

2nd European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional/Spatial Planning (CEMAT) (La Grande Motte, France: 25-27 September 1973) on "Objectives of a European regional planning policy"

General Resolution

I. Preamble

1. The second session of the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning, held at the invitation of the French Government in La Grande Motte, from 25 to 27 September 1973, was attended by the ministers and government representatives of the following 15 member states of the Council of Europe – Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom – and, as observers, those of Finland, Spain and Yugoslavia. Seven international organisations were represented by observers, namely: the Commission of the European Communities, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the European Conference of Ministers of Transport, the International Labour Organization, the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization. Its purpose was to give consideration, at the highest level, to European regional planning problems and to lay the foundation for closer and more effective co-operation.

2. The conference expresses its warmest thanks to the French Government for its organisation of the conference and for its generous hospitality. It also wishes to pay tribute to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe who has provided his administrative services, and thanks the Committee of Ministers, the Consultative Assembly and the European Conference of Local Authorities of the Council of Europe for their valuable support.

II. Objectives of a European regional planning policy

3. At the 1st Conference (Bonn, 1970), the balanced development of European regions was unanimously recognised as the main aim of regional planning policy at European level. At La Grande Motte, the ministers affirm that the long-term objectives of a European policy should be based on an improvement in man's well-being and on the expansion of activities in terms both of economic development and of the quality of life. To this end they declare that it is essential:

– to provide the inhabitants of the different European regions with the best possible social and environmental conditions and comparable standards of employment and income;

- to encourage by appropriate means the growth of all regions, in order to counterbalance the excessive attraction of the central regions of Europe;
- to be aware of the need to maintain infrastructure in regions in decline, thus ensuring possibilities for new economic take-off;
- to protect the environment and to safeguard natural resources.

4. The achievement of the economic and social equilibrium recommended above involves working towards a certain territorial balance which can be achieved only by channelling capital and enterprise into areas with available manpower; otherwise the future progress even of the most developed areas could be jeopardised. Such efforts should be accompanied by measures to control economic growth and urban concentration in the most overcrowded regions, which attract population drift, as well as a programme of decentralisation and expansion of activities to promote backward areas and to remove certain obstacles to the growth of intermediate regions.

5. To achieve these aims, regional planning must be based on a democratic, functional, comprehensive and long-term approach:

- democratic, since regional planning must allow participation by the population concerned and by their political representatives; it must take account of the regional consciousness based on common values, common culture and common interests;
- functional, since the area and content of any regional plan or any project for regional development should be determined by the requirements of the situation and should not be subject to artificial restraints imposed by administrative or territorial boundaries, but should take into account the institutional realities of each country;
- comprehensive, since regional planning must also set its sights generally on promoting individual welfare and flourishing communities, taking account of economic, social, cultural, ecological and other factors;
- long-term, since research and forecasting, continually reviewed and re-assessed, enable social, economic, cultural and environmental development to be more clearly envisaged, and facilitate the elaboration of short- and medium-term planning in relation to spatial development.

6. In general terms, regional planning should be seen as a way of promoting the development of communities and helping them adapt to new situations.

III. Three types of application

7. Wishing to give practical effect to these broad objectives, the ministers have examined their application to three important problems on a European scale, namely:

- transport policies,
- frontier regions,
- mountain regions.

A. A comprehensive transport policy, based on the principles of a European regional planning policy

8. The aims of regional planning are undoubtedly closely interwoven with those underlying the organisation of the transport system.

9. Overall objectives of a European transport policy should be defined to harmonise with regional planning and environmental policies. A comprehensive approach to transport policy is necessary for the purpose of promoting and strengthening economic development by means of a more balanced distribution of population and activities between European regions.

10. Several European institutions and, in particular, the Economic Commission for Europe of the United Nations, the European Communities and the European Conference of Ministers for Transport are endeavouring to harmonise transport policies on a European scale. Various measures already taken by these institutions in the transport sector show a close connection between, on the one hand, the transport aspect and, on the other, the regional planning aspect. The ministers warmly welcome the intention of these institutions to intensify their efforts to take further into account the requirements of a coherent regional planning on a European scale.

11. By the adoption of a special Resolution No. 1 on the principles which should guide transport policy, the ministers, aiming to take account of the needs of European regional planning, wish to stress the following principles on which investment programmes and organisational systems should be based:

- a communication system should be developed that takes into account a comprehensive approach to regional planning;
- the centripetal tendency characteristic of the transport system to date should be restricted or corrected, thus developing, for example, communications outside (or at a tangent to) the main areas of concentration;
- economic resources and opportunities for productive investment should be exploited in all regions of Europe, especially in those regions where abundant manpower is available, particularly by means of improved facilities for communications and trade, not only with the central areas, but also with countries outside Europe;
- new transport techniques should be used to improve intermetropolitan and urban links;
- the quality of life in urban areas and the diverse role of towns should be respected;
- the environment and the multiplicity of land uses in rural areas should be taken into account in the planning of communication routes.

