

# THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

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## Resolution 363 (2013)<sup>1</sup> Prospects for effective transfrontier co-operation in Europe

1. The perception of national borders in Europe is changing. Today they are regarded less and less as barriers and obstacles and increasingly as potential sources of co-operation that can benefit citizens on either side of the border. This co-operation involves targeted collaboration between individual and institutional actors coming from different jurisdictions but located in the same transfrontier territory. The aim is to solve problems and develop synergies based on the social, economic and natural characteristics of the territory.

2. Europe is on the threshold of a transfrontier co-operation of a completely new dimension, due to its investment in territorial cohesion and a new generation of actors, who are seeking more concrete results to this co-operation. There is a new spirit of pragmatism when it comes to transfrontier issues, a practical search for joint solutions to common local problems resulting from the increasing border-crossing socio-economic dynamics, in areas such as transportation, spatial planning, environmental protection, risk prevention, citizen's advice and health co-operation.

3. Europe's economic downturn is also generating a renewed interest in transfrontier co-operation with its potential for developing complementary fields of specialisation and sharing infrastructures with local and regional actors from the neighbouring State. There are huge potential savings to be made from such a rationalisation of resources.

4. Many of the obstacles to effective transfrontier co-operation lie in the diversity of the politico-administrative systems concerned, the technical nature of the work and the fragmentation of knowledge in this sector. Developing horizontal co-operation between partners from very different institutional and administrative cultures often entails a considerable change in traditional and deep-rooted working methods.

5. Unlocking the huge potential of effective transfrontier co-operation will require sustained capacity building and training programmes and a pooling of the existing expertise in order to co-ordinate and make the best use of research resources and to develop indicators to measure the impact of co-operation activities. The development of model legal clauses for thematic bilateral agreements could also facilitate such co-operation.

6. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe welcomes the entry into force on

1 March 2013 of Protocol No. 3 to the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities concerning Euro-regional Co-operation Groupings (ECGs) (CETS No. 206), and the forthcoming appendix to this treaty, which will contain practical solutions to facilitate the creation or functioning of Euro-regional Co-operation Groupings. These groupings, composed of local authorities and other public bodies, will serve to put transfrontier and inter-territorial co-operation into practice for their members.

7. The Congress believes that it has a valuable role to play in bringing together the European actors working on transfrontier co-operation issues, co-ordinating and facilitating capacity building activities, providing a forum for dialogue and exchange and assisting with the dissemination of results, ensuring that lessons are shared to the benefit of all.

8. Therefore the Congress resolves to:

*a.* organise in 2014 a conference of the main European actors working on transfrontier co-operation issues, with a view to agreeing an action plan to:

*i.* establish a pool of expertise on transfrontier co-operation issues;

*ii.* co-ordinate research in this area, including data collection and the development of indicators;

*iii.* develop capacity building and training programmes;

*b.* review the implementation of this action plan in 2017.

9. The Congress asks national associations of local and regional authorities and the national delegations to:

*a.* support this work and examine how to further develop transfrontier co-operation in territories within their own borders;

*b.* encourage the respective national authorities to sign and ratify Protocol No. 3 to the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities concerning Euro-regional Co-operation Groupings (ECGs);

*c.* disseminate this protocol and the forthcoming appendix to their members.

10. The Congress asks its Governance Committee to:

*a.* appoint a thematic spokesperson to follow this issue;

*b.* evaluate the replies from the associations and the national delegations;

*c.* continue to follow and to contribute to the work of the intergovernmental sector on this issue.

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1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 30 October 2013, 2nd Sitting (see Document CG(25)9, explanatory memorandum); rapporteur: Breda Pečan, Slovenia (R, SOC).