

# THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

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## Resolution 349 (2012)<sup>1</sup> The governance of macro-regions in Europe

1. A macro-region is a grouping of sub-national entities (local and regional authorities) – a territory covering a number of different countries or regions, which share one or more common features or challenges – which come together to co-operate on common issues.

2. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe has consistently sought to promote and develop transfrontier and inter-territorial co-operation of this nature, aware that the benefits for local and regional authorities, which are many, are all the more important in times of economic downturn. Mindful of the need to prioritise sectoral co-operation in areas where practical co-operation is easily identifiable, such as transport, environment management, health, waste disposal, public utilities or energy, the Congress also recognises the need to be practical, to have clear and realistic targets and to avoid over-ambitious programmes.

3. The entry into force of the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities (Madrid Convention, ETS No. 106) and of its Additional Protocol (ETS No. 159) and its Protocol No. 2 (ETS No. 169) was a milestone in developing such co-operation. Many macro-regions have now been established, some of them with the help of the Congress, and several more are in the planning.

4. The Congress has a role to support and accompany them, to debate the issues and analyse the problems with a view to identifying practical solutions. Existing co-operation projects need to be evaluated to avoid the recurrence of common errors. If the momentum is to be maintained, the entry into force of Protocol No. 3 to the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities concerning Euroregional Co-operation Groupings (ECGs) (CETS No. 206), which addresses many of the issues raised by the implementation of the Madrid Convention, should be a priority for the local and regional democracy agenda of the Council of Europe.

5. The Congress is convinced that it can and should increase its efforts in this respect, using its forum to bring potential collaborators together, working more with its partners such as the Assembly of European Regions (AER), the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and the Committee of the Regions of the European Union (EU), as well as with specialised institutes and agencies, in the fields of training personnel, awareness raising and providing expertise.

6. The Congress therefore refers to:

a. the Madrid Convention and its protocols;

b. Recommendation Rec(2005)2 of the Committee of Ministers on good practices in and reducing obstacles to trans-frontier and inter-territorial co-operation between territorial communities or authorities;

c. the Chaves report, presented at the 17th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Local and Regional Government in November 2011, promoting multilevel co-operation to overcome obstacles in matters of cross-border co-operation.

7. The Congress calls on local and regional authorities in Council of Europe member States to:

a. make macro-regional co-operation a transversal issue wherever it can provide an added value;

b. encourage the inclusion of elected local and regional stakeholders and civil society in the development and management of any macro-regional project at the political level;

c. make goal-oriented projects close to the citizens a priority of macro-regional co-operation, in order to facilitate a life in Europe where borders are no barriers for life, work and travel.

8. It calls on national associations of local and regional authorities to:

a. lobby their governments, if they have not yet done so, to sign and ratify the Madrid Convention and its protocols;

b. encourage and support the formation and development of macro-regions around themes that are beneficial for democracy.

9. It resolves to:

a. keep inter-regional and transfrontier co-operation, including macro-regional, as priority activities and include them in its co-operation with the intergovernmental sector;

b. collect best practice with regard to macro-regional co-operation;

c. use its experience and know-how to support macro-regional groupings which are already operational through regular debates and seminars to enable exchange of experience and analysis of the challenges and obstacles that they encounter;

d. co-operate with its partners (AER, AEBR, CEMR and the EU Committee of the Regions) in seeking to overcome obstacles to macro-regional co-operation;

e. co-operate with specialised institutes and agencies in training personnel, awareness raising and providing expertise for new projects.

10. The Congress asks its Governance Committee to periodically review the progress of European inter-regional, trans-frontier and macro-regional projects with a view to identifying strategies for achieving concrete and sustainable results.

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1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Regions on 17 October 2012 and adopted by the Congress on 18 October 2012, 3rd Sitting (see Document [CPR\(23\)2](#), explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: E. Mohr (Austria, L, EPP/CD).