

Chamber of Regions, 16 June, 11h00

Presentation by the rapporteur

**TERRITORIAL SOLIDARITY: THE ROLE REGIONS CAN
PLAY**

Harald Sonderegger, Austria (R, EPP/CCE)

**Debate and vote on the draft resolution and draft
recommendation**

Dear members,

I am pleased to present this report the subject of which becomes even more meaningful today with the pandemic we are currently facing.

Let me begin with the definition of territorial solidarity adopted in this report which refers to balanced development and the reduction of gaps in wealth and accessibility to public services between and within territories.

In this vein, the report analyses challenges and takes stocks of good practices from CoE Member States. The Governance Committee adopted the report and approved its draft Resolution

and Recommendation at its last meeting on 12 May 2021. Today, the draft Resolution and draft Recommendation are submitted to you for adoption.

I would like to stress, as I stressed already at the Committee meeting, that the need for better territorial cohesion policy and greater territorial solidarity is becoming more critical than ever, both within and between territories. The current COVID-19 health crisis has particularly highlighted the existing territorial inequalities and lack of solidarity in some places, for example, in terms of access to healthcare, living conditions and impacts on regional economies.

Indeed, this issue has produced the potential danger of political tensions and conflicts which can represent a major risk for the cohesion of States. Moreover, the scope of action of national governments has become limited by economic difficulties, globalisation, the increasing role of the European Union and by decentralisation.

It is therefore necessary to promote new methods of territorial solidarity, expanding the role of regional and local authorities in grassroots policies such as transport, education, healthcare and the environment, as well as by involving them, to a greater degree, in such policies, notably regarding financial equalisation which has been in many places a traditional domain of central authorities. Horizontal, transparent and predictable financial equalisation mechanisms and regional financial autonomy are the two pillars in order to promote territorial solidarity. The present report provides valuable guidelines on meeting all these goals.

Let me know move on to the Resolution and Recommendation included in this report.

The draft Resolution highlights the need for a common vision of solidarity policies within and between territories and calls for strengthening regional capacities to coordinate and implement territorial solidarity policies. It underlines that financial equalisation should be part of the dialogue with the government

in the framework of the consultation process that is required by the Charter. Finally, it encourages sharing of best practices of territorial solidarity policies.

The draft Recommendation calls to promote policies of territorial solidarity, in order to protect financially weaker territories, involving regions and consulting with them. It underlines the need for strengthening capacities of the regions to devise and implement territorial solidarity measures with the purpose of bridging gaps in wealth and access to public services between and within territories. In addition, the draft Recommendation calls on member States that made a reservation on Article 9.5 of the Charter, related to financial equalisation procedures, to ratify this provision.

Dear colleagues, this was – in a nutshell – the Resolution and the Recommendation we propose, and I hope you will subscribe to their provisions and adopt them.

I thank you for your attention and, of course, I am ready to answer your questions should you have any.