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Report
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European Local Democracy Week (ELDW): a new momentum

Bureau of the Congress

Congress Spokesperson on the European Local Democracy Week: Gaye DOGANOGLU,
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Summary

The European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) is a pan-European initiative launched on 16 October 2007 in Valencia, Spain, with the aim of strengthening and increasing citizens' participation in decision making at local level and introducing participatory mechanisms into our democratic systems. This Congress initiative to launch the ELDW was supported by the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Local and Regional Government.

For the last 10 years, local authorities in the 47 Council of Europe member States and their associations have been invited to organise public activities aimed at fostering dialogue between community residents and public authorities, by bringing them together in joint activities to hear each other's concerns, decide on priorities for the community, and improve the functioning of local government.

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the ELDW in October 2017, the Congress, during its 33rd session, renewed its commitment to advancing this initiative and further developing it for the benefit of the citizens and local and regional authorities across Europe. It has thus mandated a Reflection Group to give a new dimension to the European Week of Local Democracy, examining all questions related to the evolution of the Week (Resolution 423 (2017)).

All the aspects relating to the ELDW were considered by the Reflection Group. The group's proposals were submitted to the national co-ordinators of the initiative to consult them and to gather their suggestions and comments.

1 L: Chamber of Local Authorities / R: Chamber of Regions
EPP/CCE: European People's Party Group in the Congress
SOC: Socialist Group
ILDG: Independent and Liberal Democrat Group
ECR: European Conservatives and Reformists Group
NR: Members not belonging to a political group of the Congress

RESOLUTION 430 (2018)²

1. In their Declaration adopted during the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Local and Regional Government held on 16 October 2007 in Valencia, Spain, the Ministers supported the Congress' initiative to launch the European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) in recognition of the importance of increasing citizen participation in decision making at the grassroots level and introducing participatory mechanisms into our democratic systems.
2. The Week serves to foster dialogue between community residents and public authorities, by bringing them together in joint activities to hear each other's concerns, decide on priorities for the community, and improve the functioning of local government.
3. Over the years, the European Local Democracy Week became a truly pan-European initiative. More than 1000 local and regional authorities and their associations organised public activities aimed at promoting and fostering citizens' democratic participation at grassroots level, especially by raising their awareness on the functioning of local authorities, as well as to inform them of the opportunities for taking part in local decision-making processes.
4. In 2017, the European Local Democracy Week marked its 10th anniversary. On this occasion, the Congress, in its [Resolution 423 \(2017\)](#)³, renewed its commitment to advancing this initiative further and established a Reflection Group to take the European Local Democracy Week forward to a new dimension. The Reflection Group held three meetings in March, June and September 2018, during which it considered various aspects relating to the ELDW. The group's proposals were submitted to the national co-ordinators of the initiative.
5. In light of the above, the Congress:
 - a. thanks the Reflection Group for its commitment and its work to give the ELDW fresh impetus and to further develop it for the benefit of local and regional authorities and the citizens across Europe;
 - b. adopts the Reflection Group's proposals for new modalities regarding the duration of the ELDW, the means of rewarding the most remarkable activities and the strategy of developing the initiative's outreach and network, as appended to this resolution;
 - c. decides that these changes will enter into effect as from 2019.

² Debated and adopted by the Congress on 6 November 2018, 1st sitting (see Document CG35(2018)11, explanatory memorandum), Congress Spokesperson on the European Local Democracy Week: Gaye DOGANOGLU, Turkey (L, EPP/CCE).

³ Debated and adopted by the Congress on 20 October 2017, 3rd sitting (see [Document CG33\(2017\)12](#), Congress Spokesperson on the European Local Democracy Week: Gaye DOGANOGLU, Turkey (L, EPP/CCE)).

APPENDIX**NEW MODALITIES OF ORGANISATION OF THE EUROPEAN LOCAL DEMOCRACY WEEK****1. Date, duration and timeline of the ELDW**

a. In order to allow for more flexibility and for a greater number of events to be organised, the municipalities are encouraged to organise events and activities in accordance with the theme of the ELDW during the whole year, culminating in a flagship event in the week of 15 October.

b. The week of 15 October is maintained as the official ELDW date, as it is the anniversary date of the opening for signature of the European Charter for Local Self-Government. This week also corresponds to the launch of the ELDW, on 16 October 2007.

c. The annual co-ordination meeting will continue to be held at the beginning of the year. It shall bring together the national co-ordinators and ELDW participants wishing to attend. It shall present the evaluation of the previous edition as well as some of its outstanding initiatives and establish the theme for the next two editions to come. This biennial theme can be adapted from one year to another, depending on the chosen focus.

