

2.14. welcomes this proposed benchmark and recognizes that it is a prerequisite if the EU is to continue to be able to adapt to the demands of the knowledge-based society and if citizens are going to be able to hold on to and improve their jobs in the labour market, by responding to its demands more appropriately;

2.15. points out that the necessary resources must come from both public and private sources, and that training and

learning processes can take various forms and take place in various contexts (such as interactive, net-based courses, coaching or quality development projects within companies) and that this should be borne in mind when determining the methods of measurement.

2.16. notes, lastly, the need to provide for the certification of skills acquired, in order to encourage the participation of adults in lifelong learning, especially those of working age.

Brussels, 10 April 2003.

The President

of the Committee of the Regions

Albert BORE

Resolution of the Committee of the Regions in support of local elected representatives under threat in the Basque country

(2003/C 244/12)

- A. whereas the CoR is the European body that represents local and regional authorities and is, therefore, well placed to observe local democracy in the European Union;
- B. whereas the European Union is founded on the indivisible and universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity and is instrumental in upholding and developing these shared values, while respecting the diversity of cultures and traditions of the peoples of Europe, the national identities of the Member States and the way the Member States organise their public powers at national, regional and local level;
- C. whereas free expression of different orientations, cultures, beliefs and life choices is the keystone of an open society;
- D. whereas the principles of democracy and the rule of law underpinning the EU are threatened by planned, systematic and selective violent terrorist attacks by ETA and its associated organisations against local representatives in the Basque Country and Navarre; many People's Party and Socialist Party local councillors have been assassinated in these areas in recent years and elsewhere in Spain; dozens of Basque local councillors have resigned and one municipal council has even been dissolved; and several hundred Basque local representatives must be constantly protected by personal police bodyguards;
- E. whereas the democratic parties, which openly combat any attempt to halt the development of the common values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity, are finding it extremely difficult to find enough candidates in the Basque Country (and are having to look to other parts of the country); their party headquarters must be protected; and their electoral meetings have been declared a terrorist target;

- F. whereas several Spanish laws (electoral, local, etc.) have had to be amended to protect local councillors; governments and parties are having to work hard to protect these local representatives; and Spanish public opinion is increasingly doubtful concerning the legitimacy of the next local elections under such conditions;
- G. whereas ETA's murderous terrorist attacks are intended to undermine elected local representatives, the most vulnerable link in the chain of elected political representatives in Spain, in order to undermine the democratic parties' right to representation and thereby distort the outcome of elections;
- H. whereas such terrorist attacks restrict the right to vote and to be elected in local elections and hence the expression of the people's will and of political participation, on which the authority of the public powers is founded;

At its 49th plenary session (meeting of 10 April 2003) the Committee of the Regions adopted the following resolution unanimously less eight abstentions.

The Committee of the Regions

- 1. repeats its categorical rejection of any form of violence and firmly condemns any attack or terrorist threat in general and those carried out by ETA against Basque local councillors in particular;
- 2. expresses its sympathy and solidarity with the families of the many victims, on behalf of local and regional political representatives throughout Europe;
- 3. expresses its strongest and most sincere support for all local councillors who have been attacked and threatened, and encourages them to continue their democratic work in defending democracy, freedom and the rule of law, despite the intolerable conditions in which they must exercise their entirely legitimate rights;

4. expresses its support and solidarity with the Spanish authorities and with the democratic political parties and candidates who must compete in the next elections under this intolerable pressure by terrorists;

5. expresses its hope that cooperation between the Member States' police forces and courts will be stepped up in order to root out all forms of terrorism within the EU;

6. condemns all those who sanction, instigate, support or execute criminal acts in any way, together with any attempt to use this situation to gain a political advantage;

7. asks its President to submit this resolution to the European Commission, the Council, the European Parliament and to the Spanish and Basque governments.

Brussels, 10 April 2003.

The President
of the Committee of the Regions
Albert BORE
