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REPORT

**ON PROSPECTS FOR REGIONAL/SPATIAL PLANNING
IN THE NEW EUROPEAN CONTEXT**

(Rapporteur: Mr Agapito RAMOS, Spain)

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

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1. Background

The Council of Europe is working on the different aspects of regional/spatial planning since the presentation to the Parliamentary Assembly in 1968 of the report entitled: "Regional planning - a European problem".

Since then, the different bodies of this Organisation, i.e. the Parliamentarians, the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) and the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT) have defined the foundations and the leading concepts for European regional/spatial planning.

Following the adoption in 1983 of the European Regional/Spatial Planning Charter CEMAT prepared the European regional/spatial planning strategy which was published in 1991.

This strategy represents a reference document concerning the major objectives for regional planning at European level and translates into practical terms the political objectives laid down in the Charter.

The European Community is conducting a major study of the main lines of regional planning in the year 2000 - the Europe 2000 report - which will undoubtedly serve to guide the development of various Community policies (transport, regional, environment etc) within Europe.

As regional planning is an issue which affects everyone's interests and which, in some countries, falls within the sphere of competence of the various sub-national levels of government, the Committee on Regional Problems and Development of the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe decided to draw up a report on "European regional planning in the year 2000". This report could make an original contribution to the current debate within the Council of Europe on European regional planning.

For this purpose, the Community of Madrid, a member of the current Spanish delegation to the Council of Europe's Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, whose Adviser to the Presidency, Mr Agapito Ramos, was appointed Rapporteur for the report in question, wished to have the opinion of an open group of regions acting as the Rapporteur's "back-up group".

The various reports submitted to the Colloquy held in Roubaix on 22 and 23 October 1992, entitled "The challenges facing European society with the approach of the year 2000: the outlook for sustainable development and its implications on regional/spatial planning", organised by the Council of Europe's Secretariat, together with other Council of Europe reports, were taken as the starting point for the report.

By way of an initial outline, Mr Ramos presented a summary of the conclusions of this colloquy at the meeting of the Standing Conference's Committee on Regional Problems and Development on 18 March 1993. A meeting of the "back-up group", on which 12 regions were represented, was subsequently held in Seville on 24 and 25 June 1993.

The outline report of 18 March 1993, together with the contributions of the "back-up group", will be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee on Regional Problems and Development.

The completed report, incorporating the successive contributions and improvements, will, if appropriate, be submitted for approval by the plenary session of the Standing Conference in 1994.

2. General observations on regional planning

There is currently a need for innovatory approaches to impart a fresh impetus to regional planning. Nevertheless, our thinking must take into account the ground covered by previous Council of Europe reports especially the European regional planning strategy and by the Europe 2000 report of EEC, which emerges as an open-ended document on which the regions should have some influence.

Consideration should also be given to the European plan of action adopted at the European Council in Edinburgh to promote growth through public investment and to the contents of the White Paper which the European Council in Copenhagen invited the Commission presided by Jacques Delors to present in December 1993, on a medium-term strategy for growth, competitiveness and employment.

In the light of all this, consideration should be given first of all to the nature of regional planning and the role which Europe's regions should play.

It seems obvious in any event that there is a need for Europe-wide regional planning, arising from the following main factors:

- The private sector's profit-making operations, which are governed by market forces that are geared to making the most of existing structures, produce a greater concentration of activities (through the location factor) and hence a greater imbalance. Only effective public action can correct this trend.
- Infrastructures, which have to act as flow channels for economic activity, currently exhibit major shortcomings in peripheral areas. There is also a sharp discrepancy between national infrastructure policies and international traffic requirements.

- The peripheral geographical location of many regions (mountain areas, rural areas and even "central" areas).
- The high level of damage to the environment and quality of life.

It is necessary to develop a model based on parliamentary democracy, the market economy, environmental quality and efficient infrastructure.

Furthermore, one of the aims should be to harmonise positions on the basic concepts of regional planning, such as regional imbalances, sustainable development etc, which could lead to the definition of unifying objectives going beyond the Europe 2000 report (which, via a series of sectoral reports, suggests a line of development which, with the present crisis, fails to provide solutions to the problems raised). Consideration must now be given to a regional model for the future of inter-sectoral and inter-departmental co-ordination: as the national level has hitherto always been the basis for analysis, it will now be necessary to introduce the regional point of view. It is essential to establish a framework reaching from top to bottom, from regions to states and from states to the European Community.

