

Second meeting of the Platform for National - Local Dialogue: From local innovation and initiative to nationwide impact

Speech by Andreas KIEFER, Congress Secretary General

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(check against delivery)

Dear State Secretary,
Dear Deputy ministers,
Dear Chair of the AUC,
Dear mayors,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be back in Ukraine and to see you all in person again. I'm very happy to join you for the second meeting of the Platform for national-local dialogue on open government which was established seven months ago (in April 2021). It is a direct result of the fruitful dialogue and mutual trust between central government, represented by the Cabinet of Ministers, and local authorities, represented by the Association of Ukrainian Cities. It is a proof that a constructive dialogue on the implementation of Ukraine's open government commitments, and the necessary legislation, policies and practices brings tangible results for the benefit of all, in particular for the Ukrainian citizens.

When the Congress supported the participation of the AUC and a group of innovative and forward-looking mayors in the Open Government Partnership (OGP) Global Summit in Georgia in 2018 and then in Canada in 2019, no one could've expected that in only three years they would have reached such outstanding results. The mayors who participated in these events initiated a movement, motivated many others and created a "snowball effect".

With the support of the AUC and the Congress, they led the process towards a "Roadmap for the promotion and development of open government and e-governance at local level in Ukraine". Already in 2020, only two years after the first participation in the OGP Summit in Georgia, the AUC was included as a full member of the Ukrainian OGP Co-ordination Council, and three Ukrainian

municipalities were selected to join OGP Local programme. What a success, to be part of a prestigious group of local and regional authorities from all over the world that were selected under a competitive procedure!

In April this year, the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers and the AUC established the Platform for national-local dialogue on open government.

What is so impressive today is that national and local authorities join forces to identify common priorities for the development of a new Roadmap on open government in Ukraine. We are glad see the Ministry of Youth and Sport and the Ministry of Digital Transformation joining this partnership to enlarge the scope of the Platform and our joint work.

I would like to congratulate you on this success; it is a remarkable achievement that we don't get to see very often. I encourage you all to nurture this dialogue and relationship of trust and cooperation, and I can ensure you that the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities will continue to support you in this joint endeavour.

Open government and public ethics are a cornerstone for the implementation of the Congress strategic priorities in our member states. Whether seeking for enhancing the quality of democracy and citizen participation, or in our current context for effective local and regional responses to public health crises, the responsibility to respond to the needs of citizens lay in the hands of the elected leaders in municipalities, cities and regions / oblast. They – you – have to lead innovative processes and forge new alliances.

Consultation of local authorities and regular and effective dialogue are fundamental principles and two of the key requirements of the European Charter of Local Self-Government ratified by Ukraine in 1997. The ratification by Ukraine, as for all the other 46 member states of the Council of Europe, is a voluntary commitment in order to serve the people, being inspired by international standards. National-local collaboration and consultation strengthens multilevel governance and the quality of the results and impact of legislation and policies, and is a firm recognition of the key role that local authorities play as the level of government closest to the citizens.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Platform for national-local dialogue is a common space for learning, knowledge sharing, and boosting innovation. The platform ensures that there is a bottom-up contribution to national strategies and international commitments, that policies are not imposed on the local level and that mayors and councillors take ownership for enhancing democratic governance as fully-fledged partners.

Today we also will discuss the prospects for the full implementation of the Roadmap and for better inclusion of young people in political life of our communities. Indeed, they are faced with our societies' challenges, and we need to provide them with tools that can fully unlock their potential, enabling them to become powerful actors of change for the present and for the future, in which they are living.

Youth work begins at local level where it is best adapted to actual needs. Municipalities and cities have a duty of devising meaningful youth policies that leave no young person behind.

With open government and inclusive policies, we are contributing to Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda, and we must not forget that around two thirds of the SDG targets can only be reached if the local or regional authorities are able to deliver. Through our joint achievements, you all, and we as Congress, contribute specifically to SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and strong institutions) and SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities), as well as to SDG 5 (Gender equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities).

With all this said, I would like to use this opportunity to confirm our readiness for further co-operation with Ukrainian authorities. We, in the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, are looking forward to contributing our part to achieving high standards and excellent results, such as the ones we are acknowledging today. We stand ready to continue supporting the Ukrainian central and local authorities under the new Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine 2023-2026.

Negotiations have started and will be pursued in view of the Steering Committee meeting in early 2022 that will gather key Ukrainian stakeholders and the Council of Europe. We trust that we will be able to continue working jointly to widen the path that we have paved so far.

Finally, allow me to thank representatives of the AUC for their co-operation, openness and commitment, to thank our Project team here in Kyiv for their hard work, as well as our colleagues in the Congress Secretariat.

I look forward to productive discussions.

Thank you.