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## **Activity Report of the Congress**

(October 2021 – February 2022)

## **Communication by the Secretary General of the Congress at the 1429th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies**

**17 March 2022**

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## Communication by Andreas KIEFER, Secretary General of the Congress

The report on the activities of the Congress is prepared twice a year and presented to the Committee of Ministers' Deputies by the Secretary General of the Congress.

The report below is an overview of the work of the Congress since the last communication of the Secretary General to the Committee of Ministers on 13 October 2021. It covers the key issues of the Congress' work since then and was presented to the Deputies on 17 March 2022.

### The Congress sessions

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Congress was the first Council of Europe Organ to hold online meetings with interpretation and online elections. Since then, it has adapted its working methods and procedures and was coming back to in-person activities and hybrid meetings, every time the sanitary conditions made it possible.

Hybrid working conditions do however not allow for the usual and necessary interaction between the elected Congress members and we are looking forward to resuming all activities in person.

Despite the constraints, the Congress managed to hold a fruitful session in October 2021 and our secretariat is working hard to prepare the same for the March 2022 session.

In the October 2021 session, the Congress examined reports and adopted recommendations on which we expect substantial replies from the Committee of Ministers, notably on "Recurring issues based on assessments resulting from Congress monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and election observation missions (reference period 2017-2020)" – Congress Recommendation 455 (2021).

Ministers from Albania, Cyprus, North Macedonia and Spain took part in the debates on the monitoring reports concerning their countries and I would like to thank the respective Ambassadors for having facilitated the participation of their ministers. I would like to thank also the Hungarian chairmanship for supporting the official visit of the Congress President to Budapest.

The Congress is more than just statutory meetings and adoption of texts. Its role within the Council of Europe is to promote and support the Local and Regional Authorities which are building blocks of deep democracy. The Congress helps to prepare the hardware (constitution, laws, decrees) by national and/or regional governments and parliaments. Its work contributes to having compatible software: elected politicians and administrations under their responsibility who implement and deliver democracy, human rights and rule of law.

The Congress is also a large reservoir of good practice and innovation. The local and regional authorities it represents are innovation hubs, which learn from each other. In this regard in the forthcoming March 2022 session, Congress members will hold a debate on deliberative democracy with the participation of the Mayor of Mostar.

We will also hold a debate on what appears an important threat to democracy: Fake news and disinformation. Our Governance Committee will prepare a report based on the outcome of an academic study on this phenomenon.

Other subjects discussed by the session will be regional identities and cohesion, diasporas, rural youth (avoid brain drain and deserted villages), Environment and human rights, LGBTI.

The focus of this session will of course be the situation in Ukraine. Before the war started, the President of Ukraine had expressed his willingness to exchange with the members of the Congress on the situation of local democracy in his country. The war has made his participation uncertain, but we are expecting to have online exchanges with a minister of the Ukrainian government and with Ukrainian mayors and Congress members.

### **Monitoring and other statutory activities**

Concerning the Congress' monitoring activities, thanks to the additional means provided for all Council of Europe monitoring bodies, we will work to reduce the backlog of countries where monitoring took place more than five years ago including Romania (10 years ago), Ireland (8 years ago), Denmark (8 years ago), Sweden (7 years ago), Montenegro (6 years ago), Greece (6 years ago) and Norway (6 years ago) where visits are foreseen this year as well as Belgium (7 years ago) for which the first part of the visit was conducted on 8-10 March and the second one is foreseen on 10-12 May.

Election observation missions took or will take place in Denmark, Armenia, Albania, the Netherlands and Serbia. Election observation missions are conducted from online via hybrid to on site.

In the written activity report, you will find information on our cooperation activities currently in Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Ukraine and in Kosovo\*, where we have provided authorities and associations advice on local self-government, based on the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

We are pursuing our cooperation with external partners in particular the European Committee of the Regions and its bodies such as CORLEAP as well as the Adamowicz prize, which rewards Mayors for the work fulfilled in the field. The President of the Committee of Regions will also address the session next week.

As regards in house cooperation, we continue to work with the CDDG – the President participated in their meeting on 29 November 2021 and the chair of the Governance Committee is invited to take part in a future meeting.

The President of the Congress met end of last year with the President of the Court European Court of Human Rights and they agreed to enhance cooperation. As a result, the Court provided the Congress a summary of its judgements concerning local and regional authorities. The Congress Human Rights spokesperson will analyse them and propose activities to raise Congress members' awareness on their responsibilities in the area of human rights.

### **The war in Ukraine**

In Ukraine, we have been implementing cooperation activities since 2011 to strengthen local democracy and self-government. And we started end 2021 a new project which is now obviously on hold. I am however convinced that this work and the reforms it has contributed to implement have developed ownership and better functioning local and regional authorities.

This has certainly helped to make Ukrainian cities, local leaders and citizens more resistant and more united in the defence of their country. I believe that the Council of Europe and the Congress, with our action plans, political dialogue and institutional support have contributed to this.

We have mobilised our network of institutions and associations to work in synergies and avoid duplication in our help to the country. Our vice-President who is mayor of Sindelfingen has proposed to develop a city-to-city online platform to help local and regional authorities throughout Europe match the material and logistical needs of Ukrainian local authorities. The Congress will sponsor this work.

We are convinced that small actions put together can make a real difference in the end, like snowflakes which, associated with other snowflakes, end up forming a snowball.

The Congress will continue to express its concrete and active support to Ukraine and its elected representatives. We have already issued several statements to denounce this war and its dramatic consequences such as most recently the abduction of Mayors and local elected representatives as well as their illegitimate replacement in cities occupied by the Russian troops.

### **Congress reform and resources**

In its Bureau, the Congress has started to review its working methods as well as its focus, impact, relevance and visibility. This reflection will be continued in June, taking into account the new situation, including the budget situation. In its declaration on the budget 2022-2023 (see in appendix), the Bureau invited the Secretary General and the Committee of Ministers to make full use of the Congress' unique role in the institutional architecture of the Council of Europe and its potential to achieve the objective of improving democracy, human rights and the rule of law serving the women, men and children living in member States.

The current war in Ukraine will have a huge impact on the budgetary situation of the Council of Europe and we will take this into account in our reflection too. In a letter sent to the heads of delegations in the Congress, the President conveyed the Bureau's call on the Council of Europe member States to ensure the budgetary sustainability of the Organisation and to prevent the Council of Europe from suffering any financial damage.

The Congress secretariat in Strasbourg and in the field offices are working under tight conditions, but are not able to fully exploit the Congress potential in contributing to achieve the objectives of the Council of Europe at the local level and the situation will not become easier.

In his exchange of views with this Committee in April 2022, President Verbeek will again raise the issue of the resources for the whole Council of Europe and for the Congress in particular.

- [Communication from the Secretary General of the Congress to the Committee of Ministers: We continue to work to defend the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law while standing with Ukraine](#)
- [Previous Activity reports](#)

## I. POLITICAL AGENDA

### HIGHLIGHTS

#### **Meeting of the Congress Group of Independent Experts on the European Charter of Local Self-Government (GIE), 16 -17 September 2021**

The Group held its 2021 annual meeting on in a hybrid format. Against the background of recent developments in local and regional democracy, key topics were the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the observation of local and regional elections by the Congress, constitutional and legislative matters as well as on-going and future activities in the framework of the Congress' political priorities. Special attention was given to the question of legal personality of local public entities in the light of the Charter, the situation of independent candidates and opposition in local and regional elections, the issue of environment and human rights in the local context, deliberative democracy, and smart cities and regions.

