



Opinion 159 (1991)¹

**Texts adopted at the 26th Session of the Standing Conference
of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE)
(Strasbourg, 19-21 March 1991)**

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly welcomes the support given by the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe to the establishment of democratic structures at local and regional level in the new member states of the Council of Europe.
2. It therefore applauds thought given by the Conference to possible changes in its status so that it may perform its function more effectively.
3. The Assembly, in turn, expresses the following opinion on the texts adopted by the Conference at its 26th Session :

A. Resolution 219 on a convention on soil protection

The Assembly fully agrees with the Conference about the need for a structured programme on soil protection. It also believes that the Committee of Ministers ought to speed up the procedure for implementing [Resolution No. 1](#) of the 6th European Ministerial Conference on the Environment, so that a start can be made on work which would lead to the signing of a convention on soil protection at the 7th European Ministerial Conference on the Environment, to be held in Liechtenstein in 1992. However, the Assembly would point out that the activities of the European Ministerial Conference on the Environment ought to be better co-ordinated with those of the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning which relate to the same subject.

B. Resolution 220 on regional transport

The Assembly is pleased that, with regard to regional transport, the Standing Conference has the same priorities as those which the Assembly itself advocated in its opinion on the 34th and 35th annual reports of the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (ECMT).

It recalls that, when presenting this opinion, it expressed regret that the ECMT report made no mention of transalpine traffic. The Assembly is therefore particularly glad that the Standing Conference wishes to draw the attention of the ECMT, inter alia, to these questions, notably by sending it the final declaration of the Conference on Regional Transport, held in Cologne in 1989.

1. See [Doc. 6451](#), report of the Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities, Rapporteur :Mr Cuatrecasas. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 28 June 1991.



With regard to the Conference's request to the Parliamentary Assembly to organise periodic debates on co-operation in transport policy in Europe, the Assembly points out that opportunities to discuss this subject are regularly provided by its debates on the ECMT's annual progress reports. Moreover, its Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities intends to present a report on the findings of the Hearing on transalpine traffic and the environment, held in Innsbruck in May 1990.

C. Resolution 221 on improving traffic and the quality of life in metropolitan areas

The Assembly welcomes the Conference's search for solutions to the serious problems of traffic and the quality of life in most big towns in Council of Europe member states. It is particularly pleased that the issue of public transport between urban areas on either side of a border has also been raised, as an efficient public transport network is vital to sound transfrontier co-operation. Moreover, it appreciates the stress laid on the environmental problems caused by heavy traffic in large towns as well as the appeal to local and regional authorities to make maximum use of their regulatory powers in order to reduce traffic congestion and pollution.

D. Resolution 222 on the information policy of local and regional authorities of Europe

The Parliamentary Assembly, like the Standing Conference, has given thought to the Council of Europe's information policy. As a result, it cannot but approve the steps taken by the Standing Conference to update its 1983 report on the basis of the new information policy launched by the Secretary General after she took office in June 1989. The Parliamentary Assembly is convinced that the local and regional authorities of Europe have a role to play in the circulation of European information and that it is necessary to make constant improvements to the information given to the general public and to decision-makers about the work and aims of the Council of Europe in general and those of the CLRAE in particular. The Assembly supports the Conference's decisions on the improvement of information and communication policies. It particularly welcomes the request to national associations to participate actively in the implementation of this information and communication strategy.

E. Resolution 223 on the role of local and regional authorities in integration policy between Western and Eastern Europe

The Parliamentary Assembly endorses the standpoint adopted by the Committee of Ministers in Lisbon in March 1990 that the CLRAE, in the context of the new European architecture, should act "as a forum for debate and political dialogue" alongside the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly. Moreover, it is fully aware of the need for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to introduce genuine local self-government in accordance with the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

It is sure that the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe can play a role by co-operating with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in order to achieve this aim.

It therefore supports the CLRAE's intention to carry out co-ordinated measures to promote the European Charter of Local Self-Government and to encourage local and regional authorities in Council of Europe member states to embark upon a large-scale programme of co-operation, twinnings and partnerships with the local and regional authorities emerging in Central and Eastern Europe.

