

The Bureau of the Congress

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Co-operation activities of the Congress in member States and neighbouring regions

Situation at 12 October 2017

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Introduction

In 2011, the Bureau of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities adopted a new orientation² for the Congress' activities by contributing to the Council of Europe Action Plans, which support member States and States in neighbouring regions in the implementation of legal and institutional reforms, as in line with Council of Europe standards. Co-operation activities aim to provide practical responses to the shortcomings and problems identified by the various monitoring bodies of the Council of Europe, with regards to local democracy, and in particular during monitoring visits on the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-government (ECTS No.122). The *Guidelines for co-operation activities*, approved by the Bureau of the Congress on 23 March 2015,³ further specified the framework and the principles of such co-operation activities, whose importance was reiterated in the Congress priorities 2017-2020.

The co-operation activities complement the statutory activities of the Congress, its Chambers and Committees. They provide a link between the recommendations and resolutions adopted at the plenary sessions and the situation on the ground, and are based on political dialogue and the monitoring of the provisions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. Due to its expertise and experience in local and regional democracy, the Congress is in a position to provide local and regional authorities, and their associations, with the opportunity and means to acquire new skills and 'know-how', and to strengthen their institutional capacities.

Several types of intervention are undertaken: programmes and activities implemented bilaterally in the framework of the Council of Europe Action Plans for specific member States or within the Council of Europe Policy towards neighbouring regions,⁴ and those implemented multilaterally in the framework of specific partnerships such as the European Union's Eastern Partnership, and the Southern Neighbourhood. Moreover, the activities organised within the Council of Europe Policy towards neighbouring regions have been implemented following the creation by the Congress of the status of Partner for Local Democracy in 2014.⁵

The Congress serves as an indisputable reference point in local and regional democracy, whose expertise and experience are widely recognised. The beneficiaries, donors, as well as other bodies of the Council of Europe, have all recognised the added-value of the Congress to the "local democracy" dimension in the Council of Europe Action Plans. This recognition has led to a substantial increase in the number of Congress co-operation projects. Since October 2012, the total amount contributed by donors is €5 128 305.⁶

Peer exchanges are the main component of the Congress' intervention, for which members of the Congress have a key role to play. Since 2011, over fifty local and regional elected officials representing twenty-three member States have taken part in co-operation projects implemented by the Congress. Where necessary, their contribution and the work of the Congress Secretariat are complemented by experts of the Group of Independent Experts on the European Charter of Local Self-Government, and experts from the beneficiary countries or other European countries.

As most of the projects currently implemented by the Congress are about to be completed, it is therefore timely to take stock of the results achieved, in order to prepare the future contribution of the Congress to the Council of Europe work in the field.

This document presents the results that the Congress has attained in partnership with the beneficiaries, and, in this respect, summarises the main developments made by the Congress within each of the themes highlighted in the Guidelines for co-operation activities, i.e. fostering dialogue between central government and local and regional authorities, building the capacities of local and regional elected authorities, making young people aware of the principles of local democracy, and learning by doing through involvement in local initiatives to improve governance. Finally, this

² Framework document for co-operation activities of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities – Document CG/BUR/2011(21)4): <https://rm.coe.int/168071aeb0>

³ Document CG/BUR/2015(27)31

⁴ Report on the implementation of the Council of Europe Policy towards neighbouring regions:

https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=0900001680712371

⁵ Resolution 376(2014) : <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&id=2248385&Site=COE&direct=true>

⁶ Details of the contributions per project can be found in the appendix.

document also takes stock of the activities implemented in the context of the Council of Europe Policy towards neighbouring regions.

Themes and areas of co-operation

The forty-seven member States of the Council of Europe are encouraged to apply all provisions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, as well as the thematic recommendations of the Congress. However, it is important to respond to the specific needs of the beneficiaries and to adapt the methodology to the local context. Co-operation activities are therefore the outcome of an approach based on dialogue and partnership.

1. *Encouraging dialogue between local/regional authorities and central government, building the capacities of national associations of local/regional authorities*

The right of local and regional authorities to be consulted by central government is one of the main provisions of the Charter. The integration of this right into member States' legislation and the complexity involved in putting it into practice are regularly underlined in the monitoring of the application of the Charter. The right to consultation is therefore a priority for the Congress; and in addition to the numerous recommendations and resolutions adopted on this subject, new guidelines on consultation mechanisms are currently being drafted.

The aim of the Congress is not to promote a uniform consultation process across Europe. It is up to States and their local and regional authorities to decide on the consultation model which best suits the context in their country. The relationship between local and national levels is asymmetrical: indeed, central authorities represent the interests of the State as a whole, while local and regional authorities represent those of the citizens living in their territory. The Congress therefore defends the role of national associations of local and regional authorities as key partners of the central government and of the authorities they represent. It is the associations' duty to advocate the interests of local and regional authorities and to hold internal consultations with their members on subjects relevant to local and regional democracy.

