

**OVIEDO DOCUMENT
ON REGIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLIES
IN THE EUROPEAN UNION**

The Presidents of the European Regional Legislative Assemblies, meeting in Oviedo on 6 and 7 October 1997 for the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies:

1. Whereas the European Union must not put a brake on the democratic principle. On the contrary, it must help develop it further.
2. Whereas, in order to strengthen the democratic principle, the regions of the Member States with assemblies with legislative competence must be more involved in the process of European integration. They should be granted, at national and European level, the right to intervene in issues related to European integration.
3. Whereas, on the other hand, the participation of the regions in which the citizens have their roots and forge their own identity will help to bring them closer to the Union.
4. Whereas Regional Parliaments, just like the Regional Governments, should have the possibility to participate as institutions particularly close to the citizen and have an important mediating role between citizens and the European Union.
5. Whereas the region should not be disconnected from the European and national levels. On the contrary, it is essential that it be perfectly interwoven in order to apply the democratic principle correctly within the Union.
6. Whereas it is a priority to establish the relationship between these three levels in order to better express the principle of subsidiarity underlying the distribution of competences within the Union.
7. Convinced that cooperation between the parliamentary institutions fosters good understanding between the different populations and the consolidation and strengthening of democracy through the enriching heritage created by the mutual exchange of experiences.
8. Convinced, moreover, that regional parliamentary institutions can,

thanks to their position close to the citizens, make a valuable contribution to the heritage of friendship that must be sustained within the Union.

9. Understanding, on the other hand, that the European action of the Governments finds in the intervention of the parliamentary institutions the reinforcement of legitimacy that they represent as a direct expression of the democratic principle.

10. Understanding also that parliamentary intervention is the expression of a will to co-operate with Governments, the objectives of which tend to fulfil the essential conditions of the democratic principle.

11. Referring to the Community Charter on Regionalisation voted by Resolution of the European Parliament on 18 November 1988, Article 25 of which states that "the regions shall participate in the definition of the policy of the States within the Community bodies in matters falling within their competence or directly affecting their interests". The States shall guarantee the Regions "mechanisms for broad and rapid information on Community projects", as well as "flexible and effective sectoral consultation mechanisms".

12. Taking as a reference the Declaration of the Assembly of European Regions (AER), adopted in Basel on 4 December 1996, Article 12.10 of which stipulates that "mechanisms shall be established for contact between the European Parliament and Regional Parliaments, considering that they are institutions representing the direct will of citizens".

13. Considering furthermore that the participants subscribe to the demands of the "Stuttgart Theses on the role of Regional Assemblies and Parliaments of the European Union in European policy", voted on 6 May 1997 in the Landtag of Baden-Württemberg, the first point of which states that "Regional Parliaments must collaborate decisively in the elaboration of European policy".

14. Referring further to the Declaration signed by Germany, Austria and Belgium on subsidiarity included in the Treaty of Amsterdam of 2 October 1997, according to which "For the German, Austrian and Belgian Governments, it goes without saying that the action of the European Community, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, concerns not only the Member States, but also their entities considering that they have

been attributed legislative power assigned by the national Constitution". Hoping that all States that have territorial entities with their own legislative power recognised by their Constitution will subscribe to this Declaration.

15. Whereas the proposals contained in this Document seek to deepen the principles of democracy and participation within the framework of the Union, objectives which can be achieved without creating new bodies or complicating the Union's decision-making process.

Consider it would be positive to agree on the following objectives:

OBJECTIVES

First. - The procedures for parliamentary monitoring and evaluation of European affairs should be strengthened in each Region. This should be done both in a bottom-up phase when formulating the State's demands and in the top-down phase when implementing Community policy. To this end, and in order to make it possible to control the European action of the respective Executives, it would be indispensable to provide the Regional Parliaments with an information service that would allow them to regularly follow all issues that could affect their competences. The Regional Governments must periodically inform the Regional Parliaments in particular of EU matters relating to the regions, consult them and take account of their resolutions when dealing with EU matters in the institutions at national and European level, and inform them of the results.

Second. - In the current practice of many Regional Parliaments, good results have been achieved by entrusting the different sectoral parliamentary committees with the task of monitoring and evaluating the sectoral actions of the Regional Governments with a European reach. This example could be followed by other Regional Parliaments.

Third. - The possibility of complementing the group of Parliamentary Sectoral Committees with a Committee on European Affairs should be evaluated.

It would be responsible for European issues of a more institutional and cross-sectoral nature.

It will also have the power to give its opinion, without being binding, on the issues entrusted to the Parliamentary Sectoral Committees.

Fourth. - Formulas should be promoted that allow the exchange of

information between the Sectoral Committees and the European Affairs Committees of the different European Regional Legislative Assemblies, as well as between the latter and the Committees of the National Parliaments and the European Parliament.

Fifth. - Consideration should be given to the creation of a computer network open to all the institutions concerned. This would allow immediate access to the data and procedures of each Chamber on the matter in question.

Sixth. - Institutional meetings that favour the effective presence of the members will be encouraged. Certain Commissioners of each Regional Chamber will be able to attend the meetings held by the others on European affairs if it is in their common interest to do so. This possibility would also include the possibility of participating in the sessions of the National Parliament of each country and of the European Parliament, whose members could also be invited to the sessions of the Regional Chambers for matters of particular European interest to them. The possibility of institutionalising the organisation of a Conference of Regional Parliaments-European Parliament is considered favourably.

Seventh. - Exchange visits of civil servants at the service of the respective Assemblies would be useful, with the aim of contributing to the pooling of experiences that would serve to form a common background of European regional parliamentarianism.

Eighth. - In the Administration of each Assembly, the function of Office of European Affairs could be discussed, which would advise the parliamentarians and the qualified personnel serving the Chamber.

This Office will be responsible for exchanging information on European affairs with the rest of the Chambers. It will work closely with the Regional Offices in Brussels.

Ninth. - Provided that bilateral contacts can be maintained, the possibility of the European Affairs Committees of the Regional Legislative Assemblies being represented at the Conference of Community Affairs Committees (COSAC) will be considered as positive. If such representation is not possible, a regional COSAC may be created.

Tenth. - It would also be expedient to create the Conference of Presidents of European Regional Legislative Assemblies. The Conference would publish a "European Regional Parliaments" Yearbook as an instrument of

expression and dissemination of parliamentarianism. This Conference will be celebrated annually. The next meeting could be organised by a Committee elected on the occasion of our Meeting, which would take care of choosing the venue, the date and the topics to be dealt with, as early as next January/February.

Eleventh. - The Regional Parliaments will continue to strengthen the position of the Committee of the Regions, in which they must be adequately represented.

Twelfth. - This Declaration will be sent to the Presidents of the National Parliaments, the President of the European Parliament, the President of the European Commission, the President of the Committee of the Regions, the President of the Council of Europe, the President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, the President of the Assembly of European Regions and to all the institutions interested in its contents.

Done in Oviedo, 7 October 1997