

APPENDIX

AGENDA FOR DELIVERING GOOD LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

We, the European Ministers responsible for Local and Regional government, meeting in Budapest on 24-25 February 2005 for the 14th session of our Conference:

Further to the agreement to adopt “delivering good local and regional governance” as an overall objective and drawing on the views expressed and the information made available to the Conference¹, identify the following major challenges and commit ourselves to the following actions by member States individually and through the Council of Europe over the next five years:

As concerns democratic citizenship and participation at local and regional level,

Challenges:

- Addressing the low level of electoral turnout in elections at local and regional level in many countries;
- Responding to the changing ways in which citizens engage in public life at local level and, in some cases, the decreasing willingness to do so;
- Broadening the scope for participation by foreign residents in public life at local level.

Actions:

- To pursue the implementation of Recommendation (2001) 19 on the Participation of Citizens in Local Public Life;

¹ - The *acquis* and information base of the Council of Europe in general, and in the field of local and regional democracy in particular as well as the evaluation of them by member States (MCL 14(2005) 3 Addendum 3);

- the developments and policy priorities in the field of local and regional government identified in our respective countries, in the introductory report presented by our Hungarian colleague, individual statements by other colleagues, including a report on the South-Eastern Europe Regional Ministerial Conference on “Effective democratic governance at local and regional level” held in Zagreb on 25-26 October 2004 and the conclusions of the Barcelona Conference “The future of democracy in Europe” (17-19 November 2004) (MCL 14 (2005) 3 and Addenda 1-2, 4-6);

- the views expressed at the Conference on the priorities for work to be carried out through our intergovernmental co-operation within the Council of Europe;

- the presentation by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe of its assessment of the state of local democracy in the member states of the Council of Europe as regards the effective implementation of the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, as well as its views on the overall challenges for local and regional democracy and priorities for action by the Council of Europe (MCL 14 (2005) 8).

- To continue work on the ways in which information and communication technologies can facilitate democratic reform at local and regional level;
- To examine the desirability and feasibility of forms of remote voting in local and regional elections;
- To develop and make use of tools to assess the effectiveness of measures taken to enhance participation in public life at local level;
- To examine the desirability and feasibility of introducing convention-based legal standards on the participation of citizens in public life at local and regional level;
- To seek to overcome any obstacles to acceding to the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level and to seek to ratify it as soon as possible.

As concerns the legal framework and institutional structure of local and regional government:

Challenges:

- Giving full effect to the principle of subsidiarity by defining and legislating on the competences, structures and boundaries of local and regional authorities;
- Encouraging and creating the necessary conditions for inter-municipal co-operation;
- Fostering effective relations between different levels of territorial administration, particularly between central and local authorities.

Actions:

- To monitor developments in regional self-government with a view to identifying in particular innovations and any issues common to a number of states;
- To share our knowledge, experience and views concerning inter-municipal co-operation with a view to identifying and promoting good practices and drawing up guidelines on this topic;
- To share our knowledge, experience and views concerning the relationship between central and local authorities with a view to identifying good practice and drawing up guidelines on this topic;
- When engaging in processes of reform of local and regional self-government, to respect the European Charter of Local Self-Government and be guided by Recommendation (2004) 12 on the processes of reform of boundaries and/or structure of local and regional authorities.

As concerns local and regional finance:

Challenges:

- Reaching a level of resources for local and regional authorities which is commensurate with their responsibilities;
- Finding an optimum structure of income sources in order to allow local and regional authorities to offer their citizens services which are adapted to their requirements;
- Striking the right balance between a high degree of freedom for local and regional authorities in managing their finance and a high degree of accountability.

Actions:

- To make use of, implement and promote, as appropriate, the existing Council of Europe *acquis* in the field of local and regional finance, in particular Recommendations Rec (2004) 1 on the financial and budgetary management at local and regional levels and Rec (2005) 1 on financial resources for local and regional authorities;
- To promote and assess the impact of the Council of Europe's *acquis* in the field of local finance;
- To consider updating some of the previous reports in the field of local and regional finance and notably the report on "Local finance in Europe" examined by us the 11th session of the Conference (Lisbon, 1996).