The Congress offers its expertise to stakeholders who wish to strengthen local and regional authorities' right to be consulted by central government. It also provides support to national associations of local and regional authorities who wish to take steps to ensure that they have an impact on the dialogue with different levels of government. The following detailed examples highlight the Congress' various interventions in this respect, be it the introduction of an institutionalised consultation mechanism or measures to build associations' advocacy capacities, a political mediation between several associations of local and regional authorities, or the strengthening of the institutional and/or administrative capacities of an association.

Albania was the first member State to seek the Congress' assistance in improving and increasing consultation of local authorities. The Albanian authorities embarked, in 2013, on major reforms in terms of administrative and territorial decentralisation and organisation. Their determination has been decisive. A Consultative Council of Local and Central Authorities was established in January 2017: it is an institutionalised consultative body where national associations of local and regional authorities represent all local and regional authorities on a parity basis.

The Congress provided legislative assistance, including a long and intense process of political mediation, which made it possible to incorporate the right of local and regional authorities to be consulted into the 2015-2020 National Decentralisation Strategy and subsequently into the organic law on local self-government adopted in December 2015. It led to the drafting of the Council of Ministers' Decision on the establishment of the Consultative Council in late 2016. It was within the framework of this new body that the Albanian associations of local and regional authorities were provided with the opportunity to present their proposals on the law on local finances, most of which were taken into account in the final text which came into force in May 2017.

This result corresponds to the initial objective of the project to strengthen the legislative process and decentralisation by means of increased dialogue with the central authorities and co-operation between local and regional authorities. However, the Congress' intervention took place in an extremely polarised and tense political context. Local and regional authorities, represented by strongly

polarised associations, were neither in a position to present their concerns to central government nor to identify joint lines of action.

Since 2012, the Congress has maintained regular dialogue with all stakeholders, including the political parties, with a view to the setting up of a joint platform for dialogue, which would bring together all national associations of local authorities. The Congress had to use the various means available, in particular the members and the leadership of the Congress, and various Albanian and European experts, to contribute to numerous exchanges, meetings or consultations with the mayors in all Albanian local authorities.

Although this mediation, met with outbreaks of political tension, finally led to the establishment and institutionalisation of a genuine mechanism of consultation and dialogue, the representation of local authorities on a pluralistic platform remains a challenge in Albania. It is with hope that the national and local authorities do their utmost to ensure that the Albanian Consultative Council becomes a sustainable mechanism, which will serve as an example for other member States.

Strengthening the right of local and regional authorities to be consulted also requires strengthening the capacities of their associations. The co-operation with the Communities Association of **Armenia** (CAA) highlights the Congress' contribution in this respect.

The activities implemented together with the CAA pursue several objectives: to support the various bodies of the Association and its secretariat in developing their institutional capacities; to motivate the members of the Association to become involved in advocating with the central government by providing them with the means to do so; to promote the establishment of a network of institutional partners; and improve communication with the public.

An evaluation of the CAA's situation in 2014 highlighted the need for the Association to develop the culture of participation and consultation of its members, and to actively involve them in communal forms of decision-making. The Congress' mission in this regard was thus to convince the governing bodies of the Association and its members of the added value of open debates, in which criticism can be voiced, and of the need to establish internal procedures to ensure transparency of their actions, and human and financial resource management. Initial efforts in this area have been effective, leading, in 2016, to the adoption of a new five-year strategy for the Association, the revision of its statutes and, in 2017, the holding of its first general assembly for a number of years. This general assembly provided the opportunity to elect the President and the statutory bodies of the Association.

Following these reforms, the Association addressed recommendations to central government on the draft legislation on local self-government, local referendums and inter-municipal trade unions. Some of these recommendations have been taken into account in the draft legislation. In September 2017, in the context of a territorial and administrative reform, the CAA again appealed to the government to allow it to take part in the preparation of an action plan on decentralisation in Armenia.

The CAA, again with the backing of the Congress, is henceforth focusing on the need to ensure greater transparency in its management and in its decision-making bodies. This would involve the introduction of new procedures for organising work and internal consultation. Moreover, the establishment of committees and thematic working groups should enable its members to participate in, and make a greater contribution to, the work of the Association and thus better defend their interests vis-à-vis central government. The CAA is also extending the range of services it offers to members, such as assistance in preparing and implementing projects.

At the same time, the Association is continuing to develop its administrative structures and its network of experts, as well as to improve its public image and its communication capacities – with the introduction of a new graphic charter, the launching of its new website and the organisation of a joint CAA/Government Forum on local self-government in Armenia in November 2017. In this regard, the CAA seeks to enhance its status as a key actor in Armenian local democracy, both with the central authorities and with its institutional partners, as well as the general public.

