

The Bureau of the Congress

To all members of the Congress

**Meeting of the Bureau of the Congress
Wednesday 11 September 2019**

**Council of Europe,
Strasbourg,
Room 10**

Summary of decisions CG/BUR28(2019)DEC¹
17 October 2019

The Bureau of the Congress,

meeting in Strasbourg, at the Council of Europe on 11 September 2019, with Anders KNAPE, President of the Congress, in the chair, considered the following items:

- **the draft agenda:** adopted the draft agenda [CG/BUR28(2019)OJprov];
- **communication by the President and the Secretary General of the Congress:**
 - took note of the letter [CG/BUR28(2019)INF55] from Amélie De MONCHALIN, President of the Committee of Ministers, confirming her support for the work of the Congress and her wish to meet the President of the Congress before the end of the French Presidency (27 November 2019);
 - welcomed the support expressed by the Committee of Ministers in its reply [CM/Cong(2019)Rec429] to Recommendation 429 (2019) on the Congress' contribution to the reflection on the future of the Council of Europe (Helsinki Ministerial Session, 16-17 May 2019);
- **the bureaux of the chambers** [CPR/BUR23(2019)OJprov] and [CPL/BUR23(2019)OJprov]: heard information from the Vice-President of the Chamber of Regions Harald SONDEREGGER (in the absence of the President, Gunn Marit HELGESEN) and Xavier CADORET, President of the Chamber of Local Authorities, concerning the debates in their respective bureaux meetings on 11 September;
- **the budget of the Congress:**
 - was informed by the Director of the Congress of the use of the 2019 budget appropriations [CG/BUR28(2019)INF49] as at 5 September 2019;
 - took note of the replies to the President's letter [CG/BUR28(2019)INF50REV] of 16 July 2019 asking national delegations to intervene with their governments to increase the share of the Congress budget in the Council of Europe's 2020-2021 budget; instructed the President to send a letter asking delegations to mobilise again in view of the budget discussions starting on 4 October in the Committee of Ministers;
 - examined the request of the Russian delegation and authorities [CG/BUR28(2019)36] to benefit from Russian language interpretation during the Congress proceedings; was informed by the Secretary General that the origins of the financial difficulties of the Organisation and of the Congress were the on-going zero nominal growth policy, the change of status of Turkey and the constantly decreasing share of the Congress' budget in the budget of the Council of Europe. These factors and the

¹ Adopted by the Bureau of the Congress on 15 October 2019 by written procedure (e-mail).

suspension by Russia of the payment of its contributions led to the establishment of a strategic reflection group of the Congress which had prepared options and scenarios for a sustainable financial situation enabling the Congress to contribute to the work of the Council of Europe and to fulfil its mandate as established by the Committee of Ministers. From the proposed options – reducing the number of sessions to one a year, reducing the number of members of the Congress and modifying the language regime of working languages – the latter was chosen as the least damaging and as being reversible. The payment of the Russian contribution to the Council of Europe in July and September 2019 does not modify the financial situation of the Congress which received no additional resources on this occasion. As a consequence, the Bureau decided not to change its decision governing the language regime of working languages;

- adopted a declaration on the Congress 2020-2021 budget in which it reiterated its request to the Committee of Ministers to return to a 3% share of the Organisation's budget and to provide for a budget based at least on zero real growth; agreed to widely circulate this declaration and send it to the Committee of Ministers and to the new Secretary General taking office on 18 September 2019;

→ **the reform of the Congress:**

- took note of the letter sent to the GR-DEM Chair after his participation in the previous Bureau meeting (Brussels, 28 June 2019) clarifying the proposals for revision of the Congress Charter under discussion in the GR-DEM [CG/BUR28(2019)INF51];
- noted that the Committee of Ministers would decide in the coming weeks on the revision of the Congress Charter and that the revised Congress Charter would enter into force as soon as the Committee of Ministers' reply to Recommendation 425 (2019) was published; the amendments to the Charter would be reflected in the *Rules and Procedures*, partly by derogation and partly by decision;
- considered the amendments [CG/BUR28(2019)34] to be made to the *Congress Rules and Procedures*, independently of the Charter, as presented by the rapporteurs; agreed that the document would be submitted for adoption by the Congress at its October 2019 session;

