

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 160 (2005)¹ on coastal management and local and regional authority policy in Europe

The Congress,

1. Having regard to:

- a.* the report on coastal management and local and regional authority policy in Europe, presented by Mr Giovanni Macchiavello (Italy, R) on behalf of the Committee on Sustainable Development;
- b.* the results of the survey carried out by the Isle of Wight Centre for the Coastal Environment (United Kingdom) at the request of the committee;
- c.* the communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on integrated coastal management: a strategy for Europe (COM (2000) 547);
- d.* the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2002 concerning the implementation of integrated coastal zone management in Europe;

2. Considering that:

- a.* there is a considerable amount of legislation and guidance in relation to the management of the coastal zone but currently there is little co-ordination between these regulations;
- b.* although different government departments have sectoral policies for the coast, there is generally no planning or co-ordinating framework at national or European level;
- c.* as a result, there is a policy vacuum that often leaves local and regional authorities with little or no effective guidance on how to deal with many complex issues in an integrated manner;
- d.* integrated solutions to coastal problems can only be found and implemented at the local and regional level. However, integration of policies is only possible if the higher levels of administration provide a legal and institutional context and take appropriate measures to enable local and regional action;
- e.* local and regional authorities are in the best position to collect information about coastal conditions, to involve local stakeholders, to develop consensus or to make arbitration. Bottom-up initiatives involving the citizens and users of the coastal zones occur at this level; local and regional authorities are therefore a cornerstone for integrated management;

3. Concerned that:

- a.* currently there is little opportunity for local and regional authorities to have an influential role or to reflect the concerns of the coastal community;
- b.* a democratic deficit has arisen in the exercise of powers on the coast, resulting in little or no strategic or integrated planning of resource use;
- c.* many decisions in the coastal zone continue to be made without any opportunity for public comment or local democratic accountability;
- d.* as a result, there is a reduced local ownership of global issues such as the impact of climate change or the management of natural resources;

4. Convinced that:

- a.* in order to help coastal areas in meeting current and future economic and social objectives, a strategic and democratic approach is needed to the management and planning of Europe's coasts;
- b.* there is a need for a long-term strategy and a clear vision for the effective management of the coastal zone;
- c.* integrated management of the coastal zone requires strategic, co-ordinated and concerted action at the local and regional level, guided and supported by an appropriate framework at the national level;

5. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers call on the governments of coastal member states to:

- a.* conduct an overall stocktaking to analyse which major actors, laws and institutions influence the management of their coastal zone;
- b.* develop a co-ordinated and comprehensive national strategy to implement the principles of integrated coastal zone management, taking into account the possible impact of future climate change;
- c.* promote and enable the integration and co-ordination of sectoral development strategies affecting coastal areas;
- d.* develop a targeted and cost effective research and monitoring programme for the coast, including the response to climate change, pollution and natural hazards;
- e.* develop strategic coastal resource management including fisheries, energy and mineral exploitation with the aim of regenerating the economic potential of the coast to sustain coastal communities;
- f.* instigate bottom-up initiatives involving diverse stakeholders and public participation in order to achieve greater transparency and democratic accountability in decision making on the coast;
- g.* recognise the role and responsibilities of local and regional authorities in the national strategy for integrated coastal zone management;

h. issue clear guidance on the duties and financial responsibilities of local and regional authorities in respect of the coast;

i. endeavour to provide sufficient assistance and financial aid to support the coastal planning and management tasks being undertaken by local and regional authorities;

j. promote the establishment of information networks between national agencies, government departments, local and regional authorities, industry and NGOs in order to facilitate implementation of effective coastal zone management;

6. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers call on the European Union to:

a. set clear and practical targets for the quality of Europe's coast and regional seas and require all coastal member states to demonstrate progress towards achieving them;

b. develop a clear and consistent approach to coastal areas of transnational and interregional significance;

c. ensure that EU sectoral policies are compatible with and enable the integrated management of Europe's coastal zone;

d. recognise the special needs of the coast in future environmental, structural and research funding programmes;

e. launch a comprehensive monitoring programme to assess the physical and ecological implications of climate change for Europe's coastal zone;

f. promote co-operation between all coastal member states to exchange information and best practice;

g. encourage the participation of local and regional authorities in implementing the recommendation on integrated coastal zone management in Europe.

1. Debated and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 17 March 2005 (see Document CG (11) 28, draft recommendation presented by G. Macchiavello (Italy, R, EPP/CD), rapporteur).