Community policy-making has so far overlooked the regional level in framing sectoral policies. However, the document Europe 2000 introduces a series of innovations by addressing sectoral issues from a regional standpoint, echoing the Council of Europe and the specific types of region (coastal, mountain etc) and demonstrating a major change in this respect.

Spatial planning policy in the regional context should involve intermediate-level physical planning combined with economic and environmental planning. It should be regarded as a particular way of approaching regional policy.

Regional planning must be flexible, so that economic trends do not necessitate changes in it, and it must take into account the specific identity of the regions. The cascade model must be supplemented with strategic economic planning.

Regions should be classified in functional terms. A regional plan and a European-level institute for balanced urban development are needed as management instruments for the structural funds.

Economic development must go beyond the principle of fairness and efficiency and be based on the territory's endogenous capacity and the efficient matching of endogenous potentials and the territory's carrying capacity viewed from the regional standpoint. For this purpose it is necessary to determine the resources which may be applicable under programmes implemented at regional, state and Community level.

3. The present situation in Europe: a tentative diagnosis

In the present circumstances, the following elements must be taken into consideration:

- a. The territorial, economic, political and social changes which are shaping the new Europe and which may be summarised essentially as follows: the Maastricht treaty, the onset of the economic crisis and the change of political system in Eastern Europe;

- b. European population movements, migration both from Eastern Europe and from the Mediterranean, the population structure (ageing in Northern Europe), emergence of women in the world of work (especially in the regions of Southern Europe, where it is a new development);
- c. The redefinition of economic centres and the change in the main lines of economic activity; the emergence of new patterns of activity and the great mobility of capital flows in Europe; the trend towards mobility of capital, not only of labour; the fact that peripheral regions are acquiring a greater role;
- d. Environmental issues. The setting of limits to development, linking conservation and investment; the transformation of rural areas due to Community agricultural policy; the prevention of desertification, coastal pollution, etc;
- e. The increasing malfunctioning of the main regions due to:
 - the congestion of urban centres, social marginalisation, the obsolescence of urban areas;
 - the decline of the industrial and residential periphery with the obsolescence of the urban fabric and social marginalisation;
- f. Territorial polarisation within European regions;
- g. The lack of co-ordination between neighbouring regions in different countries and between regions in the same country despite the disappearance of frontiers. There is a need for connecting infrastructure (transport) and for the designation of protected areas. There is no possibility of agreements being reached between regions of different countries until this problem has been solved.

4. Long-term European planning objectives

The strategic framework for the definition of objectives will have to take into account protection of the environment, improvement of the quality of life and the economic efficiency of the regions, together with the concepts of democracy, the economic market or real economy, and the incorporation of local policies.

A series of objectives to be pursued in European planning may be inferred from the above diagnosis. They include:

- a. Inter-regional co-ordination
- b. Local compatibility
- c. Creation of large networks from the regional standpoint
- d. Direct intervention by the regions
- e. Promotion of endogenous development, having regard to carrying capacity
- f. Reduction of imbalances between regions
- g. Definition of areas of co-operation between levels of government, leading to a sharing of responsibility between the regional and national levels
- h. Promotion of a network of medium-sized towns
- i. Planning of measures or instruments of co-operation with the private sector, as the strategic operations are aimed at that sector.

The priorities for implementation would be:

- Quantitative and qualitative analysis of the structural elements in use;
- Basic reform of structural policies, including policies for the countries of Southern and Eastern Europe;
- Setting up of a European Regional Planning Academy supplementing the system of state institutions;
- Increase in direct co-operation between political representatives and public authorities.
- Definition of an institutional framework meeting both the requirements of integration and the needs of states.
- Increased funding in support of transfrontier development.

5. Action criteria

Public action is needed to correct territorial imbalances. The investment involved has to be targeted both on training and technological development and on communication infrastructures.

Investment in human resources should promote stability of the population, so that employers do not require manpower from other areas and the population can live in those regions with which it has cultural ties. Investment in infrastructure will have to promote mobility of raw materials and products, so as to prevent the allocation of resources from being dictated by the geographical proximity of raw materials or the potential markets for them.

Decisions on these lines should be guided by criteria that will ensure that the traditional economic centres currently in decline are compatible with the development of small nucleuses which will be instrumental in decentralising economic activity while taking advantage of the external savings generated by the activities carried out in the main nucleuses.

The idea would be to create an inter-urban fabric making the most of major investments through the multiplier effect generated by ensuring that their benefits are circulated through a network distributing them to well-linked medium-sized nucleuses.

This would make it possible to avoid dramatic population movements which would exacerbate existing imbalances by making it necessary to invest more heavily in immigration target areas, which are logically the areas that are already most highly developed, and to foster a spatial distribution of population that would have less impact on the environment.

