Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1330 (1997)[1]

Draft European charter of the Danube basin

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Danube basin has always been a region where many different peoples have been brought together by historical, social, cultural and economic links made possible by the unifying effect of the river.

2. Growth in co-operation between the countries within the region and between them and other countries in both western and eastern Europe was checked or, at the very least, greatly reduced during the period before 1989.

3. Developments since 1989 and the return of east European countries to democratic government and the market economy undoubtedly offer new opportunities for co-operation and development in the Danube basin.

4. In this connection, for instance, the Assembly believes that the Danube can serve as a major inland waterway, which, in particular through the Rhine-Main-Danube link, can significantly reduce the volume of goods transported by land routes and offer a less expensive and, above all, less environmentally harmful means of transport.

5. Moreover, increased use of the Danube as a transport route is bound to have a beneficial impact on the economic development of the surrounding regions.

6. However, the Assembly is equally aware of the dangers facing this region where not only the river, but also other natural resources such as the air and the soil, are under serious threat.

7. At the same time, it is important to note that the state of the Danube has significant implications for other regions such as the Black Sea basin, the pollution of which is largely attributable to the pollution of the Danube, and this makes properly co-ordinated co-operation between the various regions concerned all the more necessary.

8. Given the new opportunities which have emerged in the Danube basin region following the opening up of the countries of central and eastern Europe, many initiatives - mostly focusing on specific individual aspects of the problems facing the region - have either come into being or, if already existing, have gained fresh momentum.

9. At present, the Danube basin is covered by various conventions, agreements and projects, etc., concerning environmental protection, navigation issues, transfrontier water management, tourism, etc.

10. The Assembly believes that only a comprehensive and integrated approach to the various sectoral policies concerned can ensure harmonious, satisfactory, ecologically acceptable and economically legitimate development of the region.

11. Consequently, while recognising the validity of these initiatives and the important role they can play with regard to the specific problems addressed, the Assembly believes there is a need to put in place a mechanism which will ensure that all the relevant problems are taken into consideration in a comprehensive and integrated manner, and which meets the requirements of sustainable development while fitting in with a regional development policy that is consistent with a pan-European approach and with the specific problems of the region.

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1. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 28 May 1997.See Doc. 7797, report of the Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities, rapporteur : Mr Zierer.

12. If all the problems which the Danube region may have to face are to be dealt with in a comprehensive and integrated manner, co-operation must also extend to all levels, that is, international, national, regional and local, and to all the parties concerned, that is, public authorities, elected representatives and governmental and non-governmental organisations.

13. It was with this in mind that the Assembly decided in Resolution 1021 (1994) to draw up a European charter of the Danube basin, which would provide an appropriate framework for permanent co-operation at all levels in the Danube region and for effective co-ordination of the specific examples of co-operation already in existence.

14. The Assembly thus welcomes the completion of the work on the draft European charter of the Danube basin, which is in keeping with the wishes expressed in Resolution 1021 (1994).

15. In this connection, the Assembly has noted the offer of the Romanian authorities to host in Bucharest the secretariat to be established under the charter.

16. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers :

16.1. examine the draft European charter of the Danube basin with a view to permitting its early adoption;

16.2. consider the possibilities of establishing in Bucharest the seat of the Standing Committee, to be set up under the charter, and its secretariat;

16.3. assign responsibility for finalisation of the text, if it believes this to be necessary, to a committee of experts including representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe;

16.4. present the draft text thus completed, and before its final adoption, to the Parliamentary Assembly for its opinion.