

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 142 (2003)¹ on the promotion of regionalisation and interregional co-operation in Europe through the Summer Schools and Centurio programmes run by the Assembly of European Regions

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

1. Considering:

a. that the Centurio and Summer School programmes of the Assembly of European Regions (AER) are effective tools for promoting interregional co-operation and regionalisation throughout Europe;

b. that they also effectively further the main aims of the Council of Europe and its Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe inasmuch as they help to make regions more aware of the importance of the values of a pluralist democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and freedoms, and of the need to observe and implement these principles;

c. that they also enable regions to engage in meaningful exchanges of practical experience and expertise in areas of key importance for European integration and that they thus make a decisive contribution to the process of preparing regions in candidate countries for the challenges of the enlargement of the European Union;

d. that the Council of Europe and the European Union have already undertaken to support these programmes, which are in fact significant sources of inspiration for European policies on integration and on social, economic and territorial cohesion;

e. that more emphatic Council of Europe and European Union support for these programmes could none the less bring about improvement in the vital process of monitoring the Centurio traineeships and the Summer School and the equally indispensable task of evaluating their results;

f. that a large number of European regions, in many Council of Europe member states, are actively involved in the programmes, bringing their experiences and their wish to co-operate;

g. that the relations of the Council of Europe and the European Union with non-member countries are in full evolution and that it is essential that the programmes also reach out to countries beyond Europe, starting with those of the Mediterranean basin;

h. that, as a result, the programmes contribute to networking among a great number of territorial authorities right across Europe and indeed farther afield, facilitating exchanges between those responsible and their experiences both at bilateral and multilateral level;

2. Having acknowledged the Adriatic Agenda 21 launched at the Assembly of European Regions Summer School 2002, recognising that this programme of interregional co-operation in the Adriatic zone can be an instrument of sustainable and economic development, democratic stability, and peace in this part of Europe;

3. Noting:

a. the numerous statements of the Committee of the Regions and the European Parliament on the promotion of interregional co-operation and training;

b. Resolution 119 (2001) and Recommendation 99 (2001) on international co-operation at regional level adopted by the Congress;

4. Recommends that the member states:

a. facilitate and support interregional and transfrontier co-operation, by giving regions suitable competences and legal and financial instruments;

b. work for the speedy adoption and ratification of the draft European Charter of Regional Self-Government proposed by the Congress in 1997;

c. give their support for the Adriatic Agenda 21 by:

i. inviting the regional and local authorities of the Adriatic coast to participate in organised activities within the framework of this programme;

ii. organising, with AER co-operation, a future Economic Forum for South-East Europe in a region on the Adriatic coast;

iii. organising, with the AER's co-operation, common meetings with the working groups for South-east Europe as well as with the competent working structures for the Stability Pact;

iv. proposing a future conference on regional democracy and interregional co-operation in one of the regions on the Adriatic coast.

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

a. reserve a suitable place for the Congress in its special assistance programmes in favour of the Council of Europe's new member states, in order to enable the Congress, in co-operation with the AER, to step up its efforts to promote local and regional democracy, East-West and North-South interregional co-operation within the continent of Europe and with the south of the Mediterranean basin;

b. provide particular support to the Adriatic regional members of the Congress in order to promote the Adriatic Agenda 21 initiative and to establish an Adriatic network

of local and regional authorities for democracy and sustainable development;

6. Recommends that the European Commission:

a. integrate interregional co-operation into the Community initiatives for regional development and recognise its transfrontier, transnational and interregional dimensions as factors that contribute in a practical way to European integration and democratic stability;

b. involve the regions in the definition of its future programmes, so that it can properly reflect the needs of the regions and their co-operation;

c. improve and strengthen the “external policy” dimension of the Interreg III programme by properly co-ordinating the programmes for external co-operation (e.g. PHARE, TACIS and MEDA), with the central aim of extending eligibility criteria in favour of non-EU partners;

d. encourage its candidate countries, so that the regional reforms should not only serve the statistical needs of the structural funds, but should also be the occasion to create

real democratically legitimated territorial authorities following the principle of subsidiarity;

e. base the management of the structural funds on a democratic mechanism and support the efforts of the Council of Europe, and more particularly those of the Congress in this respect, to establish effective democratic structures at regional level in its future member states and not to limit the request to manage the structural funds at regional level by only deconcentrated administrations;

f. organise jointly with the Committee of the Regions and the Congress Chamber of Regions, colloquies or task-forces in certain candidate countries for the European Union to promote in this way the creation of democratic structures at the regional level in the course of the envisaged national administrative reforms.

1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Regions on 25 November 2003 and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 26 November 2003 (see Document CPR (10) 7, draft recommendation presented by Mr Doric and Mr Arbagic, rapporteurs).