

CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF EUROPE

Recommendation 112 (2002)¹ on the Forums of Cities and Regions of South-eastern Europe (8th and 9th Economic Forums) (Istanbul, Turkey, 2 and 3 November 2001 and Novi Sad, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 18 to 20 April 2002)

The Congress

1. Wishes to thank:

a. The Metropolitan Municipality of Istanbul, the City of Novi Sad and the authorities of Turkey and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for their hospitality on the occasion of the Forums Of Cities and Regions of South-eastern Europe held in Istanbul on 2 and 3 November 2001 and Novi Sad from 18 to 20 April 2002;

b. The Belgian Government for providing financial support for these activities, which promote local democracy under the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe;

c. The participants at the two forums, in particular local and regional elected representatives from South-eastern Europe, their partners from other European local and regional authorities, and the representatives of national governments, international organisations and NGOs;

2. Points out that:

a. The Istanbul and Novi Sad Forums were organised in co-operation with the Foundation for the Economy and Sustainable Development of the Regions of Europe (FEDRE);

b. The Parliamentary Assembly attended both forums and the Ministers' Deputies attended the Istanbul Forum;

3. Is closely following political and economic developments in South-eastern Europe and their impact on local and regional authorities, and in this connection:

a. welcomes Bosnia and Herzegovina's membership of the Council of Europe;

b. hopes that the new law on local self-government will help establish a stable political climate in "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia";

c. hopes that the political changes in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) will enable the Federal Republic to become a member of the Council of Europe in the near future;

d. hopes that the local elections in Kosovo, scheduled for 21 September 2002, will be well conducted and that there will be a high turnout by all its constituent communities;

4. Reaffirms its belief that economic and social development leading to a higher standard of living is a crucial factor in establishing stable democratic institutions and stresses the major contribution that small and medium-sized businesses can and must make to developing the local, regional, and national economy;

5. Asks the governments of South-eastern European countries to introduce legislation enabling local and regional authorities to step up co-operation beyond national borders and, consequently:

a. to sign and/or ratify (if they have not already done so) the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities (ETS No. 106), and the two protocols to it;

b. to enact laws to protect investors and combat corruption in local authority management so that investor confidence is restored and the citizen is encouraged to play a greater part in public affairs;

6. Invites non-governmental organisations, in particular the Assembly of European Regions (AER), the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) and the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR) to:

a. foster partnerships with South-eastern European towns and regions in technical matters, such as energy, environment, transport and water and waste management;

b. take part in Congress actions aimed at developing interregional and transfrontier co-operation between local authorities and regions in South-eastern Europe;

7. Invites the Council of Europe Development Bank to:

a. increase lending for local and regional authority development in Europe, especially South-eastern Europe;

b. develop closer co-operation with the CLRAE and in this context;

c. organise, in co-operation with the CLRAE, a seminar to provide local authorities with more information on how the Bank can help local and regional authority development in South-eastern Europe;

8. Ask the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and the donor countries:

a. to give priority to projects aimed at strengthening local democracy in South-eastern Europe and give the CLRAE financial support for its projects in this field, in particular the mayor of Belgrade's proposal for a meeting of those South-eastern European cities and regions of the Danube, taking into account the work of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and other

intergovernmental, interregional or intermunicipal work on matters concerning the Danube area;

b. to place emphasis, in Working Tables I and II, on small projects designed to support local initiatives, Euroregions and the local economy;

9. Recommends that, on the basis of the Istanbul and Novi Sad Declarations, unanimously adopted on 3 November 2001 and 20 April 2002 respectively, the Committee of Ministers:

a. invite South-eastern European countries to conclude agreements doing away with visa requirements, which hamper movement of citizens and consequently transfrontier co-operation;

b. allocate more resources to developing local democracy and civil society:

i. through voluntary contributions and;

ii. programmes of assistance for South-eastern Europe (in particular post-admission programmes for Bosnia and Herzegovina and pre- and post-admission programmes for Serbia and Montenegro);

c. instruct the Committee of Experts on Transfrontier Co-operation (LR-CT) to take part in forthcoming Congress work on:

i. a political statement on the development of transfrontier co-operation between local and regional authorities in South-eastern Europe, taking the form of a “gentleman’s agreement”, and subsequently;

ii. a multilateral agreement between governments of South-eastern European countries providing a legal framework for transfrontier co-operation between local and regional authorities on the basis of examples existing elsewhere in Europe;

d. give its support to the network of National Associations of Local Authorities of South-eastern Europe (NALAs-SEE), one of whose objectives is to help train staff working for those associations or for local and regional authorities in South-eastern Europe;

10. Invites the European Union to:

a. increase its logistical and financial support for European towns and regions running decentralised technical partnership projects with towns and regions in South-eastern Europe by setting up a special support programme;

b. approve European Commission funding for the comprehensive projects submitted by the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA), which meet the real needs of the communities of South-eastern Europe in the fields of democracy, economic and social development, interethnic dialogue and respect for human rights and minorities’ rights;

c. extend, without delay, European Commission aid programmes for twinnings with towns and municipalities in South-eastern Europe (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, “the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, and Albania) as a way of drawing Europeans’ attention to problems in this part of Europe and demonstrating European solidarity;

d. support the CLRAE’s proposal for a multilateral agreement between countries in South-eastern Europe to facilitate transfrontier co-operation between local and regional authorities.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 6 June 2002, 3rd sitting (see Doc. CG (9) 8, draft recommendation, presented by Mr Y. Mildon and Mr O. Masters, rapporteurs).