

3rd European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT) (Bari, Italy: 21-23 October 1976) on "Urbanisation and regional planning"

Resolution No. 1 on Control of urbanisation within the context of regional planning

I. Preamble

1. The 3rd European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning was held at Bari from 21 to 23 October 1976 at the invitation of the Italian Government, and was attended by ministers and government representatives from the following member states of the Council of Europe: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom, together with, as observers, Finland, the Holy See, San Marino, Spain and Yugoslavia.

Four international governmental organisations were represented: the Commission of the European Communities, the European Conference of Ministers of Transport, the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development and the European Free Trade Association.

2. The Conference expresses its warm thanks to the Italian Government, and to the regional authorities of Puglia, for its organisation of the conference and for its generous hospitality, and to the rapporteur delegations for their considerable work in the preparation of the conference.

It also wishes to pay tribute to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and to the conference secretariat for their conscientious effort and spirit of commitment throughout the preparation of the conference, and requests the secretariat to give the proceedings of the conference as widespread a distribution as possible.

Its thanks are also due to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe for their invaluable support.

II. Control of urbanisation within the context of regional planning

3. The European Ministers of Regional Planning have examined at the conference the phenomenon of urbanisation, the problems it causes and the part that regional planning can and should play in solving these problems.

4. The urban explosion is closely bound up with the development of secondary and tertiary activities, whose dynamic forces give rise to ever-increasing urbanisation, and, in many towns, is also bound up with the attraction towards an urban way of life.

The ministers,

1. Having agreed at their 1st Conference to promote the balanced development of Europe's regions and having defined at their 2nd Conference the main objectives of European regional planning, undertook at their 3rd Conference to analyse the problems of urbanisation in Europe and to draw conclusions regarding the framing of a European urban development policy within regional planning;

2. Emphasising that urban problems cannot be seen solely as a sectoral concern, but in conjunction with related socio-economic factors and that the urban process must be considered part of regional planning;

3. Acknowledging that some urban problems are best solved by specific urban policies, but remaining nonetheless convinced that most urban policies must be drawn up as an integrated part of any national and regional planning policies;

4. Having studied the following themes, namely:

- a. urban development trends in Europe
- b. urban development and urban renewal
- c. control of urban growth,

and the theme on mountain regions and urbanisation, draw attention to the following main points:

A. The link between urban growth and demographic development is a complex, inter-related phenomenon. While intensive urbanisation over the last 25 years has taken place in most countries in Europe against a background of general population growth, in certain countries population growth has recently been slowing down. The effects of this should be taken into account in the formulation of urban and regional policies. The fall in overall population growth may cause

changes in the ways towns develop, owing both to the substantial reduction in population drift away from rural areas and to the shift in age-patterns among the urban population.

B. Urbanisation in Europe is uneven. In some countries, there are marked disparities between highly congested urban areas and less densely populated regions. In others, the structure is relatively homogeneous. Intra-regional and inter-regional balance in Europe imply greater homogeneity in the European urban structure. The major industrial regions raise not only problems of disharmony with other less densely populated regions, some of which are becoming under-populated and under-developed, but also problems of urban congestion.

C. The development of tertiary activities in towns has become an important factor in urban growth and has led to a concentration of services and an intensification of infrastructure. This concentration, in an excessive form, affects the social organisation of the towns in question, and the conditions of life of their inhabitants.

D. A significant urban development phenomenon of recent times has been the growing importance, in most European countries, of medium-sized towns (the size varying according to country). These towns have major advantages from the point of view of the general organisation of urban structure in relation to regional planning and in terms of the conditions and qualities of life for the population.

E. The urban network in Europe no longer seems to require the creation of as many new towns as in the past. Instead, it requires the better use of existing urban resources and the improvement of quality, whether in town centres, in the suburbs, in small towns or in the countryside. Urban renewal operations should not cause disturbances in the social structure nor permit property speculation.

F. In all countries the conditions governing the consumption of space are of growing importance, because usable space is a limited commodity. This applies not only to towns' growing space, but also to space used by city-dwellers in areas which may be distant from the towns. It is consequently important to control the consumption and use of space, especially in and around towns where there is a fairly general tendency to increase the areas used for infrastructural purposes or for economic activities, causing pressure on agricultural land and green spaces. It is accordingly important to take appropriate steps to control the consumption of all space and the conditions governing it, and to devise policies and standards for environmental protection.

