



THE CONGRESS OF
LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES
COUNCIL OF EUROPE

ACTIVITY REPORT

(mid-April to end of November 2014)

Communication by the
Congress Secretary General

at the 1215th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies
on 10 December 2014

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INTRODUCTION

This report is aimed at giving an overview of the Congress's activities in the past six months, since the last activity report presented mid April 2014.

The statutory, operational and thematic activities implemented by the Congress and presented in this report contribute to achieving the overall objectives of the Congress in improving the situation of local and regional democracy and safeguarding the rule of law and promoting human rights at local and regional level.

The Congress is a consultative body for the Committee of Ministers, a monitoring body for the implementation of the European Charter of local self-government and the observation of local and regional elections as well as an institutional partner for implementing activities together with other actors in the Council of Europe and a partner outside the Organisation for developing synergies and cooperation in particular with the Committee of the Regions and the European associations of local and regional authorities.

The report contains among others detailed information on the 27th session in October on the active participation of young people in the debates as part of the 47 national delegations. "Involving youth" was not only the theme of the two Congress sessions in 2014 but also of the European local democracy week this year with the overarching theme of "Participatory democracy: sharing, proposing, deciding".

Other aspects of the statutory work of the Congress are also explained in the report which include the monitoring of local and regional democracy activities in several member States (Poland, Norway, Greece, Belgium), the post-monitoring dialogue (Ukraine, Armenia) and local election observation in Ukraine, Georgia and the Netherlands, as well as the work of the Congress Chambers and Committees. The cooperation activities implemented by the Congress and detailed here are part of the Council of Europe's Action Plans and cooperation programmes as a concrete follow-up to the Congress's resolutions and recommendations resulting from the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

The Congress also organises and takes part in thematic activities which are among the Council of Europe priorities, such as the Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma inclusion, the '1 in 5' campaign and the Congress's contribution through its pact of cities and towns to fight sexual exploitation of children, as well as human rights activities at local level.

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Statement by Andreas Kiefer, Secretary General of the Congress

In his exchange of views on 22 October 2014, the President of the Congress, Mr Frécon, informed this Committee about the highlights of the October session, the activities of the Congress with regard to Ukraine, the newly adopted “Partner for local democracy” status for local and regional authorities in countries of the CoE neighbourhood policy, our work with youth and also the need for a sufficiently endowed secretariat and the means to achieve the expected results in our statutory and co-operation activities.

To complement this, I would like to highlight some of the activities mentioned in the activity report and give you some advance information on the next Session, which will take place from 24 to 26 March 2015.

Co-operation with the intergovernmental sector

The Congress Bureau was very pleased with the exchange of views the GR-DEM had with Mr Karl-Heinz Lambertz, Spokesperson of the Congress for relations with the intergovernmental sector, and is looking forward to holding an exchange of views with Ambassador Astrid Helle, Chair of the GR-DEM, at the next Bureau meeting on 2 February 2015.

We also look forward to welcoming the Chairpersons of the relevant rapporteur groups, who will be invited to the Congress committee meetings, a practice which has already been begun by the Parliamentary Assembly.

Post-monitoring dialogue

In my communication to the CM last year, on 11 December 2013, I presented to you the concept of the Congress to engage in political post-monitoring and post-election observation dialogue with member states’ governments. Today I am happy to inform you that we are in a very promising dialogue in Ukraine – this very week -, in Georgia – meetings take place next week – and in Armenia, where we will start early next year. I would like to thank the Ambassadors concerned for their support in organising this post-monitoring dialogue with their authorities.

The idea is not to leave the governments concerned on their own, in dealing with the Recommendations stemming from Congress monitoring, but to accompany the authorities in the process of adapting their constitutions and legislation and introducing appropriate policies to develop, reform and strengthen local self-government.

We are working closely with the Venice Commission on this. An example is the Congress contribution to the opinion of the Venice Commission on the constitutional reform in Ukraine, which has been largely taken into account.

Yesterday, in Kyiv, our post-monitoring delegation met with Deputy Minister Nehoda, senior representatives of the Ministries for regional development, finance, economy and interior and all representative associations, to discuss our proposals for a transfer of competencies and constitutional aspects of decentralisation. As you may know, there is a heated debate on this in Ukraine at the moment and we want to contribute to achieving a sustainable solution in close contact with the Venice Commission. The Congress will present an intermediate report and a roadmap for the process early next week.

Another example of concrete follow-up following a monitoring report, is the letter of the Dutch Minister of the Interior, Mr Pasterk, which he sent jointly with the Associations of Local and Regional Authorities. Together they provided information on the follow-up to be given to the Congress’s Recommendation in the spirit of a culture of consultation and partnership between the national, regional and local levels.

Invitations to observe elections

Besides monitoring the European Charter of Local Self-Government, the observation of local and regional elections is the most effective means of the Congress to assess the situation of local and regional democracy in a member state.

On the basis of recommendations, stemming from such monitoring activities, the Congress engages in a post-monitoring dialogue and in co-operation activities (bilateral and in the framework of CoE Action Plans).

While the monitoring visits are scheduled on the basis of the work programme of the Monitoring Committee, concerning election observation, the Congress relies on an official invitation by the respective authority in the country concerned. That can be the Central Electoral Commission, a Ministry or the Permanent Representation in Strasbourg. The essential is that by this invitation the Congress' delegations are granted access to the polling stations and entitled to perform their duties, on the basis of internationally agreed standards for observing elections.

As you know from our Plenary Sessions, in 2014, the Congress has observed local elections in the Netherlands, Georgia and Ukraine. The Congress is willing and interested to observe elections.

We therefore regret that we were not able to respond positively to invitations in recent months, since we did not receive the necessary official invitation in time.

For this reason, I would encourage you to ask your authorities to invite the Congress as early as possible after the announcement of the election. A timely invitation helps us to properly prepare an election observation mission, in accordance with the internal procedures and rules of the Congress, as well as with international standards.

20 years of Congress and co-operation with EU

In April I had the opportunity to inform you about the celebrations of the 20th anniversary of the Congress during the March Session.

Three weeks ago, the Congress held two joint events with the Committee of the Regions, which was also established in 1994. On 17 November the Governance and CIVEX commissions held a joint meeting, and on 18 November the Congress / CoR "Contact Group" met in Brussels. We were honoured by the participation of Ambassadors Jari Vilén and Torbjørn Frøysnes, to discuss issues of common interest in the fields of democracy, human rights and rule of law, with a specific focus on candidate countries for the EU and the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries. As you may know, the EU has set up the Conference of local and regional authorities of the Eastern partnership (CORLEAP), in which many Congress members represent their respective national associations and thus create synergies in the interest of the Council of Europe.

Another area of co-operation with the EU: The Congress has submitted a joint proposal with DG Democracy for a 3-year project within the "2015-2017 EU-CoE Eastern Partnership Programmatic Co-operation Framework (PCF)", which is supported by EU funding. The component led by the Congress aims:

- at supporting the ongoing local government reforms in the five participating countries which are Council of Europe member states (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine),
- at raising awareness of European standards on local democracy in Belarus, and
- at promoting ethical behaviour by locally elected representatives as well as a citizen participation culture in the whole region.

This project, which is now in the final stage of negotiations with the European Commission, should start in early 2015.

In the context of the co-operation with the EU, Director General Philippe Boillat and I will speak at a conference on Human and Fundamental Rights which is being organised by the Commission's Vice-President Frans Timmermans next week in Brussels. I will be presenting proposals and experiences of the Congress to raise the awareness of cities, and regions and their politicians and senior staff, to

promote human rights in their areas of responsibility. I see this invitation as an acknowledgement of the competence and expertise of the Congress and the Council of Europe by our partners in Brussels.

Progress achieved

Now that all 47 member states have ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government, one of the key priorities in 2015 and beyond will be to engage in dialogue with governments, so as to achieve more and more articles declared applicable, in order to establish a common European space of local democracy. We are pleased to note that in recent years a number of our member states have accepted to apply additional articles of the Charter.

The Congress has analysed the reasons for non-acceptance of articles in the Charter (in a report on the subject debated in October 2011) and is now pursuing its efforts to change the circumstances that were used as justification for non-ratification. These efforts are bearing fruit. The analysis of the current situation shows that the number of non-ratified provisions has decreased over the past 7 years (since May 2007) from 107 to 83 today that is minus 22 percent! This is also consequence of our monitoring activities.

In addition to the country-by-country approach, the Congress is collecting experiences from several member states. You had an opportunity to discuss these “recurring issues” with Mr Lambertz in September at the GR-DEM. The Congress will pursue both these approaches – by member states and horizontally - and propose legal and policy responses to address the shortcomings identified.

European Local Democracy Week (ELDW)

The eighth edition of the European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) took place between 13 and 19 October 2014 and was dedicated to the theme of “Participatory democracy: sharing, proposing, deciding”, with a special focus on youth.

175 partners from 24 countries participated this year and organised some 470 activities. Information on this can be found on the ELDW website run by the Congress Secretariat.

Outlook for 2015

The Congress will continue to focus on the core areas of the Council of Europe. The Bureau has chosen “**Local responses to human rights challenges – migration, discrimination, social inclusion**” as the guiding theme for the two sessions in 2015. This will include concrete and specific aspects of human rights at local and regional level.

Congress members will discuss the situation in UK after the referendum in Scotland and invited Lord Ahmad, Minister for Communities and European Programmes, to present the UK government proposals for empowering not only Scotland but also Northern Ireland, Wales and England. I would like to thank Ambassador Johnson for his support.

We will also continue to work with the youth representatives and the feedback and proposals from their side as well as from the members of the Congress are very encouraging.

As a next step in the Congress reform, the Committee of Ministers has received proposals to amend the Statutory Resolution and Charter, as a basis for further modernising the rules of procedure. Subject to (a discussion in the GR-DEM and) the decision of the CM, the Congress is preparing to adapt its rules of procedure in the March session. Our members would therefore be grateful if this decision could be taken by the Committee of Ministers in due time.

Finally, I would like to thank the Ambassadors of Austria and Turkey for seconding officials to the Congress Secretariat to work in the areas of the Monitoring committee, as well as the Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma inclusion. This is a substantial support that facilitates our work!

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1. Political developments

a. Agenda

- **Presentation of Congress activities to the Ministers' Deputies (Strasbourg, 17 April 2014)**

The Congress Secretary General gave the Ministers' Deputies a presentation of the Congress activities and in particular the results of the 26th (March 2014) session and other recent Congress activities. He underlined that "empowering youth" would be the focus of both Congress sessions and other activities in 2014. He also recalled that in 2014 the Congress was celebrating its 20th anniversary. It had held a special ceremony for this during the 26th Session in March and will hold in November a joint meeting of its Governance Committee and the CIVEX Commission of the Committee of the Regions.

- **124th Session of the Committee of Ministers (Vienna, 6 May 2014)**

In his statement President van Staa commended the foundation of the Council of Europe 65 years ago and the Congress' creation by the Committee of Ministers 20 years ago. He recalled that in the meanwhile local and regional democracy through decentralisation and greater autonomy for local authorities and regions has become the landmark of European democratic development. He underlined that the Congress is at the forefront, as the only political assembly in Europe that regularly monitors the development of local and regional democracy and submits recommendations to further improve the situation on the basis of the European Charter of Self Government (ECLSG) and international standards for the observation of local and regional elections.

- **Emperor Maximilian Prize awarded to Herwig Van Staa (Innsbruck, 8 May 2014)**

The 2014 Emperor Maximilian Prize has been awarded to the President of the Congress, for his work to promote local and regional democracy, and more specifically transborder and inter-regional co-operation, multi-level governance and regional self-government.

- **Congress supports Bosnia and Herzegovina and to Serbia facing terrible floods (19 May 2014)**

During his meeting with the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ana Trisic-Babic the Secretary General informed her that the President of the Congress has passed a message to all national associations and delegations to call for help for the two countries in this situation.

- **Official visit of Congress President to Romania (12-14 June 2014)**

During this visit, Herwig van Staa met in particular Liviu Nicolae Dragnea, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Regional Development and Public Administration Romanian and Ministry of Foreign Affairs Titus Corlătean. Meetings took place also with local and regional elected representatives and members of national associations of local and regional authorities in Bucharest and Ploiesti.

- **Congress President meets the president of Azerbaijan (Baku, 18 June 2014)**

During the meeting with President Ilham Aliyev, President van Staa confirmed the readiness of the Congress to support the local and regional dimensions of the priorities of the Azerbaijan Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. He expressed the Congress' satisfaction in co-organising the conference on youth participation which took place in Baku on the same day. He also underlined that further exchanges between young people and the sharing of experiences from other European countries will contribute to the consolidation of local democracy in Azerbaijan.

- **Statement on the release of Leyla Güven and other elected representatives jailed in Turkey (3 July 2014)**

The Congress expressed its satisfaction on the release from pre-trial detention of Leyla Güven and 30 local elected representatives after a decision by the Diyarbakir Court. For the Congress, the case of Leyla Güven has always been symbolic of the situation of all the local elected representatives kept for a long time in pre-trial detention in Turkey. The rapporteurs on local and regional democracy in

Turkey, Anders Knape, Sweden (L, EPP/CCE), and Leen Verbeek, Netherlands (R, SOC) said they will continue with the Congress to keep a close eye on the situation of Leyla Güven and the other elected representatives still being detained.

- **High level visit to the Republic of Moldova (1-2 July 2014)**

A delegation headed by Lars O. Molin (Sweden, EPP/CCE) Chair of the monitoring Committee, visited the Republic of Moldova and held meetings with government representatives in Chişinău, with the authorities of the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia, as well as with representatives of the Transnistrian Region and the city of Tiraspol. On the sidelines of this official visit, the rapporteurs on local and regional democracy in the Republic of Moldova, Francis Lec (France, L, SOC), and Philippe Receveur (Switzerland, R, EPP-CCE), underlined the efforts made by the Moldovan Government to speed up the country's European integration specially with the signature of the Association Agreement with the EU. In the view of the Congress, which has been monitoring the situation of local and regional democracy in the Republic of Moldova for several years, European integration guarantees democratic values and also the diversity in the country, while ensuring respect for its territorial integrity.