#### **Working visit to Hungary, 5 October 2021**

The President met with the State Secretary for Security Policy in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the State Secretary and Deputy State Secretary for Local Government in the Ministry of Interior, the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Hungarian National Assembly, Head of the Hungarian PACE delegation, and the Ministerial Commissioner responsible for the fostering of international relations in connection with the priorities set out during Hungary's presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Member of the Parliamentary Committee for European Affairs. The discussions focused on the co-operation in areas of common interest, in particular to strengthen local and regional democracy in Hungary. In Visegrád, the President, the Presidents of the two Chambers and the Secretary General took part in a roundtable discussion with the President of National Association of Local Municipal Governments, the President of the Alliance of County-Ranked, as well as members of the Hungarian Delegation to the Congress.

#### **Communication to the Committee of Ministers, 13 October 2021**

The President stressed the importance of the Congress' thematic, statutory and operational activities responding to current threats to democracy and gave examples of how local and regional politicians are helping to prevent the erosion of democracy from within, to ensure confidence in democratic institutions, to successfully promote anti-corruption and human rights agendas and gender equality. He also asked for a progressive return to a share of the budget which is commensurate with its mandate and tasks, and which makes best use of the Congress' potential, network and outreach to contribute to achieving the objectives of the Council of Europe as a whole.

#### **60th anniversary of the Social Charter – 18 October 2021**

In his statement, the President desired to draw attention to the fact that 60 years following the adoption of the European Social Charter, a multitude of challenges remain, especially regarding the local anchorage. He emphasized that the implementation of the Social Charter in member States remains unsatisfactory and uneven, despite social issues becoming even more relevant. The President renewed his commitment to the rights and values defended by the European Social Charter and underlined that the Congress stands for the defence and promotion of these most valuable rights.

#### **International Day for the Eradication of Poverty - European Day against Trafficking in Human Beings – 18 October 2021**

The President underlined the role of local and regional authorities, but also of all other levels of government and civil society organizations, to meet all the social needs of citizens. He also added that in its 2020 Human Rights Handbook, devoted to social rights, the Congress provides concrete examples of best practices for local and regional authorities to fight poverty, exploitation and trafficking, and to guarantee that all their citizens enjoy their right to work.

#### **Statement on the 40th anniversary of the landmark case *Dudgeon v United Kingdom* - 22 October 2022**

Andrew BOFF (United Kingdom, ECR) Congress Rapporteur on LGBTI issues stressed that this decision by the European Court of Human Rights which recognised the criminalisation of homosexual

acts as an unjustified interference with the right for private life under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights led to the decriminalisation of homosexuality and was a turning point for LGBTI persons. He said the Congress was more than ever committed to further the legacy of this landmark decision and recalled that two reports were published in 2021 to call for further protection of the human rights of LGBTI people, the first, as a response to the rising anti-LGBTI hate speech and discrimination in Europe, and the second on the role of local authorities with regards to the situation of LGBTI people in Poland.

#### **Statement on the European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, 18 November 2021**

The Congress Rapporteur Brigitte VAN DEN BERG (Netherlands, ILDG), called for urgent action to put an end to the sexual abuse of children. She underlined that the recent increase in the number of reported cases of child sexual abuse and exploitation has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 crisis, which has led to both under-reporting of child sexual abuse and increased sharing of child exploitation material on the internet. She recalled that civil society and governments at all levels have the power to take action to prevent sexual offences against children, prosecute perpetrators and protect child victims. She reminded that local and regional authorities, due to their proximity to the citizens, are especially well placed to see early warning signs and put a stop to child abuse from the very beginning. The Congress has been promoting the “Pact of Towns and Regions to stop the sexual exploitation of children” for nearly a decade to increase awareness of the problem at the local level.

#### **Statement on the situation of migrants on the Belarusian-Polish border, 23 November 2021**

Thomas ANDERSSON (Sweden, ILDG), chairman of the Current Affairs Committee, called for greater involvement of municipalities and regions affected by the migrant crisis at the Belarusian-Polish border. He recalled that, most of the time, mayors and councilors supported by civil society are left to provide support and access to key public services with limited means and without a coordinated strategy and that an approach must be found that puts human beings first and ensures respect for their dignity and human rights, while involving the municipalities and regions concerned.

#### **Statement on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, 24 November 2021**

Rapporteur Jelena DRENJANIN (Sweden, SOC/G/PD) declared that the COVID-19 pandemic shows that crisis situations are doubly dangerous for women. Underlining that, amidst the Covid-19 crisis, the Shadow Pandemic of domestic violence against women had grown exponentially, she drew attention to the four pillars of the Istanbul Convention: prevention, protection, prosecution and co-ordinated policies and the need to make a collective effort to stop this violence. The Congress report on fighting sexist violence against women in politics at regional and local level, published in 2020, highlights the increase of insults and attacks notably via social media against women who become visible in the political arena and invites local authorities and the governments to take measures prohibiting sexist behaviour and speech in their assemblies.

#### **Joint commitment to strengthen grassroots democracy and civil society between the Congress and the European Parliament, 17 February 2022**

During their meeting in Strasbourg, the Congress Secretary General and the First Vice-President of the European Parliament, Othmas KARAS stressed that local and regional self-government with elected democratic institutions and a strong civil society are the basis of a pluralistic society, based on democracy, human rights and the rule of law. They underlined that the Council of Europe and the European Union share these values and cooperate at different levels. Othmas KARAS expressed his readiness to support democratic initiatives on regional and local level, which can provide very valuable input for the work of the European Parliament and said he was happily looking forward to a fruitful cooperation. The Secretary General of the Congress expressed hope for a stronger EU support for local and regional democracy initiatives in future programme cycles of the EU.

#### **Statement on the recognition of the so-called ‘people’s republics’ of Donetsk and Luhansk by the Russian Federation, Strasbourg, 22 February 2022**

The President strongly condemned the recognition of the so-called ‘people’s republics’ of Donetsk and Luhansk by the Russian Federation in flagrant violation of international law and the Minsk agreements.



He said he joined the Chair of the Committee of Ministers, the Council of Europe Secretary General and Parliamentary Assembly President, in calling on the Russian Federation to reverse this decision and abstain from further aggravating the situation, and to comply with its obligations under international law. He expressed the Congress' solidarity with the Ukrainian people and authorities at national, regional and local levels and its support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.

### **Statement on the military offensive launched by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, Strasbourg, 24 February 2022**

The President strongly condemned the Russian military attack against Ukraine, which constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and the Statute of Council of Europe, and the principles and values it stands for. He urged the Russian authorities to immediately cease the hostilities and withdraw their troops from Ukraine and choose the path of diplomacy and peaceful settlement of the conflict.

