

60 years of promoting local and regional democracy

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities was born out of the conviction that local, and subsequently regional, authorities should be given a chance to have their say as efforts to construct a united Europe began. Starting as a mere committee of the Parliamentary Assembly, it subsequently became the "Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe" and was finally, in 1994, established as the "Congress of Local and Regional Authorities".

Today, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities pursues its work as the institution of the Council of Europe responsible for strengthening local and regional democracy in its 47 member States. Composed of two chambers – the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions – and three committees, it comprises 636 elected representatives representing more than 200,000 local and regional authorities.

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60 years of promoting local and regional democracy

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

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Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe



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12 janvier 1957:
"I declare open the first session of the European Conference of Local Authorities"



Strengthening member States' commitment to decentralisation

In 2010 and 2011, the Congress continued to extend its reforms. It altered and streamlined its structure thereby simplifying the way it functioned. More emphasis was placed on its work in monitoring local and regional democracy and the election observation process was also reinforced and expanded.

Institutional consultation of the Congress by the Committee of Ministers and other bodies or mechanisms such as the Parliamentary Assembly has grown over the years, thereby incorporating the local and regional dimension into all of the Organisation's activities. It also provided the opportunity to strengthen the institutional link and political dialogue with the Committee of Ministers.

In undertaking such a proactive and carefully targeted reform, the Congress strengthened its contribution to the Council of Europe's work. Upholding the Organisation's fundamental values – democracy, human rights and the rule of law – forms the core of its activities.

When I was elected in October 2016, I emphasised that these were the values for which we have to fight, as without these values the democratic structure of our continent risks being destabilised.

The work of the Congress is therefore more important than ever. In 2018, we will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the entry into force of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. We must use this opportunity to take stock and consider how we can strengthen member States' commitment to decentralisation and to the principle of subsidiarity and in particular to the Charter by making member States aware of its applicability in domestic law.

When my predecessor, Jean-Claude Frécon handed over the baton to me, I undertook not only to continue the work done by the successive presidents of the Congress but also to ensure that it reflects the needs of local and regional authorities, the policies of the Council of Europe and developments within member States.

In addition to the pleasure we have in celebrating anniversaries, they also give us the opportunity to look back at the past and to draw the necessary lessons for improving our present and future action. That is what I invite you to do as you read this publication.

Gudrun Mosler-Törnström
President of the Congress

Exactly 60 years ago, on 12 January 1957, the first meeting of the "European Conference of Local Authorities" was held in Strasbourg with Jacques Chaban-Delmas, former French Prime Minister, in the chair.

The Conference, the Congress' predecessor, which was initially a mere committee of the Parliamentary Assembly, first changed its name in 1975, when it became the "European Conference of Local and Regional Authorities" and again in 1983, when it took the name of "Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe" (CLRAE).

On 9 October 1993, the Heads of State and Government of Council of Europe member States, meeting at their first Summit in Vienna (Austria), approved "the principle of creating a new consultative organ genuinely representing both local and regional authorities in Europe". That was how, in 1994, the CLRAE became the "Congress of Local and Regional Authorities".

Although the Vienna Summit gave birth to the Congress, it was the initial Conference which, back in 1957, paved the way for the presence of local and regional authorities at the Council of Europe. Since then the Congress has worked tirelessly to represent local and regional authorities and to strengthen local and regional democracy in member States.

In reforming its structure and its working methods from 2008 onwards, the Congress has sought to improve its effectiveness and to adapt its structure more closely to the work of the Council of Europe.



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Milestones in the history of the Congress

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities was born out of the conviction that local, and subsequently regional, authorities should be given a chance to have their say as efforts to construct a united Europe began. Starting as a mere committee of the Parliamentary Assembly, it subsequently became the "Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe" and was finally, in 1994, established as the "Congress of Local and Regional Authorities".

In 1953, the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe – now the Parliamentary Assembly – set up a "Special Committee on Municipal and Regional Affairs". Two years later, the Assembly requested the creation of a European conference of local elected representatives.

1957: first session of the Conference of Local Authorities of Europe

The new body, which brought together 124 local elected representatives from 13 of the then

15 Council of Europe member States, sat for the first time in Strasbourg on 12 January 1957. Chaired by Frenchman Jacques Chaban-Delmas, it took the title "Conference of Local Authorities of Europe" and first met every two years, then every year. In 1975, it changed its name to "Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe" and in 1983 it became the "Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe" (CLRAE).

