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Local and regional democracy in the Netherlands

Strasbourg, 26.03.2014 – The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe has examined a report of the situation of local and regional democracy in the Netherlands at its 26th session. The report follows a monitoring visit to the country from 14 to 16 May 2013 by Congress rapporteurs Artur Torres Pereira (Portugal, L, EPP/CCE) and Jean-Pierre Liouville (France, R, SOC) with a view to examining follow-up to the commitments made by the Netherlands in the area of local and regional democracy and decentralisation when it ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government in 1991. The rapporteurs praised the culture of compromise and negotiation prevailing in the Netherlands, which should serve as an example to other countries.

In the text adopted today, which made a positive assessment on the whole, the Congress recommends that the Netherlands authorities define the principle of local and regional self-government in domestic legislation and, as far as possible, in the Constitution, reinforce the "autonomous" and "proper" competences of municipal authorities, strengthen the mechanism of consultation between central government and the municipal and provincial authorities. The Netherlands authorities are also invited to amend the law on municipal and provincial finances and improve local taxation to guarantee local authorities greater autonomy.

"The first requirement of the Charter is that the principle of local self-government be recognised in law. We know that the system functions in practice and that, implicitly, the subsidiarity principle allows decentralisation. What we are pointing out is that legal guarantees are important for when it might no longer function as we wish", explained Artur Torres Pereira when presenting the report. For his part, Jean-Pierre Liouville emphasised that the 2013 Code on Inter-administrative relations, adopted after an agreement was concluded between the government and the two associations regarding matters of co-operation, co-ordination, mutual assistance and supervision, is also a most welcome development.

The Netherlands signed the European Charter of Local Self-Government on 7 January 1988 and ratified it on 20 March 1991. The Charter entered into force in respect of the Netherlands on 1 July 1991. The countries having ratified the Charter are bound by its provisions. The convention imposes respect for a minimum core of principles that form the first European foundation for local self-government. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe ensures that those principles are respected.

Document : [CG\(26\)7PROV](#)

More information : [File 26th Session](#)

The Congress has two chambers, the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions. It brings together 318 full and 318 substitute members representing more than 200 000 European territorial communities.

President of the Congress: Herwig Van Staa (Austria, EPP/DC), President of the Chamber of Regions: Nataliya Romanova (Ukraine, IDLG), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities: Jean-Claude Frécon (France, SOC)
Political Groups: Socialist Group (SOC), – Christian Democrats in the EU (EPP/CD), Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (ILDG), European Conservatives & Reformists Group (ECR)