

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 373 (2014)¹ Inter-regional co-operation in Europe: trends and prospects

1. Horizontal co-operation between territorial authorities in different States lies at the heart of the Council of Europe's vision of territorial democracy and for this reason is one of the rights enshrined in the European Charter of Local Self-Government, now in force in all Council of Europe member States, as well as in the Council of Europe's Reference Framework for Regional Democracy.

2. Inter-regional co-operation may be understood as the direct involvement of regional governments and parliaments in bilateral or multilateral co-operation schemes, other than those represented by transfrontier co-operation, with regional governments in other countries.

3. The last twenty years have witnessed a remarkable surge in such co-operation within and beyond Europe. Regional governments are becoming increasingly active in this field, developing more and more projects with their counterparts in other countries, both inside and outside Europe. There are many factors behind this boom, which is linked to developments in globalisation, improvements in communications and increased mobility through low-cost travel and easing of visa regimes.

4. Such co-operation, characterised by the adaptability, flexibility and fluidity of its arrangements and the lightness of its structures, is leading regions to discover new, effective and imaginative ways of working together and is becoming increasingly important for European integration and creative territorial cohesion. Regions are co-operating in an increasingly diverse range of fields, including infrastructure projects, investment in research and technology, exchanges and training programmes, intercultural dialogue and promotion of shared cultural heritage, serving the interests of citizens, local and regional authorities, NGOs, cultural associations and business enterprises.

5. The Congress, in particular its Chamber of Regions, is well placed to act as a catalyst and facilitator in this field, and has for more than twenty years been taking a pioneering role in promoting such co-operation and campaigning to improve the legal framework, including the Council of Europe's treaty law, within which such co-operation can develop.

6. The rapid evolution of this sphere of activity makes it all the more important for regional authorities to pool their experiences and work together to share experiences, identify good practices and establish indicators for evaluating projects.

7. The Congress therefore, bearing in mind:

a. its Resolution 227 (1991) on the external relations of local and regional authorities;

b. its Resolution 248 (1993) on inter-territorial co-operation;

c. the recent entry into force of Protocol No.3 to the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities (Madrid Convention) concerning Euroregional Co-operation Groupings (ECGs), (CETS No. 206);

8. Convinced that it has an important role to play as a catalyst and facilitator of inter-regional co-operation, in addition to transfrontier co-operation;

9. Resolves to:

a. encourage its members in the States Parties to Protocol No. 3 to make use of this new international treaty to further develop co-operation between regions in their respective countries and regions in other States Parties, whether these are adjacent or not;

b. set up a database and register of inter-regional co-operation initiatives involving European regions, to be available to the general public through the Congress website;

c. continue to promote and facilitate inter-regional co-operation initiatives (and share good practice);

d. organise a conference on inter-regional co-operation in 2015, to discuss the political, legal and technical aspects of such co-operation, promote good practice and encourage greater networking and co-ordination of approaches;

10. Reaffirms its commitment to:

a. overcoming obstacles to inter-regional co-operation;

b. working closely with its main partners, the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and the Assembly of European Regions (AER), to extend and deepen such co-operation;

c. supporting European networks of regional authorities as a way to address common interests and challenges;

11. Calls upon its national delegations and associations of territorial authorities to:

a. support its work promoting Protocol No. 3 and to lobby their national authorities to ratify this treaty if they have not already done so;

b. promote inter-regional co-operation projects in the interests of increasing European territorial cohesion and meeting the challenges of the economic downturn;

c. regularly provide the Congress with information on such initiatives;

d. support the Congress 2015 conference on this theme.

1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Regions on 14 October 2014 and adopted by the Congress on 15 October 2014, 2nd Sitting (see Document CPR(27)2FINAL, explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: Stewart Dickson, United Kingdom (R, ILDG).