

8th European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT) (Lausanne, Switzerland: 20-21 October 1988) on "Rational use of land: the basis and limiting factor of our development"

Resolution No. 1 on Rational use of land: the basis and limiting factor of our development

The ministers participating in the 8th European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning, at Lausanne (Switzerland) on 20 and 21 October 1988;

After considering reports from the Swiss, Austrian, German, Netherlands, Swedish and United Kingdom delegations and taking into account the discussion which followed them;

– Considering land – like air and water, the other natural resources – to be a vital and limited factor in human activity;

– Considering that soil/land performs a number of functions – some of which are mutually incompatible – since it is:

a. part of the cycle of natural exchange, acting as a filter, a buffer and a transformer of harmful substances;

b. a genetic reservoir of organisms;

c. a source of raw materials and water;

d. productive (of biomass and food);

e. the spatial base on which socio-economic structures rest;

f. support for our historical and cultural heritage;

– Considering land to be a limited, non-increasable resource, which could be difficult and costly to recover, and therefore deserving protection, which should however be balanced against demands for developments, – which should be ecologically sustainable;

– Concerned about the increasing tendency in recent years to use land for immediate needs without sufficient regard to the needs of posterity or of nature, and fearing that this could result in the exhaustion of certain resources, the local or global disappearance of some species and deterioration of recreation areas;

– Recognising that land – an object also of capital investment – is quantitatively under threat, from:

a. urban expansion due to concentration of population regionally and the tendency to move out of town to detached houses in and beyond the suburbs;

b. movement of economic activity from declining regions to more thriving regions and, within these regions, to disperse to the suburbs and to rural areas, resulting in more extensive land use, liable to add to industrial fallow;

c. building large infrastructure installations on farmland and in natural areas in order to meet, in particular, increased transport needs due, among other things, to growing use of the private car and to site major energy, water-purification and waste-processing installations outside towns;

d. intensive development of tourism to meet greater leisure needs resulting from shorter working hours and longer life expectancy;

and considering that these quantitative threats have qualitative impact;

– Believing that land needs also qualitative protection, by appropriate regulations, from:

a. deterioration of soil structure and soil erosion;

b. pollution of various origins;

c. ecological and landscape deterioration;

Having regard to Resolution (72) 19 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the European Soil Charter;

Aware that the Council of Europe is carrying out a study to find out what action is needed at European level to protect soil quality;

Convinced that quantitative and qualitative protection of soil/land – and therefore spatial (land-use) planning policy and environment policy – are interlinked,

Decisions

I. Reaffirm the importance of regional and spatial planning as the means of regulating land use, giving as it does geographical expression to the economic, social, cultural and ecological policies of society, as pointed out in the European Regional/Spatial Planning Charter;

II. Believe that ecologically sustainable development of land, as a source of economic growth, would subsequently make possible better protection of land as mentioned in the United Nations report on the environment and development;

III. Draw attention to the urgent need for quantitative land protection, which, while retaining the possibility of long-term management, gives priority to systematic but regulated re-use of existing urban and industrial areas, including preservation of buildings and urban environments, and appropriately monitors the development of touristic installations and equipment in rural areas;

IV. In this connection, consider the principles appended hereto to be the basis of any local regional, national or international action; in particular, request:

- the Council of Europe to study the possibility of inviting the United Nations to undertake appropriate action at world level in order to prevent risks caused by soil deterioration;
- The Senior Officials to propose a specific work programme on rational use of land;

V. Believe that the first priority is to develop, on the basis of the above-mentioned principles: instruments for promoting, implementing and managing a policy of judicious and restrained use of land, particularly:

a. information instruments (such as cartography, remote-sensing and databanks) and monitoring instruments;

b. instruments of regulatory character and incentives, such as:

- development and planning-permission procedure;
- financial instruments (such as fiscal measures);
- new tools, such as the extension of environment-impact studies to cover the "use" of soil aspect, and possible compensatory measures/allowances;

c. socio-political instruments such as:

- co-operation between public authorities and the private sector;
- information and participation of the public;
- integrated policy of local and regional development;
- development of declining regions and rehabilitation of redundant urban and industrial areas;
- rural development policy;
- training;

VI. Recommend that the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe extend the feasibility study which is being made of qualitative soil/land protection to include quantitative aspects – that is, in regional and spatial planning – by involving in the study the Committee of Senior Officials in charge of preparations for European Conferences of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning.