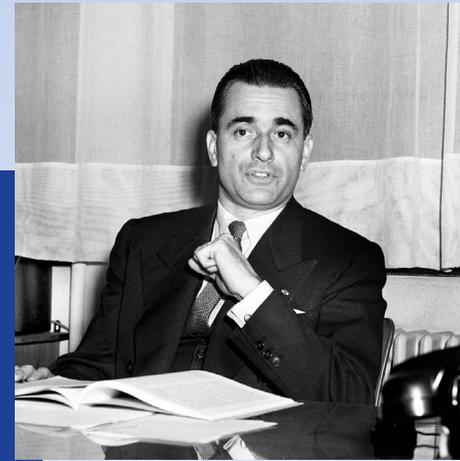
In the 1960s, the Conference mainly concerned itself with all the effects on local authorities of

the process of European integration but it also took an interest in the issues of housing and urban renewal. It sought to encourage a sense of European identity in towns and cities, especially through twinnings. Forward-looking in the subjects it dealt with as well as in its policy approaches, for example with regard to subsidiarity and devolution, it was the first to propose, in 1978, a European definition of regions, showing that the latter can contribute to the harmonious development of Europe at both political and economic levels. Its work resulted in the European Convention on Trans-frontier Co-operation, which, from 1980 onwards, enabled border regions to begin working together focusing on specific objectives.

At the same time, the CLRAE wanted a European charter that guaranteed local authorities' rights and responsibilities vis-à-vis central government. The drafting work began in 1981, resulting in the adoption by the Committee of Ministers in 1985 of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, in the legal form of a convention, which came into force in 1988. In 1992, the



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A posthumous interview: "Local democracy, a burning obligation"

Mr President, in 2014 we will be celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, an event with which the Congress members wish to associate your name.

J. Chaban-Delmas: Thank you, and my thanks naturally also go to all my fellow Congress members, those of yesterday and those of today. I should say that I followed the Vienna Summit, even if from afar. President Mitterrand, whose convictions I shared with regard to the "burning obligation" to establish local democracy, handled things very well, together with the Austrian government. Thanks to him the new Congress derived its legitimacy from a decision taken by the Heads of State of all European countries. Well done the Vienna Summit!

Were you the initiator of this recognition of local democracy?

J. Chaban-Delmas: Yes, and we have come a long way ... if you only knew the boundless energy it took to launch the Conference of Local Authorities, the Congress's predecessor, between 1952 and 1957. I can tell you that, at the outset, the good fairies did not gather around the Congress's cradle. It was in fact more as if evil spirits were doing everything they could to prevent the holding of the

Jacques Chaban-Delmas

The Congress owes a great deal to a French statesman who was behind the Council of Europe's recognition of the importance of local and regional authorities. Between 1952 and 1957, Jacques Chaban-Delmas, Mayor of Bordeaux, worked tirelessly to set up the European Conference of Local Authorities, of which he was the first President. To pay him a richly-deserved tribute, the Congress is publishing this imaginary posthumous interview inspired by his speeches, in which Jacques Chaban-Delmas recalls the early years of the great initiative that would give rise to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

conference. If some people had not tenaciously defended the idea, myself of course and a number of great Europeans, it would have come to nothing. These supporters were not all French – far from it, but, like me, they were all fervent defenders of local and regional rights, local democracy activists. Without them the European Conference of Local Authorities would never have seen the light of day. As time goes by, it seems as if everything in the past was idyllic, but there were indeed problems and, believe me, they were commensurate with the challenges and the results!

Did you have a future vision for the Conference from the outset?

J. Chaban-Delmas: From where I am today, I of course have a commanding view of things, which greatly facilitates a long-term vision. However, I well remember 1952 and the first meeting, at the Palais Rohan in my home city of Bordeaux, of what was then merely an ad hoc committee of the Parliamentary Assembly. Many people hoped it would cease to exist after having drawn up a report that could be consigned to the archives. I myself already wanted to involve local authorities in the European construction process and in the Council of Europe, which had a key role at the time. I had the support of Jacques Camille Paris, then Secretary General, who was a good fellow and a Companion of the Liberation, someone I particularly appreciated who did much to support the project.

Are you saying that local authorities were absent from the European construction process?

