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European Charter for Rural Areas

Reply to Recommendation[1]: Recommendation 1296 (1996)
Committee of Ministers

The Committee of Ministers has studied with interest Recommendations 1274 (1995) and 1296 (1996) and wishes to inform the Parliamentary Assembly that it has brought them to the attention of the governments of the member states.

The Committee of Ministers shares the view expressed by the Parliamentary Assembly concerning the need to implement, at various levels, a specific policy for mountain regions and rural areas so as to ensure an overall development of the whole continent.

The Committee of Ministers recalls that, at their 540th meeting (June 1995), the Ministers' Deputies adopted a reply to Recommendation 1268 (1995) on the 6th European Conference of Border Regions (Ljubljana, 13-15 October 1994), which the Parliamentary Assembly refers to in paragraph 14 of Recommendation 1274 (1995).

The Committee of Ministers also shares the Parliamentary Assembly's view expressed in paragraph 15 of Recommendation 1274 (1995) concerning the importance of transfrontier co-operation between non-adjacent regions. In this respect it recalls that in the light of the Vienna Declaration adopted by the heads of state and government, it adopted an additional protocol to the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities and opened it to signature by member states on 9 November 1995.

With regard to the Assembly's proposal to examine, with a view to its adoption, the draft European charter of mountain regions appended to Recommendation 14 (1995) of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) and a draft European charter for rural areas appended to the Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1296 (1996), the Ministers' Deputies decided at their 580th meeting (December 1996), in the light of the opinion of the Committee of Senior Officials of the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT), to prepare:

– a draft European charter of mountain regions on the basis of CLRAE Recommendation 14 (1995),

– a draft European charter for rural areas on the basis of Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1296 (1996).

The decision to prepare these legal instruments was taken on the understanding that they should be significantly more concise and simpler than the existing draft charters prepared by the CLRAE and the Parliamentary Assembly. Moreover, the Deputies were of the opinion that these instruments should also be based on other existing international instruments, such as the Alpine Convention and the principles and recommendations adopted at the second session of the European intergovernmental consultation on sustainable enhancement of mountain areas, held in Trento from 7 to 11 October 1996.

1. Joint reply to Recommendation 1274 (1995) on the draft European charter of mountain regions and Recommendation 1296 (1996) on a European Charter for Rural Areas, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 4 February 1996 at the 583rd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies.

The two aforementioned legal instruments will be prepared by a working party on which the Parliamentary Assembly and the CLRAE are invited to be represented.