### **Bureau Declaration on the situation in Ukraine, Strasbourg, 28 February 2022**

The Bureau condemned in the strongest terms, the armed attack on Ukraine by the Russian Federation, which constitutes a blatant breach of international law and the Statute of the Council of Europe. [...] It urged the Russian Federation to immediately and unconditionally cease its military operations in Ukraine and withdraw its troops. The Bureau expressed its unwavering commitment to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders and stressed that the armed attack on Ukraine by the Russian Federation constitutes an attack on the principles and values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law which the Council of Europe stands for, promotes and defends. Furthermore, the Bureau welcomed the decision taken by the Committee of Ministers, on 25 February 2022, to suspend the Russian Federation from its rights of representation in the Council of Europe in accordance with Article 8 of the Statute of the Council of Europe. The Congress will hold a debate on the situation in Ukraine at its 42nd Session from 22 to 24 March 2022.

## **II. ACTIVITIES OF THE CONGRESS BODIES**

### **A. THE BUREAU**

#### **Visegrád, 4-5 October 2021**

The Bureau held an in-person meeting for the first time since the pandemic, at the invitation of the Hungarian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers. It discussed the situation of local and regional democracy in several member states, expressing its concern about the situation in Turkey, where opposition politicians are in long-term detention – including Nurhayat ALTUN and Leyla GÜVEN, two former Congress members. The Bureau also shared its concerns regarding the situation in Belarus, especially regarding the dissolution of the Lev Sapieha Foundation, an organisation of independent experts on local self-government which had enjoyed guest observer status with the Congress since 2001.

The Bureau expressed concern about the fact that the Congress recommendation on the Budget 2022-2023 had not been taken into account in the proposals for the COE draft Programme and Budget. It considered it to be essential that the Congress be provided with the necessary human resources to fulfil its role and in particular that at least one frozen post be unfrozen. The Congress maintains the general objective of progressively returning to 3% percent share of the Ordinary Budget, commensurate with its mandate and the implementation of the priorities. On the second day the bureau held an in-depth thematic discussion on the Congress activities, structures, resources and working methods.

#### **Strasbourg, 25 and 28 October 2021**

In the framework of the 41st Session, the Bureau held an exchange of views with the Council of Europe Secretary General who welcomed the Congress' priorities for 2021-2026. She stressed that they correspond to the priorities of the Organisation as a whole, which is encouraging in achieving the Organisation's common goals. She highlighted the urgent challenges and the emerging issues that

require the expertise of the Congress as an assembly of local and regional elected representatives: human rights and the environment, the fight against fake news and hate speech, the protection of social rights, the situation of LGBTI people, artificial intelligence, the fight against radicalisation and youth participation. Discussions also focused on the Congress budget, which has decreased over the last years, impacting its capacity to carry out its work. Bureau members also pursued the brainstorming on the functioning and working methods of the Congress initiated at the meeting in Visegrád.

### **Strasbourg, 6 December 2021**

The Bureau adopted a declaration on the budget 2022-2023 and invited the Secretary General and the Committee of Ministers to make full use of the Congress' unique role in the institutional architecture of the Council of Europe and its potential to achieve the objective of improving democracy, human rights and the rule of law serving the women, men and children living in our member States. The declaration is reproduced in the appendix.

The Bureau took note of the discussions within the Committee of Ministers' Rapporteur Group on External Relations (GR-EXT) on the Council of Europe contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and on the Council of Europe policy toward neighbouring regions and relations with other organisations and the Congress' contribution thereto.

### **Strasbourg, 11 February 2022**

The Bureau took note of the replies to the President's call to delegations for seconded staff and voluntary contributions to the Congress by letter of 20 December 2021. It examined the state of reflection on the functioning and working methods of the Congress and agreed to pursue its reflection focusing on the key areas underlined in the working document while involving and mobilising national delegations to the Congress, national associations and political groups and report to the Bureau with a view to drawing conclusions at the meeting of June 2022.

It took note of the list of Bureau rapporteurs and representatives in outside bodies and appointed co-rapporteurs on the Budget and Resources, on the Congress Charter and Congress Rules and Procedures as well as Spokespersons on Gender Equality, on Youth, on Ethics and Prevention of Corruption, on the Environment and Climate Change and a Deputy Spokesperson on the Environment and Climate Change.

The Bureau accepted the invitation by the Parliamentary Assembly to participate in the Network of Contact Parliamentarians for a healthy environment and nominated the Congress Spokesperson on the Environment and Climate Change to represent the Congress.

The Bureau took note of the Congress' political dialogue with the Committee of Ministers since 2016 and also acknowledged the Committee of Ministers' replies to Congress recommendations.

### **Online meeting, 28 February 2022**

An extraordinary meeting of the Bureau was called by the President to address the critical situation in Ukraine and its consequences. A declaration was adopted (See I. POLITICAL AGENDA).

## **B. THE SESSION**

### **41st Session, 26-28 October 2021 (hybrid)**

On 26-28 October, the Congress held its 41st session as a hybrid session for the first time in Strasbourg since the Covid-19 pandemic. Within the context of the sanitary crisis, the Congress held a debate on the different aspects of the road to recovery post Covid with Carlo MONTICELLI, appointed Governor of the Council of Europe Development Bank, and Ulrik VESTERGAARD KNUDSEN, Deputy Secretary General of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Both speakers stressed the economic and social impact of the pandemic on regions and the role of local and regional authorities as key allies in delivering services to the communities most in need.

The challenges of migration issues were discussed during two debates: "Regions and Diaspora", which underlined that diaspora are a cultural, economic and demographic asset for their regions of origin and "Migration: Continuing Challenges for Cities and Regions", with the participation of Ambassador

Drahoslav ŠTEFÁNEK, Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on Migration and Refugees, and Congress rapporteur Erini DOUROU. This debate highlighted the need for coordination between all levels of government, a clear and coherent legislative framework on a European scale and support from national governments and at European level to enable local and regional authorities to implement policies on receiving and integrating migrants and refugees.

The Congress adopted the monitoring reports on Albania, Cyprus, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, and Spain as part of its monitoring of the compliance of Council of Europe member states with the European Charter of Local Self-Government (See III. MONITORING OF THE EUROPEAN CHARTER OF LOCAL SELF – GOVERNMENT)

Other debates on the agenda included those on “Working conditions of elected representatives in times of hate speech and fake news on the internet”, “Home-sharing platforms: challenges and opportunities for municipalities”, “Inter-regional and cross-border co-operation for better territorial integration in Europe” and “Lifelong education for lifelong employment of young generations: a challenge for the regions” (see below C. THE CHAMBERS)

In addition, as part of the “Rejuvenating politics” initiative of the Congress, the youth delegates presented the results of the numerous projects they had carried out in 2020 and 2021 despite the difficulties caused by the pandemic. On the basis of a survey on the involvement of young people in the work of municipalities, they drew up a set of recommendations for local and regional authorities, youth workers and the Congress, calling for, amongst other things, the application of the revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life.

Among the guest speakers invited, in addition to the appointed Governor of the Council of Europe Development Bank and the Deputy Secretary General of the OECD, were the Deputy Minister of the Interior of Albania, Romina KUKO, the Minister of the Interior of Cyprus, Nicos NOURIS, the deputy minister for Local Self Government of North Macedonia, Zoran DIMITROVSKI, and the Secretary General for territorial coordination of Spain Miryam ALVAREZ PÁEZ. The State Secretary responsible for Security Policy of Hungary, Péter SZTÁRAY, presented the key priorities of the Hungarian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers: artificial intelligence and digitalisation, the protection of national minorities, environmental issues, antisemitism, and youth issues.

