



Recommendation 1811 (2007)¹

Regionalisation in Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly observes that a majority of Council of Europe member states are federal, confederal or regionalised, with regions enjoying a high degree of self-government or at least considerable administrative decentralisation.
2. It also considers that the regional political sphere is a highly relevant institutional reality as a sub-state level of government in a majority of Council of Europe member states, in so far as the region is the ideal level for exercising governance due to its size and proximity.
3. The Assembly underlines that the Council of Europe, on the basis of the political principles it promotes, has always supported the development of a regional Europe, as an additional guarantee to democracy in the sense that it enhances citizens' opportunities to play an active role in political affairs.
4. It points out that the Council of Europe also upholds regionalisation because of its political, administrative and financial efficiency, as it is a level of government that is closer to everyday reality and to citizens than the state.
5. It also points out that in recent years many European states have made considerable progress in developing or restructuring their federal, regional or self-governing systems.
6. The Assembly notes that a majority of Council of Europe member states include communities with a strong cultural, political and historical identity, which are not mere regions but peoples and societies with a marked collective personality (described as regions, nations, nationalities, countries, etc.) that did not establish their own state but retain visible differentiating features that inform a political will for self government.
7. It considers that it is necessary to establish a solid sub-state level within member states, at the very least to ensure greater efficiency in the governance of states that might not be able to ensure permanent and effective state action throughout the entire territory.
8. The Assembly notes the impetus that the regionalist movement is acquiring by virtue of its association with the idea of good governance, the need to apply the principle of subsidiarity and citizens' demands for organisation at regional level.
9. It underlines the importance of regionalism to the European project, considering that the European Union has established structural funds at a regional level and has designed thousands of projects implemented at this level, in order to achieve greater social and territorial cohesion.
10. The Assembly also notes that there are some states that still appear reticent with regard to any form of regionalisation, however limited, and persist in denying the existence of minorities within their borders.
11. It firmly believes that a broad majority of citizens in member states wish to uphold the existence of the state as the basic institution where the political process unfolds, as the primary holder of rights in international politics and as the ultimate decision-making level within the European institutions.

1. Assembly debate on 3 October 2007 (33rd Sitting) (see [Doc. 11373](#), report of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs, rapporteur: Mr de Puig). Text adopted by the Assembly on 3 October 2007 (33rd Sitting).



12. The Assembly notes, however, that in recent years a considerable number of new states has been created in Europe and we now face the appearance of new nations whose independence and statehood is recognised by the international community.
13. It recalls the precedent established with – and the conditions demanded for – the independence of Montenegro, and bears witness to the path towards independence taken by Kosovo, apparently accepted by a part of the international community.
14. It takes into account the fact that in a number of Council of Europe member states, within communities with a deep-rooted political awareness of their identity, there exist nationalistic minorities that further demand their independence and accession to full-fledged statehood.
15. The Assembly recalls the existence of conflicts based on ethnicity or the existence of national, cultural/linguistic, religious or border-region minorities, and the need to arrive at a resolution of these issues that is peaceful, lasting and satisfies all parties.
16. It is aware of the problems that the process of establishing new states can involve, including conflicts of all kinds, division within societies, struggles between minorities and the majority, between different minorities, between neighbouring countries and the risk of profound destabilisation of the European project.
17. The Assembly insists on the democratic condition of European states, which requires that these situations always be resolved through democratic processes, such as elections, referendums, constitutional and institutional reform, and the establishment of new entities; these processes must be dependent on the participation of citizens, who are ultimately entitled to decide.
18. It is convinced that most of these problems can find satisfactory resolution within the framework of an institutionalised sub-state power, in application of the principles of subsidiarity, of regionalism, of self-government and also of federalism.
19. The Assembly notes that regionalism, in the European states where it has been established, has met considerable success, as the examples of Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland or the United Kingdom reveal.
20. It is further convinced of the virtues of regional governance, of the effectiveness of subsidiarity and of the democratic power of proximity, which brings citizens closer to the administration of public affairs.
21. The Assembly believes that the exercise of minority rights is compatible with state actions, which must recognise these minorities and uphold their cultural, linguistic, religious and political rights.
22. It acknowledges the role that regionalist organisations have played in Europe, particularly European institutions such as the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (the Congress) or the European Union Committee of the Regions, as well as associations such as the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE), which represents European regionalism at parliamentary level.
23. The Assembly supports the Congress initiative to draw up a new draft text on regional democracy, to be adopted in May 2008, which will provide flexible and realistic solutions within a document likely to earn the acceptance of a majority of member states and, in due course, that of the Committee of Ministers, with a view to a legal instrument being drawn up offering an institutional framework in line with the developments in most European countries.
24. It welcomes the success of the first Conference of European National Parliaments and Regional Assemblies, which it hosted jointly with the CALRE in Strasbourg on 12 September 2007.
25. The Assembly wishes to continue its co-operation with European regional institutions, in particular with the Congress and its Chamber of Regions, in order to develop a shared approach and to explore the huge potential of regionalism for tomorrow's Europe.
26. It also wishes to develop its links with regions that exercise legislative powers and with the organisations that represent them, such as the Conference of European Regions with Legislative Powers (REGLEG), on the level of regional governments, or the CALRE, with regard to regional assemblies.
27. It shall pay particular attention to establishing relations with the CALRE and with the parliaments of regions that exercise legislative powers, in order to co-operate within the realm of parliamentarism and to compare the role of regional parliaments, state parliaments and international parliamentary organisations such as the Parliamentary Assembly.