- **Exchange of views of the Congress President with the Committee of Ministers (Strasbourg, 16 September 2014)**

The Congress President addressed the Minister's after the presentation of the Statutory Declaration of the Council of Europe Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland – who was re-elected in June 2014 - and the presentation of his strategic vision for the next five years term. Herwig van Staa expressed full support to the new strategic vision of the Secretary General and said the Congress would continue to focus its activities on the common priorities of the Council of Europe.

- **Declaration on the referendum in Scotland (19 September 2014)**

The President of the Congress stated that following a widespread democratic debate, held peacefully according to the institutional rules of the United Kingdom, the people of Scotland had expressed their views massively and freely and the referendum was a victory for democracy based on the rule of law. He recalled that the Congress supports strong regional self-government, respecting everyone's traditions, to develop within the national framework, in close synergy with central government.

- **Meeting of the Congress Group of Independent Experts on the European Charter of Local Self-Government (Strasbourg, 25-26 September 2014)**

The Group came together for its annual meeting for the first meeting under the new Chair, Prof. Angel Moreno (Spain). The participants discussed draft reports on "electoral rights of voters residing de facto abroad" and "criteria for standing for local and regional elections" as well as cooperation of the Congress with the Venice Commission. It also examined trends in regionalisation in Council of Europe member states and the situation of constitutional reform in Ukraine. Among the other items on the agenda were recurrent issues resulting from Congress' monitoring activities and the missions to observe local and regional elections The Group of Independent Experts works for the Congress and more particularly for the Congress committees, which it shall assist in discharging their statutory responsibilities in the field of local and regional democracy. Members of the Group: <http://bit.ly/Congress-GIE>

- **New President of the Congress elected (Strasbourg, 14 October 2014)**

The members of the Congress, meeting at the 27th Session, elected Jean-Claude Frécon (France, SOC) as President for a two-year term of office. The newly elected President stated that the Congress through the political dialogue it has established with governments and with the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly can persuade central governments to establish and protect local and regional democracy more effectively. Congress member since 1994, Mr Frécon became Vice-President of the Congress in 2002, headed the French delegation to the Congress from 2004 to 2012 and had been President of the Chamber of Local Authorities since 2010.

- **Adoption of the partner for local democracy status (Strasbourg, 16 October 2014)**

The Congress adopted during the 27th session a resolution introducing 'partner for local democracy' status open to local elected representatives in neighbouring non-member states of the Council of Europe. This status commits the national, local and regional authorities to uphold, respect and

promote at all levels of government the values and principles of the Council of Europe. Speaking on behalf of the Moroccan government, Hassan Bouhriz, deputy mayor of Tangiers and member of the House of Representatives and, underlined the importance of co-operation between his country and the Congress. The Moroccan authorities should make a formal request to be granted 'partner for local democracy' status in 2015, which will open participation in Congress activities and sessions (without voting right) for local and regional representatives from Morocco.

- **Address of the new Congress President to the Committee of Ministers (Strasbourg, 22 October 2014)**

During his exchange of views with the Ministers' Deputies, Jean-Claude Frécon underlined that the Congress has become for both European governments and the other Council of Europe entities a loyal, operational and effective political partner who shall continue to consolidate its activities of monitoring the European Charter of Local Self-Government and observing local elections, while further increasing implementation of its recommendations through political dialogue with governments.

- **Visit of Pope Francis to the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 25 November 2014)**

Speaking at the end of the visit by Pope Francis, the President of the Congress welcomed the Pope's speech and his call to continue the dialogue to maintain the peace so desired by the founding fathers of the Council of Europe. He said that this dialogue must be pursued at all political levels – European, national, regional and local, and must also include the inter-faith level so as to encompass all the constituent elements of our societies. He gave his support to Pope Francis's call for the creation of a "new agora" for dialogue between all civic and religious groups, tying in perfectly with the objectives of the Council of Europe and the Congress. Some 50 members of the Congress including its presidency attended the ceremony and the Pope's speech in the hemicycle.

- **Declaration of the President on the treaty signed between the Russian Federation and Abkhazia (3 December 2014)**

Reacting to the signature, on 24 November 2014, of a treaty on alliance and strategic partnership between the Russian Federation and Abkhazia, a separatist region of Georgia, Jean-Claude Frécon, declared that "Abkhazia is a region of Georgia, and we cannot recognise the validity of a so-called treaty adopted in violation of the territorial integrity of a member state of the Council of Europe". The President of the Congress condemned the treaty as "one more factor in the destabilisation of this part of Europe".

b. 20th anniversary of the Congress

- **Joint Meeting of the Congress Governance Committee and the EU Committee of the Regions CIVEX Commission (Brussels, 17 November 2014)**

On the occasion of the 20th anniversaries of the Congress and the Committee of the Regions, and with a view to increase the synergies between their respective bodies, the Congress Governance Committee held this joint meeting with its counterpart in the Committee of the Regions, the CIVEX Commission, ten years after a joint meeting of the preceding "Institutional Committee" and the "CONST commission" in Prag in 2004. Items on the agenda included the protection of the rule of law and human rights at the local level, the regionalisation and decentralisation trends in Europe and the new forms of local governance.

c. Ukraine

i. Declarations

- **Separatist tensions in the eastern part of Europe (Chisinau, 3 July 2014)**

The Monitoring Committee of the Congress meeting in Chisinau adopted a declaration to express its profound concern at the situation of countries of the region faced with dangerous separatist tensions. The statement noted that the annexation of the Crimea by the Russian Federation had unfortunately opened the way to regional destabilisation which threatens the territorial integrity of states. It recalled that the Congress defends local and regional government all over Europe through implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government but local and regional self-government cannot truly develop unless countries are stable and societies are at peace.

- **Attack on Malaysia Airlines flight (Kiyv, 18 July 2014)**

At the press conference in Odessa at the close of the high-level visit of the Congress delegation (see below), the President said the attack upon flight MH17, which killed 298 people was a horrifying criminal act and the criminals must be identified and brought to justice without delay.

- **Attacks against Ukrainian Mayors (29 July 2014)**

Herwig van Staa condemned the attacks against two Ukrainian mayors which led to the death of one of them, Oleg Babayev from Kremenchuk. Another attack was carried out against the Mayor of Lviv, Andry Sadovy, whose house was struck by an anti-tank missile. Having met with several Mayors of Ukrainian cities in Odessa during the high level visit Mr van Staa paid tribute to the firm position several of them had taken against the ultimatums from separatist forces calling upon them to resign and to support the self-proclaimed separatist leaders.

- **Separatist tensions in Ukraine and neighboring countries (Strasbourg, 16 October 2014)**

The declaration on separatist tensions in Ukraine and neighboring countries was adopted after a debate by the Congress during its 27th session (see under 3.b). It condemned Russia's military intervention in the east of Ukraine, and all forms of pressure by Russia on its neighbors. It underlined that "the security of the continent is seriously threatened by the Russian Federation's repeated failure to comply with international rules and the principles and values of the Council of Europe that it signed up to when it joined the Organisation" The Congress also underlined that what has taken place in the Crimea, South Ossetia and Abkhazia , in Transnistria and in the east of Ukraine is totally contrary to the Europe of the regions that it is striving to achieve. (see declaration in appendix)

- **The Donbas local elections (2 November 2014)**

The President condemned the holding of "elections" on 2 November in the two self-proclaimed republics of Luhansk and Donetsk, which took place in total contradiction with the laws and the Constitution of Ukraine. He said these so-called elections had no democratic value whatsoever and are actually counterproductive to the fragile peace process that was initiated in Minsk.

ii. High level visit

In the framework of its post-monitoring activities and further to the observation of pre-term local elections organised on 25 May, the Congress carried out this high level visit to Ukraine on 17-18 July 2014. The delegation was composed of President van Staa, the presidents of the local and regional chambers Jean-Claude Frécon and Nataliya Romanova as well as the presidents of the Congress political groups, the Rapporteur on Ukraine and the Congress Secretary General. The members of the delegation had exchanges of views with Ukrainian political representatives (see details in appendix) on the latest developments as regards the ongoing political crisis in the country as well as on decentralisation in light of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. The delegation was able to get a complete picture of the current situation in Ukraine and of the major difficulties the country is going through. It has appreciated the willingness the Government has shown to reform, in particular with the first steps taken, such as the election of mayors which are fully in line with Congress recommendations.

iii. Observation of local elections

A 19-member delegation composed of local and regional elected representatives from 13 European countries including five members of the EU Committee of Regions observed the pre-term local elections which were held on the same day as the presidential vote on 25 May 2014. The Congress delegation – under the leadership of Gudrun Mosler-Törnström (Austria, SOC) and Rapporteur Nigel Mermagen (United Kingdom, ILDG) – provided an overall positive assessment of this vote. Although the elections were overshadowed by the presidential vote, the Congress welcomed the generally harmonious atmosphere on E-Day and that international standards and fundamental freedoms were respected, by and large. However, further improvements should be made regarding electoral legislation and the practical side of electoral management, including efficient counting procedures and training of electoral staff. At the 27th Congress' Session Recommendation 359 (2014) was adopted, noting – among other items - that Ukraine should take measures to better protect journalistic freedom and media pluralism

iv. Post monitoring activities

The new Ukrainian government appointed on 27 February 2014 declared local self-government and decentralisation as one of its priorities. President Poroshenko, following his election in May, has continued support for these reforms and the new parliamentary coalition of November 2014 has re-affirmed that priority. In this context, and following up his report on local and regional democracy in Ukraine adopted at the 25th Congress Session on 31 October 2013, Co-Rapporteur Marc Cools met with Vyacheslav Nehoda, First Deputy Minister for Regional Development, Construction and Municipal Economy of Ukraine, on 22 May 2014 to launch a post monitoring dialogue, with a further meeting on 16 October during the Congress 27th session. The Minister endorsed a programme of three post-monitoring units to address Congress' Recommendation 348(2013) on local and regional democracy in Ukraine, (in particular the transfer of competences, financial autonomy and mergers or inter-municipal co-operation) followed by a road map to chart their implementation.

The activities are being supported under voluntary contributions by Denmark to improve local democracy in Ukraine (see below). The first post-monitoring meeting were held in Kyiv from 8-9 December and addressed the transfer of competences to local and regional elected representatives.

v. Cooperation activities in Ukraine

The Congress is conducting various activities in Ukraine under the following programmes:

- all the immediate measures for Ukraine (point 2.3 on local democracy) - April to December 2014 - funded by a group of Council of Europe member and observer states. Besides local democracy awareness, the activities run in this context included observation of local elections (22-26 May 2014), a high-level visit (17-18 July 2014) and the launch of post-monitoring activities (22 May 2014) (see above).
- the project on strengthening of local democracy in Ukraine - April 2014 to May 2015 - financed by a voluntary contribution from Denmark. Under the revised Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine; this project also covers training of young political leaders and post-monitoring dialogue in order to devise a roadmap for the implementation of Congress Recommendation 348(2013) on local and regional democracy in Ukraine (see above).

A series of regional training seminars is organised in order to disseminate a culture of democracy by making the participants aware of principles of local and regional democracy and by developing their capacity to take part actively and competently in local elections. These seminars bring together some twenty young people – leaders of NGOs and of youth sections of political parties, recently elected or aspiring mayors and municipal councillors, and representatives of the media – who discuss how they perceive the role of local authorities and citizens. A first seminar was held from 15 to 17 July in Truskavets (oblast of Lviv) as part of the package of immediate measures.

A second seminar, financed by the Danish Government, was held at Chernihiv (Ukraine) from 30 September to 2 October 2014. The Congress members discussed with the young local leaders the practical application of European standards designed to improve local political governance, especially the European Charter of Local Self-Government, as well as citizens' participation in the decision-making process and the questions of prevention of corruption at local level.

In addition, a workshop entitled "Mayors to spearhead change" intended for the mayors elected on 25 May 2014 was held in Kyiv from 11 to 13 November 2014. Through an approach between peers associating Congress members, the freshly elected mayors interacted with their colleagues from Ukraine and other regions of Europe and shared good practices regarding the conditions of exercise of their powers and responsibilities and the availability of public services to the local community.

The President of the Chamber of Regions of the Congress, Nataliya Romanova, and the following Congress members, contributed to these events: Liisa Ansala (Finland, ILDG), Svitlana Bohatyrchuk-Kryvko, (Ukraine, ECR), Mairi Evans (United Kingdom, NI), Matej Gombosi (Slovenia, EPP), Andris Jaunsleinis (Latvia, ILDG), Luzette Wagenaar-Kroon (Netherlands, EPP), Volodymyr Udovychenko (Ukraine, ILDG) and Sabine Van Dooren (Belgium, ILDG).

Finally, a study visit for young local leaders of Ukraine entitled "Supporting young local leaders to foster the democratic development of Ukraine at local level" was organised from 3 to 7 November 2014 to Strasbourg. This study visit provided the selected young leaders with ideas and practical

advice for developing local and regional democracy in Ukraine. During the visit, the participants had the opportunity to discuss questions of particular interest with the councillors of Strasbourg and Saverne (France) as well as Kehl and Kappelrodeck (Germany), with exchange of experiences regarding best practices in local democracy. They also participated in the 2014 World Forum for Democracy on the theme “From participation to influence: can youth revitalise democracy?” held from 3 to 5 November. The study visit is part of the series of regional seminars organised in Ukraine by the Congress.

vi. Others

Ratification of the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government by Ukraine (Kiyv, 2 September 2014)

The Parliament of Ukraine (Verkhovna Rada) adopted the law on the ratification of the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority by a majority of 260 votes. This was a positive step forward in the implementation of Recommendation 348 on local and regional democracy in Ukraine, which the Congress adopted in 2013 following the two monitoring visits in May 2012 and April 2013.

d. Chairmanships of the Committee of Ministers

Austria (November 2013-May 2014)

EUDEM Conference on multi-level Gouvernance (Strasbourg, 5- 6 May 2014)

The conference on European Democracy – EuDEM 2014 was held under the Austrian chairmanship in co-operation with the Congress and the University of Strasbourg. The main theme was the “Multilevel Governance – from local communities to a true European community” and was discussed in several panels such as policy and country perspectives, the role of regions and municipalities in Europe, and European-wide networks of independent institutions. First Vice-President of the Congress, Jean-Claude Frecon, said at the opening of the conference that the key to the success of multilevel governance is consultation, since there is a need for the different levels of government to engage in systematic consultations with each other.

