



Opinion 164 (1992)¹

Texts adopted at the 27th Session of the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) (17-19 March 1992)

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly welcomes the action taken by the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe for the establishment of democratic structures at local and regional level in the new member states of the Council of Europe.

It therefore shares the CLRAE's legitimate desire for a reform of its status and takes note of its wish for a representative body to be established for the regions through a partial agreement.

The Assembly expresses the following opinion on the texts adopted by the Conference at its 27th Session :

A. Resolution 229 on the 3rd Conference of European Island Regions

The Assembly welcomes the growing recognition - on the part of national and Community bodies - of the specific characteristics and particular problems faced by islands, factors which very often aggravate the difficulties caused by the peripheral location of these regions. This peripheral location should be taken into account not only in support policies for deprived regions, but also, especially, in national governments' regional development and structural plans, with consideration also being given to economic and environmental potential.

B. Resolution 230 on the 5th Conference of European Border Regions

The Assembly fully endorses this resolution, particularly since its Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities has been the originator and main driving force behind the five conferences of border regions organised to date.

It expresses its concern about the lack of interest shown by the Committee of Ministers in the problems of transfrontier co-operation between local and regional authorities in Europe at a time when the democratisation process in central and eastern Europe and the accession of new countries to the Council of Europe have demonstrated the urgent need for this type of co-operation, which is likely to ensure more rapidly unity between the Organisation's new and existing members. The Assembly would like the Committee of Ministers to give clear assurances confirming its intention to give full political backing to transfrontier co-operation and also to provide the means required for its promotion, particularly through additional protocols designed to strengthen and extend the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities.

In this respect, the Assembly recalls the terms of its [Recommendation 1144 \(1991\)](#) on the situation of frontier populations and workers, and requests the Committee of Ministers to instruct a technical committee to prepare a draft model agreement or additional protocol in consultation with the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR).

1. *Assembly debate* on 7 October 1992 (21st Sitting) (see [Doc. 6627](#), report of the Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities, Rapporteur : Mr Parisi, and [Doc. 6662](#), opinion of the Committee on Culture and Education, Rapporteur : Mr Tummers). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 7 October 1992 (21st Sitting).



Finally, the Assembly wishes to reiterate its own request and to underline that it fully endorses the Conference's request for the setting up of an effective information bureau on transfrontier co-operation (paragraph 7.iii). The establishment of such a bureau would not only be a response to the wishes repeatedly expressed by the border regions themselves and particularly by the regional authorities of the new member states, but would at the same time form a point of convergence and demonstrate the Council of Europe's desire to promote European local and regional democracy across national frontiers. The Assembly would like the Committee of Ministers to instruct the Secretary General to submit concrete proposals as soon as possible so that such a bureau can be set up in 1993.

C. Resolution 231 on amending the Charter and Rules of Procedure

Having been consulted under urgent procedure, the Chairman of the Committee on the Environment,

Regional Planning and Local Authorities earlier informed the President of the Assembly by a letter dated 23 April 1992 that the committee saw no objections to an increase in the number of CLRAE vice-presidents from four to six since there was a need to take account of the substantial increase in the number of national delegations in the CLRAE. The Assembly is able to confirm this position.

D. Resolution 232 on autonomy, minorities, nationalism and European union

The Assembly gives its support to the principles laid down by the Conference in Chapter II of this resolution and recalls its own recent positions on the matter, notably its [Recommendation 1134 \(1990\)](#) on the rights of minorities and, even more recently, its [Recommendation 1177 \(1992\)](#), on the same subject, proposing the creation within the Council of Europe of a mediation instrument that could be used in a conciliating role in conflicts between minorities.

In this respect, the Assembly repeats its various proposals and recommendations to the Committee of Ministers on :

- i. the drafting of an additional protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights ;
- ii. the signing of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages ;
- iii. the rapid implementation of a mediation instrument for conflicts between minorities.

The Assembly is willing to co-operate in a joint campaign with the CLRAE and the Committee of Ministers to increase public awareness of the need to live together in a multicultural Europe of solidarity. It would also be interested in participating in, and making its contribution to, the proposed conference on federalism, nationalism, local self-government and minorities to be held in 1993.

Finally, the Assembly is bound to support the proposal to give fresh impetus to Europe Day, given that such an event could be an effective instrument for awakening a spirit of European solidarity among Europe's citizens.

E. Resolution 233 on the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government

The Assembly, in keeping with the commitment it has maintained in favour of local democracy and local self-government from the day it was set up, cannot but give its support to the appeal launched by the Conference for the full and comprehensive implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government by all member states and by the European Community. The establishment of a control or, indeed, mediation mechanism would also seem necessary.

F. Resolution 235 on topical issues concerning local and regional authorities

The Assembly shares the Conference's concern regarding the tendency of many governments to grant local authorities greater powers of local self-government while at the same time reducing, or even refusing to allocate, the financial resources necessary for the exercise of these powers.

It also underlines the need for a considerable increase in the financial resources of the Demosthenes Programme in order to support efforts to inform citizens and for the rapid implementation of genuine local democracy in the countries of central and eastern Europe.

As regards the CLRAE's role and place within the Council of Europe, it recalls in particular the opinion it expressed in 1991 on CLRAE Resolution 224, and believes, in the light of the developments of recent months, that it is politically essential for a special status - perhaps in the form of a partial agreement - to be granted at

least to regions with legislative and executive powers. This would give them full autonomy *vis-à-vis* the CLRAE in its existing form and allow it to engage in dialogue with both the Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers and other European institutions.