28. Consequently, the Assembly calls on the Committee of Ministers to recommend that member states:
- 28.1. make firm progress towards the improvement of regional systems as a sub-state level of governance, or, if such systems do not exist, towards their establishment where appropriate, in order to bring institutions up to date and to adapt them to the demands of new political, economic and social challenges in the modern world, in accordance with the principles promoted by the Council of Europe;
 - 28.2. use this path to resolve issues of institutional structure and claims raised by regions with national ambitions in order to provide them with a satisfactory degree of self-government as a channel for their political realisation, in co-operation with the government and other state institutions and, if applicable, with the institutions of the European Union;
 - 28.3. remedy the situation of marginalisation suffered within the European institutions by large European regions and afford them the acknowledgement and standing that will allow them to play a role within the European project proportionate to their contribution, thus overcoming the existing sense of frustration.
29. The Assembly also calls on the Committee of Ministers to:
- 29.1. insist on scrupulous respect for human rights, in particular the rights of minorities, which may find a model in regionalism to achieve full democratic recognition and application of these rights, in accordance with Council of Europe principles;
 - 29.2. uphold a broad and flexible concept of regionalism in order to avoid the imposition of any particular form of regional organisation: states will decide, when the time comes, what form of regionalisation suits their citizens best, since it is they who shall ultimately decide;
 - 29.3. support European regionalist organisations, inter alia by giving the Congress a higher profile, in order to provide the regionalist movement with greater consistency and inspire it with a European logic, over and above the requirements of each state's specific case.
30. The Assembly also calls on the Congress to:
- 30.1. endeavour to develop the regionalist movement in all its forms, and in the most appropriate form for each situation, in order to shed light on the positive reality and good governance that the regionalised state represents;
 - 30.2. continue its work on the new draft text on regional democracy, applying up-to-date and flexible criteria that will allow for its adoption both by the Committee of Ministers and by the majority of member states;
 - 30.3. reserve membership of the Chamber of Regions only to representatives of regions in the member states where they exist, and of the Chamber of Local Authorities to those of intermediate or local authorities;
 - 30.4. give regions that exercise legislative powers, in light of their particular political character, a specific profile and recognition and seek structural solutions that will allow them to debate and adopt decisions at their own level.
31. The Assembly also calls on the European Union to:
- 31.1. make it easier for large European regions to participate in common policies and in decision-taking processes, as well as in the implementation of European Community regulations, by granting them appropriate recognition and status;
 - 31.2. strengthen regions' role in the institutions of the European Union, inter alia by developing the powers and means of the Committee of the Regions;
 - 31.3. acknowledge, in the context of the work on drafting the new amending treaty to be prepared by the intergovernmental conference, the important role of regions and regional policy.