Conference on the fight against corruption (Innsbruck, 9 May 2014)

At the International Conference co-organised by the Congress in the framework of the Austrian Chairmanship on: “Combating corruption – Preventive and Repressive Measures at European, National, Regional and Local Levels”, President van Staa underlined that corruption is a major challenge to European democracy today and grassroots authorities are playing a crucial role in fighting it at the level of their communities. He stressed the importance of exchanging good practices, in particular to develop more transparent local procurement procedures, sharing of services between communities, use of new technologies in service provision, as well as a greater use of consultations with citizens and increasing citizen participation in decision-making overall, as an essential component of good governance and accountability. Among other speakers were representatives from anti-corruption bodies such as Greco and OLAF, from the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the Court of Justice as well as representatives of national, local and regional authorities.

Azerbaijan (May-November 2014)

Meeting of the Bureau (Baku, 17 June 2014)

The Bureau met in Baku in the frame of the chairmanship of Azerbaijan of the Committee of Ministers. An opening ceremony took place with the participation of Fikrat Mammadov, Minister of Justice of Azerbaijan, Ziyafat Asgarov, First Deputy Chairman of the Milli Majlis (Parliament) and Abulfaz Babayev, chairman of the Azerbaijan City Municipalities National Association, deputy head of the Azerbaijan national delegation to the Congress.

International Conference on local democracy and youth (Baku, 18 June 2014)

The Ministry of Justice of Azerbaijan and the Congress co-organised this conference in the framework of the Azerbaijani Chairmanship. The conference opened by Vilayat Zahirov, Deputy Minister of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Congress President was structured around two round-tables: “Improving access of young people to fundamental social rights: education and training – employment – health care – housing” and “Youth participation in public life: engaging young people in democracy”, moderated by Nataliya Romanova (Ukraine, ILDG), President of the Congress Chamber of Regions, and the Secretary General of the Congress Andreas Kiefer,.

Conference on “Intercultural dialogue: interaction between culture and religion” (Baku, 1st September 2014)

Jean-Claude Frécon, (France, SOC), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities represented the Congress at this conference. He expressed the wish that at this tragic hour for Ukraine and the entire Europe of values, the proceedings of the conference on the importance of dialogue were impressed upon this region of Europe with the compelling urgency which is all that can save these populations trapped in a war from a bygone century.

Belgium (November 2014- May 2015)

Session of the Committee of Ministers for the hand over from Azerbaijan to Belgium (Strasbourg, 13 November 2014)

In his address, the Congress President thanked Azerbaijan and welcomed dialogue-based regional democracy example set by Belgium. He said the spirit of constant dialogue between the different levels of governance prevailing in the country is the same driving force that is central to the mission of the Congress.

Meeting of the Bureau (Brussels, 1st December 2014)

The Bureau met in Brussels in the frame of the chairmanship of Belgium of the Committee of Ministers. At the opening, Rudi Vervoort, minister-president of the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region addressed the members. It was the first working meeting of the new Bureau after the elections of the 27th session.

e. Continuing the reform process

Four years after undertaking a large-scale reform of its priorities, processes and internal organisation, the Congress Bureau felt that the time had come to appraise and take stock of the Congress' new way of functioning as well as the innovative political dimensions of its work.

In February 2014, the Bureau therefore tasked its rapporteurs, Marc Cools (Belgium, L, ILDG) and Urs Wüthrich-Pelloli (Switzerland, R, SOC), with examining the Congress' two key administrative texts, the Charter and Rules of Procedure, in order to eliminate discrepancies and establish a clearer separation of content and scope between the Charter and the Rules while ensuring that both texts described accurately and clearly the Congress' current procedure and practice and reflected the evolution of the Congress' work in the field.

The first step in the reform of the Congress' texts was to revise the Charter and the proposed modifications to that text were appended to a recommendation adopted by the Congress at its 27th Session. Once the revised Statutory Resolution and Charter have been examined and adopted by the Committee of Ministers, the amended provisions of the Charter will be incorporated into the Rules of Procedure, together with any other changes deemed necessary for the Rules' improvement, as a second step in this reform of the Congress' texts.

The overarching aim of the rapporteurs was to ensure that the Charter would outline the Congress' fundamental principles and functioning while its Rules of Procedure would describe in greater detail

the substance and procedure. A few articles in the Charter have therefore been considerably simplified, while the corresponding articles in the Rules of Procedure have been substantially expanded. Furthermore, specific references – to committees or types of recommendation have been eliminated to avoid having to make unnecessary revisions for purely cosmetic reasons in the future. Other changes in the Charter which will be reflected in the Rules of Procedure include clearer descriptions of what constitutes a delegate's mandate, through the introduction of new concepts, such as the "specific local or regional mandate" and tools, for example the creation of a reference list of mandates which will become the main backbone of the verification of members' credentials in the future and should be adopted by the Congress in 2015 in time to be applied for the next renewal session in October 2016.

2. Institutional co-operation within the Council of Europe

a. The intergovernmental sector

i. Committee of Ministers

In the framework of the political dialogue with the Committee of Ministers, the President of the Congress and its Secretary General hold several annual exchanges of views with the Deputies and participate in ministerial sessions.

In his communication on 16 April 2013, Andreas Kiefer presented the Congress activities since April 2013, which included, among others, the thematic debates of the 27th session, several monitoring visits to member states, local election observation missions as well as thematic activities and co-operation programmes.

The Congress follows on a regular basis the work of the Committee of Ministers' Rapporteur groups, such as the GR-DEM, the GR-EXT, the GR-H and the GR-SOC by its Secretary General or Secretariat.

On 9 September 2014, Karl-Heinz Lambertz (Belgium, SOC), Congress thematic spokesperson on co-operation with the intergovernmental sector of the Council of Europe and President of the Congress Governance Committee, held an exchange of views with the Committee of Ministers' Rapporteur Group on Democracy (GR-DEM). In particular, they discussed the document "Recurring problems identified during monitoring missions", submitted to the Committee of Ministers in December 2013, which analyses the issues encountered in member states in the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. The discussions also focused on the contribution by the Congress regarding the situation in Ukraine, problems of local finance and the Committee of Ministers' replies to Congress recommendations. The President of GR-DEM, Ambassador Astrid Helle, Permanent Representative of Norway to the Council of Europe, agreed to meet in the near future with the Congress Bureau, which previously held exchanges of views with the two former Chairs of the GR-DEM.

The Congress contributes to the work of several Steering Committees and Committees of Experts of the Council of Europe – including the Steering Committee on Human Rights (CDDH), the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG), the European Steering Committee on Youth (CDEJ), the Steering Committee on Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue (CDDI), the European Committee for Social Cohesion (CDCS), the Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues (CAHROM) and the Group of Specialists on child-friendly justice (CJ-S-CH) – through its thematic rapporteurs or its Secretariat.

The Congress adds a local and regional dimension to the work of the intergovernmental sector, contributing to making decisions that are more operational and result-oriented and meet the needs of elected officials and citizens on the ground

On 20-21 May 2014 in Baku, Gaye Doganoglu, (Turkey, EPP/CCE), political coordinator of the European Local Democracy Week introduced the ESLD at the 21st meeting of the Education for democratic citizenship and human rights (EDC/HRE) Committee Network of Coordinators.

On 5 June 2014 in Strasbourg, Congress Secretary General Andreas Kiefer held an exchange of views with the European Committee for Social Cohesion, Human Dignity and Equality (CDDECS). He presented the Congress work in this field, in particular regarding the implementation of human rights at local and regional level.

ii. Action Plans

In close coordination with Directorate General of Democracy and its centre of expertise on the reform of local democracy of Council of Europe, the Congress has pursued its contribution to projects on local and regional democracy in the Council of Europe action plans for Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine as well as in proposals of activities in Belarus and Kosovo¹. It is also contributing to the Council of Europe policy towards neighbouring regions and has established cooperation relations with national, local and regional authorities in Morocco and Tunisia. (See 6.b.)

b. The Parliamentary Assembly

The Congress has regular exchanges with the Parliamentary Assembly in areas of common interest in order to develop synergies and increase co-operation with the rapporteurs and the respective Secretariats, notably in the area of monitoring and the implementation of the ONE in FIVE Campaign.

As an example, the Congress thematic Spokesperson Johan van den Hout (Netherlands, SOC) is regularly taking part in the meetings of the Parliamentary Assembly's Network of Contact Parliamentarians to stop sexual violence against children.

The Congress President and Anne Brasseur, Parliamentary Assembly President, held a bilateral meeting during the 27th session of the Congress. They discussed the situation in Ukraine and local democracy in several member States. They reaffirmed their willingness to enhance institutional co-operation between the two bodies, especially in the field of monitoring.

c. The Commissioner for Human Rights

The Commissioner for Human Rights follows the work of the Congress on the implementation of human rights at the local level and awareness-raising of local and regional authorities in this regard. Regular meetings are held between the Commissioner and the Congress. On 8 December, the Commissioner held a meeting with Andreas Kiefer. They discussed among others, the situation in Ukraine - after the Commissioner's visit from 30 November to 5 December -, in Georgia - where the Congress will hold a post-monitoring mission from 15 to 17 December - and in Russia, as well as in Azerbaijan, Moldova (Gagauzia), Turkey and Cyprus and decided that the cooperation between the Commissioner and the Congress would be intensified in this respect. They also discussed the Commissioner's contribution to the Conference on "Facing Human Rights challenges at local and regional level" to be jointly organised by the Congress together with the Land of Styria, the municipality of Graz and the European Training and research Centre on 28-29 May 2015 in Graz.

d. The European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission)

The Congress has a close and deep co-operation with the Venice Commission, particularly in the fields of election observation and the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, as well as in the programmes of co-operation with neighbouring regions.

Co-operation between the Venice Commission, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress in electoral matters mainly occurs by means of the Council for Democratic Elections (CDE). The principles found in the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters, produced by the CDE, are taken into account in Congress reports and recommendations on electoral matters. The new Congress institutional representatives to the CDE – as of December 2014, following Lars o Molin and Gudrun Mosler-Törnström - are the Chair of the Monitoring Committee Philippe Receveur (Switzerland, PPE/CCE) and Stewart Dickson (United Kingdom, ILDG)

The Congress has also strengthened its co-operation with the Venice Commission on issues of local and regional democracy. Its opinions are also taken into account by Congress rapporteurs during their

¹ All reference to Kosovo in this text, whether to the territory, institutions or population, shall be understood in full compliance with Resolution 1244 of the Security Council of the United Nations and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

visits and in recommendations adopted by the Congress. Furthermore, the Chair of the Monitoring Committee regularly represents the Congress at meetings of the Venice Commission.

The institutional co-operation activities with Morocco and Tunisia are conducted in close collaboration with the Venice Commission. (See 6.iv.)

The Congress President and Secretary General took part in the 100th Plenary Session of the Venice Commission on 10 October 2014. Herwig van Staa underlined that most national constitutions and legislations contain provisions on local self-government and that this why the Congress is part of this partnership and can look back on many years of fruitful co-operation.

Andreas Kiefer attended the 11th European Conference of Electoral Management Bodies on misuse of public resources during elections in Helsinki on 26 June 2014. This conference was aimed at identifying mechanisms and good examples to combat the misuse of administrative resources during electoral processes, protecting the independence of civil servants and, more generally, fighting corruption. In his statement, he underlined that the Congress has noticed, over the last few years, as the Parliamentary Assembly and OSCE/ODIHR, many improvements regarding the electoral legislation and practice. However, issues related to financing of political parties and campaigns remain problematic and he pointed to the specific responsibilities of local authorities in this respect, mentioning self-regulatory measures including guidelines and other preventive measures.

e The European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (North-South Centre)

The Congress has continued to participate actively in statutory meetings of the North-South Centre, either at the office (8 July and 26 September) or the Executive Committee (10 July and 26 September), through its representatives Ludmila Sfirloaga (Romanian , SOC) and Emilio Verengia (Italy, EPP/CCE). It strives in particular, alongside the Committee of the Regions, to strengthen the local and / or regional dimension of the work of the Centre. It also attended the award ceremony of the 2013 North-South Prize (Lisbon, 12 June) and the "Lisbon Forum" on 15-16 September on "electoral processes and democratic consolidation in the countries of southern Mediterranean "(see 5.b).

3. Activities of the Congress bodies

a. Bureau meetings

The Bureau met in Paris on 12 May 2014, in Baku on 17 June, in Strasbourg on 8 September and , during the 27th session, on 13 and 16 October as well as in Brussels on 1st December 2014 .

The members of the Bureau discussed in particular the revision of the Charter and the Rules of Procedure of the Congress, the follow-up to the 26th Session, the situation in Ukraine, the Partnership for Local Democracy Status, the preparation of the 27th Session, the election procedure of the Secretary General, the strategy for the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion, the World Forum for Democracy and the European Local Democracy Week 2014 as well as the Congress activities under the forthcoming Chairmanships of the Committee of Ministers. They decided on the composition of the Congress delegation for the high-level mission to Ukraine in July, took note of the composition of delegations to observe the local elections in Ukraine and in Georgia and appointed thematic rapporteurs.

b. Plenary sessions

- **27th Session (Strasbourg, 14-16 October 2014)**

The Congress decided to devote its two annual sessions in 2014 (March and October) to the theme "Empowering youth: a shared responsibility for cities and regions". The aim was to generate exchanges between European local and regional elected representatives on the participation of young people, as actors of local and regional democracy.