In addition to these two examples, the approach taken by the Congress is to establish close and lasting relations with the different national associations in member States. This applies, for example, to **Ukraine**, where regular meetings are held between representatives of the associations, in particular the Association of Ukrainian Towns and Cities (AUC), members of the Ukrainian delegation

to the Congress, and the beneficiaries of the project implemented in Ukraine. In **Georgia**, co-operation with the National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (NALAG) in 2017, led to the drafting of proposals for amendments to the Code of Local Self-Government concerning citizens' participation in local affairs.

The Congress also encourages exchanges between the associations of different countries. For example, in June 2017, under the auspices of the Congress, NALAG (Georgia), the Congress of Local Authorities of Moldova (CALM-Republic of Moldova) and the AUC (Ukraine) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to confirm their intention to strengthen their co-operation. The representatives of the national associations of **Armenia, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine**, as well as representatives of **Azerbaijan and Belarus**, take an active role in the work of a Community of Practice on Local Democracy,⁷ which meets regularly to discuss ways to make real improvements to the quality of local democracy, particularly in the current context of administrative and territorial reforms.

2. Building the capacities of local and regional elected officials as agents of change

Delivering meaningful, successful decentralisation requires ongoing political support from all the relevant stakeholders, both authorities and citizens. It also requires these stakeholders to have a sense of ownership over, and be deeply committed to, local governance in keeping with European principles.

Mayors and local councillors are the level of government closest to citizens and have primary responsibility for promoting the principles of democracy, in particular local democracy, and the values of their community. As well as complying with national legislation and exercising the competences assigned to them, local and regional elected officials are also responsible for ensuring transparency in public action, adopting appropriate measures to prevent corruption, and developing democratic tools for enhancing citizen participation in local affairs.

That is the basic premise behind the Congress secretariat's efforts to design dedicated activities for mayors and local councillors. These activities help to promote the principles of the Charter and good governance, and to support mayors and councillors in adopting innovative and participatory approaches, in response to citizens' wishes and needs.

The Congress has developed a "leadership" programme in the form of a series of workshops aimed at facilitating peer-to-peer exchange and the sharing of good practice with Congress members. The programme is complemented by presentations by national and international experts on specific topics. Focusing on themes such as the role and responsibilities of elected officials, communication with citizens, promoting values within the local area, and effective and ethical strategic decision-making, these discussions afford participants an opportunity to identify ways of putting these principles into practice and changing how local affairs are managed.

Armenia was the first country to be offered a programme of this kind. The scheme, in which some 20 mayors took part from 2013 to 2016, helped to create a space for experimenting with citizen participation.⁸ At the project's closing conference in December 2016, the Armenian mayors acknowledged that they were now in a better position to involve citizens in decision-making and in the development of their community. They emphasised the importance of interaction with Congress members, who encouraged them in their drive to innovate, as a way of bringing about meaningful change in their community.

This approach has also been very successful in Ukraine, where, since 2014, over one hundred and fifty mayors and two hundred local councillors have benefitted from Congress activities. Likewise, under the regional programme "Partnership for Good Governance", over sixty mayors from **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine** have taken part in thematic activities and peer-to-peer exchanges on public ethics, transparency and citizen participation.

⁷ Community of practice on local democracy – network involving experts and practitioners in the fields of local governance and ethics, representatives of national associations of local authorities and civil society.

⁸ The experiences of Armenian elected officials have been compiled into a publication entitled *Toolkit on Citizen Participation* for the attention of their peers: <https://rm.coe.int/16806cf43c>

The Congress's peer-to-peer exchange programme helps to disseminate new practice and to forge closer ties between elected officials in the same country. This modus operandi has also led to the creation of various policy-making platforms and opportunities for experimentation. The inspiration that mayors and local councillors draw from it, the improved understanding of the principles of local democracy and their rights, and the heightened awareness of what can be achieved through co-operation and joint action encourages them to invest more in their local populations, and in upholding the interests of those populations, including within national associations.

3. Making young local leaders aware of the principles of local democracy

The Revised Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, adopted by the Congress in 2003, states that "participation in the democratic life of any community is about more than voting or standing for election, although these are important elements. Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society". Guided by this notion of participation in public affairs, the Congress has developed co-operation activities geared towards youth participation. These activities are aimed at young people who are already engaged at local level, and who have been elected to the local council for the first time or who might run for office in future elections, or who represent civil society or the media.

The seminars for young local leaders were designed in response to the situation in **Ukraine**, where a strong desire for renewal of the political class had been making itself felt. Since 2014, for example, nearly three hundred young Ukrainians have taken part in the exchanges proposed by the Congress. Similar activities have also been trialled in **Armenia**, where around fifty individuals have taken part.

