

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

RECOMMENDATION No. R (85) 18

OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS TO MEMBER STATES CONCERNING PLANNING POLICIES IN MARITIME REGIONS

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 23 September 1985
at the 388th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its members in order to encourage their economic and social progress;

Aware of the importance of tackling at European level the various problems inherent in the development and protection of maritime regions of the European countries;

Emphasising that the European maritime regions are at the same time a sensitive natural heritage, an important centre for trade, a prime area for the siting of commercial and industrial activities, an area for applying energy, mining and harbour policies, a starting point for the industrialisation of the sea and a particularly attractive area for mass tourism;

Aware that the various sectoral policies applied in these areas provoke conflicts which can be resolved only by a comprehensive regional development policy based on integrated planning at different levels and focusing on long-term objectives, since the protection and development of maritime regions are strongly interdependent and cannot be considered in isolation;

Having regard to its Recommendation No. R (84) 2 on the European Regional/Spatial Planning Charter, elaborated and adopted by the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT) at their 6th Session in Torremolinos;

Bearing in mind the principles set forth in its Resolution (73) 29 on the protection of coastal areas and recalling the provisions of the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities;

Considering the conclusions of the 4th European Ministerial Conference on the Environment on the theme "Coastal areas, river banks and lake shores: their planning, development and management in keeping with the ecological balance" which confirm and define the specific requirements of environmental protection;

Taking into account the guidelines of the European Coastal Charter adopted by the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions in Crete on 8 October 1981,

Recommends that the governments of member states:

a. work towards the preparation of coastal planning strategies taking into account local, regional and national peculiarities of these areas as far as their economic, socio-cultural and environmental structures are concerned;

b. encourage participation of regional and local authorities at the different stages of the preparation of such policies;

c. promote at European level transfrontier co-operation in the planning of coast and maritime zones and the hinterland ;

d. base their policies in this field on the principles of Resolution No. 1 concerning planning policies in maritime regions adopted by the 6th European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (Torremolinos, 1983), as follows :

1. General principles and objectives

The general objectives of a regional/spatial planning policy should be as follows :

Balanced development of maritime regions

A policy aimed at the balanced development of maritime regions is essential. Policies for transforming such regions must be monitored and limits fixed to the burdens which they can be expected to bear. A balance also needs to be struck in physical planning between heavily urbanised coastal regions and less densely populated peripheral regions, taking relations between these two types of region into account.

A new view of coastal areas

Henceforth regional planning policies should regard the coast not as a rigid dividing line but as a part of the land whose importance for mankind is determined by its proximity to the sea and the sea not as a different and boundless world but as a feature of our daily lives and one which, because of the resources available in the sea-bed and its subsoil, can be put to a greater variety of uses than in the past.

Land and sea were formerly seen as opposites but nowadays the "coastal strip" has become a much wider and less static physical and, more particularly, orographic concept and one which offers ever greater scope for an evolving, relational theory of economic space.

Regional planning should further regard the continental shelf as a submerged area of land.

The protection of coastal areas

Taking into account the conclusions of the 4th European Ministerial Conference on the Environment, in 1984, the following points may be made :

- measures to protect European coastal regions should be taken as a matter of the utmost urgency ;
- measures to protect European coastal regions can be effective only if accompanied by a planning and protection policy in the adjoining inland areas ;
- measures to protect European coastal regions must not be confined to ecological aspects, but must also strive to preserve the distinctive socio-cultural features of each coastal area ;
- the demands of the protection of coastal regions and those of their economic and industrial development must be reconciled.

The principle of in-depth planning

Within the institutional framework of each country, great emphasis should be placed on the introduction of in-depth planning in two directions, namely seawards from the shore and landwards from the shore.

This principle should govern not only the use of marine resources and shipping routes but also harbour, urban, industrial and tourist policies onshore and the management of river systems and other extensive inland areas.

Integrated planning of "land-sea systems"

Planning strategies for maritime regions must give priority to the interconnection between land and sea activities as shaped by technological and economic progress. This requires effective integrated planning of land-sea systems and effective guidance of scientific research and its practical application.

This principle will have to be followed in future European and national spatial planning strategies and in planning measures at national or regional level. It can also be observed by each country in reforming political and administrative structures not particularly suited to the complex management of the new land-sea relations.

The need for a more comprehensive land-sea approach to the physical planning of coastal regions implies the need for effective administrative and legal instruments to implement these policies.

The co-ordination of offshore activities

The growth of offshore activities necessitates co-ordination of fishing, boating and commercial navigation, the exploitation of energy resources, the exploitation of raw materials and military and other activities and the taking into account of environmental factors.

Maritime planning: development of a careful, step-by-step approach

Planning of the open sea was hitherto almost non-existent. As the sea does not come exclusively under the jurisdiction of the countries it adjoins or surrounds, the formulation of planning policies for non-territorial waters must be approached with a certain caution.

There are a number of differences between the situation at sea and that on land:

- with regard to the sea, more allowance must be made for the vertical dimension,
- owing to the movement of water, several maritime functions and activities are not tied to a particular location,
- attention must be drawn to the legal and administrative limits of decisions applicable outside territorial waters.

Controlled urban development

The uncontrolled urbanisation of European coasts must be stopped as a matter of urgency, given the limited capacity of coastal areas.

It is necessary to concentrate and control major developments in certain zones and to restrict these developments in areas where conservation is an important priority. Control over the arbitrary spread of holiday homes and other housing is especially significant in this respect.

Within the most urbanised coastal regions, land used for recreation, agriculture and nature conservation is subject to great pressures. Physical plans at regional level should allow for enough space to enable these activities to coexist. At the same time, regional plans should ensure that the open spaces are not needlessly subjected to the excesses of activities typical of them, such as recreation, water supply, transport, etc.

