

European Communities

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Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Regional
Policy and Regional Planning

on the role of the regions in the construction of a
democratic Europe - outcome of the Conference of
the Regions

Rapporteur: Mr W. GRIFFITHS

PE 89.062/fin.
Or. De.

At its sitting of 16 December 1983, the European Parliament referred the motion for a resolution tabled by Mr De Pasquale and others on the Conference of the Regions (Doc. 1-1212/83) to the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning as the committee responsible pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure.

At its meeting of 17 January 1984, the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning decided to draw up a report and on 2 February 1984 appointed Mr Griffiths rapporteur.

The committee considered the draft report at its meeting of 22 March 1984 and adopted it with 2 abstentions.

The following took part in the vote: Mr De Pasquale, chairman; Mrs Fullet and Mr Costanzo, vice-chairmen; Mr Griffiths, rapporteur; Mrs Boot, Mr Gendebien, Mr Hutton, Mr Kazazis, Mr Pöttering and Mr Vandewiele (deputizing for Mr Verroken).

The report was tabled on 26 March 1984.

The deadline for tabling amendments to this report will be indicated in the draft agenda for the part-session at which it will be debated.

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The Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution together with explanatory statement:

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

on the role of the regions in the construction of a democratic Europe and the outcome of the Conference of the Regions

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the final declaration of the 'First Conference of the Regions' which took place in Strasbourg from 25-27 January 1984 and which was attended by some 280 elected representatives of the regions of the Community and the applicant countries Portugal and Spain (PE 88.600 fin.),
- having regard to the motion for a resolution tabled by Mr De Pasquale and others on the Conference of the Regions of the Community (Doc. 1-1212/83),
- having regard to the Working Document of the Conference of the Regions drawn up by the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning which studies the role of the regions in the construction of a democratic Europe (PE 87.632),
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning (Doc. 1-91/84),

- having regard to the resolution of the European Parliament of 22 April 1982 in which the European Parliament calls for greater participation by the regional and local authorities in the socio-economic development of their regions¹,

1. Notes that strengthening the autonomy of the regions in the Community and the creation of a politically more unified European Community based on institutions with real powers represent two complementary and convergent aspects of a political development which is essential to cope effectively with the future tasks of the Community;
2. Notes that the people concerned must have a say in the formulation and implementation of Community policies and in particular regional development programmes via their democratically elected representatives at regional and local level; such provision for representative participation by the people still does not exist in all Member States;
3. Calls on the Council and Governments of those Member States in which there are still no regional structures of any kind with elected representatives to take the necessary steps to deal with this omission;
4. Calls on the Council and Governments of those Member States which already have granted their regions a certain degree of autonomy to give their regional authorities the powers needed to carry out their functions. This applies in particular to strengthening regional fiscal and budgetary powers;

¹ OJ No. C 125, 17.5.1982

5. Calls on the Council and Governments of the Member States to ensure that the people in the European regions or their elected political representatives are properly consulted in the planning and organization of the socio-economic future of their region. This applies in particular to involvement in Community regional and social policy;
6. Calls on the Council and the Commission of the European Communities to pay close attention in future to ensuring that aid from the Regional and Social Funds and other Community financial instruments is concentrated as a matter of priority on the weakest regions in the European Community;
7. Calls on the Commission and the Council to draft legislation, having regard to the interests of the Member States, to enable the regions to establish and maintain direct relations with the Community institutions in future;
8. Stresses the importance of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA, founded in 1913) and the Council of European Municipalities (CEM, founded in 1951). These provide the organizational basis for towns and local authorities in the Member States and at Community level where in 1976 they combined to form the 'Consultative Committee of the Local and Regional Authorities of the Member Countries of the European Community';
9. Notes that the importance of the regional authorities that exist in the Community has so far not been given sufficient weight in the Consultative Committee;
10. Emphasizes the importance of the 'Liaison Bureau of the European Regional Organizations' (BLORE) which since 1979 has included regional organizations such as the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), the Action Committee of Alpine Regions and the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions. These organizations cover only some of the regions of the European Community and are not representative of all Community regions;
11. Is therefore convinced that the regions of the Community should establish their own representative organisations and encourages the regional authorities and existing regional associations to organise themselves in an appropriate way;

