

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 212 (2006)¹ on the Adriatic Euroregion

1. Major challenges are presently at stake in the countries of the Adriatic Sea. The Adriatic is a semi-closed sea and the problem of protecting natural marine resources is considerably amplified. In this area all public authorities are confronted with the need to multiply their initiatives for ensuring intercultural dialogue and for protecting migrants. The reduction of the economic gap between European Union (EU) and non-EU regions is a major challenge and in this respect the improvement of communication and transport networks is considered essential for bringing all the populations closer to Europe. Last, but not least, the geopolitical changes that took place in the area in recent years require prosperity and stability to be brought to the area.

2. The Congress is convinced that interregional and inter-municipal co-operation is a key factor in maintaining welfare and stability in the Adriatic area and for improving relations between the two sides of the sea. Priority has been attached to the launching of common projects, based on common needs and values.

3. The experience of territorial authorities for implementing this co-operative approach is considered to be fundamental. Local and regional authorities can in fact make a considerable contribution to achieving sustainability targets by building co-operation bridges and, with the support of national and supra-national institutions, by launching interregional co-operation projects. The Congress also considers that interregional co-operation activities are major instruments for tackling the European integration challenge.

4. Being fully aware of the specific needs of the populations in the area and on the basis of the strong request from local and regional authorities of both sides of the Adriatic Sea, the Congress decided to launch the Adriatic Euroregion initiative. The initiative aims at creating a new co-operation structure to help guarantee the protection of the natural resources of the Adriatic, strengthen social and economic cohesion in the area, provide a platform for cultural co-operation and exchange, and foster the integration of all the Adriatic states into the European Union.

5. The initiative had a positive outcome on 6 February 2006, at the Venice conference, where the representatives of local and regional authorities of the Adriatic countries formalised the adoption of a joint declaration on the launching of the Adriatic Euroregion.

6. The broad involvement in the Adriatic Euroregion of cities, provinces, regions and NGOs on one hand, and national governments and European institutions on the other, are important assets. The geographical scope covered, which encompasses the entire Adriatic area, and the wish expressed by the different partners of contributing to European integration and becoming an interlocutor for the European Union and the Council of Europe are to be welcomed.

7. Hence the Congress fully supports the objectives of the euroregion of: improving social and economic cohesion; promoting sustainable use of resources (particularly in the areas of agriculture, fisheries and tourism); continuing the process of cultural co-operation and exchange. These activities can contribute to bringing prosperity to the region and ensuring the sustainability of the Adriatic area.

8. The Adriatic Euroregion may constitute a fruitful tool for strengthening good-neighbourly relations, fostering the exchange of experience between local, regional, national and international institutions and for the design and implementation of interregional co-operation projects.

9. The Congress wishes to recall the particular features of other semi-closed seas such as the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea and is convinced that Euro-regional initiatives in these areas can represent an innovative and motivating contribution to the promotion of inter-territorial co-operation in Europe.

10. For these reasons, the Congress recommends to local and regional authorities of the Adriatic area:

a. to become full members of the Adriatic Council of the Euroregion, thus contributing their experience in co-operation projects and benefiting from partnership opportunities offered by the euroregion;

b. to obtain support from national and international institutions for making the Adriatic Euroregion a true means of strengthening socio-economic and cultural cohesion.

11. Similarly, the Congress recommends to local and regional authorities of other semi-closed seas in Europe that they support the interregional co-operation initiatives brought about within the Council of Europe, firstly with the creation of a "Black Sea euroregion", announced at the Conference held in Constanța (Romania) on 30 March 2006 on this subject;

12. Finally the Congress expresses the wish of making interregional and cross-border co-operation more and more effective through the launching of additional interregional co-operation structures in its future activities. It considers in fact that it is essential to create permanent co-operation structures capable of bringing together local and regional authorities and to create new co-operation opportunities.

Appendix

Chronological stages of the Adriatic Euroregion

Pula conference, held on 28 June 2004, where the general need for promoting co-operation activities between regions was expressed;

Dubrovnik seminar of 6 September 2004, where a spectrum of fields in which co-operation activities would take place was established – fishery, environment, agriculture, tourism/culture, infrastructures/transport – (without excluding the possibility for other areas to be included in the near future);

Chioggia conference, 22-24 September 2004, organised by the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly on “Sustainable development of the Adriatic: Co-operation between Local and Regional Authorities”, that gathered a broad consensus of national members of parliament;

Termoli conference 8-9 November 2004, where the representatives of the regions and municipalities of

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Italy, Serbia-Montenegro and Slovenia signed the “Protocol on the establishment of the Adriatic/Ionian Euroregion” and discussed a proposal for a statute of the new institution;

Pula conference, held on 22 April 2005, where the temporary Council of the Euroregion agreed on a first draft of its statutes;

Brussels seminar in November 2005 on “The Adriatic Euroregion: an Instrument for European Integration”, aimed at presenting of the initiative to the European Union and securing its support;

Venice conference, 6 February 2006, the aim of which was to finalise the initiative through the signature of a joint political declaration including the draft statute of the euroregion in its appendix.

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