Resolution 210 (1961)[1]

European regional policy and local authorities

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

Having noted the Resolutions on regional planning policy adopted by the European Conference of Local Authorities at its 3rd Session in January 1960 and, in particular:

Resolution No. 12 on the concept of "region";

Resolution No. 13 on the participation of local authorities in European regional plannings;

Resolution No. 14 on the direction of European regional planning for the expansion of less developed areas;

Resolution No. 15 on the integration of natural regions astride frontiers;

Opinion No. 13 on European regional planning and the expansion of less developed countries; and

Opinion No. 14 on urban decongestion;

Convinced that the harmonious geographical development of such activities, a prerequisite for every endeavour to find the economic optimum, is impossible in the absence of a regional development policy;

Aware of the difficulties facing most regions of Europe devolving from the past, such as regional under-development, and from lack of foresight, leading primarily to congestion in development areas ;

Noting that under-development is especially rife in frontier regions and is therefore clearly the outcome of a narrow policy of national self-sufficiency still practised until recently;

Considering that all large European towns have to bear enormous burdens as a result of inordinate increase in their population and that small communities are being deserted by their inhabitants or suffering from stagnation to an equally harmful degree ;

Considering it to be a principle of European civilisation that man is the centre of all economic preoccupation and that, consequently, the economy operates for his benefit whether he be the subject of needs or the agent of improvement;

Aware that it is in our local communities and the councils administering them that conflicting interests are reconciled and at their level that efficiency and freedom most naturally combine, and that no one has better knowledge of the true needs of the population than have the local authorities,

Declares European regional planning to be one of the essential political tasks facing the European institutions at the present time ;

Considers that the balanced development of the whole, the general objective of European regional planning, pre-supposes :

1. examination of the problems and working out of solutions at European and regional levels as well as at national level;

---

1. Assembly debate on 26th September 1961 (16th Sitting) (see Doc. 1324, Report of the Committee on Local Authorities). Text adopted by the Assembly on 26th September 1961 (16th Sitting).

2. regions to be the basic development units - "regions" being taken to mean territorial units smaller than States whose inhabitants have common interests of various kinds and where, through links of a geographical, historic and economic character, and of custom and sometimes dialect, a common feeling of belonging to a particular way of life has developed;

3. a policy of decongestion for these regions including the institution of political and administrative machinery to enable populations to form a democratic association with the social and economic administration;

4. a policy of urban and industrial decongestion, combined with a careful search for solutions to the acute problems arising from the transfer of populations, the most difficult of which is probably that of the adaptation of town-dwellers to their new life, which, though sometimes "rural", is in most cases "provincial" ;

5. a policy of aid for less-developed regions based primarily on a renewal of the pioneer spirit among the populations and local economic and political leaders and on financial assistance for the latter,in particular the possibility of raising loans on foreign money markets;

6. a policy of assistance for rural areas to put an end to the doubly harmful disequilibrium between town and country;

7. a policy of assistance for frontier regions for the purpose of eradicating the harmful effects of commercial frontiers by re-establishing the natural economic units destroyed by policies of self-sufficiency ;

Affirms that these problems can be dealt with and these policies put into operation only if the natural representatives of the regional or local communities concerned, the local authorities, are closely associated in the task ;

Welcomes the setting up by the Committee on Local Authorities of a Joint Committee to study the problems of European regional planning, the Committee being composed of an equal number of members of the Committee on Local Authorities and of representatives of local authorities appointed by the European Conference;

Instructs the Committee on Local Authorities to take steps, in close co-operation with the abovementioned Joint Committee, to define the leading part which local authorities are called upon to play in European regional planning at all levels : municipal, regional, national and European.