12. Notes that the European Community needs an accredited body, which is in a position to speak on behalf of the Community, to consult on a permanent basis in the field of Community regional policy;
13. Shares the view of the First Conference of the Regions that a strengthening of regional representation in the national delegations of the 'Standing Conference of the Local and Regional Authorities of Europe' at the Council of Europe is desirable. At the same time due representation of the regions in the 'Consultative Committee' could be achieved in the same way;
14. Supports the wish expressed in the final declaration of the Conference of the Regions for a second conference of the regions to be convened by the European Parliament on a proposal from its Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning, as the committee responsible, in the course of its second legislative period;
15. Believes that the Consultative Committee, enlarged and reformed to represent adequately the regions of the European Community, should play a leading role in increasing public awareness of European problems, ensuring that Community action corresponds ever more closely to the real needs of the people and permanently monitoring the impact of such action at regional and local level, and drawing attention to the specific requirements of particular areas such as peripheral regions, border regions, highland areas and islands and areas characterized by declining industrial structures;
16. Affirms its wish to maintain direct contacts with the regions of the Community through its appropriate committee;
17. Recommends the Commission of the European Communities to embark on direct talks with the regions on matters which affect them directly, while respecting the powers of the Member States;
18. Instructs the President of the European Parliament to send this resolution and report to the Commission, the Council, the Ministers of the Member States in charge of regional policy and regional planning, and the regional authorities of the Member States.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENTI. Introduction

1. At the invitation of the European Parliament some 280 elected representatives of the regions of the European Community and the applicant countries, Portugal and Spain, met at a 'Conference of the Regions' from 25 to 27 January 1984 in Strasbourg.

The theme of the conference was: 'The role of the regions in the construction of a democratic Europe'

2. The participants and members of the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning of the European Parliament discussed the following subjects in four different working parties and then in plenary session on the basis of a working document (PE 87.632):

- Democratization of regional policy at Member-State and Community level
- The balanced development of the European regions - the crisis of the regions in a period of economic crisis
- Regional autonomy and decentralization - keys to European integration?
- Relations between the regions and the institutions of the European Community.

3. The representatives of the regions and the Members of the European Parliament present agreed on a 'Declaration of the Conference of the Regions' on which this report is largely based.
4. In this report the rapporteur has concentrated on giving a very brief review of the most fundamental elements of the new role of the regions in the construction of a democratic Europe.

II. Creation and strengthening of autonomous regional authorities in the Community

5. Despite the different organization of regional authorities between central government and local level in the individual Member States, and despite the lack of comparability, regional structures may be described as follows:
- there are Member States with well developed regional structures with wide-ranging powers (such as own sources of revenue, own budgetary powers, right to enact legislation, right to draw up and implement regional development programmes etc.),
 - there are Member States with regional structures which are developing, but which often still have insufficient powers,
 - there are Member States which have no regional structures and no administrative level between central government and local authorities.
6. The Conference of the Regions advocated creating and strengthening regional authorities in the Community. It pointed out the lack of democracy which exists in regions where there is little or no possibility for consultation of the population and called on the Council and Commission to remedy this situation.
7. The introduction to the conference working document states: 'The apathy and backwardness of many regions in Europe are moreover due to the lack of participation by the regions, by their citizens and by representatives of their social and cultural life.' It is also important to observe that in many countries of Europe there is a direct correlation between the extent to which local people and their elected representatives have a say in the administration of a region and their socio-economic condition. The countries with weak regional structures are often the poorer regions of the Community.

8. In no Member State should the citizen be excluded from participation in the economic and social future of his or her native region. Greater democracy in regions represents a form of aid, particularly for the weaker regions of the European Community, which in the long term will be at least as important as aid in the form of financial subsidies. The European Parliament therefore calls on the Council and the Commission to urge that regional structures where appropriate on a democratic basis and endowed with the necessary powers in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity are set up in those Member States in which they currently do not exist.

III. The demands of future Community regional policy on the regions

9. The aim of European regional policy, which is still in its infancy, may be described as follows:

- development and structural adaptation of backward regions
- restructuring of the industrial regions which are in decline.

10. In future, Community regional policy will increasingly centre around aid for integrated regional development programmes and less as now on individual projects.

11. These programmes, if they are to succeed, call for close cooperation between the Community, the government of the Member State and the regions concerned.

In many Member States it is still difficult to draw up such development programmes. There is frequently a lack of democratic consultation of the people and their elected representatives in the regions. The process of democratic decision-making based on the principle of feedback has still not been introduced in many cases.