The 7th edition of the Dosta! - Congress Prize was awarded to the municipalities of Torres Vedras (Portugal), Argostoli (Greece) and Salford (United Kingdom) for their initiatives aimed at ensuring the inclusion of Roma and Travelers.

## **C. THE CHAMBERS**

### **The Chamber of Local Authorities**

On 27 October, during the 41st session, the Chamber organised a debate on the rise of fake news and hate speech in recent years. At the opening of the sitting the President of the Chamber Bernd VÖHRINGER (Germany, EPP/CCE), drew attention to the impact of these negative phenomena on the working environment of mayors and councillors. To help tackle the challenge, the Congress has launched an innovative co-operation project in collaboration with several European universities and academic centres (See IV. THEMATIC ACTIVITIES).

The Chamber elected John WARMISHAM (United Kingdom, SOC/G/PD) and Oksana DERKACH (Ukraine, EPP/CCE) as 6th and 7th Vice-President, respectively.

On 10 December 2021, Bernd VÖHRINGER, participated in a video message to the International Mayors' Summit on “Living Together”, held in Izmir (see IV. THEMATIC ACTIVITIES).

### **The Chamber of Regions**

On 27 October 2021, the Chamber of the Regions debated inter-regional and cross-border co-operation for better territorial integration in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. It called on members States in particular to make use of Protocol No. 3 of the Madrid Convention which constitutes a legal basis for cross-border co-operation in Europe. It also called for special legal provisions for “transborder communities” having a legal status, in order to overcome the obstacles created by the different legal regimes on either side of the border.

In a debate on the lifelong education to ensure lifelong employment perspectives for young generations, the Chamber discussed the existing challenges for the regions in this regard, shared best practices and possible measures to remedy them.

In its third debate, the Chamber explored the role of relations between regions and diaspora communities in other countries, as a contribution to the development of their home regions, as well as regional mechanisms for engaging diasporas to foster commercial and cultural exchanges, attract foreign investment, facilitate technology and knowledge transfer, and seize other socio-economic benefits from the links with diaspora.

At the opening of the sitting, the President of the Chamber, Harald SONDEREGGER (Austria, EPP/CCE), called for a re-decentralisation of competences and resources to regions and their better distribution with an improved system of multi-level governance, as well as for strengthening inter-regional and cross-border co-operation as a crucial factor contributing to territorial integration and cohesion in Europe.

## D. THE COMMITTEES

### The Monitoring Committee

At its online meeting of **10 February 2022**, chaired by Gudrun MÖSLER-TÖRNSTROM (Austria, SOC/G/PD), the Committee adopted the draft reports on the monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Germany, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom. The agenda also included the adoption of the reports on the observation of the local elections in Georgia (2 October 2021), and the local and regional elections in Denmark (16 November 2021) as well as the reports on the municipal and regional elections in Morocco (8 September 2021) and on the local by-elections in Armenia (5 December 2021). In addition, members considered and adopted the draft report on "The situation of independent and opposition candidates in local and regional elections". All these reports will be debated for adoption at the 42nd Session of the Congress from 22 to 24 March 2022.

Members were informed of the state of preparation of the third volume of the Human Rights Handbook devoted to the environment and held an exchange on the theme of the fourth volume.

In addition, the Committee elected Stewart DICKSON (United Kingdom, ILDG) as its first vice-president.

At its meeting of **28 February**, the Committee decided to postpone the examination of the report on the monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Ukraine to one of its next meetings and approved the draft report on Monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Turkey, to be submitted for adoption at the plenary session in March 2022. It also decided to postpone the exchange of views on the theme of a political debate to be held at meeting on 30 June 2022, to the next meeting on 22 March 2022.

### The Governance Committee

Chaired by Jelena DRENJANIN, the Governance Committee met on **19 November 2021** in a hybrid format. The Committee members adopted the report "Beyond elections: the use of deliberative methods in European municipalities and regions", presented by rapporteur Karl-Heinz LAMBERTZ (Belgium, SOC/G/PD). The Rapporteur stressed that the increasing use of deliberative methods is a response to the crisis of confidence of citizens in democratic institutions and the political process. The draft resolution and recommendation will be submitted for adoption at the plenary session of March 2022.

The Committee also held a debate on the future report on "Smart cities and smart regions" with the participation of the expert Ralf-Martin SOE, Founding Director and Senior Research Fellow at Tallinn University of Technology (Estonia); and appointed Jan MARKINK (Netherlands, ILDG) and Tony BUCHANAN (United Kingdom, NPA) as co-rapporteurs for this report.

It also held a debate and on the structure of the future report on "Regional identities: and how to improve dialogue to reduce regional tensions", with the contribution of the expert Eva Maria BELSER, Co-Director of the Institute of Federalism at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland) and Vice-President of the Congress' Group of Independent Experts on the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

The Committee members also held an exchange on the development of online hate speech and fake news and their effects on local democracy, with the participation of Robert MÜLLER-TÖRÖK, Professor at the Ludwigsburg University of Public Administration and Finance (Germany) and Alexander PROSSER, Professor at the Vienna University of Economics and Business (Austria). and decided to

prepare the terms of reference for a thematic report on this topic. This debate is part of a co-operation project launched by the Congress in collaboration with several European universities and academic centres (See above C. THE CHAMBERS).

During this meeting, the Committee elected Kevin BENTLEY (United Kingdom, ECR) as its 5th Vice-President.

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on 22 March 2022.

### **The Current Affairs Committee**

On **18 November 2021**, the Congress Current Affairs Committee met in a hybrid format and adopted a report on "The future of youth in rural areas: responsibilities of local and regional authorities" by co-Rapporteurs James MOLONEY (Ireland, ILDG) and Aida JALILZADE (Azerbaijan, ECR), which was developed in cooperation with the Council of Europe's Advisory Council on Youth and the Congress youth delegates.

The Committee also held an exchange on "Environment and human rights: raising awareness at local level". Furthermore, as part of the Congress' contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Council of Europe's Strategy for the Right of the Child, the Committee approved a draft booklet for children on the SDGs as well as guidelines for local and regional authorities on child participation in local sustainability policies by Rapporteur Brigitte VAN DEN BERG (Netherlands, ILDG). In January and February 2022, pilot activities with children were carried out by members of the Committee in seven member States to gather feedback from children and local authorities on the draft booklet and guidelines. The final version of these texts, as well as a Resolution on children and sustainable cities will be presented at the 42nd session.

The Chair of the Committee, Thomas ANDERSSON, continued the cooperation with the Conference of International NGOs and the Division of Elections and Participatory Democracy on the BePART Civil Participation Forum project, aimed at providing a database with good practice examples in line with the Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in Decision-Making Process. Good practice examples are being collected to be included at the launch of the BePART forum in April 2022.

On 10 December 2021, Congress Rapporteur on LGBTI issues Andrew BOFF participated in the "Building Bridges" conference organised by the Council of Europe's SOGI Unit, which was held in Warsaw and online on the levers for protecting the human rights of LGBTI people in Poland. This comes in light of the two reports adopted by the Congress in 2021 on the role of local and regional authorities in protecting LGBTI people in a context of both rising hate speech and discrimination and the situation of LGBTI people in Poland. The Congress continues to mobilize and rely on national associations of local and regional authorities as a platform for dialogue. It does so by encouraging cities and regions to combat these discriminations and by addressing national governments so that plans to fight such discrimination consider the local dimension.