B. Frontier regions as testing grounds for regional co-operation at European level

12. The ministers are aware that the solution of difficulties facing frontier regions is one of the prerequisites for the achievement of the European ideal of an open society. In order to achieve a sense of their own identity, realise their potential

and also ensure the well-being of their population, frontier regions need a policy which will deliberately disregard the artificial divisions of history and make open frontiers a reality.

13. This policy depends on the willingness to co-operate on both sides of frontiers; here, responsibility lies with national, regional, and local authorities working to bring about a rapprochement between the peoples of Europe and to make their external or maritime frontiers as open as possible. A series of recommendations designed to further this policy have been set out in a special Resolution No. 2.

14. Government action in frontier areas, on a bilateral or multilateral basis, should be directed towards:

- i. improved exchange of information;
- ii. permanent collaboration, including the reduction of legislative and administrative obstacles to joint action in regional planning and development, and
- iii. joint use of infrastructure and amenities (sewerage, hospitals, sports facilities, etc.).

15. International organisations, too, can play an active part in the definition of the practical objectives of trans-frontier co-operation. The ministers would wish to see the kind of repeated and sustained efforts made by the Council of Europe continued and intensified.

C. Mountain regions

16. Recognising, on the one hand, that mountain regions in certain parts of Europe are faced with loss of population, economic decline and growing threats to the natural environment, and, on the other hand, the growing importance of their function as an ecological counterbalance and as recreation areas, the ministers consider the solution of the problems of some mountain regions as a matter of European concern. They believe that special attention should be given to mountain areas situated in economically under-developed regions where the process of physical and social-economic deterioration is more pronounced.

17. The ministers recommend that governments of countries participating in the conference should ensure, within the framework of bilateral and multilateral co-operation, the co-ordination of development plans in mountain regions.

18. The ministers instruct the Committee of Senior Officials to create the necessary conditions for studying the problems of mountain regions at their third conference. To this end, they adopted a special Resolution No. 3.

IV. Establishment of working instruments

19. The ministers are aware that the establishment of certain essential working methods is the prerequisite for the implementation of a regional planning policy at European level. With this in mind, at the time of the Bonn Conference, the ministers asked their Committee of Senior Officials to examine the possibilities of organising and co-ordinating at European level and according to their needs, forecasting research, cartography, statistics and terminology. The programmes which they now recommend for implementation are contained in two special resolutions, Nos. 4 and 5.

A. European forecasting

20. Because it sets out problems in an overall and long-term context, forecasting should play a continuous and increasingly important part in the search for solutions to a growing number of problems with European implications which influence national regional planning policies, notably problems of urbanisation, major peripheral regions, reconversion areas, multinational firms, migrant workers and mass tourism.

21. There are a number of possible approaches to the difficult task of long-range forecasting. All of them may be needed in order to clarify the likely futures for European regions and populations, and to help therefore the responsible authorities to assess the range of policies open to them.

22. In order to overcome the difficulties of a technical and methodological nature, which make European co-operation in this area especially arduous, the ministers resolve to pursue and intensify their joint efforts in this field.

B. Cartography

23. The ministers reaffirm that cartography, which the Bonn Conference designated as a priority area for co-operation, is an essential tool for their future work. Having taken note of the work programme in this area, they resolve to organise systematic co-operation for the compilation of thematic maps on a European basis. The new techniques of automated cartography – currently at the experimental stage in several countries – should also be compared as soon as possible at European level.

C. Harmonisation of statistical data

24. Although the Bonn resolution designated the harmonisation of statistics as a priority area, in order to avoid duplication of work on other organisations, no work has been done in this field within the Council of Europe. Given the fact that any progress in the area of forecasting research and cartography is dependent on the establishment of new statistical systems for regional planning and the environment, and on comparable regional statistics, the ministers instruct the Committee of Senior Officials to seek a solution to this question without delay, in

conjunction with the European Conference of Statisticians of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, OECD and the Statistical Office of the European Communities, and to submit an action programme at their next conference.

D. Terminology

25. The work done since the 1st Conference has confirmed that a harmonised or common terminology is essential to European co-operation. The ministers accordingly instruct the Committee of Senior Officials to continue their studies with a view to harmonising regional planning terminology, beginning with long-range forecasting and cartography.