12. There is a further role for the regions of the Community and their elected representatives to play in this respect. They become parties to, and elements in, a wider three-way exchange between the national ministries and the Community institutions.

13. The Treaty of Rome did not provide for such an active role by the regions in the construction of a democratic Europe. This however is what the Conference of the Regions and the European Parliament wish to see.

It is important in this context to recall the resolution adopted by the European Parliament on 14 September 1983 on European Union which calls for 'local communal and regional authorities to participate in an appropriate manner in the unification of Europe'.

IV. Relations in future between the regions and the Community institutions

14. The towns and local authorities have for some time been very well organized at European level.

The International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) was founded in 1913 and the Council of European Municipalities (CEM) has been in existence since 1951. Since 1976 both organizations have been working together in what is known as the 'Consultative Committee of Local and Regional Authorities of the European Community'.

15. So far the Community regions have been unable to form such a representative body. Nevertheless certain problem regions in the Community with special interests have become organized. These include, for example, the association of European Border Regions (AEBR) formed in 1971, the Action Committee of Alpine Regions (1973), the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of the Community (1973), which joined together in 1979 to form a 'Liasion Office for European Regional Organizations' (BLORE).

Although these organizations cover geographically some of the regions of the European Community they are not representative of the whole. This view is shared by the organizations concerned.

16. Since 1957 there has been a 'Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe' in the Council of Europe whose members are as a rule appointed by the ministers for internal affairs of the governments concerned. Generally, governments have delegated membership of national delegations to national local authority organizations with the result that membership of this body has certain weaknesses as regards its representativeness.

17. (a) It would undoubtedly be useful if there was an organisation which covered all of the regions of the Community in the same way that local authorities are organised. Until now the regions in nearly all Member States and on Community level lacked this organisational basis.
18. The same applies to what is known as the 'Consultative Committee of Regional and Local Authorities of the European Community', members of which are appointed according to the same principles as the members of the 'Standing Conference'. The local authority representatives are in the majority reflecting the more widespread nature of the local as opposed to the regional authorities in the Committee.
19. The list of members of the 'Consultative Committee' also shows that there are quite a considerable number of local authority officials who have not been elected.

V. Creation of a representative and democratic body to act for the regions at Community level

20. The result is, therefore, that there is presently no completely representative and democratic organisation at Community level to defend the interests of the regions of the Community.
21. The European Parliament believes that a Consultative Committee with democratically elected members properly representative of the regions is essential for it to become the official advisory body of the European institutions in the field of regional policy, regional planning etc. This is one of the demands in the final declaration of the first Conference of the Regions.

22. Until then the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning will maintain direct links to the regions of the European Community in accordance with the wishes of the first Conference of Regions.

REPRESENTATION OF THE REGIONS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

One of the principle aims of the Conference of the Regions organized by the European Parliament is to help to organize representation of the regions in the European Community.¹

PRESENT SITUATIONI. At the bottom

At present the regions are represented within the European Institutions through two different channels.

1. The associations of local authorities (International Union of Local Authorities, IULA, set up in 1913, and the Council of European Municipalities, set up in 1951): some regions have become members of these organizations. Those regions are thus combined with the local authorities in the national sections of the organizations.

2. Purely regional associations have been created since the 1970s. They have gradually joined together in the Liaison Office of the European Regional Organizations (BLORE). These are the following associations:

- The Association of European Border Regions (1971);
- The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (1973);
- The Alpine Regions Committee (1973) which includes three sub-groups (West Alpine Union, Alp Union, Eastern Union);
- The Conference of the Pyrenees Regions (1982).

A characteristic of the various associations or organizations (which together cover a part of the Community territory) is that they are composed solely of representatives elected by the regions.

II. At the top

The Consultative Committee of the Local and Regional Authorities of the Member States of the EEC was set up in 1978 at the initiative of the CEM and the IULA.

¹ NB: This representation already exists officially at Council of Europe level (Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CPLRE) composed of representatives of the 21 member countries).

1. For several years, the associations or organizations which are members of the BLORE have not participated in that committee:
 - because the CEM and the IULA had exclusive and undivided control of it;
 - because the regions, as such, were under-represented on it and their members (appointed by the CEM and the IULA) were 'swamped' by the local authorities' representatives.
2. In 1982 a compromise agreement was entered into on a tripartite basis (CEM-IULA-BLORE) which strengthened regional representation (10 representatives appointed by the BLORE) and improved the distribution of responsibilities.
3. The Consultative Committee is therefore a body which exists because of an agreement between European associations and organizations of local and regional authorities (CEM, IULA, BLORE, and CPLRE).