To this end, it would be desirable to designate an area along the coast in which no further building is permitted.

Various coastal activities associated with a high level of urbanisation (industrialisation, intensive recreation) can have a negative effect on other uses such as fishing, aquaculture, nature conservation, landscape protection and extensive recreation. Priority should be given to combating these negative effects at both national and international level.

Pollution control

Although marine pollution problems have been discussed at the 4th European Ministerial Conference on the Environment, it should nonetheless be stressed that planning and development policies for maritime regions need to take appropriate account of the need to combat pollution caused by solid and liquid urban waste, by industry, by power-stations and by the use of pesticides in agriculture.

Control of industrial activities

Industrial development in coastal areas calls for great caution, as its growth brings with it not only pollution of the atmosphere and water but also new communication routes. Industry should therefore be concentrated in selected development areas reserved exclusively for companies having an overriding need for a coastal site. These rules should also govern regional policy strategies to promote the development of the labour market in coastal regions.

Rational organisation of tourism

The development of recreation must be prevented from leading to irreversible deterioration of the precious natural environment of certain European coastal regions. Tourism should be controlled and, where necessary, limited in specific areas to prevent destruction of the environment and the population's original pattern of life and avert further ecological or aesthetic pressures on the coastline.

Free access to the coastline for all

Steps should be taken to halt the increasing private ownership of coasts and to ensure that everyone has free access to the coast.

2. Development of European co-operation

Having regard to the interdependence of the problems analysed and their effects which reach beyond national frontiers, and to the fact that harmonisation and co-operation in this field are still insufficient, the ministers stress the need to intensify their collaboration and are of the opinion that CEMAT represents an appropriate framework especially for continuing exchanges of information and mutual consultation.

With regard to offshore activities

Having regard to the need to conserve natural resources and co-ordinate their exploitation, it is asserted that :

— the co-ordination of maritime activities, which are constantly increasing, requires that international consultations and agreements be expanded and take into account the conclusions of the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea ;

- in particular, activities at sea require fuller co-ordination in the fisheries sector. In the Mediterranean, binding agreements are needed between European countries and North African and Middle Eastern countries on fishing in territorial and non-territorial waters ;
- the immense future potential for exploration of the sea-bed in order to extract hydrocarbons and minerals generally calls for enormous technical and financial resources and for an appropriate regime of international co-operation ;
- the work done by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) on shipping routes and traffic separation zones should be continued in order to increase safety at sea and establish an integral system of safe sea lanes ;

— since the legal and administrative framework for decision-making is limited and operations outside territorial waters are attended by uncertainty, the working out of maritime planning policies within the framework of international agreements is a matter which should be approached with caution.

With regard to onshore activities

The following is called for :

a. Greater co-ordination between the European countries concerned in the preparation of the development plans and programmes implemented in coastal regions at national, regional and local levels. For instance, development objectives in coastal regions on the same seaboard should be jointly discussed before their final adoption in order to assess their possible consequences and interaction and establish future transfrontier co-ordination of programmes and plans as well as specific objectives for the protection and development of coastal areas. Consideration should be given to the possibility of harmonising certain legal regulations applicable to programmes and plans for coastal regions and to the advantages this might have for the development of coastal areas ;

b. A very detailed study of the function and role of European ports, as part of the preparatory work for a European regional planning strategy.

In view of the present competition between ports, the scope for co-operation between European ports should be studied in order to avoid certain costly excesses and possible over-equipment.

This work could eventually pave the way for preparation of a European ports plan, with as comprehensive an approach as possible to ports, particularly as regards their relationship with the hinterland.

In this context, it is appropriate :

- to give or restore to medium-sized ports their rightful place, since they play or can play an essential role in the development of certain peripheral maritime regions ;
- to strike a better balance between the Mediterranean and Atlantic seabords in continental maritime transport, by means of local, integrated and specialised port complexes ;
- to give more importance to inshore and intermodal shipping ;

c. Considering the imbalances which exist in the numbers of tourists visiting European coastal areas, a detailed study by the CEMAT to identify the trend of major international tourist movements to the European coasts ;

d. Recalling the possibilities offered by the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities, the intensification of co-operation at regional and local level as a means of facilitating transfrontier co-ordination of specific objectives concerning the development and planning of coastal areas ;

e. The preparation of a comprehensive inventory of particular pressures on the environment in coastal regions in order to facilitate the formulation of appropriate planning objectives in the framework of a European regional planning strategy and concerted measures for the effective protection of coastal areas at international level.

With regard to the hinterland

a. The quality of coastal communications (not only roads, railways, inland waterways, airlines and pipelines but also telephones, data processing networks, etc.) plays a vital role in the development of these regions, and particularly in the potential function of seaports in relation to their hinterland, which often extends beyond frontiers.

The growth of tourism, the present-day "oceanisation" of European economies, the demands of balanced regional development in Europe, energy needs, etc., require constant improvements in communications between coastal (and especially peripheral maritime) regions and other parts of Europe. Comprehensive physical planning in Europe presupposes a European network of trunk communications, establishing the main priorities and acting as a framework for a European regional planning strategy.

The CEMAT must therefore continue to work along these lines, taking full account of the studies so far carried out by the Council of Europe (particularly the Parliamentary Assembly and the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe) and by other European bodies.

b. Policies on river systems are very important for down-river coastal regions, and must take account of land-sea systems by controlling both the quality and the quantity of water used for many different domestic and industrial purposes.

Such policies, which lend themselves to international comparison and consultation, should cover the major river basins and all river systems. Here, new policy guidelines should be drawn up, especially for the Mediterranean, to encourage economic development in large areas which lack links with the major river basins and direct access to the coast.