

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 363 (2014)¹ Inter-regional co-operation in Europe: trends and prospects

1. Recent years have seen a surge in bilateral and multi-lateral co-operation initiatives involving Europe's regions. These have evolved from being a special interest of federated States to becoming a general trend throughout Europe and beyond.

2. Inter-regional co-operation may be understood as the direct involvement of regional governments and parliaments in bilateral or multilateral co-operation schemes, other than those represented by trans-frontier co-operation, with regional governments in other countries.

3. This form of co-operation has begun to demonstrate its potential with respect to territorial development and cohesion, furthering the Council of Europe's aim to achieve greater unity among its members. Economic benefits are being realised by increased trade, economies of scale, better use of resources and the forging of strategic economic alliances to better compete with large economies on the global stage. Political benefits include the erosion of barriers resulting from historical, political or cultural differences and more effective representation of common interests in international fora.

4. The Congress notes that the intergovernmental sector of the Council of Europe has already done much with regard to identifying and addressing obstacles to transfrontier co-operation and believes that it would be appropriate to carry out similar work with regard to facilitating inter-regional co-operation.

5. Inter-regional co-operation remains for the most part little known and poorly understood. There is a clear need for greater visibility and sharing of experience in this field,

to make national and regional governments more aware of what is possible and how best to proceed.

6. A key feature of the success of such initiatives lies in good consultation and co-ordination between national and regional governments, to ensure maximum coherence in policies and strategies.

7. Protocol No. 3 to the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities concerning Euroregional Co-operation Groupings (ECGs), (CETS No. 206), has created new possibilities for inter-regional co-operation, paving the way for the development of a new generation of co-operation initiatives and projects which will better meet the needs and expectations of the parties concerned.

8. Convinced of the value of further developing such co-operation, the Congress therefore asks the Committee of Ministers to invite national governments to:

a. encourage their regional governments to develop their co-operation with counterparts in other States;

b. facilitate such inter-regional co-operation initiatives;

c. encourage the representation of regions in international bodies;

d. facilitate the opening of representation offices in other countries by those regions which seek to do so.

9. The Congress invites the Committee of Ministers to:

a. consider undertaking a stock-taking of the obstacles to inter-regional co-operation in Europe, to complement the work that it has already undertaken with regard to obstacles to transfrontier co-operation;

b. encourage the representation of regional governments in its intergovernmental committees;

c. encourage member States to sign and ratify Protocol No.3 to the Outline Convention.

1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Regions on 14 October 2014 and adopted by the Congress on 15 October 2014, 2nd Sitting (see Document CPR(27)2FINAL, explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: Stewart Dickson, United Kingdom (R, ILDG).