

CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF EUROPE

Recommendation 138 (2003)¹ on sustainable regions under global rules

The Congress, bearing in mind the proposal of the Chamber of Regions,

1. Recalling the following texts already adopted by the Congress:

- a.* Resolution 55 (1997) on local and regional financial instruments for the environment in Europe;
- b.* Recommendation 57 (1999) on local and regional economic instruments for the environment;
- c.* Recommendation 101 (2001) and Resolution 121 (2001) on the impact of globalisation on regions;
- d.* Resolution 126 (2002) on Rio +10: towards the next World Summit on Sustainable Development;
- e.* Recommendation 106 (2002) and Resolution 127 (2002) on sustainable development and liberalisation of the energy market;

2. Considering that:

- a.* globalisation has an increasing impact on sustainable development;
- b.* a world-wide discussion on the opportunities and risks of globalisation and its impact on sustainable development started some years ago;
- c.* globalisation is a very complex process that affects local and regional interests in different ways;
- d.* economic globalisation is mainly determined by the consequences of international treaties, particularly the present General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), and that local and regional authorities will be directly affected by the implementation of the new trade rules;
- e.* the Agenda 21 process, following the World Summits in Rio (1992) and Johannesburg (2002), supports sustainable economic, environmental and social globalisation and sets up a binding framework for local and regional authorities;
- f.* the new global rules, set up by GATS, finally lead to a restriction of the ability of local and regional authorities to exert an influence and to provide an effective framework for economic and sustainable development;
- g.* such restrictions, however, do not completely endanger the essential competence of local and regional authorities as a number of examples throughout Europe show;

h. only national governments are taking part in the international negotiations. They make decisions which have an impact on local and regional authorities although they do not normally take sufficiently into account the implications of international agreements for the local and regional level;

3. Convinced that:

- a.* problems on a global scale can only be solved by a co-operative approach. Partnership, participation and co-operation with civil society is the basis for a sustainable political culture. The concept of “global governance” sets up a framework for solving transnational problems. The process of globalisation requires not only international binding regulations but also a pattern of different mechanisms, such as the participation of all stakeholders involved;
 - b.* local and regional authorities have a crucial role to play as part of this concept of global governance;
 - c.* local and regional authorities contribute to the protection of the global heritage environment and to sustainable development;
 - d.* responsibility for the global future also includes being responsible for all citizens, civil organisations, local economic structure and local environment as part of a global economy, in other words, maintaining local and regional competitiveness as a basis of sustainable development;
 - e.* the impact of international agreements on regional authorities, in particular the current World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations, should increasingly be taken into consideration during political discussion at national level;
 - f.* national governments should bear the responsibility of ensuring that the interests of local and regional authorities are taken into consideration at international negotiations. Local and regional authorities should be given the opportunity to contribute to and to actively participate in negotiations;
 - g.* the process of globalisation will develop positively only if local and regional authorities are ready to assert their interests with a view to meeting future challenges,
4. Expresses its concerns that the impact of globalisation is used as an argument for reducing ecological and social standards, in other words for supporting environmental and social dumping with a view to gaining competitive advantages without considering the potential negative impact on sustainable development;
5. Recommends that national governments:
- a.* establish a consultation mechanism for local and regional authorities with a view to ensuring that their interests and concerns about sustainable development are taken into consideration in international negotiations. In this context, the European Commission showed its willingness to integrate successfully the interests of all

stakeholders involved. Such a consultation is not only a matter of legitimising decisions, but also results in a much more effective implementation of policy as soon as agreements are reached;

b. strengthen ways in which local and regional authorities can assert their interests at international level through actively supporting their capacity for effective negotiation;

c. make sure that the impact of negotiations, particularly of the GATS, is taken into account appropriately, particularly with regard to sustainability;

d. encourage the European Commission, which represents the EU member states in the negotiations, and thus is the largest single party within the GATS, to take properly into

account the impact of the GATS negotiations on local and regional authorities;

e. start an open dialogue with the participants of civil society at the local, regional and national level, following the example set by the European Commission in this context;

f. support local and regional authorities in their efforts to implement a proactive and successful integration into the global economies by fostering their sustainable competitiveness.

1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Regions on 21 May 2003 and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 22 May 2003 (see Document CPR (10) 4, draft recommendation presented by Mrs C. W. Jacobs and Mr L. N. Dragnea, rapporteurs).