

Press Release

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

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Territorial democracy in Russia: Congress calls for restoring direct elections of regional governors

Strasbourg, 28.10.2010 – Russia must reintroduce direct elections for regional governors, revoke the recent law concerning the dismissal of mayors, and improve legal safeguards to ensure that local authorities are not subject to excessive supervision by higher levels.

This was the thrust of the recommendation adopted today at the 19th Session of the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Strasbourg. The vote followed a debate on the report by Christopher Newbury (United Kingdom, EPP/CD) and Knud Andersen (Denmark, ILDG) on local and regional democracy in the Russian Federation.

Congress members recognised the advances made in implementing the new legislation on local self-government in Russia, in modernising local and regional government and in training local elected representatives and administrators. However, the Congress recommended that the Russian authorities continue to improve the division of competences between federal, regional and local authorities and reduce the number and scope of shared competences; provide local authorities with appropriate financial resources or authorise them to raise revenue; ensure a more equitable distribution of revenues for local authorities and rural settlements, through improved equalisation arrangements; and implement measures to eradicate corruption at local level.

It was also recommended to prepare a legal framework for the creation and operation of agglomerations of municipalities, to facilitate the registration of new political parties at local and regional level and allow independent candidates to stand in all local and regional elections, and to increase citizen participation in local governance, in particular by ratifying the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

Local authorities must be consulted on all issues concerning them, such as in particular the merger of settlements, and the Congress, together with the Council of Europe's Venice Commission, must be consulted on any draft laws that might contradict the European Charter of Local Self-Government, particularly those to be passed by regional parliaments in Russia, the recommendation said.

The previous recommendation on the situation of local and regional democracy in Russia was adopted by the Congress in May 2004. In November 2007, the Congress held an exchange of view with Russian Vice-Minister of Regional Development Vitaly Shipov on the recommendation's implementation.

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: Yavuz Mildon (Turkey, EPP/CD), President of the Chamber of Regions: Ludmila Sfirloaga (Romania, SOC),

President of the Chamber of Local Authorities: Ian Micallef (Malta, EPP/CD).

Political Groups: Socialist Group (SOC), Group of the European People's Party – Christian Democrats (EPP/CD), Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (ILDG).