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on 22 March 2022.

## **III. MONITORING OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEMOCRACY**

### **A. MONITORING ACTIVITIES**

*The core mission of the Congress is the effective monitoring of the situation of local and regional democracy in member States by assessing the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, adopted in 1985 and ratified by the 47 Member States of the Council of Europe.*

*Due to the inability to carry out monitoring visits to Member States as a result of COVID-19 related health measures, monitoring of the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Albania Azerbaijan, Ireland, Spain and Germany originally on the work programme of 2020, were first postponed, before the Congress decided to introduce a new format of virtual meetings as a temporary procedure. The first monitoring in this remote format was conducted with Bulgaria in December 2020 and followed by remote visits in 2021 and onsite visits end 2021 and early 2022.*

#### **Monitoring visits**

**Luxembourg, 8 October 2021**

Co-rapporteurs Marjorie CROVETTO (Monaco, NR) and Christine CHEVALLEY (Switzerland, ILDG) met remotely with local and national authorities of Luxembourg to evaluate the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. They had an exchange of views with the Minister of the Interior, the President of the Chamber of Deputies, the President of the Committee on Home Affairs and Gender Equality, the President of the Constitutional Court and the Ombudsman of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, as well with the mayors of Luxembourg city and the municipalities of Wiltz and Consdorf, members of the Luxemburg delegation to the Congress and representatives of the Union of Luxembourg Cities and Municipalities (SYVICOL). The report will be debated for adoption at the 42nd Session.

#### **Ukraine, 23 November 2021**

Rapporteur Gunn Marit HELGESEN (Norway, EPP/CCE) met with local and national authorities of Ukraine in order to update the report on the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. She held meetings with the Minister of Community and territorial development and with the Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, Chairman of the Presidium of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities under the President of Ukraine, as well as Presidents of the Ukrainian Associations of local and regional authorities, members of the delegation of Ukraine to the Congress, and the Chairman of the Public Association "Institute European Sloboda". The report was due to be debated for adoption at the 42<sup>nd</sup> Session but has been postponed.

#### **Turkey, 1 December 2021**

Co-rapporteurs Vladimir PREBILIC (Slovenia, SOC/V/DP) and David ERAY (Switzerland, EPP/CCE) carried out a series of meetings in order to update the report on the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Turkey. They met the Minister of the Interior, the Mayor of Ankara, the Turkish delegation to the Congress, as well as with representatives of Turkish political parties. The updated report will be examined at the 42<sup>nd</sup> session.

### **Adopted recommendations (41<sup>st</sup> Session – 26-28 October 2021)**

#### **Netherlands**

The Congress adopted a report and Recommendation 464(2021) on the monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in the Netherlands after a remote monitoring meetings country visit in January 2021. The report acknowledges the long tradition of local democracy and local self-government in the Netherlands, rooted in a political culture that favours negotiation, compromise and agreement between levels of government. It also welcomes the positive evolution of the 2015 decentralisation reform, which has led to the transfer of additional tasks and responsibilities to the local level, particularly in the social sphere, nature management and spatial planning.

The Congress recommends to national authorities to replace the appointment of mayors and King's Commissioners by democratic election, to ensure the citizen's rights to participate in the conduct of local public affairs and comply with fundamental principles of democracy. It also invites the Dutch authorities to match the additional competences that the municipalities must perform following decentralisation, in particular in the social and youth support area, with commensurate financial resources, to expand the municipal and provincial taxing capacity, to diversify the local financial resources, to revise the legislation regulating intermunicipal co-operation and to strengthen the position of the municipal council. Finally, Dutch authorities are encouraged to ratify Articles 7.2 and 8.2 of the Charter which are already applied in practice.

#### **Spain**

The Congress adopted a report and Recommendation 465(2021) on the monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Spain following remote meetings held in May 2021. The report notes that Spain is generally fulfilling its obligations with regards to the Charter and municipalities are at the core of Spanish democracy. The Charter is incorporated under Spain's national law, enabling legal interpretation by the domestic courts. Moreover, local authorities can directly challenge laws or regulations passed by State and autonomous communities that adversely affect the constitutionally guaranteed local autonomy.

However, the Congress recommends that the Spanish government grant full discretion to local authorities to exercise their initiative in any matter which is not excluded from their competence nor assigned to any other authority. National authorities are invited to clarify the division of responsibilities among levels of government, whilst providing an appropriate legal framework and institutional settings for consultation of local authorities. It also invites Spanish authorities to ensure that each transfer of

powers to local authorities is accompanied by adequate financial resources along with greater management support for smaller municipalities. Finally, the government is encouraged to sign and ratify the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority.

### **North Macedonia**

The Congress adopted a report and Recommendation 466(2021) on the monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in North Macedonia prepared on the basis of the remote visit carried out in April 2021. A positive climate was noted with regard to the reform on further decentralisation in North Macedonia. The report welcomes the strong emphasis placed by the government in its development strategy, as evidenced by the adoption of a new Programme for Sustainable Local Development and Decentralisation 2021-2026. It also notes with satisfaction that since the previous recommendation in 2012, the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government was signed and ratified.

However, the Congress recommends the authorities of North Macedonia to clarify the division of competences and devolve further powers to local self-government as part of the decentralisation process. To this end, national authorities must ensure the adequate and commensurate funding to enable municipalities to carry out new tasks provided by the legislation. It suggests that the government increases municipalities' own share of local budget revenues and introduce a broader system for equalisation of their revenues. Finally, national authorities are encouraged to increase digitalisation, implement capacity-building programmes at local level and further consolidate anti-corruption measures.

### **Cyprus**

The Congress adopted a report and Recommendation 467(2021) on the monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Cyprus after remote meetings held in March 2021. The report points out that the Charter is being taken more into account in the development of the relevant legislation on local self-government. Furthermore, it notes with satisfaction that the planned reform of local self-government aims to modernise it and in particular to increase the competences and responsibilities of Cypriot local authorities as well as their financial capacities.

The Congress calls on national authorities to introduce and recognise the principle of local self-government in the laws applicable to municipalities and communities, to enshrine municipal tasks in law and to clarify the distribution of municipal competences. It urges the national authorities to enshrine in law the principle of adequacy of local finances. Furthermore, national authorities are encouraged to review the legislation in order to define in the law the conditions of exercise of local elected representatives.

### **Albania**

The Congress adopted a report and Recommendation 468(2021) on the monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government Albania prepared on the basis of remote visit carried out in March 2021. It acknowledges that substantial progress has been made towards securing local self-government since the adoption in 2013 of the last Congress recommendation, particularly thanks to the implementation of the 2015-2020 comprehensive decentralisation and local governance strategy and the ensuing reforms of the legislation on local self-government.

However, the Congress recommends national authorities to continue the decentralisation process initiated by the 2015-2020 "National cross-cutting strategy for decentralisation and local governance" and confirmed by the 2020-2022 Action plan, and to further harmonise the legislation on the division of responsibilities between central and local authorities. It calls national authorities to revise the local government salary structure to allow authorities more flexibility and increase their ability to recruit and retain qualified staff. It also urges the Albanian authorities to ratify the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local and Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority.