The seminars have a number of objectives: firstly to make young people aware of the principles of local and regional democracy, while at the same time supporting democratic renewal, secondly to give participants an opportunity to enhance their capacity to develop and implement initiatives involving both citizens and local authorities and, lastly, to give them the desire and the means to participate in local and/or regional elections. Each seminar is followed by a brainstorming workshop at which participants develop ideas for practical initiatives to be implemented back in their own communities.

In addition, every year since 2014, the Congress has been inviting a delegation of young people who attended the seminars in **Ukraine** to take part in study visits organised alongside the World Forum for Democracy. To date, some sixty young Ukrainians have been able to meet and talk with elected officials, journalists and activists from other countries, and to learn about good practice in local governance from French and German local authorities.

An assessment of the impact of the youth activities is currently under way in **Ukraine**. Like local elected officials who have taken part in activities implemented by the Congress, the first-hand accounts of former participants highlight the importance of contact with other young people, and show how their meetings with Congress members have inspired them. Facilitating interaction between these key players in local and regional democracy in Ukraine has led to the creation of an informal support network, where participants in the same activity continue to share advice and good practice after the seminars have ended. It was important, therefore, for the Congress to encourage the continued operation of this network, and to induce young local leaders, mayors and municipal councillors from different regions of Ukraine to carry on working together.

The first Local Democracy Forum, held in Ukraine in July 2017, marked a first step in this direction. Mayors, local councillors and young local leaders got the chance to discuss topical issues related to the principles of good local governance, in particular youth participation in local public affairs, transparency in public decision-making, gender equality or the implementation of new democratic tools. Among other things, the discussions provided participants with a better insight into everyone's role and the challenges encountered in their mutual efforts to build local democracy in Ukraine. The Forum ended with the adoption of a joint declaration in which young local leaders, mayors and municipal councillors reiterated their commitment and expressed their desire for closer co-operation with the Congress.

The Congress secretariat will endeavour, through new co-operation projects, to meet this demand in an appropriate manner, not only in terms of the format of future activities aimed at elected officials and young local leaders in Ukraine, but also by targeting other beneficiary countries.

4. Local pilot initiatives

Local democracy, which is crucial to the proper functioning of a democratic society, cannot prosper unless local and regional elected officials are required to act with integrity and to set an example. They must set aside their own personal interests when making decisions and bear in mind that the mandate conferred on them by the ballot box is only temporary. It is crucial that local and regional authorities respond to citizens' needs and expectations quickly, and in a transparent, ethical and accountable manner, while at the same time encouraging greater citizen participation based on regular and open exchanges.

In addition to the policy-making platform and "leadership" activities described above, the Congress offers mayors a space for experimentation and "learning by doing", along with operational support for developing ways and means of delivering good local governance. Quite apart from funding local initiatives, for example, the Congress offers pilot local authorities tailor-made support and expertise, and enables them to share results, experiences and new practices, in a variety of ways.

In **Armenia**, four towns were selected in 2015, at the end of the "leadership" programme, to explore different aspects of citizen participation (local development priorities, infrastructure projects, budgetary planning). The idea was also to implement new provisions of the organic law adopted in 2013, following ratification of the Additional Protocol to the Charter of Local Self-Government (STE No. 206), and to embrace new processes for citizen participation in decision-making.

Encouraged by its experience in Armenia, the Congress employed a similar arrangement in the "Partnership for Good Governance" between the European Union and the Council of Europe, thus enabling twelve more municipalities (three per country, in **Armenia, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine**) to devise procedures and adopt mechanisms for more effective and integrated governance, and greater citizen participation.⁹ These initiatives are led by mayors interested in delivering meaningful change in their municipalities, who then receive support from their peers and benefit from specialised expertise in implementing local projects. They are a continuation of the leadership programme conducted in these countries and the regional seminars on public ethics and citizen participation.

In addition, in July 2017 the Congress selected five more municipalities following a call for projects in **Ukraine**.¹⁰ The mayors concerned are invited to adopt a more transparent and participatory mode of governance and to promote a gender perspective in their public policies.

Co-operation activities as part of the Council of Europe's policy towards neighbouring regions

The co-operation programme "South-Med Partnership" was adopted by the Congress Bureau on 10 February 2017¹¹ with the aim of pursuing co-operation projects with southern Mediterranean countries, in particular Morocco and Tunisia, following the Secretariat's visits to Rabat and Tunis in November 2016. In December 2016 and in February 2017, the Bureau appointed a Thematic Spokesperson and three substitute Spokespersons on the South-Med Partnership. In this context, the Partner for Local Democracy status introduced by the Congress in 2014 is a means of strengthening political dialogue, decentralised co-operation and experience sharing, by enabling members of the delegations from the beneficiary countries to participate in the work of the Congress without voting rights.

