

# THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

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## Recommendation 268 (2009)<sup>1</sup> New budgetary perspectives

1. The financial, economic and social crisis currently affecting Europe and the rest of the world is causing problems for all sectors of activity in our member states and is inevitably having repercussions on their financial commitments to European and international organisations such as the Council of Europe.

2. The Congress is aware of this and understands that the Secretary General needs to ask the Organisation's various sectors to make efforts to cut their budgets.

3. Accordingly, despite being convinced that the request for additional resources set out in its Recommendation 267 (2009) on "Congress resources and its 2010 budget" is well founded, and in response to a request from the Secretary General, the Bureau of the Congress examined and discussed a preliminary draft budget for 2010 that is 2.7% down on 2009.

4. Like its Bureau, however, the Congress is alarmed, and cannot endorse the budgetary choices of the Committee of Ministers, which are designed to achieve a general annual reduction in the Organisation's budget, based on the principle of zero growth in real terms.

5. In this connection, the Congress fully supports the views expressed by the Parliamentary Assembly in its recent opinion on the Council's 2010 budgets and, like the Assembly, is deeply convinced that in difficult times such as our societies are experiencing our Organisation should be strengthened

rather than weakened, particularly as there is a risk that the cuts will prevent the various sectors from maintaining the critical level of activity needed to ensure that they operate effectively and that their work is useful.

6. In these troubled times, when it is important to sustain the values and reference points of democracy, the rule of law and human rights, which are the very basis of our work, the elected representatives in the Congress should be able to make their voices heard and continue to promote and strengthen local democracy, which constitutes the very foundation of democracy.

7. Democracy takes top priority at the Council of Europe, along with human rights. The work of the two organs representing elected democratic bodies in our countries – the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities – should therefore take high priority in the allocation of the Organisation's resources, limited though they may be.

8. In the light of these considerations, *the Congress therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers:*

*a.* fully recognise the role of an assembly like the Congress, which is the institutional voice of the 200 000 local and regional authorities in our member states and whose monitoring work enables grassroots democracy, which is of vital importance, to flourish in Europe;

*b.* maintain and enhance the resources the Congress needs to carry out this essential task, by means of appropriate budgetary choices;

*c.* afford the same priority to Council of Europe bodies striving to promote democracy as is allocated to those implementing the European Convention on Human Rights.

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1. Discussion and adoption by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 10 June 2009 (see document CG(16)17REC, draft recommendation, rapporteur J.C. Frécon, France (L,SOC)).