

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 192 (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.* the coast is the most dynamic, sensitive and perhaps least understood of our natural environments. It is also an area with its own special economic and social problems and risks that are exacerbated by inadequate and often outdated infrastructure;
- b.* the distinctive character of most coastal settlements reflects their historic origins, with their coastal location being central to their development;
- c.* the coast is more vulnerable and sensitive than inland areas due to natural coastal evolution, such as coastal erosion, flooding and instability;
- d.* there is a broad range of conflicts and problems that local and regional authorities need to address to ensure that the potential economic value of the coast is protected from inappropriate activities and development;
- e.* the problems will be aggravated by climate change as sea levels rise and storm events increase in frequency and severity;

3. Stressing that:

- a.* local and regional authorities in Europe are generally involved in a variety of functions relating to the coast, ranging from strategic coastal planning and development control to environmental health and coastal tourism;

- b.* in many areas, local and regional authorities have become experts in managing the complex coastal environment and the activities within it, and frequently provide advice for sectoral and voluntary groups;

- c.* local and regional priorities in the field of coastal services include protection against coastal erosion, the management of beaches and seafronts and the management of environmentally sensitive areas;

- d.* local and regional authorities play a vital role in building partnerships, resolving conflicts and supporting the community on the coast;

- e.* whilst having a broad range of responsibilities, the ability of local and regional authorities to effectively fulfil these responsibilities is constrained by a number of factors, including the degree of confusion about responsibilities on the coast;

- f.* the management and effective dissemination of coastal information and data is central to an integrated and sustainable approach to coastal zone management. Techniques that maximise the use and exchange of data therefore make good environmental as well as commercial sense;

4. Convinced that:

- a.* the utilisation of the coast is extremely diverse and often conflicting, therefore there is a need to ensure that all activities are working in partnership and collectively making real improvements to the economic, environmental and social sustainability of the coast;

- b.* a well-managed coast is dependent on good, holistic decision making, based on a broad understanding of coastal issues and access to appropriate information. This requires an ongoing dialogue between the research community and those with practical responsibilities for the coast;

- c.* an integrated approach to coastal zone management should result in a sustainable use of resources and a better managed European coastline;

5. Concerned that the predicted consequences of climate change include rising sea levels, increased storminess, wetter winters and drier summers and a possible change in wave regimes. All of these will have a significant impact on the management of the coastal zone and the associated financial implications will be great;

6. Calls on coastal local and regional authorities to:

- a.* identify coastal areas of local or regional importance not identified at national level and ensure or support the appropriate co-ordination and management of these sites;

- b.* elaborate development plans to recognise the special needs of the coast, in particular, closer integration is needed between shoreline management and the statutory planning system;

- c.* review their activities on the coast to ensure they are meeting best practice standards;

d. take the lead in the development of integrated plans for inshore waters within the context of regional guidelines;

e. facilitate dialogue between coastal interests by establishing local fora for specific areas of the coast;

f. participate in local/regional coastal defence groups or coastal networks at regional, national or European level. These provide a unique opportunity to disseminate research findings, exchange coastal data and discuss topical issues;

g. regularly co-operate with coastal centres of excellence, such as local universities or dedicated coastal observatories. These centres of expertise provide an opportunity not only to undertake coastal research but also to act as a focal point for activities and information management within the coastal zone;

h. commission research to address the specific areas of local authority concern on coastal matters. A priority should be to identify and quantify the additional burdens, and monitor additional duties and responsibilities faced by local authorities because of their coastal location;

i. assist the coastal community by providing information, training and skills development for coastal practitioners, reflecting the needs of integrated coastal management;

j. identify local and regional infrastructure priorities that are vital to sustaining the coastal economy in an integrated manner;

k. develop partnerships with port operators to consider integrated solutions for maintaining and developing the economic value of ports and industries requiring a coastal location;

l. make sure that local and regional policies are complementary to the national coastal strategy whilst enabling local and regional initiatives to work towards a common national aim. Local and regional policies should provide the interface between local coastal initiatives and national and European policy.

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