⁹ The call for projects can be consulted at the following address:

<https://wcd.coe.int/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&InstranetImage=2950123&SecMode=1&DocId=2391056&Usage=2>

¹⁰ The call for projects can be consulted at the following address:

<https://mycloud.coe.int/index.php/s/Dw70WwSNnwpt3Xg#pdfviewer>

¹¹ For further information, see document [CG32\(2017\)26](#) "Congress South-Med Partnership", submitted to members of the Congress on 16 March 2017 for information.

This programme is built upon the following five pillars and seeks to put the Congress' expertise and the experience of its members at the service of strengthening local and regional governance in the southern Mediterranean countries:

- enhancing political dialogue between European elected representatives and their counterparts from the South and increasing decentralised co-operation between local and regional authorities on the two sides of the Mediterranean. This enhanced dialogue and co-operation will also facilitate exchanges of best practices between local and regional elected representatives;
- legislative assistance and expertise in drafting and implementing legislation concerning decentralisation and local and regional governance; and assisting with the electoral process and, where applicable, observing local and regional elections;
- awareness-raising and training for local and regional elected representatives and their officials, with a particular focus on the role of women and young local leaders;
- strengthening the role and capacities of associations of local and regional authorities (especially in terms of leadership);
- supporting the development of participatory democracy, with a particular focus on the role of young people, women and civil society.

Among other things, the Congress helped draw up the law on advanced regionalisation in **Morocco**, adopted in May 2015 and which paved the way for local and regional elections in September 2015, and was involved in drafting the "local democracy" section of **Tunisia's** new Constitution, adopted in January 2014. In December 2016, the Congress contributed to the discussion on Tunisia's draft legislation on local elections, through comparative research on the right to vote of members of the armed forces; the enactment of this legislation in January 2017 has prepared the ground for Tunisia's first-ever local elections in 2018. In July 2017, the Congress commented on four aspects of the draft Local Government Code (competences, local goods and services, finances and control) and, in September 2017, discussed these texts with members of the Assembly of People's Representatives. The Congress has also been asked by the Directorate General of Local Authorities to help prepare seven implementing decrees for the Code, in October-November 2017.

In order to promote the principles of good local governance, a joint study visit for a delegation of Moroccan and Tunisian partners took place during the 32nd plenary session of the Congress in March 2017. The visit provided an opportunity for peer-to-peer exchanges on the principles of local and regional democracy, and on the framework required for decentralised co-operation. Among those taking part in the exchanges were some key players in this area, namely the presidents of the Association of the Regions of Morocco (ARM) and of the Moroccan Association of Presidents of Municipal Councils (AMPCC), the mayor of the City of Rabat, the Director General for Local Authorities, and representatives of the Parliament and the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE) in the case of **Morocco**, and the Chair of the Commission on Decentralisation of the Assembly of People's Representatives (ARP), the president of the Independent High Authority for Elections (ISIE), the president and executive director of the National Federation of Tunisian Towns and Cities (FNVT), the Director General for Local Authorities (DGCL), and the director of the Decentralisation Training and Support Centre (CFAD) in the case of **Tunisia**. During this visit, moreover, each of the delegations expressed an interest in exploring the possibility of obtaining "Partner for Local Democracy" status with the Congress.

Specific activities were also organised to support local and regional government associations in Morocco and Tunisia. A study on the various consultation mechanisms found in Europe has been prepared, in order to identify the most appropriate consultation models for the beneficiaries.

In addition, the Congress is considering staging various conferences and events to promote citizen participation in local public affairs and women's participation in politics at local level.

Lastly, a number of key documents on European principles and standards in the field of local democracy have been produced in Arabic, not least the European Charter on Local Self-Government, the revised European Charter for the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, and the European Code of Conduct for the political integrity of local and regional elected representatives. These documents are also used by other Council of Europe entities in their work.

Conclusion

Through its co-operation activities, the Congress contributes to promoting local and regional democracy in the beneficiary countries, thus encouraging implementation of the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the recommendations and resolutions adopted by the Congress.

Its approach based on regular political dialogue, peer-to-peer exchanges and proven expertise helps to create a network of players committed to improving the quality of local and regional democracy across Europe, as well as in the Council of Europe's neighbouring regions.

The Congress provides local and regional authorities, their associations, and young people engaged at local level with a platform where they can express their aspirations, needs and concerns, and share their experiences and innovative practices with Congress members and with each other. This proximity to ordinary citizens opens up new avenues to explore and feeds into the Congress's work and thematic debates.

