

CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF EUROPE

Resolution 145 (2002)¹ on the state of regional print media in Europe – Pluralism, independence and freedom in regional press

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

1. Considers:

- a. a free and unhindered press to be integral to the democratic system of government;
- b. a pluralistic press sector to be an indispensable component in democratic decision making and transparent and accountable government;

2. Recognises:

- a. the economic pressure that regional print media face in highly competitive media markets;
- b. that both the regional print media and the regional content of national newspapers remain an important source of information and news for regional communities;
- c. the significant role played by all regional media in supporting regional communities. Regional media include – in addition to printed media – television, radio and Internet pages of regional news stations and papers;

3. Emphasises:

- a. the importance of regional coverage of political, social, economic, and cultural life and the role played by regional media in fostering and supporting a pluralistic democratic system;
- b. the central role played by regional media in covering local and regional issues and events that help to support regional identity and the involvement of citizens in local and regional authorities;
- c. The need for a pluralistic and diverse regional press that allows all individuals and groups to draw upon numerous different sources of information and news;

4. Recalls:

- a. the preparatory study of the CLRAE Culture and Education Committee on transfrontier co-operation between the regions of member states in the fields of education and culture (CPR/CULT (7) 3) of 9 April 2001, in which the media sector is identified as a key area for transfrontier co-operation;
- b. the study on *Promotion of Transfrontier Media at Local and Regional Level*, 2000 (series: Transfrontier Co-

operation in Europe – No. 8) prepared by the Select Committee of Experts on Transfrontier Co-operation, Directorate of Co-operation for Local and Regional Democracy;

c. the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1506 (2001) on freedom of expression in Europe, and Recommendation 1407 (1999) on media and democratic culture;

5. Encourages the regional print media to:

- a. seek mutual co-operation, both within national territories and beyond national borders;
- b. by means of such co-operation:
 - i. offer and promote news and information from neighbouring regions;
 - ii. promote bilingualism/multilingualism in the media;
 - iii. support understanding and tolerance both within national territories and across borders;
 - iv. investigate areas where resources may be shared across borders;

6. Welcomes joint transfrontier co-operation in the field of the print media, such as the following examples of good practice, mentioned in the study referred to in paragraph 4.b above:

- a. The German-Polish press club *Against Stereotypes*, which, among other things, publishes its own informative magazine targeted at journalists and decision-makers involved in transfrontier co-operation;
- b. The publication of the transfrontier newspaper *Dreilandzeitung* in the French and German border region of north-west Switzerland;

7. Regrets:

- a. the overall decline in the number of independent regional print media available to individuals and groups in society;
- b. the increasingly low level of interest shown by readers in the issues at stake in neighbouring regions, both across national borders and domestically;
- c. the high level of monopolies or concentration of ownership that has developed in the regional press markets in many European countries;
- d. the excessive concentration of ownership of the regional print media, as it is a serious threat to diversity and pluralism;

8. Believes:

- a. that monopolies and high levels of concentration in the regional print media are a serious threat to a democratic and pluralistic media sector;
- b. where subsidies or other instruments are employed by member states and local or regional authorities to sustain or

promote diversity in the media, they should be used in a non-discriminatory and transparent manner, and should respect editorial freedom;

c. that even higher journalistic standards in regional press can be reached by introducing courses for reporters about standard and ethics in journalism;

9. Urges:

a. proprietors of regional print media to respect editorial independence and the right of the regional media to report on regional affairs in the public;

b. editors of regional print media to engage all sections of the population, and in particular young people, in order to encourage interest and involvement in regional social and political issues;

10. Invites its members to:

a. contribute to the best of their abilities to the strengthening of independent print media in the regions;

b. ensure that regional newspapers are available in public places and, in particular, in libraries;

c. take measures to support transregional co-operation between print media at both the national and transnational levels;

d. undertake appropriate measures to develop exchange programmes for journalists working in the regional print media;

e. restate and acknowledge the importance of a diverse and pluralistic media sector for a democratic system of government;

f. take all appropriate measures to ensure full access by regional media to full information on public affairs at regional level.

1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Regions on 5 June and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 6 June 2002 (see Doc. CPR (9) 4, draft resolution presented by Mr T. Souladze in the name of Mr P. Kittelmann, rapporteur).