V. A new phase

26. Thanks to the work of the Committee of Senior Officials, this 2nd Conference marks the beginning of a new phase in co-operation between European ministers responsible for regional planning. Statements of general principles have paved the way for a definition of more specific goals and the will to accomplish concrete results.

A. The European context

27. Since the Bonn Conference, a number of European events at various levels have helped to accelerate and intensify the realisation that the quality of life must be improved, by means of a concerted regional development and environment policy in which regional planning plays a special part.

28. The future action of the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning will need to be approached against the background of this new situation.

i. The European Communities

29. An event with far-reaching implications for the conference is undoubtedly the decision taken by the Conference of Heads of State or Government, in Paris in October 1972, to give high priority to a European regional policy. The ministers are convinced, however, that a European regional policy cannot be confined within the boundaries of the Communities' member countries but hope that the results of experiments made within the "Nine" will prove of benefit to the European countries represented at the present conference.

30. Considering that the conference and the European Communities have as a common objective the balanced development of the regions of Europe and that their activities will need to complement each other to this end, it will be essential

to establish effective links at all levels and to define the priority tasks of the conference in taking advantage of the methods proper to intergovernmental co-operation.

ii. The European Conference of Ministers of Transport

31. Resolution No. 1 on Regional planning and communications policies establishes a dialogue between the European Conference of Ministers of Transport and the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning. Contacts between the two will need to be sustained and intensified.

32. A joint meeting of the two conferences could take place at a convenient date.

iii. Council of Europe

a. Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe

33. The ministers noted with satisfaction that the Consultative Assembly, in its debate on the role of the Council of Europe, recommended that its priority tasks should include:

the protection of nature and the historic heritage and the right to an environment and living conditions conducive to the full development of the human personality in the framework of a European regional planning policy.

b. The European Ministerial Conference on the Environment

34. The ministers were gratified that the first European Ministerial Conference on the Environment (Vienna, 1973) followed the Bonn resolution in stressing the close interdependence between regional planning and environmental problems; they found confirmation of their belief that a resolute policy was needed at European level to provide contemporary society with an environment which, whilst opening up a full range of economic activities, in no way destroys the ecological balance.

c. European Architectural Heritage Year 1975

35. The aims of European Architectural Heritage Year 1975 as defined by the Council of Europe – to give the conservation of the historic and cultural heritage of monuments and sites in Europe its rightful place in the framework of town and country planning – provide a further valuable contribution to the definition of a European regional planning policy.

d. Resettlement Fund of the Council of Europe

36. The ministers acknowledge the present role of the Resettlement Fund in stemming rural depopulation through the provision of employment, housing, training schemes and other aids, and instruct the Committee of Senior Officials to examine in their preparations for the 3rd Conference, how the fund might assist in social and economic projects undertaken in peripheral, frontier and mountain regions.

37. They express their satisfaction at the creation by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe of a mixed working party to examine the possible uses of the Resettlement Fund in assisting those regions suffering from problems of rural exodus, and instruct the Committee of Senior Officials to arrange for their representation on it.

iv. Possibilities for co-operation with all European countries

38. The ministers are further aware that regional planning at European level should extend to all European countries, including those of eastern Europe. They express the hope that there will be ever increasing possibilities for effective co-operation, and believe that regional planning provides a valuable framework in which to explore and promote arrangements for co-operation since it entails seeking solutions on as extensive a geographical scale as possible.

B. Status and future action of the conference

39. The ministers express their determination that their conference should continue to play a pioneering role in regional planning at European level, as an instigator of new ideas and as a forum for the promotion of co-operative action of common interest to them.

40. The ministers will continue to direct and promote multilateral co-operation within the sphere of their competence.

41. To this effect, the ministers express their wish that the conference's current "special working relationship" with the Council of Europe be maintained. Their recommendations with regard to the execution of the programme described in resolutions Nos. 2, 3, 4 and 5 have been set out in Resolution No. 6, which is addressed to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

42. The ministers accept with gratitude the invitation of the Italian minister to hold their third session in Italy, and instruct their Committee of Senior Officials to prepare the 3rd Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning.

43. They further took note with satisfaction of the invitations for the 4th and 5th Conferences extended to them by the Turkish and British governments.

44. They instruct the Committee of Senior Officials to prepare the 3rd Conference, which is to take place in Italy in 1975 or 1976, taking into account the importance they attach to the two following questions:

- the problem of urban development and its impact on the environment;
- the problem of regional economic disparities.