For its 27th session (14 to 16 October 2014), the Congress invited each delegation to propose one young person to participate in the Congress' work and debates, as part of each of its 47 national delegations. The youth delegates were selected by a panel appointed by the Congress's Bureau and

the Joint Council on Youth (Directorate General on Democracy). As a consequence, young delegates, aged 16 to 30 years, from 34 different countries took part for the first time in a Congress session.

An introductory programme was organised and led by professional youth trainers from the Council of Europe's pool of specialised trainers, on the eve of the session and the youth delegates were invited to prepare their contribution to the Congress session, in particular to discuss youth participation and to prepare the youth debate. For this debate, the youth delegates chose two subjects which they considered to be most important for young people today: "co-management and the setting up of joint decision-making bodies" and "youth (un)employment". On 16 October, two evaluation sessions were organised, one joint one with Congress members and the youth delegates, the second for the latter only. The youth delegates' evaluation of the experiment will be used to inform the future activities aimed at promoting the active participation of young people in the Congress' work.

During the session, reports were adopted on subjects ranging from equal opportunities for people with disabilities, adequate financial resources for local authorities, inter-regional co-operation and the role of regional media as a tool for building participatory democracy to the revision of the Congress Charter and promoting diversity through intercultural education and communication strategies. Three reports were adopted concerning the observation of local elections in the Netherlands (19 March 2014), Ukraine (25 May 2014) and Georgia (15 June 2014), as well as a report on the situation of local and regional democracy in Belgium. Members also voted for the creation of a new Partner for Local Democracy status following a debate on the contribution of the Congress to the Council of Europe's neighbourhood policy. Regional members held a debate on promoting public ethics and preventing corruption at regional level.

A Congress declaration on separatist tensions in Ukraine and neighbouring countries was also adopted following a debate in which the speakers included: Vyacheslav Nehoda, First Deputy Minister of Regional Development, Building, Housing and Communal Services of Ukraine, Valeriu Chiveri, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova, Oleksii Reznikov, Deputy Mayor, Chairman of Kyiv City Council, Tengiz Shergelashvili, Deputy Minister for Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia, and Fikrat Mammadov, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The members of the Congress also elected the Presidents of the Congress, the Chamber of Local Authorities, the Chamber of Regions, the chairs of the three Congress committees and the fourteen vice-presidents of the Congress (see list in appendix)

They held exchanges of view with the Council of Europe Secretary General Torbjørn Jagland and the Minister of Justice of Azerbaijan Fikrat Mammadov, on behalf of the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. He presented recent developments of local democracy in Azerbaijan and underlined that the Congress' monitoring missions and recommendations had been helpful in terms of identification of areas which could be further improved regarding local governance in Azerbaijan.

Leyla Güven, a former Congress member who had been in pre-trial detention in Turkey from 2009 to July 2014, gave an address in which she welcomed the solidarity shown by the Congress during her detention. She regretted that local councillors are detained on charges of founding and running a terrorist organisation based solely on audio-visual surveillance and phone tapping records. She also underlined the importance of Turkey's ratification of the European Charter of Local Self-government for the country's democratic advancement.

c. The Chambers

• The Chamber of Local Authorities

The Chamber began its session by electing its new President, namely Anders Knape (Sweden, EPP/CCE), president of the Swedish Association of Local and Regional Authorities (SALAR). The Chamber then elected 7 vice-presidents (see appendix).

The Chamber proceeded to examine a report and adopt a recommendation and resolution on "Adequate financial resources for local authorities", calling for regular reviews of the correlation of resources to competences and underlining that an explicit and detailed consultation procedure be agreed to govern the necessary negotiations concerning local authority grants and taxation powers.

The Chamber then debated and adopted recommendations on its recent election observation missions in Georgia, Ukraine and the Netherlands. With regard to the local elections held in Georgia on 15 June 2014, Jos Wiene (Netherlands, EPP/CCE), Congress rapporteur, welcomed the generally calm and peaceful manner in which the vote had been conducted, as an important step in strengthening Georgia's democracy, in particular, at the local level (see under 4.b.)

With regard to the pre-term local elections in Ukraine in May 2014, Congress rapporteur, Nigel Mermagen (United Kingdom, ILDG), welcomed the large turnout and that the elections, to a great extent, had taken place in a good atmosphere (see para. Election observation)

The observation of the local elections in the Netherlands (19 March 2014) was the first observation election mission carried out by the Congress in that country. The report presented by Pearl Pedergrana (Switzerland, SOC) underlined the open and inclusive nature of the voting process in the Netherlands and the commitment of the staff involved in organising the elections. The Congress raised concerns about the lack of regulations on party and campaign financing, limitation of campaign expenditure and the conditions for sponsorship of political parties.

- **The Chamber of Regions**

The Chamber of Regions renewed its leadership by electing Gudrun Mosler-Törnström (Austria, SOC) as its President, as well as 7 Vice-Presidents, for the next two years (see appendix).

The Chamber continued focusing on topical issues concerning the regions in Europe and carried on its close cooperation with the European associations of regional authorities - in particular with the Assembly of European Regions (AER) and the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE), whose President Pilar Rojo Noguera attended the meeting of the Chamber on 14 October during the 27th Plenary session, in Strasbourg.

At this meeting, the Chamber also adopted a Report on Interregional Cooperation presented by rapporteur Stewart Dickson (United-Kingdom, ILDG). The purpose of the report is to value the increasing benefits - in social, economic and political terms - of the co-operation initiatives involving European regions. In particular, the importance of Protocol No.3 to the Madrid Convention for opening up new opportunities and anchoring interregional cooperation in a legal framework has been stressed.

The report on the Role of Regional Media as a Tool for Building Participatory Democracy, - presented by rapporteur Johan van den Hout (Netherlands, SOC) -, was adopted during the same session, with the objective of underlining the role that the media play in democratic societies. The Chamber considers pluralism, the diversity of media content, and their ownership, as issues of major importance. It recommends adapting the existing regional regulatory frameworks to the new media environment, ensuring continued support for regional public media.

Finally, the Chamber held a thematic debate on public ethics and corruption prevention at regional level, which included the presentation of successful practices for counteracting corruption. The contributions to the debate, in particular those of the anti-corruption regional offices, will serve as a base for the Congress future initiatives on this field.

d. The Committees

- **The Monitoring Committee**

The Monitoring Committee meeting was held on 3 July 2014 in Chisinau (Republic of Moldova). At this meeting it approved the draft recommendation on local and regional democracy in Belgium. It also approved a draft report and a preliminary draft recommendation on local elections in Ukraine and Georgia and a draft report and a preliminary draft recommendation on local elections in the Netherlands. The rapporteurs on the situation of local and regional democracy in the Republic of Moldova reported back on their high-level visit, which took place on 1 and 2 July in Chisinau, in the autonomous territory of Gagauzia and in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova (see under Political developments).

The Committee also held a discussion on separatist threats and regional tensions and adopted a declaration ("Declaration of Chişinău") (see under "latest political developments"). A thematic spokesperson on election observation, Jos Wiene (Netherlands, EPP), was proposed by the Committee for approval by the Bureau.

The Monitoring Committee held its last meeting of 2014 on 15 October 2014 in margin of the Congress session and, after paying tribute to the commitment of Lars O. Molin (Sweden, EPP) for the four years he has spent as chair of the Monitoring Committee, elected its new President: Philippe Receveur (Switzerland, EPP) and its five vice-presidents (see list in appendix).

At its meeting it adopted the report and approved the preliminary draft recommendation on local and regional democracy in Poland. The rapporteur on local and regional democracy in Ukraine, Marc Cools (Belgium, ILDG) reported back to the Committee on the High Level visit held on 17 and 18 July in Kiev and Odessa (see under 1.c.).

Finally, it adopted its work programme for 2015-2016. At its next meeting the Monitoring Committee will discuss draft reports on local and regional democracy in Greece and Norway. The draft report on "Electoral rolls and voters living abroad" will also be on the agenda.

The issue of human rights at local and regional level will also be examined in view of the first Forum on this issue to be held on 28 and 29 May 2015 in Graz, Austria. This Forum will be co-organised by the Congress with the Province of Styria, Graz and the Research and Training Center of Graz.

In addition to these reports the Commission will continue in 2015 its monitoring activities (Luxembourg, Slovakia, Montenegro, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Liechtenstein) and post-monitoring (including Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Armenia, Portugal, Bosnia and Herzegovina).

- **The Governance Committee**

At its meeting in Strasbourg on 2 June 2014, the Governance Committee approved a preliminary draft report, resolution and recommendation on 'Adequate financial resources for local authorities'. These texts were adopted in the Chamber of Local Authorities during the 27th plenary session in October 2014. At the same session the preliminary draft report, resolution and recommendation on 'Inter-regional co-operation' was adopted by the Chamber of Regions.

On 15 October, the Committee elected its new Chair Tracey Simpson-Laing, (United Kingdom, SOC) and four vice-presidents (see list in appendix). At this meeting the Committee also approved terms of reference for reports on "open data: transparency at the service of citizens" and "metropolitan regions".

On 17 November, the Committee held a meeting in Brussels where the Committee approved a preliminary draft report, resolution and recommendation on criteria for standing for local and regional elections. These texts will be submitted to the Congress for adoption during the 28th plenary session in March 2015. The Committee also approved new terms of reference for a report and event on "Principles, frameworks and procedures to modify status, competence and borders of regions and of autonomy statutes within domestic law" and proposed Karl-Heinz Lambertz (Belgium, SOC) as rapporteur. Finally, rapporteurs updated the Committee on the preparation of reports on "Conditions of office for local and regional elected representatives", "New forms of local governance" and "E-media: game changer for local and regional politicians".

While in Brussels, Governance Committee also held a joint meeting with the Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs of the Committee of the Regions, with topical debates on protection of the rule of law and fundamental rights, regionalisation and new forms of local governance.

- **The Current Affairs Committee**

The Committee held its second regular meeting of the year in Strasbourg in June 2014. It adopted reports on changing perceptions of cultural diversity through intercultural education and communication strategies; on promoting equal opportunities for people with disabilities and their participation at local and regional levels; and on the situation of regional media. Also on 12 June 2014, the Committee organised a conference entitled "It's not just about consultation: How can local and regional authorities promote youth participation that leads to a real impact on society?". The aim was to explore the realities of youth participation and democratic citizenship today and to discuss how local and regional authorities can engage with young people, in all their diversity, so as to promote meaningful youth participation. The conclusions of the conference will inform the Congress' upcoming report on youth participation prepared in co-operation with the Council of Europe's Youth Department, the Advisory Council on Youth, the EU/CoE Youth Partnership and the European Youth Foundation.

At its third meeting of the year (15 October 2014 during the 27th session of the Congress), the Committee elected its Chair and Vice-Chairs. Farid Mukhametshin (Russian Federation, ILDG) was re-elected chairman for a second term of two years. The Committee then adopted reports on guaranteeing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people's rights and on the role of local authorities in safeguarding Jewish burial sites. The Committee discussed progress in the reports concerning partnership with civil society, new forms of youth participation and women's participation in political life at local and regional levels. It was also informed of the preparation of two reports, respectively on fighting the increasing poverty of women and championing children's rights in times of austerity.

For the 27th session in October, the Current Affairs Committee took part in the preparations for inviting one young person to participate in the Congress' work and debates as part of each of the 47 national delegations, in cooperation with the European Youth Foundation, the Youth Department and Youth Sector's statutory bodies (see under 3.b.).

The Committee continued to coordinate the Congress' contribution to the Council of Europe's ONE in FIVE Campaign, its aim being to raise awareness at local and regional levels of sexual exploitation and abuse of children. The Congress' Thematic Spokesperson on Children, Johan van den Hout (Netherlands, SOC) visited several Czech cities in September 2014 to promote the pact of towns and regions to stop sexual violence against children, six of the seven cities visited voiced their intention to put the question of signature of the Pact to their municipal councils after the imminent elections. All over Europe, over 60 towns, regions and associations have now adhered to the pact. Mr van den Hout participated in the conference on "Growing with Children's Rights" and in the meetings of the Parliamentary Assembly's Network of Reference Parliamentarians to stop sexual violence against children.

The Committee members took an active part in a number of events, including the conference on youth participation (Baku, 18 June), the European Youth Forum's European Youth Capital Jury meeting (Brussels, 14 November) and the Conference on Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response (4-5 December).

4. Monitoring of local and regional democracy

a. Monitoring the ECLSG

i. Visits carried out

- **Poland (20-23 May 2014)**

A Congress delegation led by Jos Wiene (Netherlands, EPP/CCE) and Cynthia Hughes (United Kingdom, SOC) carried out this monitoring visit to assess the situation of local and regional democracy in Poland. This is the second general monitoring visit to the country since Poland's ratification of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in 1993. The delegation visited Warsaw, Lublin, Opole Lubelskie and Gdansk. The report will be discussed during the 28th session (March 2015)

- **Norway (9-11 September 2014)**

A Congress delegation composed of Xavier Cadoret (France, SOC) and Guilherme Pinto (Portugal, SOC) carried out this monitoring visit with a view to examining the follow-up given to the commitments made by this country in the area of local and regional democracy and decentralisation when it ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government in 1993. High level meetings were scheduled in Oslo, in particular with Jan Tore Sanner, Minister of Local Government and Modernisation and Siv Jensen, Minister of Finance. The delegation also met with representatives of the Municipalities of Oslo, Nome, and Bergen, as well as representatives of the Counties of Hordaland and Telemark. The report will be discussed during the 28th session (March 2015)

- **Greece (16-17 September and 18-20 November 2014)**

A delegation of the Congress, composed of Arthur Torres Pereira (Portugal EPP/CCE) and Gudrun Mosler-Törnström (Austria, SOC), carried out this monitoring visit and met in Athens, with Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Administrative Reform and E-governance Minister, T. Anastsatos, General Secretary of the Ministry of Finance, as well as Giannis F. Ioannidis, General Secretary of the Ministry of the

Interior. The delegation also met with Evangelos - Vasileios Meimarakis, President of the Greek Parliament, Sotirios Al. Rizos, President of the Council of State, N. Aggelaras, President of the Hellenic Court of Audit, Vasilis Sotiropoulos, Ombudsman of the City of Athens, as well as John Sayas, Deputy Ombudsman of Greece.

