

48th SESSION

Foreign interference in electoral processes at local and regional levels

Resolution 508 (2025)¹

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:

a. the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122) and its Additional Protocol on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No. 207);

b. Recommendation (2003)⁴ of the Committee of Ministers on common rules against corruption in the funding of political parties and electoral campaigns;

c. Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)⁵ of the Committee of Ministers to member States on standards for e-voting;

d. the Committee of Ministers’ Guidelines on the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in electoral processes in Council of Europe member States (2022);

e. Resolution 2390 (2021) “Transparency and regulation of donations to political parties and electoral campaigns from foreign donors” of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe;

f. the Venice Commission Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters (2002), the Venice Commission, Guidelines on Political Party Regulation, (Second Edition, 2020) and its Opinion on the Prohibition of Financial Contributions to Political Parties from Foreign Sources (2006);

g. Congress Resolution 505 (2024) “Recurring issues based on assessments resulting from Congress monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and election observation missions (reference period 2021-2024)”;

h. Congress Resolution 496 (2023) “Local and regional media: watchdogs of democracy, guardians of community cohesion”;

i. Congress Resolution 485 (2022) “Hate speech and fake news: the impact on working conditions of local and regional elected representatives”;

j. the Reykjavik Declaration following the Fourth Summit of Heads of States and Government of the Council of Europe (2023), reaffirming the commitment “to hold elections and referenda in accordance with international standards and take all appropriate measures against any interference in electoral systems and processes”, and revised Priorities of the Congress for 2021-2026;

k. United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions; Target 16.7: Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.

¹ Debated and adopted by the Congress on 26 March 2025 (see document [CG\(2025\)48-10](#), explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: Stewart DICKSON, United Kingdom (R, ILDG).

2. The Congress points out that:

a. local and regional elections, while attracting modest interest from authoritarian actors, are not immune to the threat of foreign interference in electoral processes to influence the results of an election, via instances of disinformation, opportunistic cyber-attacks and illicit funding. Despite foreign interference being an old and complex phenomenon, recent geopolitical changes and new technological developments have increased the scale, the number of involved actors and the reach of such actions, making it even harder to attribute these attacks to a state actor;

b. grassroots elections should be decided by the voters residing in a community and having the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority and therefore, national, regional and local authorities should take steps to protect the integrity of electoral processes and to ensure that voters form their opinion free from interference and according to their convictions and have the freedom to express such opinion on election day;

c. while refraining from overemphasising the issue and feeding narratives about rigged electoral systems, a careful examination of recent cases reveals the emergence of many challenges in the handling of potential foreign interference, such as the corrosive effect of small incidents, the increasing manipulation of the concept for political purposes, the growing importance of non-state actors (private companies, individuals, transnational groups, etc) and domestic actors and the potential multiplier that artificial intelligence could represent.

3. In the light of the foregoing, the Congress underlines the importance of adopting a coordinated approach and:

a. calls on its members to take into consideration in their activities the potential risks related to foreign interference in electoral processes at local and regional levels, promote voter education and develop tools to support local and regional authorities to effectively counter this issue;

b. invites the Monitoring Committee to draw attention to this issue when contributing to future reviews of the Venice Commission Rule of Law Checklist and to systematically introduce a dedicated section in Congress election observation reports;

c. invites the Governance Committee to mainstream this issue when developing or contributing to activities related to corruption at local and regional levels, including when contributing to the GRECO's sixth round of evaluations on local and regional corruption;

4. On the basis of this document, the Congress commits itself to continued co-operation with the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Venice Commission as well as with international partner organisations in order to collect, compare and evaluate examples of good practice related to foreign interference in electoral processes.