In the inter-regional context, the same pattern could be repeated by developing inter-regional means of communication and avoiding undue industrial or financial specialisation, with technological capability and human resources being spread over diversified areas.

The aim would therefore be to create a structure at both the intra- and inter-regional levels in which the focal points would not be unduly powerful and a symbiotic relationship would be created between medium-sized urban nucleuses and traditional urban centres and between regions that have yet to be developed and those that are already developed.

It would thus be possible to bring about harmonious development that would avoid the hypertrophy of some parts and the atrophy of others. This model would not only make for growth with fewer breaks in continuity, but would also ensure greater respect for the environment and better land use.

6. Information needs, goals and instruments

a. Information needs

With a view to creating a basis for spatial planning action, an effort should be made to obtain a clearer picture of regional features, in order to ensure respect for specific cultural traits, on the understanding that planning would be the joint responsibility of all the authorities concerned.

- Compilation of an inventory of regional planning systems through a network of urban research institutes, with the work being centralised in a European agency for urban analysis and information, whose task would be to produce a European atlas, with the aim of enhancing information and consultation procedures;
- The basic data would cover geographical factors, the population and population growth patterns, economic activities and their distribution, transport and telecommunications infrastructures, environmental and energy policies, and the degree of co-operation between the different authorities;
- Creation of an information network on methods and strategies (on specific subjects or integrated);
- Standardisation of the land use plans as a means of regulating economic planning.

b. Improvement of infrastructure connected with the endogenous potential of the local environment

- The training required should have an impact on environmental education, gear vocational training to market needs, heighten public awareness of urban development and regional planning, and foster an educational structure that would control the migration of young people and skilled workers;
- Supporting services for local projects, the creation of an information system on technological innovation and advances, and the creation of networks of economic development and marketing agencies;
- The adoption of policies that enhance the role of small and medium-sized enterprises.
- Promotion of a greater regional presence in pressure groups.

c. Development of a network of infrastructure not confined to the local context

- Creation of trans-European telecommunications and energy networks;
- Strengthening of the network of major transport infrastructures, such as motorways, high-speed railways and airports.

d. Promotion of improvements in the quality of the environment through regional environmental agencies

- Adoption of common policies guaranteeing the use of limited resources: land, air, water and energy;
- Any strategic action should be accompanied by an environmental study;
- A detailed inventory should be made of the environmental qualities that need to be preserved.
- The use of renewable energy sources should be encouraged.

e. Action aimed at creating a grid of cities ensuring balanced regional development

- Improving conditions in the main urban centres by creating a permanent economic base and improving the quality of their environment in terms of the abatement of noise and other forms of pollution, improving water quality, etc, while avoiding high population densities;
- Diversifying urban structures by developing city complexes so that they offer services in respect of education, employment, residential accommodation and recreational facilities.
- Setting up a hierarchically organised structure of cities that will include large, medium and small-scale development centres, while avoiding undue concentration of both the population and economic activities in a small number of cities and fostering a network of medium-sized cities for structurally weak areas;
- Developing planning on a regional and sub-regional level with reference to supra-regional contexts;
- Addressing the problems caused by the concentration of poor people, ethnic minorities and immigrants causes in large cities, which in turn lead to impoverishment of rural areas and structurally weak regions.

f. Adoption of further regional planning legislation with a view to co-ordinating European regions' future activities

- Creation of a legal basis geared to the overall growth of Europe by introducing instruments for the implementation, monitoring and control of planning;
- Progress in legislative co-ordination, enabling agreements to be reached between the different administrative entities (local authorities, regions, states and the European Community);
- Exerting an influence on the exchange of legislative experiences on land use between the different regions and states forming the Council of Europe.

Conclusion

Summing up, it should be pointed out that it is becoming necessary to lay down a coherent regional planning policy whose purpose should be to ensure sustainable development by exerting an influence on the correction of regional imbalances. With this in mind, it will be necessary to spell out the long-term objectives that will serve as a framework for private investors when they come to plan their activities. Efforts should be made to improve policy co-ordination between the various national and regional ministries by underscoring the principle that urban development is a collective task of municipalities, regions and states and that, for this purpose, the use of EEC structural funds has to give rise to balanced policies in terms both of investment in infrastructure and of an overall strategy for promoting economic activities aimed at ensuring competitiveness and convergence.

The starting point should accordingly be the adoption of the principle of solidarity between rich and poor regions. Regional planning in Europe has to be based on the principle that economic inequalities have to be reduced and specific cultural features preserved.