J. Chaban-Delmas: Absolutely! It was a big mistake to try to build Europe solely with the national authorities. My ambition at the time was to give the process a territorial component, to use your current-day terminology. We ourselves talked about municipalities or local authorities, the regions did not really exist. My entire approach was in fact inspired by Montesquieu's political philosophy of the separation of powers. I would like to let you in on a secret: Montesquieu was a proponent of subsidiarity even before the word came into existence. Moreover, I remember that on the day of our meeting, in 1952, we even visited Montesquieu's castle at La Brède. From then on, the Conference, and at present the Congress, was imbued with the spirit of this great man. With this prevailing spirit, I predict a bright future for you.



adoption of the European Urban Charter and, in particular the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages constituted the CLRAE's two other major achievements prior to the extensive development of its role and structures.

1994: the CLRAE becomes the Congress

On 9 October 1993, the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe member States, meeting for their first Summit in Vienna (Austria), approved the creation of "a consultative organ genuinely representing both local and regional authorities in Europe". This was the first official step in setting up the Congress, the direct successor of the CLRAE. In early 1994, this new body became a Council of Europe organ in its own right, officially tasked with representing the local and regional authorities. Called "the Congress", it is divided into two Chambers, one for the local authorities and the other for the regions, and was given new tasks and responsibilities, the most important of which were the monitoring of local and regional self-government in States that have ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the observation of local and regional elections in member States.

At the turn of the 1990s, the new Congress had much greater challenges to face than in the past. The former "Eastern Bloc" countries, almost all of which joined the Council of Europe from 1991 onwards, are still highly centralised and

regard the Congress's expertise as an enormous help in the process of structural change. The Congress also became involved in the restoration of peace in the former Yugoslavia by taking action at local level in particular, as it was later to do in the Southern Caucasus, where it set up "Local Democracy Agencies" and encouraged local elected representatives to engage in dialogue and work together.

Instruments for strengthening local and regional democracy

From 1997, the Congress worked on drawing up a "Reference Framework for Regional Democracy": A genuine code of rights and duties of regional entities, it was approved in 2009 by the Ministers Responsible for Local and Regional Government. In 2003, the Congress adopted the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life. In addition, "European Local Democracy Week" was launched for the first time in 2007 on the Congress's initiative. The aim of this annual pan-European event is to raise awareness of local political life and invite citizens to engage in dialogue with their local councillors. One year later, paying heed to developments in urban policies, the Congress adopted the "European Urban Charter II - Manifesto for a new urbanity". A further step forward was taken in 2009 with the opening for signature of an additional protocol to the European

Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority.

From 2010 onwards, the Congress stepped up its activities relating to its specific tasks, first and foremost its monitoring visits and the observation of elections. Since 2015, a new, post-monitoring and post-observation procedure has made it possible to assist national authorities in improving the implementation of Congress recommendations through the signing of roadmaps. The co-operation programmes launched by the Congress in 2011 also provide practical support for local and regional elected representatives in several countries.

2013 marked the culmination of a long process aimed at establishing a harmonised legislative space for European local and regional democracy. With San Marino's ratification of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, all 47 Council of Europe member States are now covered by this international treaty.

With two key dates – 1957, the date of the first session of the CLRAE, and 1994, the birth of the present Congress – the path of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities illustrates the unanimous recognition by governments of local democracy as a cornerstone of the democratic system. Today, the Congress is a major player in fostering genuine grassroots democracy in the 47 Council of Europe member States.

The Congress, a unique assembly in Europe

The voice of municipalities and regions, the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities continues to develop and implement tools to ensure high quality grassroots democracy.

The monitoring of local and regional democracy and the observation of elections are the Congress's flagship activities. Each year, monitoring visits to several member States are carried out by a Congress delegation, which holds meetings not only with local and regional but also national authorities to ensure the proper implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in the country visited. The Congress then adopts recommendations calling on states to comply. Moreover, monitoring visits enable the Congress to satisfy itself as to the appropriate implementation of its other instruments and protocols and provide input to cross-cutting reports on "recurrent issues", in other words those that are regularly encountered during visits, whatever the country involved.

In order to facilitate the implementation of its recommendations, the Congress offers to help the national authorities by engaging in a genuine political dialogue in a "post-monitoring" procedure. It draws up "roadmaps" with them with the aim of bringing national legislation on local and regional authorities into line with the provisions of the Charter. Since 2015, Albania, Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Portugal and Ukraine have entered into this post-monitoring procedure with the Congress.

In addition, the Congress observes, either alone or with other international bodies, the conduct of local and regional elections in its member States. The observation, which covers both the voting process and the election campaign, is an opportunity for dialogue at

the highest level with representatives of parties and political groups, electoral commissions, the media and NGOs. The Congress then presents its conclusions on the fairness of the elections and makes the relevant recommendations. Here, too, it can propose a "post-observation" procedure to work with the authorities of the countries concerned on improving the situation, as it did for the first time in 2016 in the case of Albania.

