

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 175 (2005)¹ on outermost regions: a challenge to the balanced and sustainable development of European territory

The Congress, bearing in mind the proposal of the Chamber of Regions,

1. Having regard to:

a. the motion for a resolution tabled by Alberto Joao Jardim (Portugal, R, EPP/CD), Calin Chirita (Romania, L, NR), Giovanni Di Stasi (Italy, R, SOC), Miljenko Doric (Croatia, R, ILDG), Günther Krug (Germany, R, SOC), Yavuz Mildon (Turkey, R, EPP/CD), Hans Martin Tschudi (Switzerland, R, ILDG), Luciano Valaguzza (Italy, R, NR), Stanislav Vavilov (Russian Federation, R, ILDG) and Keith Whitmore (United Kingdom, R, ILDG) [Document GC (10) 27];

b. its Recommendation 101 (2001) on the impact of globalisation on regions, which calls on the European Union to continue and step up support for regions, in particular the “ultraperipheral” or outermost regions;

2. Considering that:

a. the seven outermost regions who obtained this statute within the European Union are particularly hard-hit by specific disadvantages that hinder their development;

b. the regions in question are distinctive in that they belong not only to geographically very remote parts of Europe, but also to areas having no highly developed markets;

c. the persistence of a combination of factors affecting them – extreme remoteness, insularity, small size, harsh relief, difficult climate and economic dependence on a small number of products – gives them an identity of their own which cannot be compared with any other in the European Union or in Europe generally, and which is in fact much more similar to that of the small vulnerable economies;

d. these disadvantages have been recognised by the European Union in Article 299, paragraph 2, of the Amsterdam Treaty, which allows differential treatment for these regions, and Articles IV-440-2; IV-440-7 and III-424 of the EU Treaty establishing a constitution for Europe;

e. with the establishment of this legal basis, arrangements have been made for the outermost regions that undoubtedly reflect, in primary law, the emergence of a new situation unique in Europe;

f. the development of these regions, which is based largely on European solidarity, could be undermined by the changes resulting from the building of a new Europe and in particular enlargement, the reform of certain European policies and economic globalisation;

g. the outermost dimension of the European regions requires that a new approach be established; this approach should attenuate the disadvantages of these regions and optimise their potential in promising fields or sectors, on the basis of their specific characteristics;

h. political will on the part of member states and the EU institutions is crucial if solutions are to be found to the special problems facing this group of remote European regions;

i. the outermost regions do not have the same opportunities as other European regions;

3. Considering that a number of regions that have not been classified by the European Union as “outermost” suffer from major geographical and economic handicaps, and urgent measures are needed in order to help development and support this second category of European under-privileged territories;

4. Concerning the so-called “outermost” regions:

a. urges the governments of the member states in which these regions are located to devise and propose action strategies – including reference instruments – appropriate to the specific features and needs of the outermost regions, and design a development model specific to that group of regions;

b. requests the European Union:

i. to guarantee for the future the allocation to the outermost regions of the financial resources which are essential if they are to continue and consolidate their development process;

ii. to avoid reductions in financial support that would penalise these regions because of their permanent vulnerability, and also because of the risk of economic decline stemming from the adoption of such measures,

5. Concerning the regions that do not have “outermost” status within the European Union, requests the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe:

a. to take note of the analysis of the special situation of the distant regions prepared by the Committee on Sustainable Development of the Chamber of Regions, as set out in the explanatory memorandum to this recommendation [Document CPR (12) 4, Part II];

b. to invite the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT) to analyse more closely the constraints that these areas have to face and, in co-operation with the Congress, prepare a recommendation for supporting this second category of distant and under-privileged territories;

c. to examine in co-operation with the Congress the introduction of a support framework for all regions suffering from permanent natural or demographic disadvantages, such as the most northern regions, with small population density, as well as the insular, transborder and mountainous regions, to achieve financial, social and territorial cohesion;

d. to consider the measures to be taken to foster pan-European co-operation concerning outlying regions and

the access of such regions in states not members of the European Union to the *acquis communautaire* and co-operation mechanisms in such matters.

1. Debated and adopted by the Chamber of Regions on 1 June 2005 and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 2 June 2005 (see Document CPR (12) 4, draft recommendation presented by I. Linge (Sweden, R, EPP/CD), rapporteur).