### **Post – monitoring dialogue**

A delegation composed of co-rapporteurs Gunn Marit HELGESEN and Marc COOLS (Belgium, ILDG) carried out a remote post-monitoring on the situation of local and regional democracy in the Republic of Moldova, on 3 February 2022. They held meetings with local and national authorities to assess developments regarding the implementation of the Congress recommendation adopted in 2019 and the corresponding roadmap signed in April 2021 that identified key priorities to be addressed according to

a timetable that has been agreed among stakeholders. The delegation held meetings also with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, the Secretary General of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, the Minister of Finance, the Governor (Bashkan) of the ATU of Gagauzia, the President of the Congress of Local Authorities of Moldova (CALM), the President of the Moldovan Delegation to the Congress, as well as members of the Parliamentary Committee for Public Administration. These meetings will be followed by an onsite visit of the rapporteurs to Chisinau during the spring.

## **B. OBSERVATION OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL ELECTIONS**

*Over the last 15 years, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities has observed more than 100 local and regional elections in Council of Europe member States and occasionally also beyond. Such missions are conducted further to the invitation of the national authorities or competent electoral bodies, and they complement the political monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. Assistance in following-up to Congress' recommendations prepared further to observation missions can be provided through a post-electoral dialogue.*

*In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Congress had adopted a report on local and regional elections in times of crisis and decided to implement a strategy including alternatives to sending observer delegations to the field replaced by remote observation procedure. In September 2021, onsite missions have resumed but the local elections in Armenia in December 2021 were observed using the remote procedure again, due to the worsening COVID-19 situation.*

### **Election observation missions**

#### **Denmark, 13 – 17 November 2021**

Further to the invitation by national associations of Danish regions and municipalities, the Congress observed, for the first time ever, the local and regional elections in Denmark. Led by Gunn Marit HELGESEN, the delegation included Congress members Vladimir PREBILIC, Marc COOLS and Jana FISCHEROVA (Czech Republic, ECR) as well as Professor Christina Binder, member of the Congress Group of Independent Experts, who acted as the electoral expert on this mission. On Election Day, four Congress teams, deployed to the Copenhagen metropolitan area and other regions, visited some 50 polling stations and saw generally well-administered elections with the active participation of the population despite an upsurge of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Before the Election Day, the Congress delegation carried out a site visit to a merged municipality, Rudersdal, and met with its mayor. The delegation held briefings with representatives of the Ministry of the Interior and Housing, the District Election Commission of Copenhagen, the Association of Local Government Denmark (LGDK), the national association of regional authorities (Danish Regions), the Danish delegation to the Congress, as well as representatives from academia, the media and NGOs, representatives of political parties, the Danish Institute for Human Rights.

#### **Armenia, 2 – 3 December 2021**

Further to the invitation from the country's authorities regarding the partial local elections which took place in Armenia on 5 December 2021, the Congress organised an electoral assessment mission in the remote format (based on its RES 455(2020)). The delegation led by Stewart DICKSON (United-Kingdom, ILDG), Rapporteur and representative of the Congress on the Venice Commission's Council for Democratic Elections, held video meetings with representatives of the international community in Yerevan, members of Armenia's delegation to the Congress as well as domestic and international NGOs, the media and candidates running in the elections.

Before the Election Day, online briefings were organised with the President of the Central Election Commission of Armenia, the Deputy-Minister of Territorial Administration and Development and the President of the Communities Association of Armenia (CAA).

#### **Albania, 24 – 25 February 2022**

The Congress carried out a remote election observation mission on 24 and 25 February ahead of the partial local elections scheduled for 6 March 2022. The delegation led by Gunn-Marit HELGESEN, Rapporteur and representative of the Congress on the Venice Commission's Council for Democratic Elections, held online briefings with representatives of the international community in Tirana, the Chair of the Central Electoral Commission, and with the Albanian delegation to the Congress and local



government associations. Video briefings were also organised with domestic NGOs, media and with representatives of political subjects running in the elections.

## IV. THEMATIC ACTIVITIES

*The Congress supports local authorities in the performance of their duties in respect of their citizens and it supports them in their search for solutions to the challenges they face, in particular in terms of security, integration, dialogue and participation, respect for fundamental human and social rights, and the inclusion of vulnerable populations.*

*It initiates reflections and projects on these topics and contributes actively to the work being done in this connection within the Council of Europe and its partners at European level as well as to the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations.*

### A. YOUTH

The Congress published a leaflet aimed at strengthening youth work in cities and regions. It is based on a Congress report, adopted in February 2021. The leaflet is addressed to stakeholders in youth work and presents the main Congress' recommendations, best practices and concrete tools to strengthen youth work. The leaflet was prepared in collaboration with youth delegates in the framework of the Congress' "Rejuvenate Politics" initiative, which aims to promote the participation of young people in public life and decision-making at local and regional level.

### B. FAKE NEWS – DISINFORMATION – HATE SPEECH

On 9 and 10 December 2021, the Chair of the Current Affairs Committee Thomas ANDERSSON took part in the 27th edition of the Lisbon Forum on the theme "Intercultural Dialogue in the Infodemic era" and highlighted that misinformation and prejudice can easily spread online through unreliable content which circulates too much and too fast, which can cause polarisation of communities and feed into mistrust between citizens at an incredible speed. He underlined that the Congress has developed a toolkit on "Organising intercultural and interreligious activities" to help cities and regions to bring together different communities and combat hate speech and stigmatisation, providing information on legal resources, education and trainings as well as guidelines on how to organise intercultural activities. To explore how fake news and hate speech affect local democracy and the work of mayors and councillors, the Congress has engaged in a scientific co-operation project involving academics and experts from university academic institutions in from Ludwigsburg, Budapest, Bucharest, Kosice and Vienna. The aim is to analyse the damaging effects of fake news and hate speech, as well as the way in which they affect local political debate and to explore means of detecting these phenomena and possible legal and technical action against them. Based on the analysis of experiences from local authorities, this survey will provide, for the first time, a scientific basis for a policy for combating fake news and hate speech on the Internet in the local and regional context. The project will be presented to the Congress session in March 2022. A Congress report will be then prepared on this issue.

Vice-President Bernd VÖHRINGER addressed a video message to the International Mayors' Summit on "Living Together", held in Izmir on 10 December 2021. He highlighted several aggravating factors such as the gap between the rich and the poor, the contrast between rural and urban areas, the challenge to acquired rights, for example of women and LGBTI people, and the rise of far-right parties and anti-refugee rhetoric. He stressed the responsibility of mayors to counter this phenomenon, calling for the fight against two strong trends: firstly, fake news and disinformation which "in one tweet" contribute to polarising society and fuelling mistrust between citizens against a backdrop of conspiracy theories; secondly, xenophobic hate speech and anti-migrant rhetoric which constitute a threat to social cohesion.

### C. EUROPEAN LOCAL DEMOCRACY WEEK (ELDW)

In 2021 and 2022, the theme of the ELDW is "Protecting the environment: local communities take action". The theme focuses on local action to protect the environment, fight climate change, strengthen resilience and work towards achieving SDGs 11 (building resilient communities) and 13 (climate action) as well as on ways in which territorial authorities could integrate them into their work plans.