Artur Torres Pereira and Gudrun Mosler -Törnström conducted a second monitoring visit with several meetings scheduled with the mayors of Paros and Naxos and Small Cyclades Islands, the Director of the Financial Department of the Municipality of Naxos, the deputy Mayors of Lagadas as well as the Mayor of Thessaloniki and the Mayor of Athens, the President of the National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government (EKDDA), the Representative of the President of Central Union of Municipalities of Greece, as well as the representatives of the Central Union of Municipalities of Greece and the Union of Greek Regions. The report will be discussed during the 28th session (March 2015)

ii. Adopted recommendations and reports

• Belgium (15 October 2014)

The Congress adopted the report and Recommendation 366 (2014) on the situation of local and regional democracy in Belgium compiled after the two monitoring visits carried out by rapporteurs Henrik Hammar (Sweden, EPP/CCE) and Urs Wüthrich-Pelloli (Switzerland, SOC), the first to Brussels and Tervueren on 8 and 9 October 2013 and the second to Brussels from 4 to 6 February 2014. The recommendation adopted underlines that the constitutional and legislative foundations of self-government are fully complied with throughout the country and that the scope of local self-government is generally respected. The Belgian authorities are invited to improve the procedure for consulting the communities and regions, in particular in the case of local authorities in the Walloon Region and the Brussels-Capital Region.

iii. Hearing on the situation of local democracy in Armenia (Brussels, 5 June 2014)

Following the adoption of a Congress monitoring report on the state of local democracy in Armenia in March 2014, the EU Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the Congress jointly organised a hearing on this matter. Presenting the conclusion of this report, Knud Andersen (Denmark, ILDG) welcomed in particular the efforts made by the Armenian authorities to implement the provisions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, notably by introducing constitutional changes in 2005 and adopting new legislation in 2008 but underlined that Armenian local authorities still only had a limited role in the management of the country's public affairs. Lusine Avetyan, Mayor of Karahunj Municipality and member of the Armenian Delegation to the Congress as well as Emin Yeritsyan, Vice-President of the Congress presented an assessment and suggestions for future reforms in their country. The hearing aimed to discuss the perspectives of implementing local democracy in Armenia and the role that both institutions can play to support the development of regions in this country.

iv. Post-monitoring activities

In order to enhance the effectiveness of its activities in monitoring the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the observation of local and regional elections, the Congress continues the political dialogue initiated during monitoring with the authorities. The purpose of the post-monitoring activity is to agree with the authorities of the country concerned of a road map for the implementation of the recommendations of the Congress. This post-monitoring activity is based on good cooperation with the Member States. It is interesting to note that since its establishment in 2013, this political dialogue continues to grow and that governments show a rising interest in the implementation of the recommendations in this way.

• Ukraine

See under 1.c.

• Armenia

By letter of 27 November 2014, the Ambassador of Armenia to the Council of Europe confirmed to the President of the Congress, the political will of Armenian authorities to engage a post monitoring procedure in order to strengthen local self-government in Armenia in compliance with the European Charter on Local Self Government.

b. The observation of local and regional elections

Since April 2014, the Congress has deployed delegations to observe elections at the grassroots' level in Ukraine and Georgia. Furthermore, the drafting of a report dedicated to the issue of "electoral lists and voters residing *de facto* abroad" has been launched. This matter has been identified as problematic in the course of election observation activities of the Congress in several countries. The present report is under preparation in co-ordination with the Venice Commission/Council for Democratic Elections.

i. Observation missions

- **Pre-term local elections in Ukraine (25 May 2014)**

See under 1.c.

- **Local elections in Georgia (15 June 2014)**

A 22-member delegation composed of local and regional representatives from 15 European countries including six participants of the EU Committee of Regions visited the country from 11 to 16 June. Already at the end of May, a six member-delegation carried out a pre-electoral mission to assess the campaign environment. The delegation – lead by Congress' Rapporteur Jos Wiene (Netherlands, EPP/CCE) - concluded that E-Day was generally well run, technically professionally prepared and that voting took place in an overall calm and peaceful atmosphere, despite of the controversial campaign in a heated atmosphere. The necessity of second-round elections in several cities and municipalities showed that Georgia's competitive electoral environment has improved, with positive effects for the democratic system of checks and balances. However, there was need to address shortcomings including the composition of electoral commissions, the registration of independent candidates and the counting procedures.

- **Local elections in Azerbaijan**

On 26 November the President of the Congress took the decision to discontinue the preliminary preparations for a possible Congress mission to observe the municipal elections in Azerbaijan scheduled for 23 December 2014 as an invitation had not been received from the Central Election Commission despite several high-level contacts and written requests made by the Secretary General of the Congress for such an invitation to be submitted as early as possible after the announcement of the elections (60 days before the date of the election). The lack of sufficient time to adequately prepare such a mission posed logistical problems that rendered it untenable. Although a formal invitation was finally received by the Congress on Friday 28 November 2014 at 5.58 pm, the Bureau of the Congress meeting on Monday 1 December unanimously confirmed the President's decision on the same grounds.

ii. Recommendations adopted

- **The Netherlands (14 October)**

During the 27th session, the Congress adopted Recommendation 358 (2014) following on from its observation of the local elections in the Netherlands on 19 March 2014. This was the first observation election mission carried out by the Congress in that country. The report presented by Pearl Pedergrana (Switzerland, SOC) underlines the transparent, open and inclusive nature of the voting process in the Netherlands and the high level of democratic commitment of the staff involved in organising the municipal elections of 19 March 2014. The Congress nonetheless raises concerns about the lack of regulations on party and campaign financing, limitation of campaign expenditure and the conditions for sponsorship of political parties.

- **Georgia (14 October 2014)**

During the 27th session, the Congress adopted Recommendation 360 (2014) on the local elections held in Georgia in the frame of the 27th Congress' Session. It welcomed the direct election of Mayors and *Gamgebelis* (Town Managers), improvements as regards to misuse of administrative resources and programmes to increase the accuracy of voters' lists. At the same time, the Recommendation calls for measures to avoid aggressiveness, violence and pressure-making during future electoral campaigns.

5. Thematic activities

a. Social inclusion

i The European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion

- **Meeting of the Secretary General and the Alliance with a delegation of Bulgarian mayors (Strasbourg, 4 June 2014)**

The Congress' Secretary General and the Alliance Taskforce met with a group of 56 Mayors from Bulgaria and the Bulgarian Ambassador to the Council of Europe, to discuss the Congress' monitoring of local and regional democracy but also the role of local and regional authorities in promoting the inclusion of Roma. The Alliance activities were subject to in-depth debate and the promotion of exchange of experience and mutual learning among cities and regions on Roma inclusion projects, which the Alliance facilitates, considered of key importance.

- **Alliance 2nd national workshop in Spain (Madrid, 28 May 2014)**

The Alliance held its 2nd Spanish national workshop to discuss improved access of local and regional authorities to European structural and investments funds. This event was organised in cooperation with the Spanish Ministry for Health, Social Services and Equality, the City of Madrid and the Fundación Secretariado Gitano. It gathered over 60 participants, amongst whom representatives of national ministries and of 24 Spanish cities and urban communities. Spanish local and regional authorities have been very active from the beginning in promoting the Alliance concept following the Summit of Mayors for Roma inclusion organised by the Congress in 2011. Spanish Alliance participating cities and regions are so far: Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, El Prat de Llobregat, Malaga, Seville, Donostia-San Sebastián, and Vigo.

- **High-level conference on ROMACT (Brussels, 2-3 October 2014)**

ROMACT is a joint initiative by of the Council of Europe and the European Commission, implemented with the support of the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion, in order to promote the inclusion of Roma at local and regional level. ROMACT aims to strengthen the capacity of local and regional authorities (targeting both elected officials and senior civil servants) to develop and implement plans and projects for Roma inclusion.

The purpose of the event was to take stock and to share with the audience the experience gained by project managers and local officials through ROMACT one year after the implementation of the project. Key note speakers included Commissioner Laszlo Andor and MEP Soraya Post, as well as the Special Representative of the SG for Roma Issues Ulrich Bunjes. Inspiring expertise was provided by the mayors from ROMACT participating municipalities, who shared valuable insight about their approaches to designing projects for Roma Inclusion.

At the closing session, President van Staa re-affirmed the support of the Congress for ROMACT and the related initiatives Alliance for Roma Inclusion and ROMED. ROMED is another joint initiative by the Council of Europe and the European Commission, tackling the inequalities Roma face in terms of access to employment, healthcare services and quality education. The project employs people with a Roma background, from local Roma communities, or with a good knowledge of Roma issues, to act as mediators between the Roma and the public institutions.

Furthermore President van Staa stated the Congress' willingness to further develop the benefits of ROMED, ROMACT and the Alliance for Roma Inclusion by strengthening their mutual connections, with a view to possibly merging in the medium term.

b. Women' rights

- **Encouraging women's participation in political life (Lisbon, 16 September 2014)**

Ludmila Sfirloaga (Romania, SOC), Vice-President, represented the Congress at the workshop on "Observation of elections: the role of civil society" held as part of the Lisbon Forum. She said that participation by women is vital to democratic life and is enshrined in the Congress Charter, which provides that women must make up at least 30% of members of all national delegations. She also underlined that the regular holding of free and fair elections at local and regional level and

encouragement for the participation of women in political life are among the criteria for granting the new status of "Partner for local democracy", which the Congress is to adopt at its session in October 2014.

- **Entry in force of Istanbul Convention (6 August 2014)**

Congress President Herwig van Staa welcomed the coming into force of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence means much better protection for women's rights in Europe. He called local and regional elected representatives to continue to urge those governments which have not yet done so to make a commitment to signing and ratifying the Convention. The Congress has, since 2006, very actively supported the drafting of this legal instrument and the taking of practical measures at local and regional level.

- c. **Citizen participation**

- i **2014 edition of the European Local Democracy Week (ELDW)**

The eighth edition of the European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) officially took place between 13 and 19 October 2014; it was dedicated to the main theme of "*Participatory democracy: sharing, proposing, deciding*", with special focus on youth.

As of 30 November, 175 partners from 24 countries had reported their participation for this year and organised about 450 activities, most of which can be seen on the ELDW website administered by the Congress Secretariat. 15 partners chose the "12 star" status, thus giving special prominence to their participation in this pan-European initiative.

- **Activities for the promotion of the European Local Democracy Week**

Cooperation with institutional partners

As a first step of the newly established partnership with the Education for democratic citizenship and human rights (EDC/HRE) Committee, Gaye Doganoglu, (Turkey, EPP/CCE), political coordinator of the European Local Democracy Week, introduced the Week at the 21st meeting of the EDC/HRE Network of Coordinators (Baku, 20-21 May 2014), which focused on the topics of children in vulnerable situations and the development of competences for democratic culture and intercultural dialogue. She also participated in the joint meeting of the Network and the Pedagogical Club of European Capitals (Strasbourg, 21-22 October) where, together with Andrée Buchmann (France, SOC), she spoke about the ELDW, as well as the role and contribution of local authorities in the area of citizenship and human rights education.

Round table on citizen participation

"*The European Local Democracy Week – a pertinent tool for encouraging youth participation at local level?*" was the main topic of a round table organised in Strasbourg, on 24 June 2014, by the Association Migration Solidarité et Échanges pour le Développement (AMSED). The presentation of and discussion on the ELDW was part of a 10-day training course, with the participation of about 40 youth workers and young members of associations from France, Italy, Sweden, Morocco, Algeria, Ukraine, Turkey and Georgia.

Promoting the ELDW in the non-governmental sphere

In an attempt to raise awareness of the ELDW among international associations and NGOs, the ELDW was presented at the summer session of the Committee on Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges of the Conference of INGOs, which was held in Strasbourg on 25 June 2014.

Brochure of best practices of citizen participation

With the cooperation of the ELDW project team, the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) prepared a brochure of best practices of citizen participation, which includes case studies of the most active ELDW participants from last year. ALDA will use this brochure for his capacity-building projects in Belarus.

d. Children's Rights

- **Signature of the Pact of Cities and Regions on sexual violence against children (13 May 2014)**

Nicosia signed the Pact in the presence of Congress Thematic Spokesperson on Children Johan van den Hout (Netherlands, SOC). Earlier this year, the city of Limassol (Cyprus) and Land Berlin (Germany) also joined the Pact, bringing to 33 the number of municipalities, regions and civil society associations who have committed to combating sexual abuse of children in their communities, in the framework of the ONE in FIVE Campaign. The Pact is a tool which helps local and regional authorities to implement, at their levels, the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. It aims to prevent abuse, protect victims and prosecute perpetrators whilst ensuring the full participation of children throughout the process. IN Cyprus, the Congress thematic Spokesperson took also part in the meeting of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly's Network of Contact Parliamentarians to stop sexual violence against children, and the meeting of the Steering Group on the Cyprus project.

e. Youth

- **Promoting youth participation (Strasbourg 12 June 2014)**

The Current Affairs Committee held a conference on the theme "It's not just about consultation: How can local and regional authorities promote youth participation that leads to a real impact on society?" (See under 3.d.).

- **International Conference on local democracy and youth (Baku, 18 June 2014)**

The Ministry of Justice of Azerbaijan and the Congress co-organised this conference in the framework of the Azerbaijani Chairmanship (see under 1.d.).