It has no legal personality of its own. It does however have internal rules of procedure the object of which is to lay down the procedures and rules relating to its composition and functioning. It is not a consultative committee within the meaning of Community law, but the Commissioner with special responsibility for regional policy has agreed to meet it in some cases, either directly or via his services. These consultations have not hitherto been of a compulsory nature or at regular intervals.

The Committee does not have either a budget of its own or its own secretariat. The CEM and the IULA have hitherto provided both of these, in cooperation in some cases with the secretariats of the other two bodies.

4. There is no official list of members. There is no provision guaranteeing the attendance of representatives or of persons accountable to the representatives. Consultation of attendance lists shows that in many cases officials replace representatives, certain countries are not represented (particularly Ireland and Greece)

and that the rule of personal unity with the CPLRE delegations is not observed by some delegations although those provisions are laid down in paragraph 2 of the rules of Procedure of the Consultative Committee¹.

5. Nevertheless, the structure of the Consultative Committee, in its present form, though enabling the various organisations to work together, needs to be enlarged and reformed to allow more scope for regional representation. This was the finding of the Conference of the Regions organised by the European Parliament in its final declaration. It underlined the importance of the Consultative Committee and its role if it was duly enlarged and reformed. It hoped that the Community institutions would make official their links with the duly adapted, enlarged and reformed Consultative Committee so as to give the regions of the Community full representation.

This is a very important pre-condition for any recognition of this committee, which is still only an association of local and regional authorities.

¹ 'The Consultative Committee shall include representatives elected from the local and regional authorities of the Member States of the Community. These representatives shall be chosen, as a general rule, from among the delegations of the Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe under the procedure used for electing these delegations in the various countries by the national associations and national sections of the international organizations of local and regional authorities.'

CONFERENCE OF THE REGIONS

F I N A L D E C L A R A T I O N

OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE REGIONS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY,
AND THE APPLICANT COUNTRIES SPAIN AND PORTUGAL

The "Conference of the Regions of the European Community and the applicant countries, Spain and Portugal," meeting in Strasbourg on 25 - 27 January 1984,

WELCOMES the initiative taken by the European Parliament, on a proposal by its Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning;

NOTES with satisfaction that, together with Members of the European Parliament and representatives of the other Community institutions, many duly elected representatives of regional authorities and other autonomous local bodies - reflecting the various national systems of local government - from the Member States of the Community and the applicant states, Spain and Portugal accepted the European Parliament's invitation to attend the Conference;

OBSERVES that the Conference discussed subjects of fundamental importance for the future of Europe's political and economic integration, its democratic character and its capacity to respond effectively to the current crisis and to continuing high levels of unemployment and considerable regional imbalances, and for the promotion of the necessary dialogue between the European institutions and the autonomous local authorities;

the Conference, on the basis of the reports submitted and the debates held in plenary sitting and in its four working groups,

CONSIDERS that:

- (1) strengthening local autonomy and introducing greater decentralization as already practised in some countries, on the one hand, and building a united Europe founded on institutions endowed with specific responsibilities and real powers, on the other hand, are two complementary and parallel aspects of the complex political and legal process required to confront the problems raised by modern society more effectively, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. It is becoming ever more apparent that the individual Member States, acting alone, are finding it increasingly difficult to rise to the various challenges they must face;

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- (2) regional development policy cannot be regarded as a sectoral and secondary matter, but should inspire and ensure a more consistent and coordinated use of all the Community's policies with a view to achieving balanced development;
- (3) the formulation and implementation of Community policies to restore balance, particularly the regional development programmes, should involve, both at the level of individual countries and the European Community as a whole, the local communities in question through their democratically elected local and regional representatives, in accordance with clearly established and hence transparent legislative procedures, backed up by an efficient system for the reciprocal exchange of information;
- (4) the participation of the local authorities on the one hand and the regional authorities on the other at European level presupposes in turn a European Community endowed with real decision-making powers to allow it to tackle major development problems which cannot be solved by Member States acting alone. Hence these authorities have direct responsibility for helping to give new impetus to the process of economic, political and institutional integration, a substantial increase in resources, the strengthening of existing policies and the adoption of new policies in response to the urgent need for technological innovation and for greater European competitiveness on world markets;
- (5) the enlargement of the Community to include Spain and Portugal should be completed in the near future in the common and reciprocal interest of the Member States and the applicant countries to ensure that more European countries ruled by democratic governments are included in the Community;
- (6) the Community institutions should cooperate with the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe - which is the Council of Europe's representative assembly of local and regional authorities - in application of Article 230 of the Treaty of Rome;
- (7) increased representation of the regions thus becomes a necessity in the national delegations of the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, and this will also make it possible to achieve more adequate representation of the regions in the Consultative Committee;

