as inevitably interwoven in the framework of liberal and productivist globalization. Market-related devastations in the social and environmental areas are tragic. Local authorities, being at the very core of public policies, must commit themselves to sustainably developing territories, promoting a social and solidarity-based economy, setting up a genuine participative democracy. Many sectors are interested by alternative policies : energy, transportation, housing, North/South cooperation, struggle against exclusion and discriminations, etc.

Among the various concrete proposals that emerged in the discussions, participants in the 2nd European FLA have focused most specifically on :

- Experimenting territorial laboratories to build up alternative policies of sustainable and solidarity development based on the local ;
- Creating a network at local, national, European, and international levels to give way to information circulation, to players collaboration, to resource and action coordination;
- Globalizing problem approaches in order to build up a combination of policies on the various territories which happen to be closely interwoven;
- Building up cooperation among institutions and developing their solidarity-oriented tasks when implementing their policies;
- Creating criteria to implement and assess public policies of sustainable and solidarity development of territories ;
- Promoting institutional disobedience when law opposes general interest.

More than ever before, what is at stake is to make sustainable development “desirable” and to place it at the heart of public policies in all local authorities.

➤ **Regarding human rights in the city :**

Discriminatory situations persist in our Western European societies. Migratory movements of populations, development modes of our cities subject to the rules of the land market create situations of poverty, with re-emerging areas of exclusion, if not of possible ghettos.

Nevertheless, decisions taken by local authorities can be a decisive factor as to rights development. They should :

- Assert their role to maintain gained rights, to manage basic services, to promote new rights and fully recognize Children’s rights ;
- Broaden the network of cities signatories of the Charter of human rights in the city and set up a monitoring mechanism of its implementation in cities at a European level ;
- Improve European directives on the question of human rights in the city.

➤ **Regarding the international action of local authorities for peace and development :**

Participants in the 2nd European FLA in Saint-Denis propose :

- A follow-up group to think this over, to set up an informative network and to develop existing networks (AFCD RP, Mayors for peace, CONFOCOS, Pace, etc) ;
- Some pedagogic work to publicize the notion of the culture of peace and to circulate it more broadly among elected representatives, local government officials, and inhabitants;
- To network according to priority themes (access to water and to improvement, healthcare, gender-balanced training, etc.) or according to geographic closeness.

We claim for :

- A real preamble in the European Charter to be inspired from the « Charter of human rights in the city » ;
- A mention in the Constitution of the role of local authorities, with sufficient identified means for decentralized cooperation;
- The recognition of the possible role of cities in conflict prevention, the importance of the culture of peace, "from the neighborhood to the planet" ;
- References to residence citizenship, to the right of voting and of being elected at local ballots;
- References to European citizenship, the recognition of human rights, in particular for gender equality to become a shared value in all European countries ;
- The integration of notions of human, economic, social, cultural, environmental rights in the European constitution.

Such proposals make up the gist of a common culture founding the existence and development of a world network of local authorities for social inclusion, as initiated in Porto Alegre as early as 2001 and at a European level in Florence in November 2002.

We encourage to continue the work and each of the participating local authorities to contribute to enlarging the network based on major upcoming events :

- The 4th World Social Forum, from January 16-21, 2004, in Mumbai (India);
- The unifying conference of WFUC/IULA/Métropolis, from May 2-5, 2004, in Paris (France) ;
- The 4th World forum of local authorities, which will confirm the launching of the Agenda 21 for culture, on upcoming May 7-8, in the framework of the « Universal forum of cultures, Barcelona 2004 (Spain, May through to September) ;
- The 4th international conference on the Charter of human rights in the city, in December 2001 in Nuremberg (Germany)