- **World Forum for Democracy (Strasbourg, 3-5 November 2014)**

As in previous years, the Congress was closely involved in the preparation and organisation of the World Forum for Democracy, participating in the work of the Steering Group, appointing its representatives in the Scientific Council and supporting the Forum Secretariat. Focusing on the theme "*From participation to influence: can youth revitalise democracy?*", the Forum brought together 1,400 participants from over 100 countries and approximately 5,000 tweets were sent, which reached around 2.5 million individuals.

At the plenaries of the Forum, the Congress was represented by its newly elected President, Jean-Claude Frécon (France, SOC), who took part on 3 November in the round table discussion on "*Young people – actors of global change?*" and on 4 November in the plenary session on the theme of "*Youth empowerment for democratic transformation?*".

In addition, the Congress sponsored 3 LABs (thematic workshops) out of the 21, for which it also provided the moderators for LAB 6 on "*Democracy Watchdogs*", LAB 16 on "*Youth Participation in Elections*" and LAB 20 on the "*Young Mayor Programme*". These moderators were Andrée Buchmann (France, SOC), Andreas Kiefer, Secretary General of the Congress and Jean-Philippe Bozouls, Executive Secretary of the Chamber of Local Authorities. Furthermore, several Congress members participated as discussants at different LABs: Natalia Pilius (Russia, ILDG) was speaker in LAB 20 on "*Young Mayor Programme*", Tracey Simpson-Laing (United Kingdom, SOC), contributed to the discussion in LAB 10 on "*Structures for Youth Advocacy*", and Dobrica Milovanovic (Serbia, EPP/CCE), spoke in LAB 15 on "*Youth in Global Summits*".

In the context of the World Forum, the Congress organised a study visit, from 3 to 7 November 2014, for 20 young Ukrainian leaders, who not only attended the Forum but also met local elected representatives of the cities of Strasbourg and Saverne in France, as well as Kehl and Kappelrodeck in Germany (see under 1.c.).

6. Co-operation activities and External Relations

a. External partnerships

i. The Committee of the Regions of the European Union

In the recent months the Congress strengthened its contacts with the Committee of the Regions of the European Union, thus increasing the visibility of the Congress and of the Council of Europe at the European Union level.

On 3 April 2014 the President represented the Congress in the Committee of the Regions plenary session in Brussels, where he welcomed the adoption of the “Charter for Multilevel Governance” of the Committee.

The Congress and the Committee of the Regions co-organised in Brussels on 28 April 2014 the Conference on “Devolution: Looking forward to democratic reform in Eastern Partnership countries” and on 5 June 2014 a hearing on local and regional democracy in Armenia. These two events gave the Congress the opportunity to disseminate at the EU level the results of its monitoring activities and to highlight their importance for the evaluation of local and regional democracy in the Eastern Partnership countries.

With a view to develop the synergies between the Congress and the Committee of the Regions, on 25 June 2014 the Congress Secretary General met in Brussels with Daniel Janssens, the Secretary General a.i. of the Committee of the Regions.

On 22-23 September 2014 he also attended in Brindisi (Italy) the meeting of the Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs of the Committee of the Regions (CIVEX) and took part in the Seminar on “The role of local and regional authorities in the future of the EU”. He proposed a strengthened co-operation with the Committee of the Regions to better involve the local and regional level in the drafting and implementation of EU-policies by local and regional authorities. The Italian Minister of Regional Affairs, Maria Carmela Lanzetta, also endorsed the important role of municipalities and regions and explained the motivation of the territorial reform undertaken by the Italian government.

Over the last several months the Congress devoted considerable efforts to enhance local and regional democracy in the “Eastern Partnership” countries. On 29 September 2014 Nataliya Romanova represented the Congress at the annual Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP) in Tbilisi. In this Conference she stressed in particular the need to strengthen local and regional democracy through concrete actions and presented the local democracy aspects of the Council of Europe’s action plans in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

On the occasion of the 20th anniversaries of the Congress and of the Committee of the Regions, a joint meeting of the Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs of the Committee of the Regions (CIVEX) and the Governance Committee of the Congress was organised in Brussels on 17 November 2014.

On 18 November 2014 the meeting of the “Contact Group Committee of the Regions/Congress” took place in Brussels. The newly elected President of the Congress Jean-Claude Frécon took part in the meeting that was also attended by the Ambassador of the European Union to the Council of Europe, Jari Vilen, and by the Ambassador of the Council of Europe to the EU, Torbjørn Froysnes. The meeting allowed for a constructive exchange of views on the state of local and regional democracy in Europe, in particular in the neighbourhood regions of both Organisations, and on the relations between the European Union and the Council of Europe.

On 18 November 2014 the Congress Secretary General met the new Secretary General of the Committee of the Regions, Jiří Buriánek, so as to establish the basis for future cooperation between the Congress and the Committee of the Regions and participated in the Bureau of the Committee of the Regions on 2 December 2014.

ii. European Associations of local and regional authorities

• Assembly of European Regions (AER)

In the framework of its partnership with the AER on 27-28 May 2014 the Chair of the Chamber of Regions Nataliya Romanova and the Congress Secretary General took part to the General Assembly of the AER, in Wroclaw, Dolnoslaskie (Poland). In the same perspective, from 17 to 23 August 2014, Dobrica Milovanovic (Serbia, EPP/CEE) contributed to the Novi Sad Summer Academy in Vojvodina (Serbia), organised by the AER and devoted to Multicultural, Multi-ethnic and Multilingual regions: regional diversity for socio-economic growth. In addition, on 3 October 2014, Nataliya Romanova participated in Bucharest (Romania), in the 5th Black Sea Regional Summit, organised by the AER.

• Plenary Assembly of the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE)

The Congress is committed to reinforcing its cooperation with CALRE, as well as with the organisations representing the regions in Europe with a view to join forces and implement joint initiatives in favour of regional democracy.

From 6 to 8 November 2014, the newly elected Chair of the Chamber of Regions Gudrun Mosler Törnström represented the Congress in the Plenary Assembly of the CALRE, held in Santiago de Compostela (Galicia, Spain). She held meetings with outgoing President Pilar Rojo Noguera (Extremadura, Spain) and newly elected Chair Raffaele Cataneo (Lombardia, Italy).

On 2 December 2014, Andreas Kiefer met with Secretaries General of European Association of Local Authorities to assess their common priorities and identify areas of future co-operation. The meeting was dedicated in particular to the presentation of the current activities of these organisations as well as the major issues of mutual interest with a view to identifying opportunities for synergies and possible joint actions. It brought together Secretary Generals Martín Guillermo Ramírez (Association of European Border Regions - AEBR), Anna Lisa Boni (Eurocities), Frederic Vallier, (Secretary General of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions – CEMR), accompanied by Boris Tonhauser, as well as Eleni Marianou, (Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions - CPRM) and Mathieu Mori (Acting Secretary General of the Association of European Regions (AER). Pietro de Vito, from the Office of the Lombardia Region in Brussels also represented CALRE.

iii. Networks

• Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA)

The final international conference of the project “Working Together for Development took place in Strasbourg on 4-5 June 2014 and was entitled ‘Bridging the European year 2013 and the European year 2015: from participation to development’ and included a workshop on “the local governance in Ukraine: an active cooperation for development with local authorities and civil society”, organised in partnership with the Congress.

The Congress Secretary General spoke at the opening of ALDA’s General Assembly on 6 June stating that ALDA has grown into a genuine and successful network seeking to promote, at local level, good governance, citizen participation and democratic pluralism. He underlined that the Congress endeavors to keep up the good practice of exchanges with ALDA, in the spirit of a continuing co-operation. ALDA is a non-governmental organisation gathering more than 150 members -including Local Authorities, Associations of Local Authorities and non-governmental organisations - coming from more than 30 countries.

b Co-operation programmes and action plans

The Congress has continued to develop its co-operation activities in a number of countries and has submitted projects for co-financing to potential donors.

i. Member States of the Council of Europe

• Albania

Within the framework of the project entitled “Strengthening local government structures and co-operation of local elected representatives”, run by the Council of Europe, the Congress is leading

activities to promote the setting-up of a unified platform for dialogue and co-operation between local and regional elected representatives. This project, which will be implemented until March 2015, is part of the co-operation document of the Council of Europe with Albania 2012 to 2014. It is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation. The total budget amounts to € 1,480,000, of which € 560,000 is for Congress activities.

The project consists in a process of political mediation aimed at building a sustainable platform for dialogue among local authorities, and between them and the central government. Unfortunately this dialogue is often impeded by political deadlock between the majority and the opposition parties, particularly over the Reform of Territorial Administration in hand which substantially reshapes the layout of the local government units following the local elections of June 2014. The Congress has deployed a series of new activities in order to further and sustain dialogue between local authorities on the revision of the devolution legislation and on matters of common concern, particularly for the local authorities elected in June 2014.

Accordingly, the Congress responded to the central authorities' request for assistance in setting up a Consultative Council to consult the local and regional authorities on the devolution and local governance policies and to draft specific sections of the National Decentralisation Strategy. It has produced for the Ministry of Local Affairs a study presenting the European models of institutional communication between central and local authorities, together with a proposed measure defining the form of consultation best suited to the Albanian situation. The ministry has been provided with assistance for a draft amendment to the law on local self-government institutionalising the consultation, as well as for drafting the National Decentralisation Strategy.

At the third meeting of the steering committee to be held in Tirana on 16 December 2014, the Congress will propose the continuation of its activities until the end of 2015 to take account of the local election results and the new territorial organisation.

Michael O'Brien (Ireland, SOC), Vice-President of the Congress and members Tatiana Badan (Moldova, ILDG), Helen Eadie (United Kingdom, SOC), Mikhel Jukhami (Estonia, EPP/CCE), Matej Gomboši (Slovenia, EPP/CCE) and Erwin Mohr (Austria, EPP/CCE) participated in several meetings in the frame of this project.

- **Armenia**

Two projects are currently being implemented by the Congress:

On 16 September 2013, the Council of Europe signed an agreement with the Government of Denmark for the implementation of the project "Support for the consolidation of local democracy in Armenia", which is included in the Action Plan for Armenia 2012-2014 which comprises three lines of action of which the third, proposed by the Congress, focuses on the strengthening of the leadership capacities of local elected representatives.

The project component implemented by the Congress aims at increasing local elected representatives' knowledge of good practices in the field of local democracy, so as to ultimately improve local political governance in the country, and allow for successful implementation of the local government reform.

The project started on 1 October 2013 and will last until September 2015 for Line of Action III). The total budget is € 1,785, 000, including € 575,000 for the Congress' activities.

Pooling good practices to improve local governance in Armenia

A series of workshops has been organised under the leadership programme for mayors:

The workshop on effective communication was held on 8 and 9 July in Yerevan. Practical exercises and peer exchanges enabled the participants to reflect on the messages delivered to the citizens not only by their words but also by their conduct and their decisions.

Another workshop entitled "effective citizen participation" took place on 29 and 30 October in Aghveran. Mayors exchanged views on the actual way of discharging the obligation embodied in the new Armenian legislation on information, consultation and dialogue with the citizens.

In addition, a special event was organised in Yerevan on 10 July 2014 for municipal councillors. The seminar "Councillors: everyday actors for democracy" brought together some 30 municipal councillors to discuss the functions of the key municipal institutions and structures, their offices and powers, social responsibility and code of conduct, as well as the principles of constructive opposition and how to communicate effectively with citizens and other stakeholders.

Under the same programme, two regional seminars were attended by over 150 mayors and councillors on 9 and 11 September in Gyumri and Sisan, who considered the initiatives that might be set up at central and local level for the effective implementation of Recommendation 351 (2014) on the state of local democracy in Armenia, adopted by the Congress on 26 March 2014.

Congress members Lusine Avetyan (Armenia, EPP/CCE), Matej Gombosi (Slovenia, EPP / CCE), Alina Harutyunyan (Armenia, EPP/CCE), Nigel Mermagen (United Kingdom, ILDG), Artan Shkembri (Albania, SOC) and Barbara Toce (Italy, SOC) participated in these activities.

Concerning the second project, on 31 October 2014 the Council of Europe signed an agreement with the Swiss Directorate of Development and Co-operation (DDC) for the implementation of the project "Enhancing the accountability, efficaciousness and efficiency of the local self-government system in Armenia". The Congress component, entitled "Institutional support to the Association of Local Authorities of Armenia", received the approval of the Armenian Ministry of Territorial Administration. The budget for the Congress activities is 674,000 €. The project commenced in November 2014 and will last until the end of April 2015.

The project is intended to build the capacities of the Association of Armenian Local Authorities so that it becomes a key operator in the Armenian system of governance and an active champion of local authorities' interests. The activities are aimed at making the association effective so as to improve its capacity to meet its members' service needs and to mobilise its members with a united voice. This depends on framing an organisational development strategy adopted by the members of the association, and on reinforcing its system of governance. The project also sets out to improve communication between the various members of the Association and to make its financial management transparent and effective.

- **Ukraine**

See under 1.c.

- **Other member and non-member states**

The Congress has also carried on projects dealing with local democracy for implementation under the Council of Europe action plan or co-operation documents for Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova.

Projects are being devised for Kosovo² and Belarus as well.

ii. **Co-operation with neighbouring regions of the Council of Europe**

The Congress proposals are part of the Council of Europe's policy towards neighbouring regions and are a response to requests received from the countries concerned.

- **Morocco**

The Congress is continuing to co-operate with Moroccan authorities, particularly following the adoption by the Parliament at the beginning of July of the draft law defining principles of territorial delineation of local governments, which should be translated concretely into the country's new territorial organisation.

At its 27th Session on 16 October 2014, the Congress adopted the "Partner for Local Democracy" status in the presence of Hassa Bouhriz, Deputy Mayor of Tangier. The Congress was invited for an

² All reference to Kosovo in this text, whether to the territory, institutions or population, shall be understood in full compliance with Resolution 1244 of the Security Council of the United Nations and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

official visit to Morocco which might be the occasion for the Moroccan authorities to ask to receive this status.

