Opinion 97 (1980)[1]

Texts adopted at the 14th Session of the Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (Strasbourg, 16-18 October 1979)

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Having considered the texts adopted by the Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe at its 14th Session (Doc. 4451) and the report of its Committee on Regional Planning and Local Authorities (Doc. 4470) ;

2. Noting with satisfaction the account taken by the Committee of Ministers of the views it expressed in Opinion No. 91 (1979), on which the revision of certain provisions of the Conference's Charter was based ;

3. Re-emphasising the need for the Conference, a consultative body, to be wholly integrated into the structures of the Council of Europe, so that it may contribute fully to the achievement of the organisation's objectives as laid down in its Statute and subsequently adjusted by its statutory organs ;

4. Considering that the Conference will not be able to perform this function until it has become representative of all the local and regional authorities of the Europe of the Twenty-one, in accordance with its Charter ;

5. Expressing the wish that the appointment of national delegations be entrusted in all countries to the representative national associations of local and regional authorities, and that governments act only as arbiters ensuring a fair ratio of local to regional councillors, as well as a proper geographical distribution among the members of a national delegation, if necessary by means of a rota system,

6. Considers, moreover, that links between the Assembly and the Conference could benefit from being strengthened, and, to this end, decides to invite the President of the Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe to report to it, in principle once a year, on the Conference's problems, objectives and achievements, so that it may have a clearer idea of the Conference's intentions and identify possibilities for joint action ;

7. Is concerned at the growing danger of overlap between the work of the Conference and the activities of the Assembly, and wishes to encourage the committees of both bodies to co-ordinate more closely their respective work programmes on subjects which concern local or regional authorities, and to pay closer attention to each other's work ;

8. Considers that the Conference may effectively help to strengthen links between the Council of Europe and the European Economic Community, and invites the Committee of Ministers to specify for the Conference a framework and conditions for closer co-operation with Community bodies, bearing in mind the unique position of the Conference as the only representative organisation of local and regional authorities in Europe ;

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1. Assembly debate on 29 January 1980 (22nd Sitting) (see Doc. 4470, report of the Committee on Regional Planning and Local Authorities). Text adopted by the Assembly on 29 January 1980 (22nd Sitting).

9. Expresses its opinion concerning the texts adopted at the Conference's 14th Session :

a. with regard to Resolution 103, on the amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe : – notes with satisfaction the Conference's decision to instruct its Standing Committee to make a general review of its Rules of Procedure for discussion at its 15th Session and awaits with interest the outcome of the review ;

b. with regard to Resolution 104, on the activities of the Standing Committee and Conference organs during the 1978-79 inter-session, and on action taken by the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly on the resolutions adopted by the Conference :

1. recommends that the Committee of Ministers act on the Conference's request to investigate the scope offered by its Charter to seek its opinions on problems affecting local and regional authorities, as well as its request for funds to enable it to maintain the necessary liaison with steering committees dealing with problems of obvious interest to local and regional authorities;

2. supports the appeal to national associations of local and regional authorities to make fuller use of the Information Bulletin on Municipal and Regional Matters for exchanging information with their European counterparts ;

c. with regard to Resolution 105, on the apportionment of public resources between the state and local and regional authorities, and its evolution :

1. approves the Conference's request to national governments to ensure that local and regional authorities are provided with financial resources of their own, and to recognise their right to an institutionally guaranteed say in the allocation of the resources granted them ;

2. urges governments to take the necessary steps to ensure that economic statistics pay more explicit attention to the financial operations of local and regional administrations ;

3. while being aware of difficulties that this involves, supports the Conference's proposal that the Council of Europe's Steering Committee for Regional and Municipal Matters be instructed by the Committee of Ministers to draw up guidelines for a European local finance policy ;

d. with regard to Resolution 106, on the 3rd European Symposium of Historic Towns (Munich-Landshut, 29 November-1 December 1978) :

1. marks its interest in the European Symposia of Historic Towns organised under the joint auspices of the Conference and of the Historic Towns Forum of Europa Nostra ;

2. asks the Conference to pay special attention to Assembly Recommendations 880 and 881 and Resolution 708 on the conservation of the European architectural heritage, which embody the results of lengthy and expert study and set out more precisely and in greater detail the measures which in the opinion of the Assembly are required ;

3. welcomes the continued recognition by the local and regional authorities of their special responsibilities for the protection of the architectural heritage;

e. with regard to Resolution 107, on the Aachen Congress on "Prevention of transfrontier pollution and co-operation between local and regional authorities" :

1. takes note of the Final Declaration of the congress ;

2. stresses the importance it attaches to transfrontier co-operation in Europe, and in this connection calls to mind its Opinion No. 96 (1979), on the draft European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities ;

3. supports the Conference's suggestion concerning wide decentralisation of powers in favour of local and regional authorities in the matter of transfrontier co-operation ;

4. supports the Conference's proposal to organise a meeting of the regions of the Mediterranean Basin in order to discuss problems arising in these regions in relation to environmental protection, and declares itself ready to contribute to the implementation of such an idea;

f. with regard to Resolution 108, on the regional policy of Council of Europe member states and of the European institutions :

1. shares the Conference's opinion concerning worsening unemployment in many European regions and growing imbalances between the most prosperous regions of Europe and the depressed regions ;

2. calls on member governments to implement aid policies for less fortunate areas ;

3. associates itself with the Conference in its request that the Council of Europe Resettlement Fund be provided with a capital commensurate with the role which any real Council of Europe social bank should play within the framework of a policy of co-operation between the developed and less-developed regions ;

4. considers that the Assembly would be exceeding its statutory powers in including representatives of the Conference in the parliamentary delegation attending the meetings of the Joint Committee ;

g. with regard to Resolution 109, on the Conference of Alpine Regions :

1. reiterates the views it expressed in Resolution 687 (1979), on European regional planning and the role and function of the Alpine regions ;

2. supports the Conference's proposal that the Committee of Ministers forward the Lugano Declaration to the Council of Europe bodies concerned ;

3. welcomes the possibility of increased cooperation between the regional planning committees of the Conference and the Assembly ;

h. with regard to Resolution 110, on the particular problems of the European Atlantic island regions (Azores, Madeira, Canaries) :

1. shares the Conference's conviction as to the European character of the population and culture of these Atlantic island regions ;

2. welcomes the establishment of autonomous institutions in these regions ;

3. endorses the Conference's suggestions for furthering the economic and social development of these archipelagos ;

4. considers it desirable for a conference of European island regions, attended by the regional and local authorities concerned, to be organised in conjunction with the Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe after a more detailed study has been made of the situation of Europe's islands ;

i. with regard to Resolution 111, on maritime pollution problems :

1. reaffirms its belief that the Council of Europe is the most suitable forum for effective cooperation in this field ;

2. calls to mind its own proposals in Recommendation 847 (1978), on European action to prevent pollution of waters and coasts ;

j. with regard to Resolution 112, on the past record and future prospects of twinnings between local and regional authorities :

1. welcomes the Conference's interest in the subject ;

2. supports the Conference's proposals to the Committee of Ministers, to member governments and to local authorities ;

3. regrets that its budget is too small to enable it, in the present circumstances, to comply with the request to share in the cost of the Inter-municipal Exchanges Plan ;

4. invites the Committee of Ministers to raise the allocation in the Budget for the Inter-municipal Exchanges Plan to at least 100 000 FF in order to bring the present amount of 50 000 FF fixed in 1962 up to date.