

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

Speaking Notes – Zdenek Broz (Czech Republic, ECR), Co-rapporteur on Local Democracy

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Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to present to you today the draft recommendation and the report on local democracy in Iceland.

The monitoring visit to review the state of local democracy in the country took place from 21 to 23 June 2016. The delegation was composed of Mr Jos WIENEN and myself in our capacity as rapporteurs on local democracy, as well as Ms Tania GROPPi as expert.

It was the second monitoring visit in Iceland. The first one took place in 2009, when the country faced grave consequences of financial and economic crises.

Our delegation met the representatives of the Icelandic Association of Local Authorities as well as the Mayors of Reykjavík, Garoabaer, Reykjanesbaer and Dalabyggð. Please pardon me my pronunciation and refer to the programme of the visit.

We regret that during the visit we did not have the opportunity to meet the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs.

But we are very glad today that Mr Jón GUNNARSSON, Minister of Transport and Local Government of Iceland accepted to participate in our discussion of the monitoring report. It demonstrates his political will to strengthening local democracy in Iceland and gives us a good opportunity to have a political exchange of views.

On behalf of the monitoring delegation, I would like to particularly thank our Icelandic colleagues, both members and secretary of the Icelandic delegation, and the Permanent Representation of Iceland to the Council of Europe for their helpful cooperation in the preparation of this visit.

First of all, I would like to stress a generally satisfactory level of local democracy in the country.

Since the last monitoring visit, our delegation has been impressed by the rapidity of the country's recovery from the economic and financial crisis that hit it in 2008.

No less remarkable is that the central government in partnership with local authorities was able to cope up with the crisis and its consequences without undermining local self-government.

We believe that good practice of consultations of the central government of Iceland with local authorities on all issues that concern them directly could be shared as good practice among the member-states of the Council of Europe.

In this respect, I hope that Iceland will finally ratify the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority that it signed yet in November 2009, especially since there is a full compliance with the Additional Protocol.

Now I would like to give the floor to my co-rapporteur Mr Jos WIENEN who will continue to present to you our findings during the visit and the recommendations to the Icelandic authorities aimed at further strengthening local democracy in the country.

Thank you for your attention.