This operational component of the Congress' actions is a response to growing demand from beneficiaries, and affords an opportunity to support them in addressing the challenges facing them today. It is vital that the Congress continue engaging in these outreach activities and to this end, the Congress Secretariat is currently developing proposals for new bilateral projects (in Armenia, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) but also projects focusing on cross-cutting themes related to local governance, such as the fight against corruption, promoting human rights at local level, gender equality, integration of all the various population groups living on the same territory and combating radicalisation.

APPENDIX – SUMMARY OF PROJECTS (Situation at 12 October 2017)**I. Bilateral projects implemented in Council of Europe member countries****a. Projects in progress**

ARMENIA	Council of Europe Action Plan for Armenia 2015-2018 ¹²
Project title	Enhancing the capacities of the Communities Association of Armenia (CAA)
Dates	November 2014 – December 2018
Budget	1 104 500 €
Funding	Federal Government of Switzerland
Objectives	<p>To establish the regular participation of local authorities in framing national policies within a sustainable institutional framework and to formalise a consultation mechanism between the CAA and the Armenian government;</p> <p>To support the CAA in the process of achieving financial sustainability;</p> <p>To strengthen the capacity of the CAA to improve its image as a recognised political institution and communicate effectively.</p>
Main activities	<p>Consolidation of the CAA's decision-making procedures to make them more transparent and democratic: revision of the CAA Charter in 2016 and clear definition of the functions of the governing bodies, new elections for the Presidency in 2017, Republican Council (108 members), Board (36 members) and five standing committees, with a gender representation quota;</p> <p>Frequent meetings of the governing bodies and consultations with members (regional seminars and specialised working groups);</p> <p>1st General Assembly for more than 10 years organised in February 2017, with high attendance (400 mayors);</p> <p>4 meetings of the Republican Council and 2 meetings of the Board in 2017;</p> <p>Adoption of 2 joint declarations addressed to the Government;</p> <p>Establishment of working groups on the amalgamation of local authorities, as well as tourism and economic development;</p> <p>Strengthening of the association's capacities to advocate, with input from experts and implementation of trainings;</p> <p>Modernisation of the association's communication tools (visual identity, website etc.);</p> <p>Restructuring of internal financial procedures;</p> <p>Forum for local democracy organised in cooperation with the government on Self-Government Day (10 November), themes: transfer of competencies to local level and financial decentralisation.</p>

¹² <https://rm.coe.int/1680471d82>

UKRAINE	Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine 2015-2017 ¹³
Project title	Promoting local democracy in Ukraine ¹⁴
Dates	July 2015 – December 2017
Budget	1 978 374 €
Funding	Action Plan for Ukraine donors ¹⁵
Objectives	<p>To support local elected representatives in the strengthening of their institutional and leadership capacities, to encourage them to be more responsive, be accountable in the exercise of their powers and better involve citizens in their policies;</p> <p>To support the implementation of local self-government reform by strengthening the capacities of local elected representatives to provide better coordination, planning and management;</p> <p>To promote active democratic citizenship and support the implementation of local democratic participatory processes, including the observation of local elections.</p>
Main activities	<p>6 "Mayors, leaders for change" workshops, involving over 130 Ukrainian mayors;</p> <p>6 "Councillors: everyday actors of local democracy" workshops, with over 200 participants in total;</p> <p>1 workshop organised specifically for the municipal council of the city of Kyiv (50 participants);</p> <p>3 round tables organised in partnership with the Ukrainian delegation to the Congress and the Association of Ukrainian Cities;</p> <p>1 round table on good governance in metropolitan areas;</p> <p>7 seminars for over 200 young local leaders;</p> <p>3 study visits organised for 50 young local leaders, at the occasion of the World Forum for Democracy;</p> <p>The first Forum for local democracy in Ukraine, with the participation of around 100 mayors, municipal councillors and young local leaders;</p> <p>5 municipalities selected to implement local initiatives for more transparent and participatory governance (involving financial support, input from specialist experts, exchanges between peers and a study visit by mayors during the 33rd session of the Congress).</p> <p>Study on gender equality in local political life in Ukraine (under preparation);</p> <p>Meeting and debate with representatives of the Ukrainian Parliament on the law on the status of municipal councillors (planned for November 2017);</p> <p>Seminar for exchange of good practices following the implementation of initiatives supported by the Congress (planned for December 2017).</p>

¹³ <https://rm.coe.int/16802f600e>

¹⁴ This project is a follow-up to activities implemented within the framework of the "Immediate measures package for Ukraine" in 2014 (275 969 €) and the project entitled "Strengthening the capacity of local authorities in Ukraine" in 2015, funded by Denmark (184 462 €)