Appendix to Resolution No. 1

Principles of a new land-use policy

1. General: Towards a new relationship between people and their environment

1. We need to move to a more general view of the environment heedful of such requirements as nature conservation and ecological balance;

2. Land is not an inexhaustible resource and must be used thriftily;

3. Local, regional, national and international land-use policy should pay more heed to all the interests at stake, viewed in the long term, instead of looking for short-term solutions.

4. Such a land-management approach, based on the long view rather than short-term speculation, must leave future generations some "room for manoeuvre".

5. Land use must be based on co-ordination of the various interests so as to maintain diversity of land function.

6. In the striking of this balance of interests, the "weaker" interests need protecting against the stronger interests.

7. At the national or regional level machinery should be set up for monitoring and controlling land use, with such components as:

a. periodic monitoring, by a standard method, of the area and area per inhabitant of built-up land, particularly in towns of over 10 000 people;

b. monitoring of population trends, population structure – with a view to possible decentralisation – and employment trends in representative rural and peripheral areas;

c. designation of agricultural zones, periodical assessment of such protected areas and measurement of the area of land used for other purposes in representative regions;

d. measurement of networks of natural and near-natural areas in representative regions;

e. periodic progress reviews of law promoting or safeguarding the aims of the present resolution.

II. Built-up areas

A. Urban development and housing

8. With a view to balanced development – taking account of environmental factors – re-use and reorganisation of urban land should be treated as fundamental to urban land-use policy. In particular, the aims should be to:

- a. keep, as far as possible, urban areas to their present size;
- b. reduce the pressure on green space;
- c. divert pressure towards other, less developed, areas.

9. In housing, the planning approach should place more emphasis on inner-city and village-centre renewal so as to:

- a. improve the quality of urban life, particularly in densely populated districts;
- b. help rehabilitate existing housing;
- c. make better use of suburban areas;
- d. develop innovatory urban housing of good quality which uses land sparingly;
- e. site home, workplace and leisure/shopping facilities closer together, avoiding, however, any undesirable interferences, in particular, nuisances from road traffic;
- f. promote internal dynamism of housing developments (commerce, culture, recreation, etc.) and their over-spill effect.

B. Industry and work

10. Land-use policy in this sphere should promote economic development “from within”, by means of planning measures and instruments designed, inter alia, to:

- a. keep economic activity, wherever possible, on its present site;
- b. help re-use disused sites and buildings;

- c. restructure former industrial sites, possibly by using them for new purposes;
- d. make optimum use of land and buildings;
- e. develop and disseminate (particularly by new technologies) innovatory models of construction, production and organisation that are sparing of land.

C. Tourism

11. Policy here should put more emphasis on qualitative development through measures aimed, in particular, at:

- a. using existing facilities to best advantage;
- b. upgrading existing facilities;
- c. actively maintaining a balance between areas where facilities are provided and those where they are not;
- d. restricting tourist activity in areas that merit protection;
- e. encouraging new forms of accommodation (as alternatives to holiday homes, inter alia, by promoting new forms of ownership, e.g. time-share); investigating ways of shaping demand (by staggering holidays, etc.).

D. Infrastructure

12. The role and place of infrastructure should be reconsidered, consumption reduced at source and changes made to the process of public-authority decision-making.

13. The aims should be to:

- a. promote new habits of production and consumption;
- b. help to site home, place of work and recreation/shopping facilities closer together;
- c. take into account the uses for which land is suitable and all types of user;
- d. bear in mind the secondary effects of infrastructure;
- e. revise planning requirements;
- f. encourage modes of transport that take up less land;
- g. strengthen public transport and new communication technologies that do not use up land.

III. Agriculture

14. For planning purposes, the aims of agriculture and the role of the countryside need redefining with a view, in particular, to:

- a.* reorganising the countryside, taking into account all potential uses of land;
- b.* encouraging rural local development by appropriately integrating agricultural, tourist and handicraft activities;
- c.* adjusting services to needs, in order to ensure an agreeable environment;
- d.* combating the adverse effects of intensification and extensification of agriculture;
- e.* conserving and developing natural areas (for leisure or other purposes) in regions with intensive production;
- f.* maintaining cultural and historical landscape values.

IV. Nature

15. Conservation and re-establishment of natural areas should be a major aim of land-use policy. For these purposes, steps should be taken to:

- a.* protect and manage natural or semi-natural areas in urban, intensively farmed or sparsely populated areas;
- b.* designate minimum protected areas for natural species, forming a coherent network of biotopes;
- c.* re-establish necessary interconnections between natural areas;
- d.* ensure that natural areas are properly maintained (by farmers, for instance).