

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 315 (2010)¹ Sustainable development of mountain regions and the experience of the Carpathian Mountains

1. The various mountain regions in Europe offer many advantages that benefit the entire continent. However, they face specific challenges which require appropriate policies, implemented in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity and with effective local self-government, to meet the needs of their citizens.

2. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe reiterates its belief² that European policies must take into account the structural and economic challenges inherent in mountain regions. With this in mind, the Congress supports the call of the European Union Committee of the Regions³ to put in place a truly integrated European policy for all mountain massifs whilst respecting their diversity. These policies should recognise the diverse contribution and crucial role of local and regional authorities in the field of sustainable development of mountain areas.

3. Indeed, the majority of mountain regions in Europe are peripheral territories with difficult natural conditions which require particular integrated holistic development policies to guarantee the populations of mountain regions the right to live and work in the mountains, and the preservation of their living environment with living conditions comparable to the more favourable conditions in rural and urban regions.

4. These policies need to have social cohesion at the heart of their concerns to meet the challenges posed by maintaining employment and access to essential services, as well as by demographic changes. Additionally, considering that European mountains constitute an exceptional cultural and linguistic heritage, it is important that these policies defend and foster their development by ensuring that social and cultural identities and traditions are respected and preserved.

5. Furthermore, as most mountain ranges lie in border regions, the Congress believes that these policies need to be applied to the entire massif in order to be effective and coherent. Indeed, each mountain massif should be viewed as a macro-region. Mountain policies should be implemented coherently on both sides of the border. The Congress calls for reinforcement of transfrontier and inter-regional co-operation which will apply the principles outlined in the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities (ETS No. 106) and in particular, its new Protocol No. 3 concerning Euroregional Co-operation Groupings (ECGs) (CETS No. 206).

6. The Congress considers that any mountain policy should rely primarily on the authorities closest to the territories, citizens and problems of mountain regions, and this in full respect of the subsidiarity principle as laid down in the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122) and the Reference Framework for Regional Democracy. It is appropriate to encourage co-operation between these authorities and to support any initiatives they may take.

7. The implementation of good regional governance can offer effective solutions to economic, social and environmental challenges in mountain regions. It should promote greater transparency and accountability and promote citizen participation in the decision-making process and in the implementation of policies which impact on their lives. In general, regional authorities need to strengthen the trust between public authorities and citizens.

8. The Congress stresses the fundamental role of local and regional authorities in creating specific sustainable development policies for their mountain regions and in the conception of territorial planning programmes to improve the competitiveness and attractiveness of these regions.

9. As an example of the challenges facing mountain regions, the Carpathian mountain range covers seven countries,⁴ and it is home to around 17 million people and exceptional natural and cultural wealth. This region faces major social, economic and environmental challenges (depopulation, unemployment, pollution, flooding and land/mud slides) which must be addressed.

10. The Congress takes note of the final declaration of the international conference on “Sustainable development of the Carpathians and other European mountain regions” held in Uzhgorod, Ukraine on 8 and 9 September 2010.

11. It also considers that the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Carpathian Convention) constitutes an important basis for the future of the region. Local and regional authorities in the region should play a key role in its concrete implementation and reinforce co-operation and the exchange of good practice.

12. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe invites local and regional authorities and in particular those in the Carpathian mountains to:

a. practise good regional governance with a shared vision of the future of the massif, which transcends administrative and geographic boundaries and respects the subsidiarity principle;

b. encourage the participation of the local population in the decision-making process, in particular, as regards territorial planning, and the protection and use of natural resources of the mountains;

c. recognise that ecological stability and sustainable development of mountain regions cannot be achieved alone but require reinforced, formal and informal, transfrontier and inter-regional co-operation.⁵ Regional authorities should favour transfrontier co-operation and synergies to benefit from expertise and best practices in this field;

d. implement specific policies to combat social exclusion in these sparsely populated areas and which respond to the problems of migration, in particular of youth, as well as the maintenance of essential services;

e. revitalise the local economy and improve employment though encouraging and investing in the development of activities which make sustainable use of the natural resources found in mountain regions such as sustainable tourism and renewable energy sources;

f. make full use of the potential of information and communication technologies to maintain local services of proximity including administrative, educational, health and social services.

13. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe invites the local and regional authorities of the Carpathian mountains to:

a. reinforce transfrontier and inter-regional co-operation through the creation of informal and formal networks of local self-government authorities of the Carpathian regions and to actively engage in the work of the “Carpathian Euroregion”;

b. support the elaboration of a strategy for the Carpathian region within the framework of the Carpathian Convention and be proactively involved in the implementation of the convention’s provisions and projects.

14. Finally, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe invites the Committee of the Regions of the European Union to continue its undertaking for a European mountain policy, with particular attention to the Carpathian regions and to promote co-operation between those regions in the European Union and those which border it.

1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Regions on 26 October 2010 and adopted by the Congress on 28 October 2010, 3rd Sitting (see Document [CPR\(19\)2](#), explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: M. Kichkovskyy, Ukraine (R, EPP/CD).

2. Recommendation 130 (2003) on the European Charter for mountains.

3. For a green paper – towards a European union policy for upland regions: a European vision for upland regions (CoR 23/2008).

4. Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic and Ukraine.

5. Congress Recommendation 270 (2009) and Resolution 286 (2009) on transfrontier co-operation in Europe.