As concerns the leadership and management capacity of local and regional authorities:

Challenges:

- Fostering the leadership and capacity of local and regional authorities to deliver good local and regional governance and providing citizens with services of the highest possible quality while respecting budgetary constraints.

Actions:

- To share experiences on leadership, benchmarking and capacity-building for local and regional authorities with a view to identifying good practice and possibly preparing a recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States in these fields;
- To make use of and implement, as appropriate, the Committee of Ministers recommendations in the field of local and regional public services;

- To examine the possible ways in which local and regional authorities can co-operate with other authorities (inter-municipal co-operation, co-operation with authorities of a different level) and with the private sector (partnerships, concession of public services, contracting out certain elements) for improving public services offered to their citizens.

As concerns public ethics at local and regional level:

Challenge:

- Ensuring ethical behaviour by local and regional authorities, elected representatives and officials, whilst respecting local and regional self-government as well as individual rights and legitimate interests.

Actions:

- To continue to promote the Handbook of Good Practice on Public Ethics at Local Level and prepare, where possible, handbooks suited to the particular situation in member States and thematic documents targeted at specific audiences;
- To gather and share good practices concerning the evaluation of compliance with standards of public ethics at local and regional level;
- To exchange experiences and provide the information necessary for the review of the Handbook, with a view to preparing a revised version in 3 to 4 years time.

As concerns the development of the transfrontier and interterritorial co-operation of territorial communities or authorities:

Challenges:

- Removing remaining legal and administrative obstacles to transfrontier and interterritorial co-operation;
- Finding ways and means of providing territorial communities or authorities and their transfrontier co-operation bodies with the capacity necessary to engage in and develop co-operation;
- Establishing a clear and effective legal framework for institutionalised co-operation between territorial communities or authorities (euroregions).

Actions:

- To make use of the “check list” of measures to be taken prior to or after the ratification of the Madrid Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities and its Protocols with a view to giving these instruments the greatest possible effect;

- To make use of, and implement, as appropriate, Recommendation Rec(2005)2 of the Committee of Ministers on good practice in and the removal of obstacles to transfrontier and interterritorial co-operation;
- To identify the persons or institutions in charge of, or responsible for transfrontier and interterritorial co-operation at the level of the state (or the regions, as appropriate), with a view to creating within the Council of Europe an informal network through which to request and share information and documentation;
- In co-operation with the associations of local authorities at national and European level, to develop and promote the use of training methods and tools aimed at enhancing the capacity of local authorities to engage in sustainable transfrontier co-operation initiatives;
- To continue the work engaged in the Council of Europe with a view to adopting a third protocol to the Madrid Outline Convention, regulating the euroregional co-operation groupings (ECG).

Furthermore, we commit ourselves:

As concerns the acquis of the Council of Europe:

to give the fullest possible implementation to the relevant norms and recommendations, at central state and local and regional levels, and to this end, to:

- ensure translation into the official language(s) of our respective states;
- publish and disseminate the texts concerned and organise promotional events on them;
- collect feed-back from relevant actors about the implementation of the acquis and report to the intergovernmental bodies of the Council of Europe in order that experiences are shared, lessons drawn and the acquis is constantly updated and improved.

As concerns the information base of the Council of Europe

- To promote awareness and make use of it wherever appropriate, through
 - translation of the parts most relevant to our respective administrations, associations of local authorities and citizens;
 - facilitated access to it by relevant actors;
 - further input to be provided to competent bodies of the Council of Europe.

As concerns participation in the work of the Council of Europe:

- To review the working methods and procedures in force in our respective national administrations so as to ensure that our participation in the intergovernmental co-operation in the Council of Europe reflects the priority we attach to it;
- To share our experiences with a view to identifying good practices in this regard and keeping them under review.