

CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF EUROPE

Recommendation 117 (2002)¹ on “Promoting transfrontier co-operation: an important factor of democratic stability in Europe”

The Congress, bearing in mind the proposal of the Chamber of Regions,

1. Having regard to the Council of Europe’s work in the area of transfrontier co-operation and its crucial role in developing transfrontier co-operation in Europe through the conventions and activities carried out at intergovernmental level (Select Committee of Experts), and through its Committee of Advisers for the Development of Transfrontier Co-operation in Central and Eastern Europe, and through the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities
2. Emphasising that transfrontier co-operation remains a factor for social cohesion and intercommunity dialogue that is essential for the development of stability in Europe;
3. Having regard to its Recommendation 74 on the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe: specific projects on local democracy and transfrontier co-operation and Recommendation 85 on democratic stability through transfrontier co-operation in Europe, adopted by the Congress in 2000;
4. Noting with satisfaction the positive developments in recent years, particularly:
 - a.* the entry into force on 1 February 2001 of Protocol No. 2 to the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities;
 - b.* the recognition of the importance of transfrontier co-operation in the Stability Pact (conclusions of Working Table I on Democratisation and Human Rights, adopted in Portoroz in May 2001 and Skopje in December 2001);
5. Welcoming the Committee of Ministers’ decision to increase the number of advisers on the development of transfrontier co-operation in central and eastern Europe to 12, including 2 full members and 2 substitute members from the Congress;
6. Bearing in mind Opinion CdR 1811/2000 by the European Union’s Committee of the Regions on strategies for promoting cross-border and interregional co-operation in an enlarged EU – a basic document setting out guidelines for the future;
7. Conscious that the development of transfrontier co-operation has reached varying stages in different states, and

that this provides an opportunity to share experience and know-how;

8. Convinced that transfrontier co-operation has become a tool for developing all the sectoral policies of border local and regional authorities in Europe, and thus deserves to be incorporated into many aspects of daily life, and that this will require these authorities to have at their disposal civil servants and elected representatives with training in transfrontier problems,

9. Invites the Council of Europe member states:

a. to remove the existing legal and administrative obstacles and give their local and regional authorities the financial and human resources to allow them to implement transfrontier activities, and to provide local and regional authorities with the tools for transfrontier governance;

b. to sign and ratify the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities, known as the Madrid Convention, and its two protocols, if they have not already done so;

c. to give local and regional authorities the necessary powers and finances to enable them to develop public policies in the field of transfrontier co-operation;

d. to promote the creation of Euroregions and encourage them to co-operate in a Europe-wide network;

e. to take the social and economic dimension into account when drawing up transfrontier policies;

f. to allow local and regional authority staff and elected representatives from border regions and towns to have access to appropriate training in transfrontier co-operation;

g. to give local and regional authorities access, for the funding of transfrontier projects, to financial resources provided for similar projects in their countries;

h. to make voluntary contributions for the financing of Council of Europe programmes to promote transfrontier co-operation in South-eastern Europe;

10. Invites the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe:

a. to integrate the transfrontier co-operation dimension in its intergovernmental activities, particularly in the fields of social cohesion and civil society;

b. to pay particular attention to transfrontier co-operation in drawing up any projects for intercultural dialogue and conflict prevention;

c. to support the efforts to develop transfrontier co-operation wherever there is a need for such co-operation;

d. to attach particular importance to the role played by local and regional elected representatives in developing transfrontier co-operation;

e. to pay maximum attention to the specific problems of towns divided by an international border, particularly when

this border seriously restricts people's freedom of movement and access to services and facilities available on one side only, and promote the adoption of solutions which treat divided towns and their populations as joint entities;

f. to give its political backing to negotiation, by the parties concerned, of a multilateral regional agreement on transfrontier co-operation in South-eastern Europe;

11. Invites the Committee of Advisers for the Development of Transfrontier Co-operation in Central and Eastern Europe:

a. to contribute to the preparation and negotiation of a multilateral regional agreement on transfrontier co-operation in South-eastern Europe;

b. to co-operate with organisations outside the Council of Europe, which are active in the field of transfrontier co-operation, particularly the Association of European Border Regions and the Assembly of European Regions, with a view to co-ordinating its activities more effectively;

12. Invites the Parliamentary Assembly:

a. to support the preparation and negotiation of a multilateral regional agreement on transfrontier co-operation in South-eastern Europe;

b. to pursue its commitment to transfrontier co-operation;

13. Invites the European Union:

a. to continue its programmes to support transfrontier co-operation in the wider Europe and the setting up of Euroregions (to include regions on the external borders of the enlarged European Union), and to support local and regional authorities in these working structures, particularly through the Interreg, Phare and Tacis programmes;

b. to take into account initiatives to promote transfrontier co-operation in managing the revised structural funds.

1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Regions on 4 June 2002 and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 6 June 2002 (see Doc. CPR (9) 3, draft recommendation presented by Mr H. M. Tschudi, rapporteur).