

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 167 (2005)¹ on the 5th Forum of Cities and Regions of South-East Europe (Budva, Serbia and Montenegro, 11-12 October 2004)

The Congress,

1. Thanks:

- a.* the City of Budva and the Montenegrin authorities for their warm welcome on the occasion of the 5th Forum of Cities and Regions of South-East Europe (11th Economic Forum), which took place in Budva on 11 and 12 October 2004;
- b.* those in charge of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe for their participation and support;
- c.* the speakers and participants at the Forum, particularly the local and regional elected representatives of South-Eastern Europe and the representatives of national governments, European and international organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for their active contribution to the success of the Forum;
- d.* the European Foundation for the Sustainable Development of the Regions (FEDRE) for helping to prepare the event and organise the exhibitions that were held to coincide with the Forum;
- e.* the Representative of the Ministers' Deputies of the Council of Europe for his active participation in the Forum;

2. Regarding the political situation in South-Eastern Europe and its consequences for local and regional authorities:

- a.* hopes that the new legislation on local self-government in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" will contribute to the stability of the political climate and that the country's authorities will take due account of the recommendations issued by the Congress following its observation of the local elections in March and April 2005;
- b.* hopes that the new plans concerning local government in Kosovo will lead to a satisfactory solution enabling all the communities to take part in local life in Kosovo in the spirit of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the European Convention on Human Rights;
- c.* reaffirms the essential role that local and regional authorities can play in reconciling communities and fostering political stability in South-Eastern Europe;

3. Recommends that the governments of the countries of South-Eastern Europe:

- a.* adopt and implement work programmes for better local government in accordance with the conclusions of the European Ministers responsible for Local and Regional Government's Conference on Effective Democratic Governance at Local and Regional Level in Zagreb, October 2004 and, accordingly:

- i.* foster dialogue between central government and local authorities, and between associations of local and regional authorities and the national authorities;

- ii.* propose that each government should set up a task force to co-ordinate and assess the implementation of national programmes in each of these countries;

- b.* sign and/or ratify – if they have not already done so – the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities (ETS No. 106) and its two additional protocols; in this connection, encourage states to sign agreements on the development of transfrontier and inter-territorial co-operation between local and regional authorities, as follow-up to the Chişinău Political Declaration, adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 6 November 2003;

- c.* support the finalisation, within the Council of Europe, of the draft third protocol to the Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities concerning the legal status of euroregional co-operation groupings, in accordance with the conclusions of the Conference of European Ministers responsible for Local and Regional Government held in Budapest (24-25 February 2005);

- d.* give their support to the Adriatic Euroregion, which was launched at the Termoli Conference in November 2004, with a view to ensuring that it has the necessary material and financial resources to develop its programme of activities;

- e.* introduce, with the support of the relevant international and European organisations, policies to improve economic conditions at local and regional level and, in particular, secure basic utilities for local communities, namely access to water, energy, housing, health, education, etc., in keeping with the proposal made by the United Nations;

- f.* introduce policies to support sustainable tourism, in particular by promoting specific measures such as prolonging the tourist season, targeting retired people from Northern Europe, providing training for tourist managers and improving the many tourist services and facilities;

- g.* take the necessary steps to give local and regional authorities the powers they need to:

- i.* improve the way in which they manage public property in their municipalities, including property which may be subject to privatisation;

- ii.* set up public and private partnerships at local and regional levels so as to establish the necessary infrastructure as quickly as possible;

h. enact laws to protect investments and curb corruption at local and regional level, for the purpose of restoring investor confidence and encouraging citizens to play a greater part in public affairs and, to this end:

i. take measures to ensure that local and regional authorities participate in the process of drafting national anti-corruption strategies;

ii. ensure that the European Code of Conduct for Local and Regional Elected Representatives, adopted by the Congress in 1999, is implemented;

iii. supplement national anti-corruption measures by encouraging local and regional authorities to adopt special provisions – in the light of the specific problems of each city and region in South-Eastern Europe – to prevent and combat corruption and make the public aware of these activities;

iv. involve local and regional authorities in the management of public information offices (run by the central authorities) so that the public are aware of anti-corruption measures;

v. set up specialised liaison committees, comprising representatives of all levels of government (local, regional and national), and with the close involvement of associations of local and regional authorities, for the purpose of drawing up civic education programmes to make young people aware of the need to fight corruption;

i. regarding the situation of refugees and internally displaced persons:

i. provide easier access, within the municipalities concerned, to funding for suitable housing;

ii. ensure unimpeded and non-discriminatory access to rights for refugees, returnees and displaced populations and, in particular, access to employment, education and municipal services in keeping with established international standards;

iii. resolve the issue of informal settlements, as expressed in the Vienna Declaration on national and regional programmes regarding informal settlements in South-Eastern Europe, signed by ministers from the region on 28 September 2004;

iv. encourage the municipalities to set up housing associations and co-operatives; promote public-private partnerships in order to develop a housing market that is accessible to all sections of society;

4. Asks those in charge of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and the governments and donor organisations to:

a. support specific projects aimed at strengthening local and regional democracy and transfrontier co-operation in South-Eastern Europe;

b. carefully examine and give their financial backing to projects for South-Eastern Europe presented by the Congress, in particular those concerning the development of the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe (NALAS), the Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs) and the organisation of a 6th Forum of Cities

and Regions of South-Eastern Europe in Romania in November 2005;

c. continue to support the various initiatives fostering transfrontier co-operation between local and regional authorities in South-Eastern Europe, in particular by developing fully-functioning euroregions;

5. Invites the non-governmental organisations involved in co-operation between local and regional authorities in Europe² to:

a. promote technical partnerships, the pooling of experience and specific projects with the cities and regions of South-Eastern Europe (requests for and offers of new partnerships, specific funding programmes under EU projects, activities for promoting partnerships in specific areas such as energy, environment, tourism, transport, water and waste management, youth, education and cultural affairs, etc.);

b. contribute to the co-operation programmes launched by the Congress (in particular, the projects of the Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs), the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe and the Adriatic Euroregion);

6. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers, on the basis of the Budva Declaration unanimously adopted on 12 October 2004, carefully consider the proposals submitted by the Congress for which it hopes to receive voluntary contributions. These proposals are aimed at fostering local and regional democracy in South-Eastern Europe and particularly concern the development of the NALAS, the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) and the ENTO training programmes;

7. Invites the European Commission to:

a. strengthen the role played by local and regional authorities in helping to consolidate democracy in the western Balkans;

b. involve the Council of Europe, and in particular the Congress, in its programmes in South-Eastern Europe, especially the new neighbourhood policy, taking due account of the projects submitted by the Congress with a view to developing local and regional democracy and transfrontier co-operation in South-Eastern Europe;

c. continue to support the general projects of the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA), which now includes eleven agencies in South-Eastern Europe;

d. give its financial backing to the projects submitted by the NALAS.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 2 June 2005, 3rd Sitting (see Document CG (12) 11, draft recommendation presented by G. Angelov (“the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, L, EPP/CD), rapporteur).

2. Assembly of European Regions (AER), Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), United Cities and Local Governments and the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR)

