

Recommendation on European industrial towns (87/24)

(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 22 October 1987 at the 411th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its members for the purpose of facilitating their economic and social progress;

Considering that this aim may be pursued by exchanging information and experience amongst member states on topics of common interest;

Considering that the Council of Europe has established, through its European Campaign for Urban Renaissance and subsequent work programme on urban policies, a valid platform facilitating such a discussion between the urban administrations of its member states;

Noting that the urban policies work programme, currently conducted by the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, concentrates above all on the illustration of strategies and policies that help to afford a broader human experience and dimension in towns;

Bearing in mind the reports presented at and the results of the conferences held at Lille (30 November-2 December 1983) and at Dortmund (17-19 September 1985) devoted to a discussion of the regeneration of old industrial towns;

Considering that, for decades, industrial towns have been the cradle of economic growth from which all Europe has benefited;

Believing therefore that a particular effort at their regeneration by public authorities is called for;

Believing furthermore that the regeneration of old industrial towns is an important element in the improvement of the urban environment as a whole in Europe;

Considering therefore that it would be opportune to draw up a recommendation to governments on this subject, in the belief that it will pave the way for positive tangible results, of use and value for the inhabitants of European industrial towns;

Considering that towns of traditional industry need to create new reasons for their citizens and enterprises to want to live and work in them as well as to invest in and demonstrate a commitment to the locality;

Noting that this concern about problems of towns and regions of traditional industry has been reflected by the creation of the Association of Traditional Industrial Regions of Europe,

Recommends that the governments of member states:

A. Recognise and take into account the following considerations concerning the particular situation of industrial towns:

1. The traditional industrial town has undergone decline through a combination of exhausted resources, technological obsolescence of products and production processes, loss of markets and over dependence on a limited number of basic industries, such as coal, steel, textiles and shipbuilding;
2. To reverse this decline, which affects a large number of towns and regions of traditional industry, requires remedial measures for the high level and long-term nature of unemployment, low per capita income, poor housing, a damaged physical environment, derelict land, social polarisation, demographic imbalance and lack of business investment;
3. The problems of industrial towns should be tackled by policies which do not focus almost exclusively on unemployment and on the attraction of investment from more prosperous regions or from abroad. The net effect of such policies in stemming structural decline has been modest, and the cost of jobs created in such towns and regions by regional economic incentives has tended to be high;
4. There should therefore be improved co-operation between the public, private and voluntary sectors in order to bring about innovation and new methods of dealing with the decline;
5. However, in a time of scarce resources, the apparent disadvantages of industrial towns and regions should be turned into assets and opportunities, particularly through the re-use and redevelopment of public services and infrastructure and the mobilisation of existing human resources;
6. Furthermore, industrial towns, given their social, cultural and historic development, have amassed a wealth of experience and have the potential to promote and respond to innovation and new challenges;
7. The wealth of historic and architectural heritage of industrial towns and regions, particularly from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, should, where necessary, be rehabilitated, so as to constitute a considerable source and potential for future development;

B. Propose the following policy guidelines and strategies to the various bodies concerned:

1. The economic and social value of environmental improvement

Regeneration of the environment is certainly a prior condition of a region's economic and social redevelopment, and the creation or re-creation of the population's confidence in themselves and their region;

In practice, emphasis should be placed on qualitative improvement of the existing fabric

and resources rather than the stimulation of growth as such;

2. Policy co-ordination

In the field of urban regeneration, an integrated approach should be adopted towards the mobilisation of physical and human resources. Such a co-ordinated view, identifying and responding to the particular characteristics of industrial towns and regions, is best taken at local or regional level;

3. New approaches

In the task of urban regeneration, new planning mechanisms, financial instruments and implementing agencies should be established, including new forms of partnership within and between the public and private sectors;

4. Public sector management

The public sector should acquire, where necessary, the management skills which are needed to respond effectively to the economic and social challenges of urban regeneration;

5. Need for innovators

In new forms of partnership between the public and private sectors, innovators and entrepreneurs should be encouraged to take initiatives in industrial and commercial development, and in social and cultural fields as well;

6. Community involvement

The engagement of community resources and interest groups in the task of regeneration should be encouraged and made possible by all levels of government;

7. Re-use of existing resources

Policies for the regeneration of industrial towns and areas should be based whenever possible on the re-use of derelict land, the conservation and revitalisation of existing buildings, facilities and amenities;

8. Contribution to local employment

The renovation of buildings, environmental improvement and provision of open spaces are often labour-intensive and should be used to contribute towards the reduction of unemployment and the development of new local skills;

9. New products and techniques

Local industries and scientific institutions should develop new products and techniques to deal with the major challenge of extensive ecological and environmental damage in industrial regions;

10. Decentralisation and the role of local and regional authorities

Such co-operation can indeed accelerate the pace at which regeneration occurs as well as create a clearer political awareness of the need to develop new policies;

11. International and interregional co-operation

International co-operation between towns, regions and countries should be encouraged since exchanges of information and experience about the regeneration of industrial towns in Europe may be of considerable value.