→ **the national delegations** (rapporteurs: Michail ANGELOPOULOS, Greece (L, EPP/CCE), and Johan VAN DEN HOUT, Netherlands (R, SOC)):

- approved the changes [CG/BUR28(2019)35REV] in the composition of the delegations of Albania, Austria, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Portugal and Turkey;
- concerning the two Armenian members whose credentials had been examined at the meeting of 28 June 2019, confirmed their appointment, effective as of 11 September 2019, in the light of the exchange of letters contained in Document CG/BUR28(2019)INF56;

→ **the 37th Session of the Congress** (Strasbourg, 29-31 October 2019):

- took note of the timetable of meetings [CG37(2019)01prov] and of the list of stands and events in the margins of the session [CG/BUR28(2019)37];
- approved the draft agenda of the 37th Session [CG37(2019)OJprov] updated since the previous Bureau meeting and authorised the Secretariat to update it as necessary for its next meeting on 28 October;

→ **the election of the General Secretary of the Congress:** instructed the Secretariat to submit to the Bureau at its next meeting, for information, an updated timetable taking into account the delay in the publication of the vacancy notice for the post of Secretary General of the Congress;

→ **the Congress priorities for 2021-2024:**

- took note of the contributions [CG/BUR28(2019)INF52REV] sent by the Bureau members and participants and agreed to consider, at its meeting on 28 October, a first working document prepared by the rapporteurs;
- decided to send this document to the committees and chambers for discussion at their meetings and sessions on 29 and 30 October and to ask them to send their written contributions to the Secretariat by 15 November 2019;

→ **the activities of the committees:** heard the activity reports presented by the Chair of the Monitoring Committee and on behalf of the Chair of the Current Affairs Committee;

→ **local and regional democracy:**

- Turkey:
 - on the recent suspension of mayors in Turkey, took note of the statement by the President of the Congress [News (20.08.2019)], as well as that of the European External Action Service of the EU [EU Statement (04.09.2019)];
 - took note that the situation of Nurhayat ALTUN, a member of the Turkish delegation to the Congress sentenced in March 2019 to 10 years in prison, remained unchanged;
- Albania: took note of various letters [CG/BUR28(2019)40REV] concerning the local elections of 30 June 2019 in Albania; agreed to analyse the opinion of the Venice Commission expected in October 2019 and to organise a high-level fact-finding visit of the Congress, bearing in mind the monitoring visit planned in this country for early 2020 by the Monitoring Committee;
- Ukraine: took note of a letter from the Association of Ukrainian Cities (09.09.2019) [CG/BUR28(2019)38] received on 10 September; pending further information, agreed to resume consideration of this letter at its meeting on 28 October;
- “grey zones” within Council of Europe member States: agreed to invite the Group of Independent Experts to prepare a mapping of the “grey zones” and the territories of inapplicability of the European Charter of Local Self-Government;

→ **local and regional elections:**

- given the deadline of 10 September for the receipt of candidatures for the observation of local elections in the Republic of Moldova (20.10.2019), authorised the 3 Presidents to validate the composition of the observer delegations that will visit the country from 2 to 4 October (pre-mission) and from 17 to 21 October (observation mission);
- took note of the press release issued by Secretary General Jagland on 31 July 2019 [Statement SG Jagland] concerning the organisation of the local elections in the Russian Federation;
- referred to the draft Congress report on local and regional democracy in the Russian Federation due to be debated during the 37th Congress Session, in which the Congress recommended that the Russian Federation abolish the legal provision requiring an excessive number of signatures and guarantee equal access to voting rights to independent and opposition candidates, and review their legal framework for local elections in order to allow for comments by international delegations; reaffirmed the Congress’ readiness to assist them in improving these processes;

- **the Congress’ patronage:** examined the International Delphic Council’s request [CG/BUR28(2019)39] for the patronage of the Congress for the 1st European Delphiad 2020 in Greece; considered that it would be preferable to re-examine a new request once the first event had taken place;

- **the 70th Anniversary of the Council of Europe** (1 October 2019): was informed of the latest modifications to the programme prepared around the celebration of the 70th Anniversary of the Council of Europe to which members and participants of the Bureau, as well as former Presidents of the Congress and predecessor bodies were invited;

