

Brussels Resolution

Final resolution

The present Resolution was adopted by the Conference of the Environment Ministers and Political Leaders of the Regions of the European Union held in Brussels on 13 and 14 December 1993.

The Resolution is divided into four parts:

1. the Treaty on European Union,
2. the Community Fifth Environmental Action Programme,
3. the regional policy and the Community Funds,
4. the follow-up of the Conference.

1. The Treaty on European Union

The Conference of the Environment Ministers and Political Leaders of the Regions of the European Union:

1. Whereas article 2 of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community as amended by the Treaty on the European Unions entrusts the Community with the task of promoting "a harmonious and balanced development of economic activities, sustainable an non-inflationary growth respecting the environment";
2. Whereas the Treaty calls for an ever closer union between the peoples of Europe, in which the decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizens;
3. Whereas article 130 R of the Treaty extends to all aspects of the Community environmental policy the aim of a high level of protection for the environment taking into account the diversity of the situations of the various Regions of the Community;
4. Whereas the Treaty creates a Committee of the Regions and whereas this committee has a right to give an opinion on its own initiative;
5. Whereas it is necessary to implement the principle of subsidiarity in a spirit of dialogue, respecting the social and economic cohesion in association with the regional authorities which are competent in the matter of environment;
6. Whereas a policy of sustainable development depends on the integration of environmental aspects into the other policies and on the "shared" responsibility of, on the one hand, the community, national, regional and local authorities, and, on the other hand, all economic and social actors at all levels;
7. Whereas the responsibility of the regional authorities in the implementation of the Community Regulations and Directives justifies their participation in the elaboration of these Directives;
8. Expresses the wish that, according to Art 198C, the Committee of the Regions will issue opinions on the essential European Union initiatives related to the environment;

9. Asks the Council and the Commission to inform the Committee of the Regions on every European Union initiative in the matter of environment and to consult the Committee of the Regions each time an essential initiative is being debated;

2. The Community Fifth Environmental Action Programme

10. Whereas the regional policies should reflect the Rio Summit conclusions and particularly the conclusions of Agenda 21;

11. Having regard to the resolution adopted on 1st February 1993 by the Council of Ministers and the Delegates of the Governments of the Member States, meeting as the Council, on a Community Programme of Policy and Action in relation to the Environment and Sustainable Development (5th Action Programme);

12. Whereas the Fifth Action Programme underlines that regional authorities 'have a particularly important role to play in ensuring the sustainability of development through the exercise of their statutory functions as competent authorities, for many of the existing Directives and Regulations and in the context of practical implementation of the principle of subsidiarity';

13. Whereas Regions have an important role to play in the implementation of national legislation;

14. Whereas European citizens should be able to participate in discussions dealing with environmental issues;

15. Confirms the intention of the Regions to start a policy of sustainable development with reference to Agenda 21 within the framework of the 5th Action Programme and recognises the necessity of integrating environmental policy in all regional sectoral policies, in particular agriculture, economic development, energy, infrastructures and transport;

16. Expresses the wish of the Regions that a true dialogue be established with the Commission, in particular through the Committee of the Regions and the framework of the Consultative Forum as described in the Fifth Action Programme;

17. Calls on the Regions for a trans-boundary and interregional co-operation in issues connected with the environment and underlines the need to develop network actions;

18. Encourages continuous co-operation with European Regions of non-EC countries;

19. Invites the Regions to carry out internal environmental audits with a view to analyse in a critical way their own activities as suggested in point 3. 1. of the 5th Action Programme;

20. Encourages the Regions to associate both citizens, and socio-professional bodies and non-governmental organisations in the decision making process;

21. Believes that initiatives to increase environmental awareness through information and education are fundamental;

22. Urges the Regions to gather the information on the state of the environment and natural resources in their territory, in order to inform citizens and assist in the formulation of regional environmental policies and strategies;

23. Invites the European institutions and the national authorities to take into account the regional differences and the need for a balanced development of the regions in the formulation and the implementation of the European Union environmental policies;

3. The regional policy and the Community Funds

24. Having regard to Council Regulations of 20 July 1993 amending the Regulations organising the functioning of the Structural Funds of the Community;

