

CONFERENCE ON CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

UNDER THE HUNGARIAN PRESIDENCY

OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Budapest, 9-10 September 2021

CONCLUSIONS

- *Considering that the Council of Europe has developed legal frameworks intended to encourage and to facilitate the conclusion of cross-border agreements between local and regional authorities within the scope of their respective powers, notably the Madrid Outline Convention and its additional protocols,*
- *Noting the persistence of obstacles to cross-border and interterritorial cooperation and the consequent need to share good practices aiming at their reduction as stated in Recommendation CM/Rec(2005)2,*
- *Considering the further need to facilitate the engagement of local and regional authorities, within the scope of their respective powers, in the areas of mutual assistance in case of natural or man-made disasters as stated by the Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)5,*
- *Considering the Conclusions of the “International Conference on Cross-border cooperation in Europe: decentralisation, legal frameworks and practice”, held in Dubrovnik, Croatia on the 25th of May 2018 under the Croatian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe,*
- *In light of the recent adverse impact of the Covid-19 pandemics on European societies in general and in border areas in particular,*
- *In light of the importance of the efforts to further collect and share good practices on how to prepare and manage such crises as highlighted in the Special Report on Democratic Governance and COVID-19 adopted by the European Committee on Democracy and Governance in November 2020,*

- *In light of the findings presented in the 2021 Report “State of Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law” of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe,*

The participants of the Conference on Cross-Border Cooperation organised on 9 September 2021 under the Hungarian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe:

- Acknowledged that the recent pandemic crisis demonstrated how much the European states are interconnected and interdependent and emphasised the need to further coordinate efforts to limit the impacts upon cross-border mobility, including but not limited to, the mobility of medical and social care staff, medical equipment and even of patients.
- Reaffirmed that the benefits of cross-border and interterritorial cooperation are not limited to border areas but are essential to achieving peace, prosperity, and stability in Europe.
- Acknowledged that the relevance of cross-border cooperation and interterritorial cooperation relates increasingly to issues regarding social and economic inequalities, environmental degradation, resilience and crisis management, the backsliding of democracy, as well as to opportunities and challenges linked with the rapid technological developments in such fields.
- Acknowledged the role of the Council of Europe in promoting effective local democracy also through facilitated co-operation between local and regional authorities across political and geographical boundaries, providing four conventions, several recommendations and practical tools aimed at making cooperation between neighbouring or non-adjacent territorial communities/authorities legally feasible and practically sustainable.

Furthermore, the participants call on the Council of Europe to:

- Continue to support Member States in the ratification of the Outline Madrid Convention and its additional protocols.
- Continue to support local and regional authorities engaged in cross-border and interterritorial cooperation providing technical support within the framework of Good Democratic Governance and tailoring specific capacity-building tools to cross-border cooperation needs and peculiarities.

The participants call on the Member States to:

- Ensure the wider ratification of the Third Protocol to the Outline Madrid Convention, thus widening the range of tools available to local and regional authorities.
- Foster the role of regional and local authorities, which have gained a new centrality in developing and maintaining cross-border cooperation as means to provide solutions to today’s extraordinary challenges in border areas.