

# THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

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## Recommendation 185 (2006)<sup>1</sup> on the proposal to set up a Council of Europe centre for interregional and cross-border co-operation

1. The Congress notes and welcomes the fact that international co-operation at regional level is currently undergoing strong growth throughout Europe. Such co-operation is indeed a particularly effective means of European integration and closer union between nations and makes a significant contribution to democratic and political stability in member states. It is also an important economic development factor;

2. The Council of Europe has always been particularly active in this field and has played a key role in the promotion of cross-border co-operation in Europe through its conventions (in particular the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities – the Madrid Convention – and its protocols), through the work done at intergovernmental level and through its Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. In this connection, reference should be made to Congress Recommendations 117 (2002) on promoting transfrontier co-operation: an important factor of democratic stability in Europe and 99 (2001) on international co-operation at regional level;

3. The Congress also notes with satisfaction the support the heads of state and government of its member states have given regional and cross-border co-operation in the Declaration and Action Plan of the Warsaw Summit (16 and 17 May 2005) and the Vilnius Declaration on Regional Co-operation and the Consolidation of Democratic Stability in Greater Europe, adopted on 3 May 2002;

4. It also draws attention to the Parliamentary Assembly's constant interest in and backing of these activities through both its contribution to the implementation of the Madrid Convention and its activities, reports and recommendations on these subjects;

5. In view of the above, the Congress particularly welcomes the initiative by the Russian authorities and the President of the Congress aimed at establishing a Council of Europe centre for interregional and cross-border

co-operation, which might take the form of an enlarged partial agreement of the Council of Europe and could – further to an invitation by the Russian authorities – be located in the Russian Federation;

6. It is convinced that this centre would encourage the spread of local and regional self-government and would constitute an additional opportunity for promoting and strengthening co-operation between the regions of Europe in matters within the Council of Europe's areas of competence;

7. A centre of this kind could indeed:

a. become an operational instrument of the Council of Europe for promoting and developing interregional and cross-border co-operation throughout the continent;

b. constitute an active, open forum for fostering synergies between existing or new regional co-operation initiatives and activities;

c. offer assistance with the development of cross-border and inter-territorial co-operation between local and regional authorities in all of the Organisation's member states with a view to contributing to the construction of a Europe without dividing lines;

d. promote joint projects in specific areas of topical concern, including projects aimed at reinforcing civil society and human relations, in particular where dialogue, co-operation and exchanges need to be encouraged.

8. Accordingly, the Congress:

a. affirms its strong support for the idea of establishing a Council of Europe centre for interregional and cross-border co-operation;

b. recommends to the Committee of Ministers that it:

i. give full backing to the initiative to set up this centre;

ii. decide to establish the centre as soon as possible;

iii. contribute to the activities of the future centre;

c. invites the Parliamentary Assembly to continue supporting the Congress's activities in this field, *inter alia*, by contributing to the activities of the future centre.

d. calls on member states to support the initiative to set up this centre and to accede to it in due course.

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1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 30 May 2006, 1st Sitting (see Document CG (13) 13, draft recommendation presented by G. Di Stasi (Italy, R, SOC), rapporteur).