The Conference

APPEALS to the institutions of the European Community and the Member States to endeavour to ensure that the regional and local authorities receive fuller, more specific and more up-to-date information on the problems of European integration, so that they may derive fuller and more timely benefit from Community policies and aid mechanisms;

EMPHASIZES the importance of the activities of the Consultative Committee of the Local and Regional Authorities of the member countries of the European Community, in which the following bodies participate at the present time: the Council of European Municipalities (CEM), the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA), the Liaison Bureau of the European Regional Organizations (BLORE) and the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE). The Consultative Committee, duly enlarged and reformed, can play a leading role in increasing public awareness of European problems, ensuring that Community action corresponds ever more closely to the real needs of the people and permanently monitoring the impact of such action at regional and local level, and drawing attention to the specific requirements of particular areas such as peripheral regions, border regions, highland areas and islands and areas characterised by declining industrial structures;

INSISTS on the need for stronger cooperation between border regions within the Community, which is the very touchstone of the process of European integration, since these regions merit particular attention in the context of Community regional policy;

RECALLS that the preamble (Article 12(g)) to the resolution adopted by the European Parliament on 14 September 1983 specifically states that European Union should contribute 'towards enabling local and regional authorities to participate - in an appropriate manner - in the unification of Europe';

CALLS ON the European Parliament returned after the elections of June 1984, therefore, to ensure that the recognized need to involve democratically elected local and regional authorities in its activities on a steady, regular basis is translated promptly into formal arrangements, such as regular meetings between Parliament and representatives of local and regional authorities;

HOPES that the other Community institutions will also take action to implement the many expressions of support for such participation contained in official documents and elsewhere, by institutionalizing their links with the Consultative Committee, which would be adapted, enlarged and reformed in such a way as to offer full representation to the regions of the Community;

RESOLVES that a second Conference may be held within a period of two years to establish a framework and conditions for organized, permanent participation of the regions in the formulation of Community policies;

RECOMMENDS the European Parliament to maintain direct relations with the regions of the European Community via its appropriate committee;

RECOMMENDS the Commission of the European Communities to establish a direct dialogue, respecting the powers of the Member States, with the regions on all the activities which directly concern them.

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION (doc. 1-1212/83)

tabled by Mr DE PASQUALE, Mrs FUILLET, Mr FAURE, Mr GRIFFITHS, Mr PÖTTERING, Mr HUTTON and Mr GENDEBIEN

pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure
on the Conference of the Regions of the Community

The European Parliament,

- A. noting that the European Parliament is inviting the elected presidents of the regions and equivalent territorial communities to a Conference of the Regions of the Community and the applicant countries Spain and Portugal to be held in Strasbourg (in the Palais de l'Europe) on 25, 26 and 27 January 1984,
- B. noting that this will be the first meeting of some 300 elected representatives of the regions of the Community in the context of the Community institutions to discuss questions of common interest,
- C. noting that all the Community institutions are associated with this event and that they will be represented by the President-in-Office of the Council of Ministers, the President of the Commission of the European Communities, Mr THORN, and Commissioner GIOLITTI, the President of the Economic and Social Committee, Mr CEYRAC and the President of the European Parliament, Mr DANKERT,
- D. whereas the holding of this Conference is of great importance in connection with the present review of the European Regional Development Fund, and in connection with the desired development of the Community's regional policy in favour, particularly, of the less developed regions and industrial regions in decline,
- E. considering the important role of the regions of the Community in the formulation and implementation of a common regional policy,
- F. aware of the importance of the regional authorities for the construction of Europe,
- G. whereas there is a direct link between this event and the preparations for the 1984 European elections,

1. Instructs the committee responsible to submit a report on the conclusions of this Conference of the Regions;
2. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission of the European Communities and the governments of the Member States.