- **Tunisia**

The Congress continued its contacts with the Tunisian authorities in the framework of the Council of Europe's institutional aid. These contacts will be intensified in the context of the local elections in 2015 particularly to encourage Tunisia to ask to receive the "Partner for Local Democracy" status.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I – Agenda of the 27th Session (14-16 October 2014)

CG(27)OJ1 Final
12 October 2014

27th Session of the Congress


Strasbourg, Palais de l'Europe
14-16 October 2014

DRAFT AGENDA
PUBLIC MEETING

THEME FOR 2014:

**EMPOWERING YOUTH: A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR CITIES
AND REGIONS**

Members' attention is drawn to:

- Electronic voting on texts will take place in the hemicycle and in Room 1. The voting handsets will be distributed at the entrance to the meeting rooms upon signature of the attendance register. []

Participants are reminded that access to the hemicycle is strictly limited to holders of badges which indicate the specific hemicycle symbol. Seating in the hemicycle will be allocated according to the seating plans available for consultation by the entrance.

- Tabling written questions for oral reply (Office 1081): each member should limit herself/himself to one question. Please refer to the agenda for the deadlines.
- The conditions and deadlines for tabling amendments (Office 1081): at the latest at **10.00 on the eve** of the day when the texts to which they refer are to be discussed except for texts to be debated on Tuesday 14 October for which the deadline is **16.00 on Monday 13 October**. Amendments must be signed by 5 delegates from at least two delegations for texts debated in plenary sittings or by any five delegates from at least two national delegations sitting in the Chamber of Local Authorities for debates in that chamber and by any five delegates sitting with full capacity in the Chamber of Regions for debates in that chamber. Each amendment must specify the name of the delegate who will submit it.
- The form for registration of speakers for the debates, available at the entrance of the hemicycle and Room 1 (plenary sittings and chamber sessions) must be submitted to the Table Office secretariat seated in front of the President's rostrum for sittings in the hemicycle or to the secretariat of the President for the chamber meeting in Room 1.
- **Finance Office:** Offices 1040 and 1035

Table Office: for any further questions: Office 1081.

Monday 13 October 2014 (eve of the session)

Bureaux meetings



9.30-10.30, Room 6	Bureau of the Chamber of Local Authorities
9.30-10.30, Room 7	Bureau of the Chamber of Regions
10.30-12.30 and 14.00- 16.00, Room 8	Bureau of the Congress


Seminar for Congress members
13.30 – 15.30




Room 1	Open to all members of the Congress, secretaries of delegation and advisers
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Political group meetings 16.30 – 18.30

Room 6	European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR)
Room 9	European People's Party Group in the Congress (EPP/CCE)
Room 10	Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (ILDG)
Room 11	Socialist Group (SOC)



<p>Tuesday 14 October 2014 10.00 – 13.00, Hemicycle Plenary sitting</p>	
	<p>Opening of the 27th Session of the Congress by the President</p>
	<p>Verification of new members' credentials Presentation by the rapporteurs: Anders KNAPE, Sweden (L, EPP/CCE), and Ludmila SFIRLOAGA, Romania (R, SOC) Debate and vote on the draft resolution [CG(27)2] [CG(27)15] Deadline for tabling amendments 16.00 Monday 13 October</p>
	<p>Election of the President of the Congress Presentation of the candidatures</p> <p>Commencement of voting (voting will close at 11.00) NB: Votes cast shall be counted from 11.00 to 11.30</p> <p>SUSPENSION OF THE SITTING</p>
11.30	RESUMPTION OF THE SITTING
	<p>Speech by the newly-elected President Programme for 2014-2016</p>
	<p>Adoption of the draft agenda of the session [CG(27)OJ1PROV] Adoption of the draft minutes of the last sitting of the 26th Session (27 March 2014) [CG(26)PV3] Adoption of the composition of the Congress committees [CG(27)3]</p>
	<p>Congress presidency 2012-2014: Activities and achievements [CG(27)4] Herwig VAN STAA, outgoing President Debate</p>
	<p>Promoting equal opportunities for people with disabilities and their participation at local and regional level Presentation by the rapporteur: Josef NEUMANN, Germany (R, SOC) Debate and vote on the draft resolution and the draft recommendation [CG(27)8PROV] Deadline for tabling amendments 16.00 Monday 13 October</p>
	<p>Statement by Thorbjørn JAGLAND, Secretary General of the Council of Europe Oral reply to questions from the floor</p>
	<p>End of the sitting</p>

<p>Tuesday 14 October 2014</p>	
<p>Chamber of Local Authorities 15.00 – 18.30, Hemicycle</p>	
	<p>Opening by the President</p>
	<p>Election of the President of the Chamber Presentation of the candidates SUSPENSION OF THE SITTING</p>
	RESUMPTION OF THE SITTING
	<p>Adoption of the draft agenda of the Chamber [CPL(27)OJ1PROV]</p>
	<p>Election of the 7 vice-presidents of the Chamber Presentation of the candidates</p>
	<p>Statement by the outgoing President [CPL(27)1] Jean-Claude FRECON</p>
	<p>"Adequate financial resources" for local authorities Presentation by the rapporteur: Gilbert ROGER, France (L, SOC)</p>



	<p>Debate and vote on the draft resolution and the draft recommendation [CPL(27)2PROV] Deadline for tabling amendments 16.00 Monday 13 October</p>
	<p>The observation of local elections in the Netherlands (19 March 2014) Presentation by the rapporteur: Pearl PEDERGNANA, Switzerland (L, SOC) Debate and vote on the draft recommendation [CPL(27)3PROV] Deadline for tabling amendments 16.00 Monday 13 October</p>
	<p>The observation of local elections in Ukraine (25 May 2014) Presentation by the rapporteur: Nigel MERMAGEN, United Kingdom (L, ILDG) Statement by Arnoldas ABRAMAVICIUS, Lithuania (EPP), on behalf of the members of the Committee of the Regions participating in the observation mission Debate and vote on the draft recommendation [CPL(27)4PROV] Deadline for tabling amendments 16.00 Monday 13 October</p>
	<p>The observation of local elections in Georgia (15 June 2014) Presentation by the rapporteur: Jos WIENEN, Netherlands (L, EPP/CCE) Statement by Jerzy ZAJAKALA, Poland (UEN-EA), on behalf of the members of the Committee of the Regions participating in the observation mission Debate and vote on the draft recommendation [CPL(27)5PROV] Deadline for tabling amendments 16.00 Monday 13 October Statement by Tengiz SHERGELASHVILI, Deputy Minister for Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia Close by the President of the Chamber</p>
18.30	EVENT: Inauguration of an exhibition on the world heritage in Bosnia and Herzegovina followed by a reception

Tuesday 14 October 2014

Chamber of Regions
 15.00 – 18.30, Room 1

	Opening by the President
	<p>Election of the President of the Chamber Presentation of the candidates SUSPENSION OF THE SITTING RESUMPTION OF THE SITTING</p>
	<p>Adoption of the draft agenda of the Chamber [CPR(27)OJ1PROV]</p>
	<p>Election of the 7 vice-Presidents of the Chamber Presentation of the candidates</p>
	<p>Statement by the outgoing President [CPR(27)1] Nataliya ROMANOVA</p>
	<p>Inter-regional co-operation Presentation by the rapporteur: Stewart DICKSON, United Kingdom (R, ILDG) Debate and vote on the draft resolution and the draft recommendation [CPR(27)2PROV] Deadline for tabling amendments 16.00 Monday 13 October</p>
	<p>The role of regional media as a tool for building participatory democracy Presentation by the rapporteur: Johan van den HOUT, Netherlands (R, SOC) Debate and vote on the draft resolution and the draft recommendation [CPR(27)3PROV] Deadline for tabling amendments 16.00 Monday 13 October</p>
	<p>Thematic debate: promoting public ethics and preventing corruption at regional level Introduction by Herwig VAN STAA, outgoing President of the Congress Statements by: Pilar ROJO NOGUERA, President of the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE) and President of the Galician Parliament, Spain Tracey SIMPSON-LAINING, Rapporteur of the Congress for the report on “Conditions of Office of Local and Regional Elected Representatives” Bruno GONZÁLEZ VALDELIEVRE, Director of Analysis at the Anti-Fraud Office of Catalonia, Spain Conclusions by Herwig VAN STAA, outgoing President of the Congress Close by the President of the Chamber</p>
18.30	EVENT: Inauguration of an exhibition on the world heritage in Bosnia and Herzegovina followed by a reception

Wednesday 15 October 2014	
Committee meetings: 8.30 – 11.00	
Room 1	Monitoring Committee (votes in Room 3)
Room 6	Current Affairs Committee (votes in Room 7)
Room 8	Governance Committee (votes in Room 9)
Bureau meeting: 11.15-12.00	
Room 8	Bureau of the Congress

Wednesday 15 October 2014 14.00 – 19.30, Hemicycle	
Plenary Sitting	
Adoption of the draft minutes of the sitting of the Congress on 14 October 2014 [CG(27)PV1]	
Formal adoption of texts approved by the chambers [CG(27)5]	
Azerbaijani Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (May 2014-November 2014) Statement by Fikrat MAMMADOV, Minister of Justice of Azerbaijan Republic, representing the Azerbaijani Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers Oral reply to written questions [CG(27)11] Deadline for tabling written questions 14.00 Tuesday 14 October	
Statement by Leyla GÜVEN Debate	
Statement by Annemarie JORRITSMA, President of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) Youth debate	
	Promoting diversity through intercultural education and communication strategies Presentation by the rapporteur: Nawel RAFIK-ELMRINI, France (L, SOC) Debate and vote on the draft resolution and the draft recommendation [CG(27)6PROV] Deadline for tabling amendments 10.00 Tuesday 14 October
	Local and regional democracy in Belgium Presentation by the rapporteurs: Henrik HAMMAR, Sweden (L, EPP/CCE) and Urs WÜTHRICH-PELLOLI, Switzerland (R, SOC) Debate and vote on the draft recommendation [CG(27)7PROV] Deadline for tabling amendments 10.00 Tuesday 14 October
End of the sitting	
EVENT: Reception offered by the European Youth Forum	

Thursday 16 October 2014

9.00 - 13.00, Hemicycle

Plenary Sitting

Adoption of the draft minutes of the sittings of the Chambers on 14 October 2014 [CPL(27)PV1] and [CPR(27)PV1] and of the Congress on 15 October 2014 [CG(27)PV2]



The contribution of the Congress to the Council of Europe's neighbourhood policy

Partner for Local Democracy status

Presentation by the rapporteurs: Jean-Claude FRÉCON, France (L, SOC) and Marie-Madeleine MIALOT-MULLER, France (R, SOC)

Statement by Mbarka BOUAIDA, Minister Delegate to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Co-operation, Morocco

Debate and vote on the draft resolution [\[CG\(27\)9PROV\]](#)

Deadline for tabling amendments 10.00 Wednesday 15 October

Separatist tensions in Ukraine and neighbouring countries [CG/MON(26)12]

Vyacheslav NEHODA, First Deputy Minister of Regional Development, Building, Housing and Communal Services of Ukraine

Valeriu CHIVERI, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova

Oleksii REZNIKOV, Deputy Mayor, Chairman of the Kyiv City Council

Tengiz SHERGELASHVILI, Deputy Minister for Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia

Debate



Revision of the Congress Charter

Presentation by the rapporteurs: Marc COOLS, Belgium (L, ILDG), and Urs WÜTHRICH-PELLOLI, Switzerland (R, SOC)

Debate and vote on the draft recommendation [\[CG\(27\)10PROV\]](#)

Deadline for tabling amendments 10.00 Wednesday 15 October

Close of the 27th Session by the President of the Congress

Debriefing session for youth delegates and Congress members

14.30 – 17.30

Room 9

Open to youth delegates, members of the Congress, secretaries of delegation and advisers

20.00 EVENT: Concert commemorating the 70th anniversary of the genocide committed against Roma organised by the European Roma and Travellers Forum, Dosta! and the City of Strasbourg

Pavillon Joséphine

Open to youth delegates, members of the Congress, secretaries of delegation and advisers

APPENDIX II – Declaration on the situation in Ukraine and neighbouring countries

Separatist tensions in Ukraine and neighbouring countries

27th SESSION

Strasbourg, 14-16 October 2014

Declaration 3 (2014)³

1. In the spirit of the "Chisinau Declaration", adopted by the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the European Charter of Local Self Government, the Congress expresses its grave concern about the situation in Ukraine and other countries of the region.

2. During its last session, the Congress condemned the annexation of the Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by the Russian Federation.

3. Today, the Congress condemns Russia's military intervention in the east of Ukraine, and condemns all forms of pressure by Russia on its neighbours.

4. The security of this continent is seriously threatened by the Russian Federation's repeated failure to comply with international rules and the principles and values of the Council of Europe that it signed up to when it joined the Organisation.

5. For years, we have been working to improve local and regional autonomy in Europe. We are convinced that subsidiarity benefits all levels of governance. That is why we encourage the Ukrainian authorities to pursue their reforms to deepen local and regional democracy and decentralisation in line with the recommendations made by the Congress in this regard. The Congress will continue its efforts to accompany these reforms.

6. The principles of international law, such as territorial integrity, sovereignty and the inviolability of the internationally recognised borders of states are imperative for the peaceful settlement of conflicts in Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and the Republic of Moldova faced with separatist movements. Armed separatism, supported by mercenaries and the intervention of foreign troops, is the antithesis of all that the Congress stands for and has created a humanitarian crisis that the national authorities and the international community must resolve together.

7. The Congress calls for an independent and thorough international investigation into all human rights violations committed in Ukraine during and since the Maidan events of February 2014.

8. The Congress supports the initiatives and activities of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and its other bodies aimed at promoting a peaceful settlement in Ukraine.