G. Resolution 236 on a new municipal policy for multicultural integration in Europe and the Frankfurt Declaration

The Assembly, fully recognising the crucially important role of the local communities in the integration of migrants and their families, welcomes the principles and recommendations contained in Resolution 236 of the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) and any action taken by the local communities for their implementation.

The Assembly, furthermore, reconfirms its support to the granting of political rights on the local level - as provided for in the Council of Europe Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level - to resident migrants, with the aim of promoting their integration as well as the gradual emergence of a European citizenship.

The Assembly recognises the need for greater action by the Council of Europe on matters of immigration and multicultural integration in Europe and supports the various proposals aimed at promoting exchange of experience between European cities and regions on these matters.

The Assembly has already expressed itself many times on the subject of this resolution, as have also several of the intergovernmental committees of the Council of Europe, including the CDCC. See, for example, Assembly [Recommendation 1089 \(1988\)](#) on improving community relations (European Days "Enjoying our diversity", Strasbourg, 25-27 November 1987), and the Committee of Ministers Recommendation R (84) 18 on the training of teachers in education for intercultural understanding, notably in a context of migration.

The essential point remains recognition of the practical realities of the increasingly multicultural society in Europe. This is not to accept the status of immigrant countries but to base policies on the rights and responsibilities of all living in that society. These rights and responsibilities begin with the immediate neighbourhood, but do not end at local or regional, national or European levels.

The Assembly would, however, agree with the CLRAE that there is a need for more effective policies of social integration at local levels. Such notions as non-discrimination, intercultural (in preference to the more negative "pluralist" concept), cultural and educational policy, human rights (rather than the "restrictive and emotive anti-racial") education, tolerance and reciprocity are all to be encouraged. Further Assembly reports are in preparation : on tolerance, on media ethics and on their presentation of immigrants, and on the integration of migrants and community relations. The role of sport should also be included.

Certain issues call for further specific study, such as the implications of Islam (see Assembly Recommendation 1162 and [Order No. 465](#) of 1991), the situation of gypsies (under current consideration both in the CLRAE and in the Assembly) or the free movement of persons within European territory.

H. Resolution 237 on the Charter on the Participation of Young People in Municipal and Regional Life

This charter transposes to the local and regional levels the major principles of Council of Europe youth work including recommendations of the Assembly. The basic concern remains that of involving young people in all aspects of institutional democratic activity and was expressed in Mr Martínez's report on youth participation in 1985 (see [Recommendation 1019](#)) and repeated by Mr Kollwelter in 1990 (see [Order No. 454](#)). The charter can be welcomed as a formulation of these policies at the level of local and regional authorities.

Care should also be taken to point out that there is no single solution or unique policy in this field. All initiatives that encourage participation on an open and democratic basis are to be encouraged. Young people can vote as well as belong to youth organisations.

The new ideas contained in this charter about the institutionalisation of youth representation should be given more careful consideration before general European endorsement. In fact there is a wide divergence throughout western Europe over the official recognition of youth representation in the process of government.

The notion of co-operation between the generations could well be further developed as a means of reducing violence and marginalisation in European towns.

The charter raises the problem of housing for young people. This will be taken up by the Assembly Sub-Committee on Youth and Sport in the next of its round tables on pan-European youth co-operation.

On these and other subjects the charter can usefully serve as a reference point for discussion on participation at the next Conference of European Ministers responsible for Youth in Vienna in 1993.

I. Resolution 238 on regional planning and the protection of water resources

The Parliamentary Assembly is pleased to note the convergence of opinions between itself and the CLRAE on the subject of regional development and the protection of water resources. When preparing and launching its action programme, the Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities, like the Conference, underlined the need to emphasise the role that local and regional authorities can play in the conservation of water resources. Moreover, the committee, like the Conference, recognised that the price of water should take account both of the investment and operational costs of the institutions responsible for water management and also of the quality and relative scarcity of water and the costs of its treatment. The Assembly fully supports the Conference's desire for the development and improvement of training programmes for managers, technological advisers and all other persons in the private and public sector who are involved in the management of water resources. In this context, however, it also believes that training should be provided for elected representatives. The training of persons involved in the management of water resources, in particular elected representatives and local and regional authority staff, should enable those concerned to make the right choices on the matter.

The Assembly welcomes the principles formulated on regional planning and the protection of water resources, and endorses this approach.

The Parliamentary Assembly also welcomes the Conference's desire to be involved in its activities in the context of the "Freshwater Europe" action programme. Given the exclusively parliamentary nature of the pan-European conference in which the CLRAE would wish to be involved, the Parliamentary Assembly hopes that its co-operation with the CLRAE will concentrate mainly on the key question of local and regional authorities' role and responsibilities and the resources they need in order to ensure efficient management of water resources.

The Assembly endorses the request made to the Committee of Ministers to invite the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT) to undertake a comparative study of water management institutions in relation to regional planning.

J. Resolution 239 on the quantity and quality of drinking water in Europe : the role of local authorities

The Parliamentary Assembly welcomes this contribution which is supplementary to its own consideration of the problems of the management of water resources. Being convinced of the need to identify appropriate programmes and of the usefulness of the proposal on their implementation, the Parliamentary Assembly is pleased to consider this report as a contribution to the action programme and to be able to continue its co-operation with the CLRAE.