The Congress provides member States with practical co-operation programmes based in particular on peer-to-peer exchanges at seminars and meetings, which make it possible to help local and regional elected representatives from participating countries to carry out their tasks more effectively. In the countries concerned, these programmes help to improve the implementation of the Congress's recommendations and of the principles of the Charter itself. They may be carried out in the form of bilateral partnerships, as in the case of Albania, Armenia and Ukraine, and as components of regional programmes, such as the co-operation arrangements with the European Union in the "Eastern Partnership" countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus). Furthermore, the Congress is continuing to develop its co-operation with several countries of the southern Mediterranean, especially Morocco and Tunisia.

In addition, in the light of the crises currently facing Europe – in particular the crisis of confidence in political leaders and, more broadly, in democracy – the Congress encourages good governance at local and

regional levels. Basing its approach on member States' own experience of, it urges them, for example, to introduce specific measures to increase transparency and improve the fight against corruption. At the same time, it makes every effort to encourage citizens' involvement in local public life. To this end, having initiated "European Local Democracy Week", it is currently focusing its attention on the youth sector, by involving young Europeans in its work, especially during its two annual sessions.

At local level, the Congress promotes the key principles of the Council of Europe, such as the protection of human rights and combating discrimination and violent extremism. It is very active in the promotion of "living together" at local level, and in 2016 published a "toolkit" for use by local and regional elected representatives. This is available online and consists of a database of resources relevant for combating radicalisation, promoting intercultural and inter-faith dialogue, fostering democratic citizenship and building inclusive societies. In recent years, the Congress has also become very much involved in the reception of refugees and migrants and their integration in the towns where they first arrive. Finally, it regularly contributes to the Council of Europe's thematic campaigns to combat all forms of violence and discrimination, such as domestic violence and sexual violence against children as well as prejudice towards and discrimination against Roma.

In October 2016, the Congress adopted its priorities for the period 2017-2020, which focus on two main areas: improving the quality of local and regional democracy and building secure societies that are respectful, inclusive and closer to citizens.



Today, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities brings together 648 elected officials representing more than 200 000 local and regional authorities.

12 January 1957:

"I declare open the first session of the European Conference of Local Authorities"

On Saturday, 12 January 1957, at 10.10 am, Jacques Chaban-Delmas, President of the Special Committee on Municipal and Regional Affairs, opened the first session of the European Conference of Local Authorities in Strasbourg.

1. Opening the session

THE PRESIDENT (Translation)
The Sitting is open.

In virtue of Resolution 76 of 14th October 1955 of the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe and in accordance with Rule 9 of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference "at the beginning of each session the Chairman of the Special Committee on Municipal and Regional Affairs shall preside until a President is elected.

I accordingly declare open the first session of the European Conference of Local Authorities.

2. Presidential address

THE PRESIDENT (Translation)

Ladies and Gentlemen
No one here can fail to realise the significance of this occasion. In the name of the Committee on Municipal and Regional Affairs I have the greatest pleasure in welcoming the Representatives of local authorities from the member States of the Council of Europe, and I do so, on behalf of the whole Consultative Assembly as well as of the Committee. I am glad to be able to announce that Mr Dehousse, President of the Consultative Assembly, has himself agreed to address the Conference.

Our meeting today represents the crowning achievement of many years devoted to the cause of Europe both by the Council of Europe itself and by associations such as yours whose whole-hearted response to our appeal has made this Conference so fully representative of European local authorities.

Creation of a Committee on Municipal and Regional Affairs

The first result of our efforts was the creation in Strasbourg in 1952 of a new specialised Committee on Municipal and Regional Affairs. Even at that time, our main object was to try to counter the lack of public interest shown by the various member States, a lack of interest that resulted as we realised from lack of information, but which nevertheless was depriving our work for European unification of the necessary driving force that could only come from public pressure exerted upon the governments of the democratic countries to induce them to work for a united Europe that would include as many countries as possible and be based on a system approved by the majority.

From this point of view, we have no more numerous and efficient adherents than the local authorities, Mayors, municipal councilors and, generally speaking, all local officials, whether in

cities, towns, villages or the most widely scattered country districts, form one huge group, several million strong, representing all the European member States, which is characterised above all by devotion to the interests of its fellow citizens and by the personal confidence reposed by the latter in its members.

