

CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF EUROPE

Resolution 111 (2001)¹ on the Forum of Cities and Regions of South-East Europe 7th Economic Forum (Skopje, 16-18 November 2000)

The Congress, bearing in mind the proposal of the Standing Committee,

1. Recalling its past actions to promote partnerships with cities and regions of South-eastern Europe, particularly:

a. the appeal by the President of the Congress in April 1999 to help the cities and regions concerned to cope with the problems of refugees and displaced persons, particularly in Albania, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and Montenegro;

b. the round table discussion on partnerships with Serbian and Montenegrin cities and towns held in Budapest on 20 December 1999;

c. its active involvement in the Szeged Process, especially the first two conferences (8-9 October 1999 and 23-24 March 2000) and the organisation of the third conference (Szeged, 23-24 March 2001) aimed at extending the scope of its activities;

d. activities to which it contributed in 2000 in the context of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, in particular:

– the Bucharest Forum (23-24 January 2000) which adopted an action plan to strengthen local democracy and stability in South-eastern Europe;

– the Consultative Forum with Yugoslav Municipalities (Belgrade, 13-14 November 2000);

2. Bearing in mind CLRAE Resolution 88 (2000) on the evaluation of the results of the Economic Forums of the Regions of Europe and the Stability Pact and CLRAE Recommendation 74 (2000) on the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe: specific projects on local democracy and transfrontier co-operation, adopted on 24 May 2000;

3. Considers that the Skopje Forum helped to promote partnerships between cities and regions and draft agreements between national associations of local or regional authorities to meet the co-operation and assistance needs of cities or regions of South-eastern Europe;

4. Reiterates the importance of the partnerships already entered into by many European cities and regions to promote the spread of local democracy in South-eastern Europe;

5. Considers that these partnerships, which meet urgent requests made by the cities and regions of the Balkans, complement activities launched by national governments, international financial institutions and European organisations;

6. Welcomes the various partnerships already established with cities and regions of South-eastern Europe with the support, *inter alia*, of non-governmental organisations, the European Union, the Stability Pact, and, for Serbia and Montenegro, the Szeged Process;

7. Endorses and reiterates the appeal launched in Skopje to all European cities and regions to establish new partnerships to meet the genuine and urgent needs of South-eastern Europe’s cities and regions, relating primarily to priorities in the economic and environmental fields including water and waste management, sustainable development and transport infrastructure;

8. Stresses the importance of training for local and regional government representatives and staff and hence of support for training centres in the South-eastern European countries;

9. Shares the following views expressed at the Skopje Forum:

a. economic partnerships should aim to give women a greater role in economic development and, in particular, encourage female entrepreneurs;

b. the information society has a fundamental part to play in the future economic progress of the countries of South-eastern Europe;

c. thanks to the experience acquired by the CLRAE and the intergovernmental sector dealing with local democracy – and out of a desire to make better use of all these partnership projects and ensure that the various activities complement one another –, the Council of Europe could contribute to improved co-ordination by acting as a focal point for the various activities and networks, particularly via the Internet; it being understood that this activity should go hand in hand with the activities of the European associations and not replace them;

d. on the basis of the Skopje Declaration, adopted unanimously on 18 November 2000:

i. agrees to proceed, in co-operation with Fedre and the European associations of local and regional authorities, with the implementation of the various projects and activities heralded at the Skopje Forum and, in due course, take the necessary steps to this end;

ii. decides to hold a conference in 2001 to promote the implementation of a network of national associations of local and/or regional authorities of South-eastern Europe with a view to establishing a union of these associations in

the long term. The conference will be held in conjunction with the Association of Romanian Municipalities and will complement a series of CLRAE-sponsored seminars planned for 2001 in Bulgaria, Albania, Montenegro and Croatia (with the same aim of nurturing contacts between associations). It will enable the network of associations to establish a long-term work programme, particularly in the area of training for local and regional government staff and representatives in South-eastern Europe;

iii. asks the Secretariat to establish the necessary contacts in the context of the Szeged Process to promote a multilateral agreement between the countries concerned fostering interregional and transfrontier co-operation in the Balkans. This multilateral agreement should be based on the principles of the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities and its two additional protocols;

iv. decides to hold an information seminar, in co-operation with the European Union, Cemat and the Committee of Regions, on aid granted by the European Union for the promotion of trans-European and interregional co-operation between local and regional authorities under its assistance programmes such as Interreg as well as its programmes for states in transition (Phare, Tacis);

v. requests the Ento network, which brings together Europe's local government staff training institutes, to contribute to the establishment of a programme, meeting the specific training needs of associations of local and regional authorities in South-eastern Europe;

vi. urges more of Europe's cities and regions to get involved in the work of the Association of Local

Democracy Agencies and in partnerships set up by these agencies, in view of the contribution that they make towards education in local democracy and the development of civil society;

vii. welcomes the scheduled opening of a new Local Democracy Agency (LDA) in Niksic, Montenegro, in March 2001 and the plan to set up an LDA in southern Serbia in the region of Niš, and invites European cities and regions which are interested in these projects to become partners of one LDA or the other;

viii. invites the Association of Local Democracy Agencies, which currently comprises eight agencies in four countries (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"), to contemplate the possibility of opening an LDA in Kosovo in an area where there are cultural minorities;

ix. decides to organise the 8th Forum of Cities and Regions of South-East Europe in Turkey (Thrace) during the autumn of 2001 and the following forum in Prijedor (Bosnia and Herzegovina) in 2002;

x. agrees to ask Mr Yavuz Mildon (Turkey, R) and Mr Claude Haegi (Switzerland, R) to ensure the co-ordination of action to be undertaken in connection with the forums.

1. Debated by the Congress and adopted on 31 May 2001, 3rd Sitting (see Doc. CG (8) 8, draft resolution presented by Mr C. Haegi and Mr Y. Mildon, rapporteurs).