2. Modalities for identifying, rewarding and enhancing visibility of the most remarkable initiatives

a. To highlight the commitment to raising the citizens' awareness of local democracy and encouraging them to make use of all the opportunities provided through participatory democratic processes, the most active participating local authorities taking part in the ELDW can request the title of "Partner of the European Local Democracy Week [Year]".

b. This title is granted *a posteriori*, upon the actual participation and report of activities, in order to guarantee that the participants respected the criteria regarding the nature, scale, and possible impact of events/activities, listed as follows:

1. Allocate a specific budget for citizens' participation
2. Run an ELDW promotion campaign (posters, promotion of activities at school...) using the ELDW visual identity decided upon and provided by the Congress
3. Carry out a number of specific activities linked to the leading theme of the year
4. Organise an event with a European or pan-European dimension to illustrate the role of local authorities in the construction of a democratic Europe. A Congress representative may be invited to this main event
5. Inclusiveness: extend the social scope of the initiative by reaching out to different groups of citizens, especially the groups that can feel excluded (children, elderly, women, Roma and Travellers, people with a disability, minorities...)
6. Promote the engagement of young people and youth organisations, including by involving or creating youth councils
7. Implement sustainable initiatives thereby creating an environment in which citizens and local authorities share the same long-term goals, namely to reinforce citizens' awareness and participation in decision making
8. Implement innovative activities and projects

c. On the basis of the activity reports provided by the participants requesting the title of "Partner of the European Local Democracy Week [Year]", the Bureau, at its first meeting of the year, will approve the granting of the title.

d. On the occasion of the annual co-ordination meeting, the Thematic Spokesperson on the ELDW, on behalf of the Congress President, will present the "Partner of the European Local Democracy Week [Year]" certificates to the most active participants of the previous edition.

3. Developing the outreach of the ELDW

- a. The municipalities are invited to nominate a personality with local influence as “Voice of the ELDW”, whose role would be to promote the initiative as its goodwill ambassador, to allow for a wider outreach. This person should be active in the community, especially with young people and committed to expanding the ELDW outreach and inclusiveness. This representative would be responsible for encouraging active citizenship and promoting citizen participation and dialogue with local authorities, as well as the key principles of local democracy (including ethics, transparency, good governance, etc.).
- b. The Congress youth delegates are strongly encouraged to participate in the ELDW activities of their municipality or even to lead an ELDW event. The project to be undertaken by the Youth Delegates between the two sessions of the Congress could touch upon this topic.

4. Creating an independent network of exchange of good practices

- a. The ELDW participants are encouraged to actively promote exchanges of information and good practice between them, especially by using social media and the upcoming online platform of the ELDW website, with a view to developing an independent network for direct interaction and experience-sharing, and possibly establishing a Partnership of Cities for Citizen Participation.
- b. The Congress members and youth delegates should promote the ELDW and share information about their activities in the framework of the initiative, including on the social media.

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

I. Background of the ELDW

1. The European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) is an annual pan-European initiative launched on 16 October 2007, in Valencia, Spain, in recognition of the importance of increasing citizen participation in decision making at the grassroots level and introducing participatory mechanisms into our democratic systems. This initiative of launching the ELDW was supported by the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Local and Regional Government.

2. Every year, the week around 15 October – the date on which the European Charter of Local Self-Government was opened for signature in 1985 – is dedicated to bringing together local elected representatives and citizens across the 47 Council of Europe member countries at public events and discussions on issues of current interest, the functioning of local self-government, and priorities of community development. During this Week, local and regional elected authorities and their national associations are invited to organise events and activities related to the main theme of the Week and with a suggested biannual specific theme.

3. The ELDW is intended to provide an international framework for cities and municipalities across Europe to promote awareness of the rights and responsibilities that are incumbent on each individual in a democratic society, whether as an elected representative, public servant or ordinary citizen.

4. The ELDW offers opportunities for its partners to be part of a bigger international community engaged in promoting active citizenship:

A pan-European community of local authorities, through which they can share innovative ideas on participation and good practices, build twinning partnerships, and thus learn from each other's experience and use it to further develop their actions ;

A community of representatives, who can better inform their citizens on what and how they can do for their local constituencies, and what they can achieve at pan-European level through their elected representatives.