With regard to the CLRAE's wish to take part in the meetings provided for in the CSCE Paris Charter, the Assembly considers that such participation would be premature at present, because of recent developments in the CSCE process. The Assembly firmly supports the idea that the governments of member states should be invited to take or reinforce measures to support or encourage the development of local and regional self-government in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, as it believes that such action will enable the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to set up truly independent local and regional authorities. Lastly, the Assembly endorses the request to devise "a genuine system to monitor the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government" in consultation with the CLRAE.

F. Resolution 224 on proposals for constitutional changes in the Standing Conference

The Parliamentary Assembly well understands that, in a new European architecture, the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe wishes to cease to be subject to a legal status governed by Article 17 of the Statute of the Council of Europe, which places it on the same footing as a committee of experts, and would like to act in partnership with other bodies in the Council of Europe. The Assembly

supports this wish, provided the CLRAE remains within its field of responsibilities. It also refers to the numerous proposals it has itself made, especially [Recommendation 1021 \(1985\)](#), with a view to the representation of local and regional authorities being improved at European level.

In this respect, the Assembly shares the spirit of the Conference's proposals for amending its charter in order to ensure an appropriate role and place for local and regional authorities within the Conference. The Assembly considers that the Conference should be a "forum for dialogue" for the various categories of local or regional authorities, while allowing each category to discuss its own affairs in complete freedom.

As far as the proposed "officers' advisory group" is concerned, the Parliamentary Assembly wonders whether some confusion might arise between, on the one hand, elected representatives who are members of the Conference and, on the other, the officers concerned. It also has some reservations about the large number of officers and substitutes, which might slow down the functioning of the Conference.

With regard to the new title proposed by the Standing Conference, the Assembly would prefer a name which is closer to the present title, such as "Standing Assembly of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe".

The Assembly fully approves the proposal to set up a specific platform in the Council of Europe for regions with legislative powers through the establishment of a partial agreement between member states. In this connection, it refers to a motion for a resolution recently tabled in the Assembly concerning the full and rapid integration of regional entities or authorities in the work of the Council of Europe.

The Assembly would accordingly like to be involved in the process of promoting and achieving such an agreement.

G. [Resolution 225](#) on the contribution of local and regional authorities to European education policy

The Assembly welcomes the new interest of the CLRAE in the field of education, especially in view of the increasing role of local and regional authorities in interpreting and applying national policies.

It notes that a really European dimension can only be given to education through full co-operation between bodies acting at European, national, regional and local levels.

It supports the projects proposed for school twinnings involving studies of the history of localities and regions, for education in Europe's major cities and for study visits by journalists -provided that the necessary funding at local and European levels can be found for the conduct and co-ordination of such projects.

H. [Resolution 226](#) on regional solidarity

The Assembly considers that this text is a useful complement to [Resolution 220](#) (regional transport),

[Resolution 223](#) (the role of local and regional authorities in integration policy between Western and Eastern Europe) and [Resolution 224](#) (constitutional changes in the Standing Conference), on which it has already expressed an opinion.

The Parliamentary Assembly wishes, however, to express particular support for the requests made to the Committee of Ministers concerning intergovernmental activities in the field of transfrontier co-operation, and in this connection it refers to the recommendation it adopted on the same subject ([Recommendation 1144 \(1991\)](#) on the situation of frontier populations and workers).

I. [Resolution 227](#) on the external relations of local and regional authorities

In view of its activities and involvement in the field of transfrontier co-operation, as well as the interest it has always taken in the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities, the Assembly cannot but support the Standing Conference's request that an additional protocol be drawn up with the aim of granting legal personality in national law to transfrontier co-operation bodies and empowering local and regional authorities to maintain transfrontier relations. In this connection, it recalls its own proposals made in [Recommendation 1144 \(1991\)](#). Moreover, in line with the thinking conducted by its Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities, the Assembly welcomes the decision of the Conference's Committee on Structures, Finance and Management to draw up a preliminary draft convention on interregional co-operation.

J. [Resolution 228](#) on towns in Europe

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The Parliamentary Assembly welcomes the Conference's very intensive programme of activities concerning urban matters.

It recalls that its own Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities has been instructed to present a report on the problem of spray-gun graffiti and the deterioration of the urban environment (Rapporteur : Lord Kinnoull).

In the course of preparing this report, the Assembly is therefore ready to co-operate with the CLRAE in organising a hearing on this problem, which affects many large towns in Europe.