At a moment when the building of Europe's threatened to founder in a bog of controversy, learned no doubt but none the less sterile, the triple aim of awakening the interest of the local authorities in the European idea, gaining their allegiance for it and entrusting them with the task of instructing their fellow citizens, appeared the essential one to pursue.

After careful consideration, the Consultative Assembly recognised the justice of this claim, in spite of certain very natural reservations of principle on the part of some who feared that members of local authorities who owed their election above all to their administrative ability might be led away from their appointed task of administration into political controversy which did not seem to be their function.

From the moment when the Committee on Municipal and Regional Affairs was first set up, therefore, it was strictly laid down that, while every effort would be made to propagate the European idea both among and by many means of the local authorities, these authorities would in no circumstances be themselves invited to take any part in the inevitable political controversies as to the choice to be made by national parliaments and governments between the various European institutions or organisations.



Jacques Chaban-Delmas chairs the first session of the Conference of Local Authorities, the precursor of the Congress, on 12 January 1957.

Visionary politicians

This fundamental undertaking has always been scrupulously observed by our Committee and by the Consultative Assembly, irrespective of the nationality or political party of any individual. That is how it is that our Committee, which began in a very small way both as regards numbers and terms of reference, has gradually won for itself a high place in the Council of Europe. Since 1952, the Presidents of the Consultative Assembly, first Mr de Menthon, then Mr Guy Mollet and finally Mr Dehousse, have never failed to show the greatest sympathy for our work and their example has been followed by the eminent representatives of the Assembly.

Before I turn to the organisation of the Conference, I should like to pay a well-deserved tribute to a devoted statesman who has always realised the essential value of our work, I mean the former Burgomaster of Antwerp, Mr van Cauwelaert, without whose active help, as Chairman of the Committee on Rules and Privileges, the Committee on Municipal and Regional Affairs would never have seen the light of day, and hence without whom the European Conference of Local Authorities would not now be meeting (Applause).

After marking its way through a hitherto unexplored field in which each step constituted a new departure requiring a constant display both of boldness and of prudence, and on the basis of wide preliminary studies the new Committee set to work to discover how to provide local authorities with the information and means necessary to solve the problems raised by the inauguration of the first European organisations.

The other day, for instance, the problems were those raised by the founding of the European Coal and Steel Community; doubtless, tomorrow, other new organisations will raise other problems.

I feel sure that this conference will be able to shed a great deal of light on the best means of carrying out its task. [...]

A first in the history of local democracy

Lastly, I must mention the side of your work which undoubtedly shows most plainly the unusual, I am almost tempted to say sensational, nature of this meeting. You have been invited here to discover, if not a path, at least a signpost towards some procedure that will enable local authorities to take a direct part

in building Europe, even perhaps to have their representatives as full members of future European organisations, even though it may not be our business here and now to define the form these organisations should take.

So far as I know, this is the first time in the history of democracies that representatives of the local authorities have been invited by representatives of the national parliaments, with the consent of their governments, to give their opinion as to how they might participate in the organisations now in process of being set up. This is the vital fact about the present meeting.

This innovation is a memorable one. In the first place, it is a recognition, even if a small and belated one, of the respect due to the whole body of magistrates and elected local officials, a body of men who are mostly little known but who represent an indispensable element in human society. In the second place, it is an expression of our desire to prevent a united Europe of the future from falling into the snare of over-centralisation with its thousand resulting ills that are sometimes a veritable scourge in the life of a nation.

1957 - 2017:

Congress key dates



1957

First session of the Conference of Local Authorities

1975
The Conference's remit is broadened to include the dimension of regions

1990
First local election observation report

1994
The Standing Conference becomes the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

1988
Entry into force of the European Charter of Local Self-Government

1993
Creation of the first Local Democracy Agency

1995
First report on monitoring of the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government

2007
Launch of European Local Democracy Week

2003
Adoption of the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life

2008
Adoption of the European Urban Charter II: Manifesto for a new urbanity

2009
Additional Protocol on the Right to Participate in the Affairs of a Local Authority

2009
Adoption of the Council of Europe Reference Framework for Regional Democracy

2015
Signature of the first road maps for the implementation of Congress recommendations under the post-monitoring dialogue

2013
The European Charter of Local Self-Government covers all 47 Council of Europe member States

2017

60 years of promoting local and regional democracy within the Council of Europe



Gudrun Mosler-Törnström
President of the Congress

11 January 2017 – Meeting of the Ministers' Deputies of the Council of Europe

“ Since 1957 – which is also the year of signature of the Rome treaties and the creation of the European Community – the Congress has steadily increased in political maturity and operational capacity. It has become a reliable partner and a valuable support for national governments and public policies. The main current challenges in Europe are the integration of migrants and refugees and the fight against radicalisation leading to terrorism, both having led to a lasting systemic crisis in all our member States. Our message to national authorities is that local authorities should be made full partners in addressing these challenges. This means that local and regional authorities can be part of the solution if they are consulted and involved in the drawing up and the implementation of national policies.”