During the 2021 edition of the ELDW, 205 municipalities and associations of local authorities organized more than 600 activities in 15 countries. These results were presented at the ELDW annual coordination

meeting held online on 26 February 2022. Chaired by ELDW Spokesperson Bryony Rudkin (United Kingdom, SOC/G/PD), the meeting brought together around 65 local elected representatives and municipal officials from European countries as well as Tunisia. The participants shared their best practices in organizing the ELDW and engaging citizens at local level and discussed new perspectives for the 2022 edition. On this occasion, the title of “Partner of the European Local Democracy Week 2021” was awarded to 21 municipalities from five countries (Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine) in recognition of their commitment to the promotion of local democracy and citizen participation. The decision to award the title was taken by the Congress bureau at its meeting on 11 February 2022. The Thematic Spokesperson presented the certificates to the partners in a virtual ceremony.

## **D. WORLD FORUM FOR DEMOCRACY**

As its contribution to the World Forum for Democracy, the Congress sponsored Lab 4 “Sustainable cities: when the problem becomes part of the solution”, organised on 9 November 2021 and focusing on the question of how to build a more sustainable urbanisation and guarantee social justice for all city dwellers. Participants of the Lab, moderated by Vladimir PREBILIC, Congress Spokesperson on Climate Change and the Environment, discussed the threats it represents to people in urban areas who also face other risks such as poverty, inequality and social fragmentation. Several initiatives from different countries were presented such as : “Urban arenas for sustainable and fair cities”, in Germany, “Democratic climate model, Innovation for climate action at the local level”, in Belgium, “Sustainable cities programme: Strengthening democracy through the municipalization of the SDGs”, in Brazil, and “Urban agriculture as a new asset after Covid”, in France. Speakers also included Congress member Jean-Pierre LIOUVILLE (France, SOC/G/PD) and Congress Youth Delegate Adel RAMDANI (Belgium).

Also on 9 November 2021, Vladimir PREBILIC contributed to the Forum Talk on Deliberative Democracy for Climate, while Congress Youth Delegates Adel RAMDANI, Susanna VEEVO (Estonia) and Viviane OGOU CORBI (Spain) addressed the Forum Talk on Youth Environmental Activism.

## **UNITED NATIONS AGENDA 2030 – IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)**

*The United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development lists 17 objectives to be achieved to build a socially inclusive, environmentally sustainable and economically prosperous society. The Council of Europe contributes to its implementation through a human rights-based approach stemming from its pan-European dimension, institutions, normative framework and capacity for action.*

*The Congress views the concept of sustainability in a broad sense, as democratic, social and economic sustainability built on a number of key principles: Achieving SDGs is a shared responsibility for all levels of government - Local and regional authorities must have proper competences and financial autonomy - Citizens must always remain at the heart of the action. The Congress’ work focuses on 12 of the 17 objectives defined in the Agenda.*

*The co-operation programmes and projects of the Congress contribute in particular to the Sustainable Development Goals 5 (Gender equality), 10 (Reduced inequalities), 11 (Sustainable cities and communities), 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) and 17 (Partnership for the goals) respectively.*

*In order to implement the SDGs successfully, the Congress cooperates with a wide range of actors: its institutional partners within the Council of Europe, in particular, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Office of the Directorate General of Programmes; international organisations representing local and regional authorities, such as United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG); European institutions, such as the European Committee of the Regions, the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE), the Assembly of European Regions (AER), the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR).*

The Congress prepared a Booklet for children on SDGs in their cities aimed at raising the awareness of school-age children (aged 6-12) about the SDGs and about how they can contribute to the process. Aimed at increasing children’s participation in sub-national sustainability policies, this publication will be piloted and finalised based on input from the participating local authorities and children.

On 29 October 2021, the Congress contributed to the Conference on “Agenda 2030: Transforming Regions, Changing the World” organised in Strasbourg by the Assembly of European Regions in cooperation with the Grand Est Region (France). The conference brought together local and regional

actors to call on national governments to strengthen multi-level dialogue to facilitate the implementation of the SDGs.

A workshop on "How can regions carry out voluntary reviews?" was organised during the conference by the Congress in cooperation with United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and moderated by the Congress Secretary General. Congress members Josef FREY (Germany, SOC/V/DP), Belinda GOTTARDI (Italy, SOC/V/DP), and Gunn-Marit HELGESEN as well as Marta MARIN, representative of Basque Country (Spain) to the European Union, presented experiences of their respective cities and regions in the implementation of the SDGs as well as their contribution to the national action plans and their evaluation. Gunn-Marit HELGESEN presented a voluntary review prepared by the Association of Cities and Regions of Norway, of which she is the President. Edgardo BILSKY, Head of Research at UCLG, presented an overview of voluntary reviews worldwide. Participants highlighted the central role of local and regional authorities in achieving the SDGs and the importance of voluntary reviews at national and sub-national levels in developing synergies between all levels of government. They called on national governments and international institutions to take into account local and regional authorities in their strategies and to provide them with appropriate consultation and funding instruments.

Addressing the participants of another workshop, on "The future is yours: inclusive and participatory institutions for all", Congress Vice-President Lia MONTALTI (Italy, SOC/G/DP) recalled that SDG 16 for more participation, stronger institutions and non-discrimination coincides with the main objective of the Council of Europe and the Congress: to defend human rights, democracy and the rule of law. In her view, recognition of the rights of all citizens, equal treatment in the delivery of public services, civil participation and co-decision, consultation of citizens, as well as fair redistribution are necessary conditions for the cohesion of societies.

On the same day, the Congress President participated in the Round Table on "The Way Forward: Creating Sustainable and Resilient Regions in a Post-Pandemic World" and recalled the conditions for the successful implementation of the SDGs at local and regional level: freedom of action and decision, appropriate competences and financial and budgetary autonomy, participation in national action plans through regular cooperation and consultation mechanisms, evaluation of actions, and sharing experiences between regions and with the national level.

## V. INSTITUTIONAL CO-OPERATION WITHIN THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

### A. THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL SECTOR

#### **The European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG)**

The President addressed the plenary of the CDDG on 29 November 2021, underlying the importance of regular dialogue to further develop mutual co-operation, based on complementarity between the Congress' and CDDG's priorities. He referred in particular to the Congress report on the use of deliberative methods in municipalities and regions to be adopted in March 2022. He underlined the importance of respecting the European Charter of Local Self-Government during the ongoing sanitary crisis, preventing the risks of centralisation in the long run and ensuring enhanced citizens' participation in local affairs.

### B. THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

*The Congress holds regular exchanges with the Parliamentary Assembly, in order to increase co-operation at the level of rapporteurs and the respective secretariats as well as in areas of common interest, in particular in the framework of the implementation of Council of Europe initiatives and campaigns.*

On 24 January 2022, the President held an exchange of views with Tiny Kox, newly elected President of the Parliamentary Assembly. Both Presidents agreed to strengthen the political co-operation between the two assemblies which play a complementary role in the institutional architecture of the Council of Europe. They agreed in particular to jointly work on responses to threats to societies, such as hate

speech and radicalisation and trust in democratic institutions. The Congress President invited the PACE President to participate in one of the forthcoming Congress sessions.

