

CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF EUROPE

Recommendation 92 (2001)¹ on follow-up action to be taken on the Conference “Cities and Regions: Cultural Diversity – a Precondition for a United Europe” (Innsbruck, 11-12 December 2000)

The Congress,

1. Calling to mind its previous work on the cultural policies of European cities and regions, in particular the Bordeaux Declaration on Regionalisation (1978) (paragraph 31), the Bremen Conference (May 1983), the Florence Conference (May 1987) and the 6th Economic Forum of the Regions of Europe (Weimar, 3-4 May 1999) on culture as an economic factor;

2. Having regard to:

– Recommendation Rec(2000)1 of the Committee of Ministers on the fostering of transfrontier co-operation between territorial communities or authorities in the cultural field (adopted 12 January 2000), and

– the Declaration on Cultural Diversity adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 7 December 2000;

3. On the basis of the Final Declaration of the Innsbruck Conference (11-12 December 2000) adopted unanimously on 12 December 2000;

4. Deploring the disparities between the member states and between European regions and municipalities in terms of cultural amenities;

5. Considering that:

a. access to culture is a human right;

b. cultural policies must give the right to make one's voice heard and access to culture to everyone;

c. cultural development is a vital means of preventing disadvantaged young people from engaging in urban violence, or at least limiting such violence;

d. culture thrives on tradition, but above all on creativity and exchange;

e. the new opportunities for communication on a world scale, along with travel and migration, facilitate a form of cultural “cross-breeding” conducive to cultural development and creativity;

f. the cultural sphere is an ideal area for local and regional government action, in keeping with the subsidiarity

principle laid down in the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the draft European Charter of Regional Self-Government;

g. artistic activity must be encouraged in Europe's cities and regions to counter the current trend towards standardisation resulting from globalisation;

h. exchange between cultures (at national, regional and local level) is one way of moving towards a united Europe, which cannot be based on a uniform language or culture;

i. cultural assets are of a specific nature and cannot be regarded as equivalent to ordinary economic or commercial assets;

j. all languages, whether national, regional or local, are equal in dignity;

k. preserving Europe's linguistic diversity is essential to the harmonious development of our societies. It is therefore necessary to:

i. promote the mother tongue, which is a crucial factor in the development and identity of the individual;

ii. develop language teaching on three levels, namely mother tongue, national language and other widely used languages, as aids to communication and exchange;

iii. avoid linguistic conflicts based on blinkered demands;

l. languages are conducive to multiple use – everyone can acquire skills in several languages;

6. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe:

a. invite the Council for Cultural Co-operation (CDCC) and its specialist committees to:

i. take account of the local and regional dimension in their intergovernmental co-operation activities, especially as regards the Mosaic and Stage projects dealing with cultural policies in the Balkan and Caucasian countries, as part of the work to analyse and improve the cultural policies of Council of Europe member states;

ii. involve the CLRAE in these intergovernmental co-operation programmes so as to create lasting ties and interaction between the various components of Council of Europe cultural co-operation;

iii. recognise the important part played by culture in conflict prevention and accordingly involve cities and regions in the projects to be carried out in this area by the CDCC's Culture Committee;

b. invite the European Commission to:

i. implement fully Article 151 of the Treaty establishing the European Community (Title XII, Culture), especially paragraphs 1, 3 and 4:

– “The Community shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the member states, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore”;

recognising the key role of Europe's cities and regions in this area;

– “The Community and the member states shall foster co-operation with third countries and the competent international organisations in the sphere of culture, in particular the Council of Europe”;

– “The Community shall take cultural aspects into account in its action under other provisions of this Treaty, in particular in order to respect and to promote the diversity of its cultures”;

ii. assign much greater importance to culture in European Union programmes intended for countries applying for membership of the European Union and in programmes financed by the structural funds, especially as regards projects designed to develop transfrontier and interregional co-operation between local and regional authorities (particularly under the Interreg programme);

c. invite the member states of the Council of Europe to:

i. apply the subsidiarity principle fully in the cultural sphere and hence grant local and regional authorities those powers and resources which give them the necessary room for manoeuvre to maintain and protect cultural diversity;

ii. support the preparation of new international legal instruments (particularly by Unesco) to promote cultural and linguistic diversity and provide a clearer definition of

the rights and roles of the various tiers of government (local, regional and national);

iii. ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages if they have not already done so and take the necessary steps to ensure that it is applied in all European countries, because the regional or minority languages spoken in our regions and cities are important and precious ingredients of the European cultural heritage;

iv. take an active part in the European Year of Languages 2001 programme;

v. consider the location of major cultural amenities in the light of overall spatial planning policy, with a view to reducing inequalities between regions and between urban, suburban and rural areas;

vi. encourage cultural diversity in rural areas as a prerequisite for sustainable development and for the survival of the traditions associated with them.

1. Debated by the Congress and adopted on 31 May 2001, 3rd Sitting (see Doc. CG (8) 9, draft recommendation presented by Mrs V. Dirksen and Mr T. Souladze, rapporteurs).