

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 217 (2006)¹ on the 6th Forum of Cities and Regions of South-East Europe: (Sinaia, Romania, 8-9 December 2005)

The Congress:

1. Invites local authorities of South-Eastern Europe to take account of the conclusions of the 6th Forum of Cities and Regions of South-East Europe held in Sinaia (8-9 December 2005) and in particular,

2. Calls for the strengthening of associations of local and regional authorities of South-Eastern Europe and recommends that these associations, in consultation with their members:

a. develop their role and capacities with the aim of strengthening local authorities' leadership, service provision, community participation and public ethics;

b. ensure that local authorities and citizens are aware of the responsibilities of transparency and accountability incumbent upon public officials through wide distribution and knowledge of relevant international instruments such as the European Code of Conduct for Local and Regional Elected Representatives;

c. promote ongoing self-improvement and good governance throughout local government;

d. research, plan, implement and evaluate capacity-building programmes, and collect and disseminate best practice, taking into account that high-quality models and service methods exist in a number of countries and can be shared at international level, thus enabling national and local authorities to learn from each other;

e. make the best possible use of the Council of Europe's Centre of Expertise on Local Government Reform, its expertise and its capacity-building toolkit(s) in developing their own capacity-building programmes;

f. make full use of the expertise of the European Network of Training Organisations (ENTO);

3. Reiterates its support, financial means permitting, for the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS);

4. Encourages NALAS to:

a. reinforce the role of its member associations in relation to central government;

b. improve their ability to provide services to their members;

c. help to develop local self-government, financial and fiscal decentralisation in South-East Europe;

5. invites NALAS members, following their active participation at the conference on "Effective Democratic Governance at Local and Regional Level" (Zagreb, 25 and 26 October 2004), to work in close partnership with central government in the preparation of their respective National Work Programmes with a view to the follow-up conference in 2006/2007;

6. invites NALAS to consolidate its position by finding steadier sources of finance, thereby ensuring its long-term sustainability, and invites it to co-operate with relevant international NGOs such as the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), the Assembly of European Regions (AER) and the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR);

7. invites the Central Union of Greek Cities and Municipalities (KEDKE) and the Union of the Association of Towns and Association of Municipalities of Croatia to seek membership of NALAS;

8. Reaffirms the importance of the municipal banks in the strengthening of local and regional authorities' capacity to finance local investments, and recommends that they:

a. operate on the basis of a long-lasting commitment with local governments;

b. assist in local institutional and legal development and help build a sound credit framework;

c. facilitate authorities' access to long-term credit by raising resources on private financial markets;

d. provide local authorities with a wide range of services: long-term loans; project financing; liquidity guarantees; credit enhancement; budget planning and enhancement of management skills;

9. Emphasises the role that young people, from an early age should play in influencing and shaping decisions, thus facilitating their social inclusion, the development of their socio-political awareness, and improving citizen participation at local and regional level in South-Eastern Europe, and recommends that:

a. the diverse needs, circumstances and aspirations of young people be taken into account by any policy or measure designed to promote youth participation, thus implementing the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People;

b. education for democratic citizenship and human rights be promoted by parliamentarians and local and regional elected representatives as one of the main tools for forming active and participative citizens and contributing to the follow-up of the European Year of Citizenship through Education (2005);

10. Affirms that local and regional authorities in South-Eastern Europe should actively promote human rights and

measures to counter discrimination against minorities and any population groups that may suffer from it, by:

- a.* promoting the development of sustainable multicultural communities through the integration of minorities;
- b.* not only taking account of minorities' diverse needs and customs, cultures and lifestyles, but also using them as a springboard for co-operation;
- c.* encouraging initiatives enabling participation of minority communities in the political arena;

11. Recognises the sustained activities undertaken in the above-mentioned fields by the Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs) both individually and as part of the network formed by the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA);

12. Encourages cities and towns of South-Eastern Europe to work together with the whole of Europe to develop co-operation for the sake of stability and democracy;

13. Encourages associations and entities such as the existing euroregions, whose objective is the development of co-operation between municipalities and regions of South-Eastern Europe, to continue their work and in particular to support the creation of a specific INTERREG

programme in the Balkan and Black Sea area, in synergy with the European Union regional policy and the new neighbourhood policy;

14. Asks its Ad hoc Working Group of local and regional elected representatives of South-Eastern Europe to:

- a.* support the project of a joint seminar between ENTO and the Congress in Osijek (Croatia) on 18 and 20 October 2006;
- b.* develop its relationship and give its support to the euroregions acting in SEE;
- c.* examine the follow-up to be given to the creation of the Adriatic Euroregion and the project of the Black Sea euroregion for its future programme of activities;
- d.* study the possibility of organising a 7th Forum of Cities and Regions of South-East Europe in Albania in 2006/2007 on the basis of the invitation launched during the Sinaia Forum.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 1 June 2006, 3rd Sitting (see Document CG (13) 11, draft resolution presented by L. Sfirloaga (Romania, R, SOC), rapporteur).