9. What has taken place in the Crimea (Ukraine), in South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Georgia), and in Transnistria (Republic of Moldova), and what is happening today in the east of Ukraine is totally contrary to the Europe of the regions that we are striving to achieve. At the same time, the Congress reaffirms its commitment to a peaceful dialogue on the basis of European values, especially the respect for human rights, including language rights of national minorities. With regard to the east of Ukraine, a cease-fire has been agreed in Minsk between the different parties concerned by the conflict. This cease-fire must be effectively and comprehensively implemented and must be followed by a political dialogue to enable Ukraine to recover its territorial integrity.

³ Adopted by the Congress on 16 October 2014, 3rd Sitting (see Document CG(27)16FINAL), rapporteur: Marc COOLS, Belgium (L, ILDG).

APPENDIX III – List of newly elected presidency

Council of Europe Congress elects new leadership

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe has a renewed leadership voted in at its 27th Session. The term of office for leadership positions is 2 years.

PRESIDENT OF THE CONGRESS: Jean-Claude FRÉCON (SOC, France)

CHAMBER LEADERSHIP

President of the Chamber of Local Authorities: Anders KNAPE (Sweden, EPP/CCE)

- 1st Vice-President: Barbara TOCE (Italy, SOC)
- 2nd Vice-President: Jolanta BARSKA (Poland, EPP/CCE)
- 3rd Vice-President: Jaroslav HLINKA (Slovak Republic, ILDG)
- 4th Vice-President: Gaye DOGANOGLU (Turkey EPP/CCE)
- 5th Vice-President: Mary HEGARTY (Ireland /EPP/CCE)
- 6th Vice-President: John WARMISHAM (United Kingdom, SOC)
- 7th Vice-President: Juliana HOXHA (Albania, SOC)

President of the Chamber of Regions: Gudrun MOSLER-TÖRNSTRÖM, (Austria, SOC)

- 1st Vice-President: Clemens LAMMERSKITTEN, (Germany, EPP/CCE)
 - 2nd Vice-President: Gunn Marit HELGESEN, (Norway EPP/CCE)
 - 3rd Vice-president: Helena PIHLAJASAARI, (Finland, SOC)
 - 4th Vice-president: Jean-Marie BELLIARD, (France, EPP/CCE)
 - 5th Vice-president: Leen VERBEEK, (Netherlands, SOC)
 - 6th Vice-president: Nataliya ROMANOVA, (Ukraine, ILDG)
 - 7th Vice-president: Svetlana ORLOVA, (Russian Federation, EPP/CCE)
- The 2 Presidents of the two Chambers and the 14 Vice-Presidents of these Chambers are Vice-Presidents of the Congress.

COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP

Chair of the Monitoring Committee:

Philippe RECEVEUR (Switzerland, R, EPP/CCE)

Vice-Chairs:

1. MERMAGEN Nigel, (United Kingdom, L, ILDG)
2. WIENEN Jacob (Jos), (Netherlands, L, EPP/CCE)
3. LOIZIDOU Irene, (Cyprus, L, EPP/CCE)
4. SFIRLOAGA Ludmila, (Romania L, SOC)
5. BUCHMANN Andrée, (France, R, SOC)

Chair of the Governance Committee:

Tracey SIMPSON-LAING, (United Kingdom, R, SOC)

Vice-Chairs:

1. Annemieke TRAAG, (Netherlands, R, ILDG)
2. Frida JOHANSSON METSO, (Sweden, L, ILDG)
3. Viacheslav ROGOV (Russia, L, ILDG)
4. Sevdia UGREKHELIDZE, (Georgia, R, EPP/CCE)

Chair of the Current Affairs Committee:

Farid MUKHAMETSIN, (Russian Federation, R, ILDG)

Vice-Chairs:

1. Malcolm BYRNE, (Ireland, R, ILDG)
2. Josef NEUMAN, (Germany, R, SOC)
3. Volodymyr UDOVYCHENKO, (Ukraine, R, ILDG)
4. Minodora Susana LUCA, (Romania L, EPP/CCE)
5. Emin YERITSYAN, (Armenia, L, EPP/CCE)

POLITICAL GROUP LEADERSHIP

President of the Group European People's party (EPP-CCE):

Artur TORRES PEREIRA, Portugal

President of the Socialist Group (SOC):

Karl-Heinz LAMBERTZ, Belgium

President of the Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (ILDG):

Marc COOLS, Belgium

President of the European Conservatives & Reformists Group (ECR):

Halldor HALLDORSSON, Iceland

APPENDIX IV – Statement by Jean-Claude Frécon, President of the Congress, at the 1210th meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies

Speech by Jean-Claude Frécon, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

1210th meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies of the Council of Europe

Wednesday 22 October 2014

Mr Chairman, Secretary General, Deputy Secretary General, Ambassadors,

I am honoured to be addressing you today, only a week after being elected President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. It was last week, during its 27th session, that the Congress renewed its leaders – the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the Chambers, the Chairs of the committees and political groups and its President.

I am French and my first official visit was a meeting with the German delegation to the Congress in Stuttgart last Thursday. I am personally very attached to the great symbolism there. As representatives of the Council of Europe’s member states, you here are all aware of just how important Franco-German reconciliation has been historically in the European construction process and how important it still is today for peace and prosperity in Europe.

Our session was very busy. Congress members had an opportunity to exchange views with your Chair and with the Council’s Secretary General about the priorities for the years ahead. These regular exchanges with the organisation’s leaders are vital to us, as they confirm our own policy directions and priorities, which are fully in line with the Council of Europe’s agenda.

As you know, we held a debate on separatist tensions in Ukraine and neighbouring countries in the presence of ministers from four states – Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and Azerbaijan – and I should like to thank those countries’ Permanent Representatives most sincerely for helping to ensure that their ministers attended.

Since the beginning of the year, like the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress has condemned the holding of an undemocratic referendum in Crimea, the annexation of that autonomous region of Ukraine and Sebastopol by Russia and the presence of Russian regular troops in eastern Ukraine. However, we have not confined ourselves to condemning these developments; we have also stepped up the existing dialogue with the authorities and taken very practical steps to help them on the path to local and regional reforms in Ukraine.

For instance, we observed the first local elections in May and arranged the first post-monitoring preparation visit with the relevant minister. We conducted a major high-level visit in July and will be continuing the post-monitoring programme in December. All this has been in close co-ordination with the country’s authorities. Several co-operation seminars have also been held during the period.

At the close of an intense and serious debate, we adopted a declaration setting out our policy line for the months ahead.

Our session was also special because, for the first time, youth delegates were able to sit in the national delegations and take part in the debates alongside them. Both the young people and Congress members found this first experience to be very positive, and we must now make sure that it was not just a one-off, isolated initiative but is followed by other initiatives and fits into the broader framework of increased participation by young people in our activities. We are looking into the possibilities here.

In the context of the Council of Europe’s neighbourhood policy, the Congress has implemented specific activities in Morocco and Tunisia. Last week, it adopted *partner for local democracy status*, which will enable it to step up this co-operation and support local and regional reforms with the governments and local and regional authorities in the countries concerned. Morocco has shown great interest in obtaining the status.

I should like now to say a few words about the work of the Congress in the coming months. As over the past few years, we are going to continue stepping up our activities in terms of monitoring the Charter of Local Self-Government and observing local elections, putting a still greater emphasis on the aspect of implementation of our recommendations through post-monitoring dialogue with governments.

To carry out our statutory tasks, we need a properly staffed and competent secretariat. The budgetary situation in recent years has not been very favourable to us and we have had to make proportionately larger cuts than other entities in the organisation.

I was Vice-Chair of the Finance Committee of the French Senate until a few weeks ago, so I am aware of how things stand with our countries' public finances. And I know that the organisation's budget debate is in progress and is extremely difficult. I have not come here to beg; instead, I wish to share with you my realistic concerns about our working structure.

Allow me to make a personal comment: I believe that our Secretary General is a responsible and sensible manager. That is a great asset for our organisation and for the quality of the budget debate.

The Congress now receives substantial voluntary contributions for carrying out co-operation programmes in various countries, in particular Albania, Armenia and Ukraine, as well as others which are under preparation. I should like to extend particular thanks to the Swiss and Danish authorities for their commitment and their financial support in this respect.

However, to give you the full picture, I must say that, in terms of the Congress's statutory activities, we now suffer from a lack of resources, in particular as regards staffing, and our secretariat is not sufficient for us to meet the expectations and keep up with the pace of the politically realistic and necessary programme which we have adopted. If this situation continues, there is a risk in the short term of it jeopardising our co-operation activities which are based on the results of our statutory activities.

I should like to close this presentation on a more optimistic and more personal note. I arrived at the Congress at the time of the introduction of its new statute in 1994, following a decision by the Vienna Summit of Heads of State and Government. In various posts, I have followed the developments which have taken place over 20 years. I have witnessed and supported the reforms of the Congress, the refocusing of its activities and the concentration of its efforts and resources on its priority tasks. And I can assure you that the Congress has become a loyal, operational and effective political partner both for governments and for the other entities in the Council of Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Commissioner for Human Rights, the Venice Commission and the operational directorates, under the aegis of the Secretary General.

The Congress, an assembly of local and regional elected representatives, has found its full place in an intergovernmental organisation, and every advance has been made with your support.

As you know, I also sit in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in my capacity as a member of the French Senate.

For years, the Council of Europe and its 47 governments have welcomed and made effective use of the contribution of the two assemblies of national and of local and regional elected representatives. That is to their credit and, I believe, entirely to our organisation's benefit.

Thank you.

APPENDIX V – Programme of the high level visit of the Congress to Ukraine

Members of the Congress delegation

The Congress delegation was headed by its President Herwig van Staa (Austria, EPP/CCE) and comprised Jean-Claude Frécon (France, SOC) and Nataliya Romanova (Ukraine, ILDG), respectively Presidents of the Chamber of Local Authorities and of the Chamber of Regions, as well as the Presidents of the Congress political groups Gudrun Mösler-Törnström (Austria, SOC), Artur Torres Pereira (Portugal, EPP/CCE) and Andrew Boff (ECR), and the Rapporteur on Ukraine, Marc Cools (Belgium, ILDG).

Meetings held during the high level mission (17-18 July 2014)

17 July 2014, Kyiv

1. Administration of the President of Ukraine

Ms Maryna STAVNIYCHUK, Advisor to the President of Ukraine

Ms Natalya SHAKURO, Head of the Unit of the Human Rights and Council of Europe of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine

2. Committee on European Integration of the Parliament of Ukraine

Ms Iryna GERASCHENKO, Special Representative of the President of Ukraine on peaceful settlement of the situation in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, member of PACE and Deputy Head of the Committee on European Integration of Ukraine,

3. Parliament of Ukraine

Ruslan KOSHULYNSKYI, Deputy Chairman of the Parliament

Davyd ZHVANIYA, Chairman of the Committee on State Building and Local Self Government

Natalya SHAKURO, Head of the Unit of the Human Rights and Council of Europe of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine

4. Kyiv City Council

Mr Vitali KLITSCHKO, Mayor of Kyiv

Mr Olexiy REZNIKOV, Chairman of the Kyiv City Council, Deputy Head of Kyiv State Administration

Mr Taras HOLOTA, Head of International Relations Department

Ms Maria ADOMAYTIS, Deputy Head of International Relations Department

5. Ministry of Regional Development, Construction and Municipal Economy of Ukraine

Mr Volodymyr GROYSMAN, Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Regional Development, Construction and Municipal Economy of Ukraine

Mr Myroslav KOSHEL'YUK, Advisor to Vice Prime Minister

Mr Natalya SHAKURO, Head of the Unit of the Human Rights and Council of Europe of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine

Ms Natalya RYABTSEVA, Head of International Relations Department

Mr Iryna KYRYCHENKO, International Relations Department

6. Crimean Tatar Assembly

Mr Mustafa DJEMILEV, leader of the Tatar community and member of PACE

Mr Oleksii SKORYK, president of the Crimea Development Fund, Advisor to Mr Demilev

Mr Aslan Omer KIRIMLI, Vice-Chairman of Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People

18 July 2014, Odessa

7. Joint Meeting with the members of the National Delegation of Ukraine to the Congress, representatives of the associations of local and regional authorities and other local authorities

Mr Stepan BARNA, Deputy of Ternopil regional council

Mr Oleksiy GONCHARENKO, Deputy Head of Odessa Regional Council

Mr Olexandr LUKYANCHENKO, Donetsk Mayor

Mrs Svitlana BOHATYRCHUK-KRYVKO, deputy of Rivne municipal council

Mr Vadym IVCHENKO, Vice President of the National Association of Village and Settlement Councils

Mr Dmitry LOSEV, Deputy Head of Ukrainian Fund on Support of Local self-governance

Ms Nataliya ROMANOVA, President of the Chamber of Regions of the Congress, Councillor of Chernihiv District Council

8. Odessa Regional Council, Odessa State Regional Administration and City of Odessa,

Mr Petro KHLITSOV, Deputy Chairman of Odessa Regional Council

Mr Ihor PALYTSIA, Governor of Odessa Region

Mr Gennadiy TRUKHANOV, Mayor of Odessa

Ms Yevheniya VOLYNETS, Head of International Relations and European Integration Department

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

The voice of Cities and Regions in Europe

- The Congress is a political assembly composed of 636 elected officials – mayors, governors, councillors, etc. – representing the 200 000 local and regional authorities of the 47 Council of Europe member states.

It speaks for Europe's local and regional elected representatives.

- The Congress promotes devolution through transfer of political powers and financial resources to the municipalities and regions.

It ensures that policy decisions are made at a level closest to the citizens.

- The Congress guarantees civic participation and fosters a positive perception of local identities.

It strives for living grassroots democracy in an ever more globalised world.

- The Congress reinforces local and regional democracy by permanently monitoring the due application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, observing local and regional elections, and issuing recommendations to the governments of the 47 Council of Europe member states.

It upholds local self-government, together with democracy and human rights at local level.

