

Opinion 274 (2009)¹

Draft additional protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly has always underlined the importance of democratic participation at local level and is pleased that it is being given practical effect in a pan-European legal instrument.
2. In this connection, the Assembly refers to [Resolution 1121 \(1997\)](#) on instruments of citizen participation in representative democracy, in which it underlined the importance of striking a balance between the exercise of responsibility of political power and direct citizen participation in the decision-making process.
3. The Assembly also refers to the Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance at Local Level, adopted in 2007 by the Conference of European Ministers responsible for Local and Regional Government in Valencia, Spain, and by the Committee of Ministers in March 2008, as well as to the platform tasked with implementing it, in which the Assembly plays an active part.
4. The Assembly points out that active and responsible citizen engagement is a decisive principle for ensuring the legitimacy and proper functioning of democratic systems, as it enables citizens to exercise directly their right to take part in the management of public affairs. In its view, every citizen should play an active part in public life.
5. The Assembly also believes that the process of decentralisation seen in recent years means that it is vital for citizens to be able to be more closely involved in the activities of local authorities.
6. Given the clear public disinterest in local affairs that is now apparent, the Assembly hopes that this new instrument will help to strengthen and expand public participation in local life by giving citizens a real sense of belonging to the community.
7. The Assembly underlines the need to ensure equitable representation and participation of women and men for the purpose of contributing to the development of democratic values in Council of Europe member states.
8. The Assembly stresses the importance of local authorities listening to the wishes of citizens so that they are able to improve their policies and the services provided, and in this context, supports European Local Democracy Week.
9. The Assembly also notes that the draft protocol in no way conflicts with the provisions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122), as it does not concern local authorities' degree of self-government in any way.
10. The Assembly does, however, regret the fact that the provisions concerning the implementation of the right to participate and the possibilities offered to citizens are not more explicit.

1. *Assembly debate* on 26 June 2009 (26th Sitting) (see [Doc. 11950](#), report of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs, rapporteur: Mr Dorić). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 26 June 2009 (26th Sitting).



11. The Assembly therefore supports the draft additional protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority.