



Resolution 1265 (2001)¹

Role of interregional co-operation for agricultural and rural development

Parliamentary Assembly

1. European agriculture has undergone far-reaching changes during the past few years. Following the privatisation of land and the transition to a market economy, the transformation of the rural sector has become crucial for the economic and political stability of central and eastern European countries.
2. The Assembly considers that the process of transforming and adapting agriculture should take place on several levels, from the farm itself to central government, via the village and the region. It notes, however, that the considerable resources required for this change are not always available within the framework of national and European programmes.
3. In addition, cross-border and interregional co-operation can have extremely beneficial effects on agriculture and rural development and can also play a part in alleviating the negative aspects of the existence of borders and improving the local residents' quality of life.
4. In this connection, the Assembly is pleased to note that a large number of interregional co-operation initiatives have been carried out successfully in a variety of forms, such as cross-border and interregional agreements, Euroregions, etc., thus supplementing the limited resources available for assisting the transformation and modernisation of the farming sector and the economic development of rural regions.
5. The Assembly welcomes the fact that initiatives of this kind create close links between European countries and regions, in line with the Council of Europe's basic aim of achieving "a greater unity between its members". It wholeheartedly encourages the development of such initiatives, which contribute to the whole process of European integration.
6. The Assembly therefore invites member states and European regions:
 - 6.1. to develop closer links in terms of agricultural co-operation and rural development, allowing other European regions to benefit from their experience, skills and technology by placing their human, financial and technical resources at the disposal of less-advanced regions;
 - 6.2. to promote trade in agricultural produce in order to make better use of their respective production advantages and to enhance the complementary nature of their agricultural sectors;
 - 6.3. to promote the production of regional agricultural produce of certified quality and origin in order to adapt to new market conditions and consumer demand, while allowing for better traceability;
 - 6.4. to co-operate in developing agro-industrial and trade outlets for products in regions where such outlets are non-existent or obsolete, with a view to consolidating the agro-industrial sector, making it more competitive and contributing to rural and socio-economic development in these regions;
 - 6.5. to promote an integrated form of rural development, taking account of the multifunctional nature of agriculture, environmental constraints and social needs in an agriculture sector and in regions that are undergoing widespread restructuring;

1. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 8 November 2001 (see [Doc. 9186](#), report of the Committee on the Environment and Agriculture, rapporteur: Mr Smolarek).



6.6. to devise jointly-agreed rural development programmes, particularly with the regions of central and eastern Europe, in areas such as farmer training, improving farm infrastructure, new farming techniques and practices, financial and trade support, organisation of agricultural services (such as banks, insurance, land registers and professional organisations), development of the agri-food industry, environmental conservation and promotion of agricultural tourism, etc.;

6.7. to promote cross-border and interregional agreements on agricultural and rural development, in particular:

- a. by making use of the Council of Europe's existing legal instruments, such as the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities (Madrid, 1980, ETS No. 106), as supplemented by its Additional Protocol (Strasbourg, 1995, ETS No. 159) and its Protocol No. 2 concerning interterritorial co-operation (Strasbourg, 1998, ETS No. 169), where these have been ratified by the member state concerned;
- b. by submitting projects for European Union financial and technical co-operation programmes and instruments at national or regional level, such as Sapard, Phare, Interreg, Leader + and Tacis, eligibility for which varies according to the category of the countries concerned (member states, applicant states or others).

7. The Assembly calls on the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, the European Union's Committee of the Regions and European associations of local and regional authorities to step up their efforts and initiatives, in order to promote rural development and interregional co-operation in this field, especially in the regions of central and eastern Europe.