5. The Congress co-ordinates the Week, providing contacts, information and resource material, and offers publicity and visibility at the European level. It also established a "12-Star" partner status to highlight the commitment of a city council/a municipality to raising its citizens' awareness of local democracy and encourages them to make use of all the opportunities provided through participatory democracy processes.

6. Every year, the Congress organises the coordination meeting of the ELDW. On this occasion, participating cities and national associations of local authorities are invited to evaluate the previous edition of Week, to present their activities as well as to make proposals for future editions.

What has been achieved over 10 years of ELDW

7. A network of cities and associations committed to fostering participatory democracy at grassroots level had been built up, which has counted a total of around 1000 partners having organised more than 2000 citizen participation activities in different editions.

8. Synergies with other Congress activities had been developed, for instance, with the Congress co-operation programmes in Ukraine, Armenia, Albania and Georgia – presentations on the ELDW were held during the seminars for elected representatives, as a practical Congress tool for enhanced citizen participation.

9. Partnerships had been built between the ELDW and other relevant Council of Europe initiatives and international partners such as the Europe Prize of the Parliamentary Assembly; the Intercultural Cities Programme, the No Hate Speech Campaign, the European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA).

10. As partner cities of the ELDW are prevalingly smaller communities and cities with remote location, the ELDW has contributed to the development of their international image and the showcase of their good practices on citizen participation towards the rest of Europe. The development of the Arab Local Democracy Week in cities in Tunisia and Morocco had provided them with a further connection to Europe guided by the principles of democracy and human rights.

11. The ELDW has served as a platform of exchange of good ideas between the members of the Council of Europe at the subnational level, thus building a bridge between the member states of the European Union and their neighbourhood.

12. Through keeping direct contacts with the city administrations, as well as NGOs and associations that are active at local level, the Congress is able to directly promote the relevant instruments and materials of the Congress and the Council of Europe (e.g. the European Charter of Self-Government, the educational game “Europe Matters – A Question of Values”) among the cities and foster the implementation of these tools.

II. The creation of the Reflection Group on the ELDW

Context

13. The 33rd session of the Congress, in October 2017, featured a debate to mark the 10th anniversary of the ELDW. This was the occasion to bring together comments from members and other partners.

14. In its [Resolution 423\(2017\)](#) adopted on 20 October 2017 (see Appendix), the Congress decided to establish a Reflection Group and instructed the Congress Secretariat to submit to the Bureau a proposal concerning the possible composition of such a group and the practical arrangements for its meetings.

15. On 2 February 2018, the Bureau agreed to set up a Reflection Group tasked with giving a new dimension to the Week. The Bureau decided that the Group would consist of 2 members from each of the three committees (a representative and an alternate) to be appointed by the committees, and 2 former youth delegates (a representative and an alternate). The Bureau appointed Gaye DOGANOGLU, Spokesperson on the European Local Democracy Week, to chair this Group.

Composition of the Reflection Group

16. **Gaye DOGANOGLU**, Turkey (EPP/CCE), Vice-President, Thematic Spokesperson on the ELDW, nominated President of the RG

Alternate - **Barbara TOCE**, Italy (SOC), Alternate Thematic Spokesperson on the ELDW, nominated alternate President of the RG

MON Committee

Representative: **Majlinda BUFI**, Albania (SOC)

Alternate: Gyorgy ILLES, Hungary (ILDG)

GOV Committee

Representative: **Andreas GALSTER**, Germany (EPP/CCE)

Alternate: Andrew DAWSON, UK (CRE)

CUR Committee

Representative: **John WARMISHAM**, UK (SOC)

Alternate: Thomas ANDERSSON, Sweden (ILDG)

1 former Youth delegate to ensure the youth representation within the Reflection Group

Representative: **Rita JONUSAITE**, Lithuania

Alternate: Matic MATJASIC, Slovenia

Timeline of the meetings

17. The Group held three meetings in Strasbourg, on 27 March, 19 June 2018 and 10 September.

18. After examining the points at issue related to the evolution of the Week, the Reflection Group submitted its proposals to the National Coordinators to seek their input and to collect their suggestions and comments.

19. At its meeting on 10 September 2018, the Group took into account the National Coordinators' suggestions and approved the preliminary draft Resolution to be submitted to the Bureau, on 5 October 2018.