25. Having regard to Council Regulation n°792/93 of 30 March 1993 creating a financial instrument of cohesion to support projects related to the environment and to the trans-european transport infrastructures in Greece, in Spain, in Ireland and in Portugal, and whereas, according to article 130 D, the Council is to establish a Cohesion Fund before 31 December 1993 by which the Community will financially contribute to projects related to the environment and to the trans-european transport infrastructures;

26. Whereas Community regional policies need to be in accordance with the principles of a sustainable development;

27. Approves the increased importance attached to environmental protection in the Regulations on Structural Funds as amended by the above-mentioned Regulations of 20 July 1993 and in particular the obligation in the development plans to make an assessment of the state of the environment and of the environmental impact of the strategy and proposed actions, as well as the obligation to mention the measures taken to associate the environmental authorities to the preparation and the implementation of the plans, as well as to ensure the respect of Community environmental legislation;

28. Undertakes to do everything within the limits of the Region's competencies, in order to ensure that only the actions respecting the environmental requirements obtain a Community support;

29. Believes it is necessary to promote co-operation actions with non-EC Regions and supports initiatives of the Commission and the European Parliament in order to implement financial instruments applicable to such actions;

30. Expresses the wish that actions supported by the European Investment Bank will also respect environmental requirements;

31. Expresses the wish that specific Community efforts be made to allow sensitive rural or reconverting Regions to go forward towards sustainable development without increasing the problems they currently face;

32. Expresses the wish that the level of Community support through the Cohesion Fund for environmental programmes be at least equal to the level of the support for trans-european transport infrastructures and invites the Member States which benefit from the Cohesion Fund, on the one hand to prepare projects in co-operation with the Regions, and on the other hand to put forward at least as many environmental projects as projects related to trans-european transport infrastructures;

33. Encourages the Regions, within the limits of their competencies, to identify appropriate environmental projects to be presented by the Member States and invites the Member States to ensure that the Regions are able to participate in the selection of those projects in the most appropriate way;

34. Expresses the wish that all investments supported by Community Funds be submitted to an assessment of their environmental impact. This assessment should ensure a wide participation of citizens, according to legislation in force;

35. Expresses the wish to the Member States and the Commission that the Regions, to the extent of their environmental competencies, be associated to the elaboration management and assessment of action of the Structural and Cohesion Funds, according to the Regulations establishing them;

4. The follow-up of the Conference

36. Expects that the Committee of the Regions will set up a Sub-Committee of the Environment, with a view to allow a specific and co-ordinated approach to environmental problems;

37. Proposes that the Committee of the Regions will include in its internal rules that its members or their representatives will, in the plenary sessions and, in sessions of the Sub-Committee of the Environment, be allowed to be assisted, and in preparatory sessions be represented, by experts who are able, through their experience or knowledge, to give information on environmental aspects of issues dealt with and that the representatives of the Assembly of European Regions (AER) and of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) be invited to participate in the discussions on environmental issues;

38. Expresses the wish that the Environment Ministers and Political Leaders of the Regions of the European Union meet with the Members of the European Commission competent for environment related issues. The possibility of a yearly meeting will be considered;

39. Invites the Environment Ministers and Political Leaders of the Regions of the European Union to send representatives to a meeting of officials to be held during the second half of 1994 following the establishment of the Committee of the Regions, with a view to:

- drafting a working paper concerning the role of the Regions in environmental policy; including the environmental policy of the European Union to be presented to the Committee of the Regions; - defining the agenda of the next Conference referred to in article 38 which could for instance include a discussion on the implementation of the present resolution and on the annual work programme of the European Commission, as well as an exchange of experience in the realisation of regional plans for environment and sustainable development, and in the implementation of the Regulations on the Structural Funds;

40. Asks a Region of Germany to organise the meeting of officials referred to in article 39 and a Region of Spain to organise the next Conference in the year 1995, and invites the European Commission to support those Regions financially;

41. Entrusts its Chairmen to transmit the present Resolution to the institutions of the European Union and to the Regions;

42. Invites the Walloon Region to act as co-ordinating Region for the time being.