1957 - 2018:

Congress Presidents

Since 1957, twenty-nine political representatives from thirteen countries have presided over the construction of European local and regional democracy. In 2016, for the first time in its history, the Congress elected a woman – Gudrun Mosler-Törnström (Austria, SOC) – as president for a two-year term.



1957 - 1960
Jacques Chaban-Delmas
France



1960 - 1962
Georges Dardel
France



1962 - 1966
Henry Cravatte
Luxembourg



1966 - 1968
Sir Francis Hill
United Kingdom



1968 - 1970
Alois Lugger
Austria



1970 - 1972
Kjell T. Evers
Norway



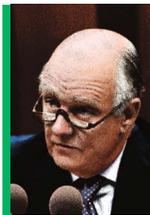
1972 - 1974
Giancarlo Piombino
Italy



1974 - 1976
Reint Laan
The Netherlands



1976 - 1978
Henry Cravatte
Luxembourg



1978 - 1980
Gordon Pirie
United Kingdom



1980 - 1982
Bernard Dupont
Switzerland



1982 - 1984
Eric Kiesl
The Netherlands



1984 - 1985
John Winther
Denmark



1985 - 1987
Antoni Srana
Spain



1987 - 1991
John Morgan
United Kingdom



1991 - 1992
Lucien Sergent
France



1992 - 1994
Bengt Mollstedt
Sweden



1994 - 1996
Alexander Tchernoff
The Netherlands



1996 - 1998
Claude Haegi
Switzerland



1998 - 2000
Alain Chenard
France



2000 - 2002
Llibert Cuatrecasas
Spain



2002 - 2004
Herwig Van Staa
Austria



2004 - 2006
Giovanni Di Stasi
Italy



2006 - 2008
Halvdan Skard
Norway



2008 - 2009
Yavuz Mildon
Turkey



2009 - 2010
Ian Micallef
Malta



2010 - 2012
Keith Whitmore
United Kingdom



2012 - 2014
Herwig van Staa
Austria



2014 - 2016
Jean-Claude Frécon
France



2016 - 2018
Gudrun Mosler-Törnström
Austria

"The Congress has contributed, since 1957, to the spectacular advance of local and regional democracy on our continent"

We, local and regional elected representatives of European territorial communities, members of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, [...]

We are convinced

that the peaceful, prosperous and united Europe we wish for is a Europe not only of nation-states, but also of local and regional communities at the service of their citizens who are thus in control of decisions which directly affect their daily lives;

We are convinced

that the Congress has contributed, since 1957, to the spectacular advance, on our continent, of local and regional democracy which is the bedrock of European democratic development and one of the major achievements of the Council of Europe;

We reaffirm

that the European Charter of Local Self-Government, adopted in 1985, remains the main international treaty for local democracy whose example is being followed in other parts of the world, and that the implementation of the Charter and observance of its principles constitutes a solid basis for further development of European democracy;

We are convinced

that by monitoring the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the situation of local and regional democracy in Council of Europe member States the Congress contributes, at territorial level, to the main objectives of the Council of Europe: democracy, human rights and the rule of law;



We reiterate our conviction

that territorial communities and their elected representatives have become key economic and political players in our societies, and that the growing magnitude of the territorial dimension has led local and regional authorities to enter into a real partnership with governments and parliaments;

We are convinced

that the Congress advances human rights by urging communities and their elected representatives to create the best possible foundation for the respect of these rights and by encouraging them to build inclusive and intercultural communities;

We emphasise

that, in building this new environment, the Congress seeks to foster equal access to social rights, integration of migrants, protection of minorities, intercultural dialogue and the increased participation of citizens in democratic processes and decision-making at local level, in particular that of young people;

We firmly believe

that the Congress must be endowed with the adequate resources, in recognition of its role in consolidating and strengthening territorial democracy in Europe, to be able to pursue its mission effectively and must maintain a constant and constructive dialogue with the central authorities of Council of Europe member States in order to ensure cooperation between the territorial and national levels of governance which is of crucial importance for the effective functioning of democracy.

Resolution 287 (2009)