- **the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE):** took note of [Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 2297 (2019)] entitled “Shedding light on the murder of Boris Nemtsov”, a well-known figure of the Russian political opposition, and, in accordance with a request expressed in that resolution, instructed the President to forward it to the heads and deputy-heads of national delegations (copy to the delegation secretaries);

→ **the meetings of the bureaux and sessions in 2020:**

- took note of the 2020 calendar [CG/BUR28(2019)INF53], and agreed that the date of 7 December 2020 should be confirmed by the new Bureau to be elected in October 2020;
- decided to invite for an exchange of views:
 - on 2 December 2019: the Secretary General of the Council of Europe;
 - on 3 February, 2020: the Chair of the Group of Independent Experts;
 - on 7 December 2020: the President of the Venice Commission (subject to approval by the new Bureau);

→ **other business:** none.

The Bureau praised the work of Gaye DOGANOGLU, member of the Congress since 1994 and Vice-President since 2010, who lost her mandate on 12 September 2019.

The next meetings of the Congress Bureau will be held in Strasbourg on 28 October (eve of the 37th Session) and 31 October 2019 (last day of the session).

Items and documents for information on the meeting agenda:

2.	[CG/BUR27(2019)DEC]	Summary of decisions of the meeting of 28.006.2019
3.1	[CG/BUR28(2019)INF47]	Missions and meetings of the President of the Congress
3.2	[CG/BUR28(2019)INF48]	Missions and meetings of the Secretary General of the Congress
3.5	Council of Europe Highlights 2018	
14.3	Calendar 2019	Calendar 2019 of the local and regional elections
16.	[Programme/Labs]	Work programmes of the World Forum for Democracy (Strasbourg, 6-8 November 2019)
20.	[CG/BUR28(2019)INF54]	Timetable of events

Copy for information:

Secretariat: Director of the Private Office, Miroslav PAPA; Markus ADELSBACH
Secretariat of the Committee of Ministers: Geneviève MAYER; Katherine ANDERSON
Parliamentary Assembly: Secretary General; Private Office of the President; AS/Soc Committee
Directors General
Secretaries of the national delegations and political groups of the Congress
Congress Secretariat
Brussels Office
Permanent Representations to the Council of Europe

Appendices: - list of participants
- Bureau declaration on the Congress 2020-2021 budget

List of participants**Members of the Bureau:**

Anders KNAPE, Sweden (L, EPP/CCE), President of the Congress
 Gunn Marit HELGESEN, Norway (R, EPP/CCE), President of the Chamber of Regions apologised
 for absence
 Xavier CADORET, France (L, SOC), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities
 Karl-Heinz LAMBERTZ, Belgium (R, SOC) apologised for absence
 Barbara TOCE, Italy (L, SOC)
 Harald SONDEREGGER, Austria (R, EPP/CCE)
 Liisa ANSALA, Finland (L, ILDG)
 Johan VAN DEN HOUT, Netherlands (R, SOC) apologised for absence
 John WARMISHAM, United Kingdom (L, SOC)
 Tamar TALIAHVILI, Georgia (R, SOC)
 Michail ANGELOPOULOS, Greece (L, EPP/CCE)
 Yuliya SVITLYCHINA, Ukraine (R, ILDG) apologised for absence
 Clemens LAMMERSKITTEN, Germany (L, EPP/CCE)
 Anna MAGYAR, Hungary (R, EPP/CCE)
 Cristina MORENO MORENO, Spain (L, SOC) apologised for absence
 Alexander DROZDENKO, Russian Federation (R, EPP/CCE)
 Gaye DOĞANOĞLU, Turkey (L, EPP/CCE)

Presidents of Congress political groups:

Bernd VOEHRINGER, Germany (L, EPP/CCE)
 Piero FASSINO, Italy (L, SOC)
 Marc COOLS, Belgium (L, ILDG) replaced by Thomas ANDERSSON, Sweden
 Svitlana BOHATYRCHUK KRYVKO, Ukraine (R, ECR) replaced by Andrew BOFF, United Kingdom

Chairs of committees:

Leendert VERBEEK, Netherlands (R, SOC), Monitoring Committee
 Robert-Csongor GRŪMAN, Romania (R, EPP/CCE), Governance Committee
 Gabriele NEFF, Germany (L, ILDG), Current Affairs Committee apologised for absence