G. Given the many tasks to be faced by local authorities in their control of urbanisation, special attention must be given to the problems of local authority finance in order to achieve adequate management of towns and ensure balanced investment in different economic and social sectors.

5. The ministers therefore consider:

A. That an overall regional planning policy is the context in which the problems of increased urbanisation should be remedied:

The role, needs and requirements of most towns and metropolitan areas can only be viewed within their national and regional context.

B. That the overall objectives of regional planning and urban development should be clearly defined:

The overall objectives should be clearly defined at national, regional and local levels and should be embodied in strategic and indicative plans and programmes, which take account of all the aspects of urbanisation -environmental social, economic and cultural.

C. That a balanced urban structure should be encouraged at national, regional and local levels:

National, regional and local authorities should have particular regard to the development of land-use controls and economic incentives.

Another main instrument towards achieving this goal is development of towns of medium size. Not only do these towns offer advantages in their social structure and in the conditions and quality of life of their inhabitants, but they also have a beneficial effect on the organisation of the urban structure. For these reasons their development should be promoted by increased economic activities and by the provision of necessary infrastructures and services.

Where appropriate, other measures of decentralisation should be adopted in the encouragement of a balanced urban structure.

D. That public authorities should have means to permit them to control development of towns and surrounding zones. These means should concern:

- the management of inner urban areas;
- suburban growth;
- control of urban physical expansion;
- balancing the general urban pattern;
- formulating policies for environmental protection

In general, "medium size" means towns between 40 000 and 150 000 population, but will vary according to country.

To enable this to be achieved, the necessary social, economic and technical expertise, and appropriate legal and financial provisions, would have to be developed. In particular:

i. Land-use control

Public authorities should have specific powers to control the development and change of use of land within their territory. In particular they should control land use so as to ensure that increases in value arising from the adoption of master plans, and through urbanisation, fall to the public. They should also have the power to acquire building land at current use value, irrespective of any subsequent rise, either real or potential.

ii. Precise restrictions and regulations

These should include control of buildings, the classification of certain types of land, and land-zoning in order to preserve its character. In particular, a system of development permits and planning permissions would be required to ensure conformity to an overall scheme of control. The more such mechanisms are part of an overall urban plan, the more effective they are.

iii. Housing policy

The objectives of an urban housing policy should include the improvement of housing standards, the provision of physical and social infrastructure, the increase in the overall housing stock of a standard and price acceptable by and accessible to all the population, and the definition of priority action areas.

E. That a system of co-operation and co-ordination between public authorities be further developed:

For the improvement of management of towns and their national and regional balance within the region, it is essential to improve the systems and procedures for co-ordination and co-operation between public authorities within a given region.

This would apply especially in respect of transport and communications networks, open and green spaces, protection of natural resources, land-use planning and reserves, leisure and recreational zones and facilities. This would thus enable a rational use of land resources to be made.

To these spheres of co-operation should be added those of economic planning and administrative management in those areas where the size and number of urban concentrations warrants it, namely in large metropolitan areas and their immediate hinterland.

F. That transport strategy and regional planning should be more closely linked:

The influence of transport networks on urban and regional planning is so profound that no urban and regional planning can realistically be formulated without consideration of associated communications policies and equally no major transport infrastructure should be contemplated without detailed analysis of urban and regional planning criteria.

G. That positive steps be taken to avoid the unnecessary use of land:

The rapid and unplanned consumption of space is one of the most pressing regional planning and urban problems. This must be avoided, by defining strategies for the location of major industrial and transport infrastructures, which are among the main users of land in general and urban land in particular.

H. That regional and local authorities should take the necessary steps to protect the environment:

As a corollary to controlling urban growth, the necessary measures for the protection of the environment should be taken. These measures should aim:

- a. to improve existing urban conditions;
- b. to reduce the pollution of the primary natural resources of air and water, mainly by more rational land-use planning, and by the use of modern technologies;
- c. to maintain and enhance the social environment in central and inner areas of large towns, particularly through the residential functions of such areas;
- d. to reduce the use of undeveloped land (and particularly land of high agricultural quality) for urban development.
- e. That more emphasis than in the past should be placed on the better use of the existing building stock.

Public authorities should wherever possible orientate their planning policies around the recycling, re-use and improvement of existing resources rather than contemplate major new schemes and constructions.