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**RECOMMENDATION 1274 (1995)1 on the draft European charter of mountain regions**

1. The mountain regions in Europe share a number of problems arising out of their difficult geo-climatic conditions: thin soils, difficult access, tough climatic conditions, low density of population and fragile ecologies.
2. The fact that such regions are much less developed than lowland areas is largely due to these disadvantages, though it is also exacerbated by the inadequate coverage of the peculiarities of mountain regions in the sectoral policies implemented at the various levels.
3. The Assembly has been concerned about these problems for over twenty years, and has consistently advocated the implementation of a specific policy for mountain regions facilitating sustainable and satisfactory development, whether within a specific approach such as that adopted in the Alpine range or within an overall approach to all mountain regions.
4. The Assembly notes that the increased awareness of environmental issues over the last few years has led the public authorities to concentrate more on mountain regions, rich as they are in natural resources requiring protection.
5. However, it is convinced that we must not confine ourselves to a policy concentrating exclusively on conservation, but rather ensure that we take account of existing socio-economic situations which clearly illustrate the slow development in many mountain regions for which solutions must be devised.
6. In this connection, it points out that the Social Development Fund of the Council of Europe can constitute a useful financial instrument for mountain regions.
7. Moreover, it notes that, apart from the fact that they understandably only take account of specific situations, the national policies implemented hitherto often have the major drawback of exclusively tackling isolated aspects of mountain economies.
8. But the fact is that in the development of European mountain regions the stress must be laid on a regional readjustment strategy as part of an overall regional development policy taking account of the various specific policies.
9. The Assembly is convinced that binding legal instruments can help implement a European mountain region policy as one aspect of the overall development of the whole continent, while at the same time meeting the specific needs of such regions.
10. Consequently, it welcomes the existence and the recent coming into force of the Alpine Convention, ensuring the protection of the Alpine environment, which is an irreplaceable

natural heritage site, and also the emergence of the European charter of mountain regions, which, in the case of the Alpine countries, appropriately complements the Alpine Convention and, for the other mountain regions, provides a valuable means of introducing a European mountain region policy.

11. The Assembly notes with satisfaction that the European charter of mountain regions, which owes its existence primarily to the commitment of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, was also the result of broad consultation with the regional bodies concerned.

12. It also stresses the need to fully involve the local and regional authorities concerned in defining and implementing the means of action provided for in the charter and to apply the subsidiarity principle wherever possible.

13. Furthermore, in view of the positive experiments conducted hitherto, the Assembly fully shares the concern of the authors of the charter to give pride of place to transfrontier and interregional co-operation, implementing and improving the relevant existing legal instruments.

14. In this connection the Assembly recalls Recommendation 1268 (1995), which it has forwarded to the Committee of Ministers, on the 6th European Conference of Border Regions (Ljubljana, 13-15 October 1994) and the suggestions it makes to develop and improve transfrontier co-operation.

15. In the same spirit the Assembly also recalls the importance attached by the heads of state and government at the Vienna Summit to transfrontier co-operation between non-adjacent regions and the need to adopt the draft convention on inter-territorial co-operation.

16. Having regard to the importance of the European charter of mountain regions as an instrument of overall development and of European cohesion, the Assembly is convinced of the need to give priority to the adoption of this instrument.

17. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

i. examine the draft charter so that it can be adopted in the near future;

ii. if it sees fit, entrust the finalisation of this instrument to a committee of experts, involving the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe and the European Union in its work;

iii. invite the member states:

a. to sign and ratify the European charter of mountain regions once it is adopted by the Committee of Ministers;

b. in this perspective, to apply its principles in any decision concerning mountain regions;

c. to submit concrete projects which come within the general framework of the charter to the Social Development Fund of the Council of Europe;

iv. invite the European Union to become a party to the European charter of mountain regions.

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1. Assembly debate on 27 June 1995 (19th Sitting) (see Doc. 7319, report of the Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities, rapporteur: Mr Briane).

Text adopted by the Assembly on 27 June 1995 (19th Sitting).