¹⁵ 20 member States: Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Czech Republic, Romania, United Kingdom, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey

b. Completed projects

ALBANIA	Cooperation programme for Albania 2012-2014 ¹⁶ Cooperation programme for Albania 2015-2017 ¹⁷
Project title	Strengthening local and regional government structures and cooperation between local elected representatives in Albania ¹⁸
Congress Component	<i>To build a sustainable, pluralistic and unified platform of dialogue for local government representatives in Albania</i>
Dates	October 2012 – June 2017
Budget	1 630 473 € (of which 637 018 € for the Congress component)
Funding	Federal Government of Switzerland
Objectives	Strengthening local and regional government structures; Strengthening cooperation between local elected representatives in Albania to ensure effective decentralisation and local self-government, in line with the principles enshrined in the European Charter of Local Self-Government
Main activities	3 regional workshops for 150 local government representatives to contribute to the ongoing legislative process, as regards territorial and administrative reform, and the organisation of 5 round tables between experts and representatives of municipalities on the same topic; Development of a report on the functions of local authorities and their finances, which contains 49 recommendations on local self-government; Study on reinforcing the political role of local and regional authorities and their associations in Albania, with 11 guidelines for improved cooperation between Albanian associations for local authorities; 3 workshops on "Mayors, leaders for change"; Study visit by 8 municipal representatives to Switzerland to observe Swiss practices of direct democracy; Pilot initiatives on direct democracy in the municipalities of Tirana and Mallakastra: 15 meetings with 250 citizens, schoolchildren, members of municipal staff and municipal councillors; Study visit by 5 representatives of local and regional authorities and 1 representative of the Latvian Agency for Implementation of Territorial Reform to observe the functioning of consultation in the country and the role of the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments; 4 regional workshops to inform Albanian mayors of the setting up of the Consultative Council and explain how it works.

¹⁶ <https://rm.coe.int/16802ed0b9>

¹⁷ https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016805c10bc

¹⁸ This programme was implemented jointly with the Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform, a unit of the Directorate General of Democracy of the Council of Europe Secretariat.

ARMENIA	Council of Europe Action Plan for Armenia 2012-2014 ¹⁹ Council of Europe Action Plan for Armenia 2015-2018 ²⁰
Project title	Support for the consolidation of local democracy in Armenia ²¹
<i>Congress Component</i>	<i>Strengthening local elected representatives' leadership</i>
Dates	October 2013 - December 2016 ²²
Budget	1 579 301 € (of which 606 419 € for the Congress component)
Funding	Government of Denmark
Objectives	To establish a legal framework in line with European principles and standards of local democracy; To raise awareness of these principles and standards; To strengthen ethical governance and the prevention of corruption; To reinforce leadership and governance skills and capacities of local authorities; To strengthen the involvement of young people and create mechanisms enabling citizens to participate in decision-making at local level.
Main activities	Consultation with mayors and councillors at the occasion of the adoption of Recommendation 351 on local democracy in Armenia in 2014, resulting in a "Call to the government of Armenia", made public in January 2015, by the three associations dealing with local self-government issues; 2 series of regional seminars on the participation of citizens in decision-making at local level in Armenia, attended by over 170 Armenian mayors and councillors; Leadership programme for a group of Armenian mayors in the form of 6 thematic interactive workshops aimed at supporting them in their role as leaders of change; Micro-financing programme for the implementation of citizen participation initiatives in 4 Armenian communities, to enable mayors having participated in the leadership programme to put the skills developed into practice - these initiatives were followed up by peer reviews; 3 regional workshops for newly elected municipal councillors and councillors of merged communities; 2 seminars on European principles of local democracy for young local leaders; Development and publication of a <i>Toolbox for citizens' participation</i> ; Closing ceremony for the project to provide the Armenian participants (mayors, councillors and young local leaders) with an opportunity to present and share their experience with their peers, local and international experts, representatives of the Armenian government, associations of local authorities, as well as members of the Congress

¹⁹ <https://rm.coe.int/16802ed0ba>

²⁰ <https://rm.coe.int/1680471d82>

²¹ This programme was implemented jointly with the Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform, a unit of the Directorate General of Democracy of the Council of Europe Secretariat.

²² A follow-up to this project was submitted for funding in January 2017 and is still pending.

II. Multilateral projects implemented in the framework of specific partnerships

Partnership for good governance between the European Union and the Council of Europe for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus (2015-2017)²³

