

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 199 (2006)¹ on interregional co-operation in the Black Sea Basin

1. Since 1989 there has been renewed interest in the Black Sea Basin and various measures have been taken to further its socio-economic development and draw it closer to Europe, in particular the European Union.

2. The European Union's recent enlargement has given a boost to co-operation in the region, whose political weight is bound to increase with the forthcoming accession of Bulgaria and Romania.

3. Moreover, on account of the region's geopolitical features, the Black Sea Basin is becoming a socio-economic area where the various European and international organisations are intervening to foster regional co-operation to promote stability.

4. The Congress endorses this view and therefore welcomes the co-operation bodies set up in the region since 1989, and particularly the work done in this area by the Black Sea Economic Co-operation Organization (BSEC) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation Organization (PABSEC); it takes note with interest of the recent initiative by the Presidents of Georgia and Ukraine to create the Alliance of Democracies, stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

5. In this spirit, a forum for interregional co-operation enabling the regions bordering on the Black Sea to decide how best to manage the basin, while meeting their specific needs, is an essential further step towards peace, stability and socio-economic development in the region.

6. Furthermore, the Congress wishes to draw particular attention to the extremely critical environmental situation in the Black Sea Basin resulting, in particular, from widespread eutrophication, which has harmful consequences for biodiversity, wetlands and fishing, but also from oil pollution of the coastline and the discharge of waste water.

7. Here again, the development of interregional co-operation between countries bordering on the Black Sea could make it easier to find a solution, or at least attenuate these crucial problems.

8. As regards the various levels of co-operation, the Congress considers, in view of the growing role the regions have to play in the spatial development of their respective countries and of Europe generally, that it is important that any form of interregional co-operation should be able to fit

in harmoniously with institutions at other levels, be they governments, parliaments or European institutions.

9. In the light of this new factor, the Congress particularly welcomes the commitment of the governments of countries bordering on the Black Sea to setting up a platform for interregional co-operation, which will also be responsible for encouraging and contributing to the institutional reforms necessitated by such co-operation.

10. In anticipation of the establishment of the Black Sea euroregion, it will be equally important to take account of the differences in the current levels of regionalisation in the countries concerned and the need to promote and further, in parallel, regionalisation processes in the region.

11. Accordingly, the Congress welcomes the outcome of the conference organised on the subject in Costanța, Romania, on 30 March 2006 by its Committee on Sustainable Development in conjunction with the Romanian chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, and endorses the final declaration adopted at the close of proceedings, in which the Conference fully supported the Congress initiative of setting up a Black Sea euroregion.

12. The establishment of such a Black Sea euroregion will provide an institutional level of multilateral co-operation that will supplement existing co-operation, in particular BSEC inter-governmental co-operation and PABSEC inter-parliamentary co-operation. In order to avoid unnecessary, harmful duplication of existing co-operation arrangements in the Black Sea Basin, it would be desirable to hold consultations between the Congress and the BSEC.

13. In connection with inter-parliamentary co-operation, and in view of the importance of legislation introduced by national parliaments in this field, the Congress is pleased to have long enjoyed fruitful co-operation on this front with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, particularly during recent work leading to the establishment of the Adriatic Euroregion.

14. In the light of the Assembly's interest and its work on the situation in the Black Sea Basin, the Congress welcomes the fact that the Assembly has expressed a willingness to help set up the Black Sea euroregion.

15. In the light of the foregoing, the Congress recommends that the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe:

a provide its support for the establishment of the Black Sea euroregion;

b. ask the member states, and more particularly the states concerned, to encourage the regionalisation processes in their respective countries so as to enable the future euroregion to play its role to the full.

Appendix

Conference on interregional co-operation in the Black Sea Area

Constanța (Romania), 30 March 2006

Final Declaration

The representatives of international organisations, national, regional and local authorities and civil society, meeting in Constanța (Romania) on 30 March 2006, at the conference on interregional co-operation in the Black Sea area:

