

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 187 (2006)¹ on the Adriatic Euroregion

1. The Adriatic Sea represents one of the most important borders between the European Union and South-Eastern Europe. Environmental, intercultural, social and economic issues are at stake in the area. Furthermore the morphological characteristics of the Adriatic (a semi-enclosed sea) witness the need for reinforcing environmental protection.

2. On the other hand, taking into account the geo-political changes that occurred in the region, new initiatives are needed for protecting social rights and boosting intercultural co-operation and the economic gap between EU and non-EU countries needs to be reduced.

3. The Congress considers interregional and inter-municipal co-operation to be a key factor for improving relations between the two sides of the Adriatic Sea and for maintaining welfare and stability in the area. It believes that the launching of common projects based on common needs and values is the best path to follow for implementing a new concrete, though ambitious, co-operation project. The experience gained by local self-government authorities who have followed such a path is also considered fundamental.

4. Being aware of the important role that Adriatic local and regional authorities could play in tackling the challenges in the Adriatic area, the Congress decided in 2004 to launch an initiative for bringing them together through a co-operation structure named the "Adriatic Euroregion".

5. The Congress notes with satisfaction that in the region there is a strongly perceived need to create a permanent framework for co-operation aimed at developing dialogue and exchanges between populations thus contributing to affirming multiculturalist values, social and economic solidarity and peaceful coexistence.

6. The Congress is convinced of the importance of the geographical scope of the Euroregion initiative, which encompasses the entire Adriatic area, and of its objectives: contributing to European integration and becoming a qualified interlocutor for the European Union and the Council of Europe. On the other hand, the Congress welcomes the interest manifested by the initiative of cities, provinces, regions and NGOs on one hand, and national governments and European institutions on the other.

7. The Congress notes with satisfaction the objectives set out in the draft statutes of the Euroregion: improving social and economic cohesion; promoting sustainable use of resources (in particular agriculture, fisheries and tourism); continuing the process of cultural co-operation and

exchange. These activities can contribute to maintaining peace and prosperity in the region and ensuring the sustainability of the area.

8. Therefore, the Congress fully supports the outcome of the launching Conference of the Euroregion held in Venice (Italy) on February 2006, and endorses the joint declaration adopted at the close of proceedings, in which the representatives of local, regional, national and European authorities present in Venice welcomed the launching of the Adriatic Euroregion.

9. Welcoming the recent activities of the Parliamentary Assembly on the Adriatic area, the Congress welcomes the support given to the Adriatic Euroregion initiative by the Assembly as stated in its Resolution 1446 (2005);

10. The Congress considers it important to take into account the differences in structures and competencies of the regions in the countries concerned and considers that any form of interregional co-operation co-ordinated with institutions at other government levels, can contribute to problem solving and to a successful outcome of European integration initiatives.

11. In the light of the above, the Congress recommends to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe that it:

a. provide its support to the Adriatic Euroregion and consider becoming an observer member of the Adriatic Council;

b. ask the relevant intergovernmental sector to support and contribute to the activities of the Euroregion;

c. forward to the member states concerned the present recommendation, asking them to support the Adriatic Region's efforts to obtain full membership within the Euroregion, thus enabling the Adriatic Euroregion to play its role to the full.

12. The Congress invites the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to continue co-operating with the Congress in this field, in particular by encouraging national parliaments and proceeding with the legislative reforms necessary for efficient interregional co-operation.

13. The Congress asks the European Commission to support the activities of the Adriatic Euroregion with a view to considering it as a preferential partner for implementing its cohesion policy in the Adriatic Sea countries.

Appendix

Joint Declaration on the Adriatic Euroregion Venice, 6 February 2006

The representatives of the bodies and institutions who have taken part in the conference for the launching of the

Adriatic Euroregion held in Venice on 6 February 2006 and who are to compose the Assembly of the Euroregion:

Considering that the regions, provinces and towns on the Adriatic Sea share extensive human, natural and cultural resources that can be turned to account through actions of cross-border and interregional co-operation;

Considering that the European Union's enlargement to 25 member states which occurred on 1 May 2004, and its pre-accession and neighbourhood policies, bear out the special importance attached to the integration and stabilisation of the territories of central and South-East Europe;

Acknowledging that the enhancement of transfrontier and interregional co-operation in the Adriatic area can make a significant contribution to the advancement of peace, stability and cohesion for the territories concerned;

Acknowledging that the Euroregion can form a useful instrument for strengthening good-neighbourly relations, for exchange of experience and contacts among local, national and international authorities, and for the conception and implementation of inter-territorial co-operation projects;

Bearing in mind the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities of the Council of Europe (1980) and the Protocols thereto (1995, 1998);

Bearing in mind the European Charter of Local Self-Government of the Council of Europe (1985);

Having regard to the Final Declaration of the Meeting on Interregional Co-operation in the Adriatic Basin held in Pula (Croatia) on 28 June 2004;

Having regard to the Final Declaration of the Fifth Forum of Cities and Regions of South-East Europe held in Budva (Serbia and Montenegro) on 11 and 12 October 2004;

Having regard to the protocol on the establishment of the Adriatic-Ionian Euroregion, signed in Termoli (Italy) on 9 November 2004;

Bearing in mind the resolution on the role of "Euroregions" in the development of regional policy adopted by the European Parliament on 1 December 2005;

Bearing in mind Resolution 1446 (2005) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on co-operation and sustainable development in the Adriatic Basin;

Taking note of the draft statute of the Adriatic Euroregion appended to the present Declaration, hereby resolve to found the Adriatic Euroregion by signing the Joint Declaration, and undertake for that purpose:

a. to lay down, in the manner prescribed by the applicable regulations, the procedures for joining the association designated as the Adriatic Euroregion;

b. to meet in the assembly that will be convened on 30 June 2006 by the President of the Istrian region, in order to adopt the statute and to elect, in compliance with its provisions, the organs of the Adriatic Euroregion;

c. to participate in the future activities of the Adriatic Euroregion, under such arrangements as may be specified by its Assembly and other organs, taking into consideration the necessary administrative and organisational responsibilities in this regard.

Done in Venice on 6 February 2006

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 31 May 2006, 2nd Sitting (see Document CG (13) 5, draft recommendation presented by G. Di Stasi (Italy, R, SOC), rapporteur).