Statutory partners:

Assembly of European Regions (AER): Mathieu MORI, Secretary General..... apologised for absence
 Council of European Municipalities and Regions: Frédéric VALLIER apologised for absence

Advisors:

Sabine DREES (advisor to Clemens LAMMERSKITTEN)
 Dominique FAYMONVILLE (advisor to Anders KNAPE)
 Andreas GREITER (advisor to Harald SONDEREGGER)
 Knuth HJORTH-JOHANSEN (advisor to Gunn Marit HELGESEN)
 Alain HUBERS (advisor to Leendert VERBEEK)
 Laura KAMISLI (advisor to Bernd VOEHRINGER)
 Richard KITT (advisor to John WARMISHAM)
 Andrey MININ (advisor to Alexander DROZDENKO)
 Ayben OKKALI (advisor to Gaye DOĞANOĞLU)
 Eleonore PARK-EDSTRÖM (advisor to Anders KNAPE)

Congress secretariat:

Andreas KIEFER, Secretary General of the Congress
 Jean-Philippe BOZOULS, Director of the Congress
 Renate ZIKMUND, Acting Executive Secretary of the Chamber of Local Authorities
 Dmitri MARCHENKOV, Acting Executive Secretary of the Chamber of Regions
 Dolores RÍOS TURÓN, Head of the Congress Table Office and Secretary of the Bureau
 Sabine ZIMMER, Head of the Private Office of the President and the Secretary General of the Congress
 Tim LISNEY, Deputy-Executive Secretary of the Chamber of Local Authorities
 Giampaolo CORDIALE, Deputy-Executive Secretary of the Chamber of Regions
 Linette TAESCH, co-Secretary of the Bureau
 Anne-Marie KLEIN, Assistant to the Bureau
 Cécile CHEVALIER LAIGNEL, Assistant to the Bureau

Declaration on the Congress 2020-2021 budget

The Bureau of the Congress, meeting on 11 September 2019 in Strasbourg,

welcomes the reply of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to the Congress contribution for the Ministerial Session held on 26-27 May 2019 in Helsinki, supporting “the activities of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in enhancing resilient local and regional democracy”;

acknowledges that the Ministers of Foreign Affairs confirmed the important monitoring functions of the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, who all “carry out monitoring functions and act as guardians of human rights and democracy in their areas of competence”.

The Bureau of the Congress further welcomes the encouragement addressed by the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, Amélie de Montchalin, to the Presidents of the Congress and of the European Committee of the Regions on the occasion of their 25th anniversaries, which they jointly celebrated on 27 June 2019 in Brussels.

The Bureau looks forward to working with Marija Pejčinović Burić, who will take office as Secretary General of the Council of Europe on 18 September 2019.

The Bureau of the Congress refers to Recommendation 430 on the budget and resources of the Congress for the next biennium (2020-2021) and invites the Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to take into account the needs for a normal functioning of the Congress and its secretariat.

With regard to the Congress’s share of the Organisation’s budget, the Bureau notes with concern that this share has steadily decreased from 2.92% in 2010 to 2.54 % in 2019. The Bureau therefore reiterates its request to the Committee of Ministers, that the Congress budget return to a share of 3% of the Organisation’s budget. The financial crisis has led to a backlog in statutory activities and a significant reduction in our thematic contributions to the objectives of the Council of Europe at local and regional level. Over the last years, the decrease in resources has obliged the Congress to discontinue its work on radicalisation leading to terrorism, on Roma inclusion and its input to intergovernmental bodies, to name just a few areas but, more drastically still, to stop financing the interpretation and translation of the working languages which has had a deleterious effect on the Congress’ work and meetings. A return to a sustainable financial and staff situation is indispensable if it is to be able to perform its duties.

The Bureau of the Congress takes note that all member states have now complied with their financial commitments to the Council of Europe’s budget. This fact does not, however, resolve the structural financial challenges which have been caused by a zero-nominal-growth policy over the past budgets. The Bureau invites the Committee of Ministers to make the best use of the capacities of the Council of Europe and its different actors by providing at least a budget based on zero-real growth.

Links:

Congress recommendations:

<https://rm.coe.int/35th-session-adopted-texts/16808f0496>

CM reply to Congress recommendation for Helsinki:

https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=090000168096fb3c