

CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF EUROPE

Resolution 83 (1999)¹ on the current state of and prospects for regionalisation in Europe

*(Extract from the Official Gazette of the Council of Europe
– June 1999)*

The Congress,

Bearing in mind the proposal of the Chamber of Regions,

1. Having regard to the report on the current state of and prospects for regionalisation in Europe, presented by Mr Claude Haegi, Switzerland;
2. Considering that regionalisation is a highly topical subject in many of the Council of Europe's member countries and that there are encouraging developments regarding decentralisation and regionalisation policies;
3. Bearing in mind that the regionalisation of multi-ethnic countries must not provide a pretext for separatist actions;
4. Recalling its recent activities concerning local and regional democracy in the member countries and encouraging its Chamber of Regions to continue to organise technical colloquies in this field, providing valuable information and experience for countries seeking to establish decentralised or regional institutions;
5. Also inviting its Chamber of Regions to develop this activity in partnership with European inter-regional organisations, such as the European Union, the UNECE, the AER, the CEMR, the FEDRE, the CPMR, which are involved in the organisation of European seminars for the promotion of Regionalism;
6. Welcoming the proposals and conclusions in the aforementioned report;
7. Decides to continue its assessment of the state of regionalisation and the efforts needed to promote decentralisation and regionalisation in member countries, and offers the following guidelines to the national delegations concerned:

a. administrative policies and reforms to introduce regionalisation in the member countries should be based on the draft charter of Regional Self-Government prepared by the Congress;

b. the various regional units must enjoy financial autonomy, but to ensure that this does not run counter to national or federal solidarity this must be accompanied by financial equalisation machinery;

8. Regarding Russia, the Congress should organise a conference in the year 2000 on financial relations between the Federation, the subjects of the Federation and the municipalities;

9. The Congress welcomes the scale of the reforms aimed at strengthening the regions in Italy, whose implementation should be encouraged, particularly as they apply the subsidiarity principle to the various tiers of government and take account in this respect of the guidelines in the draft charter of Regional Self-Government;

10. The relevant authorities in Poland must be encouraged to put the finishing touches to the recent reform of regionalisation, which is considered to be a significant development in the organisation of the state, and to give still further financial autonomy to the new voivods;

11. Having regard to the current administrative structure in Hungary, the political and financial powers of its existing regional bodies should be strengthened;

12. While the progress made towards regionalisation in the Czech Republic is to be welcomed, the special legislation required to enable the new regions (*kraje*) to come into operation by the year 2000 will have to be enacted rapidly. The Congress welcomes the proposal to organise a special colloquy to enable experts to formulate an opinion on developments in this area;

13. Bearing in mind the Congress's commitment in this area and the opinions issued at a colloquy held in 1998, the relevant authorities of Slovakia must be encouraged to revive, as soon as possible, the draft legislation on regionalisation, which should be guided by the work of the Congress in this field and the opinion already expressed by its experts;

14. Recalling the results of the 1998 colloquy and the opinion drawn up by the Congress's experts, the relevant Bulgarian authorities must be encouraged to implement a decentralisation policy, by establishing genuine regional authorities;

15. Having regard to Resolution 58 (1997) paragraph 14 and Recommendation 47 (1998), the Latvian authorities must be encouraged to revive the regionalisation process by establishing a regional tier of government with its own political and financial powers;

16. The Lithuanian authorities must be encouraged to provide for their local authorities' independence and take steps towards implementing a genuine policy of regionalisation;

17. With the support of the CLRAE and the Lode programme, the Albanian authorities can call on the experience of other European countries to advance the discussions on the country's regionalisation according to European principles;

1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Regions on 15 June 1999 and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 17 June 1999 (see Doc. CPR (6) 3 revised, draft resolution presented by Mr C. Haegi, Rapporteur).

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18. Bearing in mind Resolution 58 (1997) paragraph 15, concerning Moldova, the Congress must ensure that any legislation on local and regional administration takes account of the country's minorities and the special status of Gagauzia ;

19. It is recalled that the Congress has already made a number of precise proposals in its Resolutions 58 (1997), paragraph 16, and 68 (1998) and Recommendation 48 (1998) paragraph 15.b concerning the establishment of regional democratic institutions in Ukraine ;

20. The Congress recalls that Resolutions 58 (1997), paragraph 13, and 67 (1998) and Recommendation 46 (1998) paragraphs 6 and 7 recommend that Croatia find a solution to the confirmation of regional presidents and strengthen the powers of regional institutions ;

21. The Romanian authorities must be encouraged to develop further the administrative and financial independence of the judets ;

22. The Congress acknowledges the recent reforms in the United Kingdom concerning regionalisation but notes that they do not relate to the entire country and will carry out an assessment of their impact following their implementation in 1999 ;

23. The Congress has been following with interest the experiment currently being undertaken in three regions of Sweden and should consider carrying out an assessment of these pilot projects ;

24. With regard to Finland and the Netherlands, the Congress has adopted Recommendations 66 and 55 respectively, during this session ;

25. The Congress regrets the setback of the Portuguese referendum on regionalisation and should reopen the debate on the advantages of regionalisation and the strengthening of regional democratic institutions with the country's citizens and political representatives ;

26. It is recalled that in its Recommendation 29 (1997) and Resolution 50 (1997) the Congress has already made proposals for improving regional democracy in Turkey, which the country's authorities have not yet implemented ;

27. The Congress welcomes the very recent accession of Georgia as the Council of Europe's 41st member state but recalls that regionalisation is currently a topic of concern in the country and proposes to make available the experience of other European countries to offer political guidelines for the future development of regionalisation, including, as a first step, the organisation of a colloquy in 1999.