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Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe

Congrès des pouvoirs locaux et régionaux de l'Europe

For debate in the Standing Committee  
Pour débat à la Commission Permanente  
\* See Rule 12 (4) - Voir article 12 (4) du Règlement \*

Strasbourg, 1 February 95  
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Part II



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## REPORT

### ON THE 2ND EUROPEAN CONFERENCE OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITY STAFF (Budapest, 26-28 September 1994)

(Rapporteur: Mr Dieckmann, Germany)

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## EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

\* Objections to the Standing Committee procedure must reach the Head of the Congress Secretariat a clear week before the meeting of the Standing Committee; if 5 members object, the report will be submitted to the Plenary Session.

Les éventuelles objections à l'examen en Commission Permanente doivent parvenir au Chef du Secrétariat du Congrès une semaine avant la réunion de la Commission Permanente; si 5 membres du Congrès présentent des objections, le rapport sera soumis à la session plénière.

The First European Conference on the Problems of Local and Regional Authority Staff was held in Bournemouth in 1985, which enabled more than 300 local and regional councillors and officials, representatives of relevant unions and organisations to hold in-depth discussions on subjects of mutual interest.

The Bournemouth Conference dealt with such topics as the status, training and career prospects of local and regional government staff, the impact on that staff of public expenditure cuts, the privatisation of public services, the introduction of new technologies and prospects for co-operation and exchanges between local and regional government staff in Europe.

Following the Bournemouth Conference the CLRAE adopted Resolutions 167 and 168, containing a set of principles concerning the staff of local and regional authorities. The creation of an informal Network of Training Organisations for Local and Regional Authority Staff was also among the outcome of the first conference. A Working Group of the CLRAE has been monitoring the Network project and the CLRAE adopted Resolution 240 in 1993 on the development of its activities.

Almost ten years after Bournemouth, at the proposal of the Working Group, the Congress decided to organise a follow-up Conference on the problems of local and regional government staff, giving special attention to pan-European co-operation in this field. It was thought appropriate to examine the specific problems of Central and Eastern European administrations this time, as this aspect had not been considered at the first conference.

At the invitation of Mayor Gábor Demszky, the conference was organised in Budapest from 26 to 28 September 1994 in co-operation between the Municipality of Budapest and the CLRAE. It was attended by some 250 participants from 26 countries, including

- elected representatives and senior appointed officials of local and regional authorities, especially those with responsibilities in the field of human resources development,
- representatives of local/regional authority associations and their central organisations,
- representatives of central government/federal state ministries, responsible for local government organisation,
- directors and senior officers of training organisations for local and regional authorities, and
- representatives of professional organisations and trade unions representing local/regional authority staff of all categories.

The main objective of the Conference was to focus on issues that are currently of particular concern to local and regional authorities in terms of staff. Special attention was paid to the organisational changes that had recently taken place in local and regional authorities throughout Europe. The modernisation of local government had, in most countries, involved the devolution of responsibility and powers.

Participants discussed whether the guidelines adopted after the first conference on the status, working conditions, training and career prospects of local and regional government staff were being applied in the various countries, and whether they should be amended to reflect new circumstances.

The exchange of information and experience was aimed at identifying ways of achieving, through appropriate staff policies, the greatest possible effectiveness in local and regional authorities' operations.

The discussions were spread over two days. The opening speeches by the host authorities and by the President of the Congress were followed by introductory reports on the follow-up to the first conference and the implementation of the Bournemouth principles. A separate paper was presented on the status and working conditions of staff in Central and Eastern Europe.

A full plenary session was devoted to the changes of local government structures and operations and their implications for staff. The discussions covered such topics as the reorganisation of local administration across Europe, the devolution of responsibilities and powers, privatisation and contracting out of public services and their effects on staff (organisational reviews, elimination of posts, flexible arrangement of working hours, etc).

The second day involved four workshops and a plenary session. The workshops covered the following themes: staff remuneration (discussions on the cost and efficiency factors of the different systems, including performance related pay), staff mobility and the social dimension of the Single European Market, training, co-operation and exchanges (as important elements of staff policies aimed at improving the services delivered by local and regional authorities) and equal career opportunities for men and women (including discussions on targeted support for female employees).

The closing plenary session started with the main rapporteurs' summing up the discussions of the workshops. The final declaration was drafted on the basis of these discussions and it was presented by the General Rapporteur, professor Kübler, rector of the School of Public Administration in Kehl. The declaration provides guidelines for the proper management of human resources in local and regional government, and it was adopted by the vast majority of participants. It is interesting to note that some trade union representatives abstained from voting due to the references to privatisation and performance related pay in the text.

