

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 173 (2005)¹ on regional media and transfrontier co-operation

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

1. Recalling Recommendation No. R (2000) 1 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on fostering transfrontier co-operation between territorial communities or authorities in the cultural field, and in particular Section III of its appendix on specific areas of action, subparagraph v of which is devoted to the media and calls, *inter alia*, for:

a. “transfrontier co-operation of local, regional and national television for the co-production and joint broadcasting of programmes of transfrontier interest;”

b. “co-operation between local and regional radio stations disseminating news covering the whole transfrontier area;”

c. “local/regional radio programmes on teaching the neighbour’s language;”

2. Recalling Parliamentary Assembly Recommendations 1506 (2001) on freedom of expression and information in the media in Europe and 1407 (1999) on media and democratic culture;

3. Recalling Congress of Local and Regional Authorities Recommendations 54 (1999) on local and regional information society and 119 (2002) on the state of regional print media in Europe – Pluralism, independence and freedom in regional press;

4. Bearing in mind the final declaration of the Berlin Conference on transfrontier co-operation between regional media entities in Europe, held on 15 and 16 October 2004;

5. Noting the importance of the final declaration of the 7th European Ministerial Conference on Mass Media Policy, held in Kiev (Ukraine) on 10 and 11 March 2005, and the three resolutions adopted on that occasion, along with the action plan appended to the declaration, focusing on the promotion of freedom of expression, the pluralism and diversity of communication services and their content, the protection of human rights and encouragement for the broadest possible participation of all individuals in the Information Society;

6. Recalling that local and regional media are ideal vehicles for reflecting multiple identities and the rich cultural diversity of Europe, and a powerful means of bring citizens closer together;

7. Recalling that co-operation between the media (both written and audiovisual) is an essential part of good neighbourly relations between different regions and that it helps strengthen democracy and democratic stability in Europe;

8. Bearing in mind the fundamental principle of the independence of the media;

9. Noting the significant initiative taken by certain local and regional media entities in continuing their coverage of local and regional traditions for the benefit of ethnic and other minorities;

10. Pointing out the importance of radio and stressing its potential for assisting in the development of democratic societies, particularly at local and regional levels;

11. Recalling Recommendation No. R (99) 1 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on measures to promote media pluralism, and having regard to the European Commission’s Green Paper on Pluralism and Media Concentration in the Internal Market (COM (92) 480 final);

12. Stressing that the Council of Europe has a key role to play in promoting mutual comprehension between peoples of different cultures and faiths, both with European societies themselves and between Europe and other regions;

13. Bearing in mind the existence of European Union instruments, most of which are open to candidate countries, aimed at supporting regions which are developing at a slower pace, in particular by means of the Interreg programme, which promotes co-operation between regions for the purpose of economic development, including in the cultural field;

14. Wishing to encourage all sorts of regional programmes, retransmission and newspapers to increase knowledge of the neighbouring area, culture and traditions as a whole;

15. Lending support to interregional co-operation between both the written and audiovisual media, domestically and internationally, in order to promote cultural exchanges and tolerance;

16. Welcoming transfrontier co-operation in the existing regional media, as shown by the examples of good practices, discussed in the report on “Regional Media: transfrontier co-operation”;

17. Pointing out that in the digital environment, the “must-carry” rule is a fundamental means of ensuring consumers’ access to certain programme services which are of particular importance for society;

18. Stressing that co-operation between border regions helps preserve the cultural and natural heritage and implementation of regional sustainable development, that it also promotes peace and international understanding, and that it makes a significant contribution to the building up of a common Europe,

19. Calls on member states:

- a.* to accord greater importance to the regional media in the democratic life of both nationals and non-nationals, at all administrative levels;
- b.* to extend the scope of the “must-carry” rule beyond cable operators to include transfrontier regions;
- c.* to encourage co-operation between regions in the media field, by eliminating discriminatory measures and regulations which could hamper the free circulation of information put out by the regional press and radio;
- d.* to ensure that in a context in which there is a shortage of frequencies and fierce competition between users of the spectrum, the uniqueness of the audiovisual sector is taken into account in managing the radio-frequency spectrum;
- e.* to ensure that non-profit making community media entities are recognised as a third sector supplementing the national public service and the private broadcasting sector;
- f.* to draw up regulations on multilingual community media applicable to all current and future analogue and digital broadcasting platforms, in order to guarantee citizen participation in the media and strengthen individual involvement in democratic life;
- g.* to support and encourage programmes produced in regional languages which play a particular role as a regional “lingua franca” and multilingual programmes focusing in particular on local and regional topics and participants, as an example of good practices;
- h.* to restate their belief in a pluralist and diverse regional media landscape and acknowledge the importance of a wide range of regional media in the political and social life of individuals, communities, regional groups and others;
- i.* to provide financial support for transfrontier and inter-territorial media co-operation programmes and projects;
- j.* to assist local and regional authorities in their quest for satisfactory partners for their co-operation projects in other transfrontier areas and encourage the participation of local and regional authorities in transnational projects;

20. Invites the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to call on the relevant departments:

- a.* to support the exchange of journalists, editors, and television programmes and promote a media ethic, encourage transfrontier co-production and training courses for editors-in-chief and journalists;

- b.* to consider the possibility of launching a “European media year”;

- c.* to co-operate with the Congress in the organisation of future conferences and activities in the field of regional media;

- d.* to seek co-operation between the Congress and the Media Division of the Council of Europe under the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, in order to ensure the application of Council of Europe standards in the media field, and to promote a climate of tolerance and mutual understanding;

- e.* to undertake information and awareness-raising activities, via seminars and workshops, aimed at the official sectors concerned (local and regional elected representatives) to alert them to the requirements of an independent and pluralist media system in a democratic society;

21. Invites the European Commission:

- a.* to ensure that the regulations on competition promote pluralism in the regional press;

- b.* to institute a means of encouraging translation (adaptation, dubbing) of regional productions to make it easier for them to be broadcast further afield;

- c.* to improve training for experts working for European regional and local television channels;

- d.* to frame a coherent and flexible policy for its future external borders, in order to ensure that enlargement encourages rather than hampers transfrontier co-operation, and to this end, to work in conjunction with the Council of Europe;

- e.* to look at the situation of small multicultural countries and transfrontier regions;

22. Invites the European Parliament to look at ways and means of preserving pluralist and independent regional media in the member states of the European Union and in candidate countries.

1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Regions on 31 May 2005 and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 2 June 2005 (see Document CPR (12) 2, draft recommendation presented by G. Krug (Germany, R, SOC) and K.-H. Lambertz, (Belgium, R, SOC), rapporteurs).

