

32nd Session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities – 28 -30 March 2017 – Local Democracy in Iceland

Speaking Notes – Jakob Wienen (Netherlands, EPP-CCE), Co-rapporteur on Local Democracy

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Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to start by joining my co-rapporteur Zdenek BROZ in his thanks to all those who participated in the preparation of our monitoring visit to Iceland and the report.

I am pleased to reiterate that our report on local democracy in Iceland is globally very positive and Iceland has made significant progress in fulfilling previous recommendations of the Congress. However, in spite of this progress, there is still room for improvement in respect to some issues of local governance in the country.

First, we have some concerns with regard to local finances and the division of responsibilities between central government and local authorities.

We are convinced that the sufficiency of financial resources of local authorities should be increased, especially when new competences are transferred to local level. We recommend that the equalization fund of the country should be adapted to the changing necessities of municipalities.

We also call on the national authorities to grant the city of Reykjavik a special status, on the basis of Congress Recommendation 219 (2007), taking into account the particular situation of the Capital city compared to other municipalities.

At last, we are worried about the absence of direct applicability of the Charter in the domestic legal system of Iceland. We therefore urge Icelandic authorities to adopt the necessary legislation to give the Charter legal force in the domestic system as a directly applicable source of law. From this point of view, I realize how our findings match with the report on the recurring issues debated at the plenary sitting of the Congress yesterday.

To conclude, please let me emphasize once again our overall positive evaluation of the local democracy in Iceland as well as our strong conviction that Icelandic authorities will effectively implement our recommendations.

Minister, we are very grateful for your participation in this exchange of views here today. I would also like to go back to what my co-rapporteur Mr BROZ just said about the Additional Protocol to the Charter.

Let me refer to the process of the revision of the Constitution in Iceland in 2010- 2013 in which citizens were directly involved. That's why I should say that if there is a country to ratify the Additional Protocol it is Iceland. And I insist that this ratification would be just a formality for your country as it already complies with the Protocol.

I hope that you will adopt this draft recommendation, and remain at your disposal for any additional questions.

Thank you very much for your attention.