Modernisation of local government not only requires the decision-making process to be organised differently, it should also be carried out in co-operation with staff. A different structure and approach to government calls for different staff qualifications, and training has a crucial role in this process.

**The Network of Training Organisations**, which came about as a result of the first conference, launched a new stage of co-operation by officially establishing a legally independent association in Budapest. An account of the Network's increasing activities and future plans were given on this occasion.

The Network was created towards the end of 1988 as a follow-up to the Bournemouth conference of staff and the ensuing resolutions which suggested the introduction of a co-operation system for training. Since its establishment, the Network's main activity has been the organisation of thematic seminars, once or twice a year. The seminars have had a dual purpose: to facilitate exchanges on subjects of interest to all training institutions and to increase the mutual knowledge of Network members and their methods.

The following seminars have been held:

- 1989 (Montpellier): "Training organisation and the effects of 1992 on the training of European local and regional authority staff"
- 1990 (Barcelona): "Profiles and training for senior officials of local and regional authorities"
- 1991 (Grenaa): "Training functions in Europe"
- 1992 (Genoa): "Advanced information technologies: the impact on training"
- 1993 (Santiago de Compostela): "Public ethics and staff training"
- 1993 (London): "Training needs of elected representatives"
- 1994 (Ascona): "Modern management methods for local and regional authorities and the role of training".

The success of the Network's activities entailed some problems: the increasing number of participants in the seminars made these difficult and more expensive to manage; it put an increasing burden on the CLRAE secretariat which has already been strained; there was no clear system of decision making and responsibilities, etc.

To address these problems, representatives of member institutions and the Secretariat started discussions in 1991 about the possibilities of structuring the Network by way of establishing a legal entity. The first hypothesis of creating a European Training Academy was rejected for fear of a heavy structure and the massive bureaucracy it would involve. Doubts were expressed about the need for the Network to implement training activities, thus creating competition for member institutions.

Further consultations were held at the Genoa and Santiago seminars, where participants discussed the possible legal framework and basic activities for the Network. Bearing in mind that the aim of the Network is to develop skills of local and regional authority staff, preference for future activities was given to a regular exchange of information. This should involve the holding of at least one annual seminar, where a given pedagogical theme and the provision of training on this specific subject in the various countries can be analysed. Publishing a regularly updated directory of training centres and issuing an information newsletter were identified as further basic activities for the Network.

In the course of the gradual consolidation and expansion of the Network, it will be possible to undertake supplementary activities, such as research on subjects of common interest, assistance to joint co-operation projects, trainer and trainee exchanges and the establishment of a clearing house to collect and disseminate information on matters of interest to the members.

As regards the legal framework, members of the Network reached a broad agreement that the establishment of an association would be the most feasible solution, because it is both

simple and flexible, and it does not entail a heavy administrative structure. The statutes of an association must specify only the objectives, membership criteria, the decision-making organs and the broad way of functioning. Once registered, the association has legal personality and can therefore, act as such.

Bearing in mind the different opinions voiced during the 1991 and 1992 seminars, the CLRAE secretariat commissioned a legal expert to draft a first version of the association's statutes. These statutes were circulated among Network members and it was discussed on several occasions by the Network's provisional Bureau. In November 1993, on the occasion of the London seminar, the Bureau and the majority of participants approved the text of the Statutes with the necessary amendments, and authorised the secretariat to send this document together with an application form for membership to prospective member organisations throughout Europe.

It is perhaps enough to refer briefly to the most important advantages of creating the new association: clarification of decision-making mechanisms, greater involvement in members in Network issues, institutionalised framework for external relations, including relations with possible funding sources and, finally, the extra income from membership fees will help in easing the financial burden of organisations hosting future seminars. An independent Network-secretary is expected to progressively take over the administrative tasks from the CLRAE secretariat.

It should be pointed out that the Council of Europe, and the CLRAE in particular will continue to support the Network, both politically and in practical terms, that is financially.

Following the decisions taken in London, the secretariat contacted prospective member institutions and opened the list of founder members during the first half of 1994.

Some 50 institutions from 26 countries, including 10 countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Israel indicated their intention to join the association to be set up under Alsatian law and registered with the Tribunal d'Instance of Strasbourg. Their representatives held the constituent General Assembly on the third day of the Budapest conference, where they signed the Statutes, elected the association's Bureau and its first President, Mr Jorgen Hahn, Director of the Danish Local Government Training Centre.