Project title	Strengthening institutional frameworks for good governance
Dates	January 2015 – December 2017
Budget	1 285 000 €
Funding	European Union
Objectives	<p>To support the ongoing process of local self-government reform in the beneficiary countries;</p> <p>To promote the adoption of ethical standards and practices by local elected representatives in the region;</p> <p>To support the alignment of local administrations' financial and human resources management with European standards.</p>
Main activities	<p>3 meetings of the projects' Steering Committee;</p> <p>Introductory conference in Tbilisi, Georgia, with around 100 participants from the 6 Eastern Partnership countries (local elected representatives, members of the Congress, experts, representatives of national associations of local and regional authorities and civil society);</p> <p>Study on the roles and responsibilities of mayors and local councillors in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus;</p> <p>7 national workshops for 14 Armenian, 9 Georgian, 20 Moldovan and 19 Ukrainian mayors, on defining and leading successful public policies based on ethical values and standards;</p> <p>Regional seminar on "Local public ethics: from vision to action", Kyiv, Ukraine, with around 80 participants (local elected representatives, members of the Congress, experts, representatives of national associations of local and regional authorities and civil society);</p> <p>Regional seminar on "Citizen participation: an essential tool in local democracy", Chisinau, Republic of Moldova, with around 50 participants (local elected representatives, members of the Congress, experts, representatives of national associations of local and regional authorities and civil society);</p> <p>4 meetings of the Community of practice on local democracy in the Eastern Partnership countries in Strasbourg, France, and Kyiv, Ukraine;</p> <p>Conference on local governance in Georgia and the effectiveness of the institutionalised mechanisms for citizen participation, for around 52 participants (representatives of central and local authorities, officials, international organisations, NALAG, members of the Congress and experts);</p> <p>12 municipalities (in Armenia, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) selected (benefiting from support from their peers and input from experts) to implement local initiatives for more efficient and accountable governance;</p> <p>Preparation of handbooks on transparency and citizen participation for local and regional representatives in Armenia, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine (under development);</p> <p>Seminar for exchange of good practices following the implementation of initiatives supported by the Congress (planned for December 2017).</p>

²³ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/programmes/eu-pgg>

III. Projects implemented in the framework of the Council of Europe's policy towards neighbouring regions

MOROCCO	Neighbourhood Partnership with Morocco 2015-2017 ²⁴
Project title	Strengthening local and regional democracy in Morocco
Dates	January 2016 – December 2017
Budget	200 000 €
Funding	Norway, Estonia, France, Italy, Liechtenstein, Malta, Monaco and Portugal
Objectives	<p>To strengthen the implementation of local and regional democracy in Morocco by enhancing the capacities of local elected representatives and their associations;</p> <p>To enhance the capacities of local and regional associations to defend their interests, particularly in the regionalisation process;</p> <p>To promote and raise awareness of European standards of local and regional democracy.</p>
Main activities	<p>Study visit during the 32nd session of the Congress (Strasbourg, 27 to 30 March 2017);</p> <p>Study on the role of national associations of local and regional authorities in the national consultation mechanisms in Europe, with a view to the development of such a mechanism in Morocco and Tunisia;</p> <p>Study on the powers and responsibilities of local and regional authorities in Morocco and their training resources, with a view to the setting up of a training mechanism for local and regional elected representatives (future project);</p> <p>Study on the concept of "study tours" for local and regional elected representatives and their staff, prepared to serve as a basis for the study visit of Moroccan regional elected representatives to the Grand Est region of France planned for December 2017, and for other future visits.</p> <p>Organisation of a conference with the city of Rabat on the integration of migrants at local level (November 2017) and a colloquy with the Moroccan Parliament on the European Charter of Local Self-Government (November 2017).</p>

²⁴ <https://rm.coe.int/16802f7c60>

TUNISIA	Neighbourhood Partnership with Tunisia 2015-2017 ²⁵
Project title	Promoting local and regional democracy in Tunisia
Dates	January 2016 – December 2017
Budget	100 000 €
Funding	Norway, Estonia, France, Italy, Monaco and Portugal
Objectives	<p>To improve and strengthen the implementation of local democracy in Tunisia;</p> <p>To support the implementation of democratic processes at local level, including the observing of local elections;</p> <p>To promote and raise awareness of European standards of local democracy, particularly the European Charter of Local Self-Government.</p>
Main activities	<p>Revision of the Charter of the National Federation of Tunisian cities and preparation of a manual of internal procedures and rules (in progress);</p> <p>Study visit during the 32nd session of the Congress (Strasbourg, 27-30 March 2017);</p> <p>Study on the role of national associations of local and regional authorities in national consultation mechanisms in Europe, with a view to the development of such a mechanism in Morocco and Tunisia;</p> <p>International conference on "Women in local politics" (Tunis, 26-27 September 2017) intended to promote the exchange of knowledge and better practices regarding the role of women in politics at local level and the building of their capacities, with a view to the next local elections;</p> <p>Legislative assistance towards the draft local government code submitted to the Assembly of the Representatives of the People and a workshop organised with the participation of Tunisian and Congress experts to exchange on and debate the draft code, as well as decentralisation;</p> <p>Expert support to the drafting of decrees for the implementation of the Local Government Code (in progress).</p> <p>Co-operation with the Independent High Authority for elections on the organisation of the local elections scheduled for 25 March 2018.</p>

²⁵ <https://rm.coe.int/16802f7dfa>