1. Express their gratitude to the Romanian authorities for their hospitality and commend Romania's commitment to the cause of the Black Sea, pursued at the level of the Council of Europe as well as at the Black Sea Economic Co-operation Organization (BSEC), both of which it currently chairs;
2. Thank the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe for the special attention it devotes to the problems of seas such as the Adriatic, Baltic, Black Sea and Mediterranean;
3. Note with satisfaction the creation of the Adriatic Euroregion in Venice, on 6 February 2006;
4. Emphasise the heightened geopolitical importance of the Black Sea region due to the enlargement, both imminent and future, of the European Union to include some of its riparian states;
5. Take note of the different initiatives undertaken in the Black Sea region and welcome the ongoing co-operation at various levels: inter-governmental co-operation via the BSEC; inter-parliamentary co-operation via the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation Organization (PABSEC); local co-operation via the association of Black Sea capital cities; inter-university co-operation within the Black Sea University Network; etc.;
6. Convinced that dialogue and co-operation at all institutional levels are a key means of enhancing the prospects of the Black Sea, commend the excellent work and high quality dialogue aimed at generating fruitful synergies to the benefit of the sustainable development of the Black Sea area;
7. Welcome the interest already shown by the Council of Europe to Black Sea issues, particularly through conferences organised by its Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe;
8. Reiterate the acknowledged political importance of co-operation between local and regional authorities and agree that closer links at that level, while respecting the institutional and legislative framework of the states involved, can make a substantial contribution to ensuring peace, stability, and sustainable development in the Black Sea area;

9. Recognise the significant contribution of the Council of Europe and, in particular, of the Congress of the Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and of the European Framework Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities (Madrid, 1980) to the reinforcement of regional co-operation in Europe and reaffirm the link existing between transnational regional co-operation and the democratic stability and sustainable development of the regions concerned.

10. Stress that the natural or conventional borders should not prevent the development of exchanges, bonds and dialogue among the peoples and civilisations in the Black Sea area, aimed at promoting peaceful coexistence in multi-ethnic societies and the value of multi-culturalism;

11. Appreciate that interregional co-operation contributes to improving the quality of life of the inhabitants of the Black Sea area, to social cohesion and to a better understanding of the peoples in the border regions of the Black Sea basin.

12. For these reasons, consider that the legitimate regional and local authorities in this area, while differing in their range of prerogatives and institutional organisation, are nevertheless united in respect for the values of democracy, the rule of law and human rights and are capable of making a tangible and valuable contribution to European integration, by means of transborder, transnational and interregional co-operation. They emphasise the importance of applying the European experience of local administration as an important element contributing to building a Europe based on the principles of democracy, rule of law and human rights;

13. Bearing in mind that all Black Sea riparian states are members of the Council of Europe, consider that the Council of Europe could facilitate strengthened co-operation among local and regional authorities in the Black Sea area and thus substantially contribute to the common objective of building a Europe without dividing lines;

14. Encourage the coastal states of the Black Sea area to constantly and effectively support the transborder, transnational and interregional co-operation of their local and regional authorities, in order to create favourable conditions for the consolidation of democratic practices, for good governance at local level and for sustainable development in the region;

15. Stress, however, that – given the environmental and ecological issues – action to tackle the problems of the Black Sea region cannot be limited solely to its riparian states and must be extended to a broader geographical area, including the Danube basin and the countries of the South Caucasus;

16. Consider it important that this dialogue be reflected in concrete and ongoing commitment, firmly rooted in the practices of local and regional authorities or national structures with equivalent responsibilities;

The participants ask:

17. the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe to pursue its commitment to the Black Sea area and contribute to the creation, by the end of 2007, of a euroregion along the lines of the Adriatic Euroregion, providing the riparian countries of the Black Sea with an instrument establishing effective dialogue and co-operation among the local and regional authorities, as well as concerted and integrated approaches to the region's problems;

18. the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to support this initiative by facilitating, *inter alia*, co-operation between the Congress and national authorities in this undertaking;

19. that the following aims be considered when devising the Black Sea euroregion project:

- promoting co-operation among the Black Sea countries at local and regional level
- consolidating democratic stability and promoting good governance,
- contributing to the promotion of sustainable development, including improved social and economic cohesion,
- enhancing the development of mutual relations between residents and institutions in this area, as a precondition for better knowledge, understanding and co-operation;
- making better use of regional resources to strengthen local authorities' management skills;

– fostering an effective exchange of experience in identifying sustainable financial resources for common projects of local and regional authorities, including assistance programmes developed by the EU;

– contributing to promoting the exercising of citizens' rights to participate in public administration at local level.

20. that the participating international organisations and the national, regional and local authorities focus in the coming months on finalising the negotiations on:

– the agreement establishing the status of the Black-Sea Euroregion and

– setting up a small secretariat with a technical mandate aimed at facilitating the exchanges of views and preparing the necessary documentation. In this regard, the participants thank the Romanian authorities and take note of Romania's offer to support the setting-up of a permanent secretariat of the future Black Sea euroregion.

The countries concerned are *pro memoriam*:

1. Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation (as observer), Turkey, Ukraine and Armenia, Azerbaijan and Greece.
2. At a later stage: other interested states.

1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Regions on 31 May 2006 and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 1 June 2006 (see Document CPR (13) 3, draft recommendation presented by L. Sfirloaga (Romania, R, SOC) and V. Kadokhov (Russian Federation, R, SOC), rapporteurs).