### **C. THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

The Congress President met with the President of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) Robert SPANO on 21 September 2021 to discuss issues of common interest in the area of Human Rights. The two Presidents underlined the importance of the European Convention of Human Rights and the importance of relying on all levels of government to promote and ensure compliance with human rights. Local and regional authorities play a particular part in making human rights a reality at the grassroot level. Indeed, a number of cases brought before the ECHR result from acts and decisions of municipalities, cities and regions. The preventive role of the Congress in raising awareness of mayors and councillors on human rights is thus essential. The Congress has published a "Human Rights Handbook", a practical tool intended to raise awareness among local and regional elected representatives and administrations. President SPANO will address the Congress members at one of its forthcoming sessions.

### **D. THE EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

During their meeting on 20 September 2021 in Strasbourg, the President of the Congress, and Commissioner Dunja MIJATOVIĆ discussed synergies to be developed between the two institutions. They agreed to continue their co-operation on issues of common interest such as social rights, human rights and environment, refugee protection, and the rights of the LGBTI community in particular. The President stressed the transversality of the issue of human rights in terms of governance, as well as the need for an acute awareness of local elected officials and their administrations as actors in a robust democracy. He stressed that the Congress would rely on the Commissioner's first-hand knowledge of the human rights situation in member countries, particularly at the local level.

### **E. THE NORTH-SOUTH CENTRE**

On 9 and 10 December 2021, the 27th edition of the Lisbon Forum on the theme " Intercultural Dialogue in the Infodemic era " focused on media ethics, human rights, a democratic internet, global solidarity, and social justice. The Forum marked the conclusion of the North-South Centre's # Break your bubble campaign, supported by the Congress since its launch in April 2021, and which aims at drawing attention to the concept of infodemic and the whole critique of algorithmic-based personalization of the internet based on 'echo chambers' and 'filter bubbles'. The Chair of the Current Affairs Committee Thomas ANDERSSON took part in the Forum (see IV. THEMATIC ACTIVITIES).

## **VI. EXTERNAL CO-OPERATION AND PARTNERSHIPS**

### **A. THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

*The Congress and the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) of the European Union maintain close co-operation and working relations, both at the political level and the level of the respective secretariats, based on the Co-operation Agreement, revised most recently in March 2018. This co-operation is based on the commonality of the objective of reinforcing local and regional democracy, devolution and self-government in Europe, and on the complementarity of action.*

*Co-operation is steered by the Congress/CoR High-Level Group (HLG) which includes the Congress President and its two Chamber Presidents, and the CoR President, First Vice-President and President of the CIVEX Commission, assisted by the respective Secretaries General. The HLG meets at the beginning of the year to compare the political agendas, set priority areas of co-operation and identify potential for joint action.*

*The respective Presidents address a plenary session of the other's institution at least once during their mandate.*

*In practical terms, co-operation includes regular exchange of information and documents, contribution to the preparation of reports and to debates in committees and working groups, exchanges of views*

*with rapporteurs, participation in each other's events and statutory meetings, and organisation of joint activities.*

### **European Committee of the Regions Working Group on Ukraine**

In the first meeting of this Group, on 18 November 2021, the Secretary General of the Congress reaffirmed the continuous support of the Congress to Ukrainian mayors and councillors and to national authorities in making the democratic achievements and local self-government reforms sustainable. The meeting chaired by Aleksandra DULKIEWICZ, Mayor of Gdansk (Poland), brought together representatives of the Ukrainian Government, local and regional authorities and their national associations, members of the Committee of the Regions and stakeholders who work in Ukraine to enhance transparency and civic participation. They discussed the state of local democracy in Ukraine, the challenges faced by local and regional authorities, as well as their achievements in the field transparency and prevention of corruption (see VII. CO-OPERATION PROGRAMMES AND ACTION PLANS).

### **147th session of the European Committee of the Regions**

The President of the Congress addressed the session in Brussels on 2 December 2021. Delivering a keynote speech during the debate on the "Fight against disinformation to ensure a functioning and resilient democracy at all levels", he underlined the leading role of local and regional authorities in responding to this threat. He recalled that the issue of disinformation is part of a broader picture of multiple crises: loss of citizens' confidence, deterioration of the link with public institutions, anti-liberal tendencies, authoritarian temptations, resurgence of nationalism, climate change, technological developments, migration challenges, globalisation and the crisis of representative democracy. In addition to these challenges, the Covid-19 health crisis has put to a rigorous test the institutions of governance at all levels.

### **10th Annual Meeting of the Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP)**

The President addressed the meeting on 14 December 2021 in Brussels. Speaking in the debate on "The renewed Eastern Partnership agenda: Local and regional authorities' contribution to the Eastern Partnership Summit", he underlined the need to pursue the improvement of the multi-level governance and the decentralisation reforms underway in many CORLEAP countries and insisted that the reforms must be brought to completion in line with the European Charter of Local Self-Government, through a constant dialogue between central and territorial authorities represented by their national associations. Stressing that the Congress will continue to support building platforms and frameworks for such dialogue, he said that that local and regional authorities must be equipped with proper competences and financial resources, have access to funding and be part of regular consultations in both crisis management and recovery plans. He called on territorial authorities "to promote and practice open government based on transparency, accountability and citizen participation" in order to achieve fair, gender-equal and inclusive societies.

### **Mayor Paweł Adamowicz Award**

The Congress contributes to the selection process of the Mayor Paweł Adamowicz Award jointly created by the European Committee of the Regions, the City of Gdańsk, where Mayor Adamowicz served and was murdered in January 2019 while fulfilling his public duties, and the International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN). The aim of the award is to develop the legacy of Mayor Adamowicz in the spirit of ICORN's core mission: advancing freedom of expression, defending democratic values, and promoting international solidarity. The first winner of the award is Henriette Reker, Mayor of Cologne (Germany) named in January 2022 in recognition for the excellence and courage of her work in promoting freedom, solidarity, equality and diversity.

## **B. EUROPEAN ASSOCIATIONS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES**

### **Assembly of European Regions (AER)**

On 29 October 2021, the Congress contributed to the Conference on Agenda 2030: Transforming Regions, Changing the World, organised in Strasbourg by the AER in co-operation with the Grand Est Region (France) (see IV. THEMATIC ACTIVITIES).

In the margins of the conference, the Congress President held an exchange of views with the President of the Assembly of European Regions, Magnus BERNTSSON, during which they discussed the respective priorities of the two assemblies and identified possible synergies and areas of concrete co-operation.

## **The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)**

On 29 September 2021, the Secretary General of the Congress participated in an online debate on “Future of Europe: Time for a local shift”, organised by CEMR as part of its annual Retreat.

## **Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)**

On 7 October 2021, the AEBR, the Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives (CESCI) and the Mission Operationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT) signed a co-operation agreement under the auspices of the Congress. The Declaration, signed by the Presidents of the three associations aims at reinforcing their co-operation and synergy along the internal and external borders of the EU, in the context of the COVID-19 crisis which has jeopardised economic activity and prevented the free movement of people across the EU's internal borders. The Congress Secretary General stressed that a third of Europe's citizens live in border areas and out of the 362 regions registered by the Council of Europe in its 47 member States, more than 140 are transborder regions, underlining that the Congress has for many years been a pioneer in developing transborder co-operation.

On 21 October, the President of the Congress addressed the General Assembly of the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) on its 50th anniversary, underlying the need for enhanced cross-border co-operation. He stressed that, as a third of Europe's citizens live in border areas, the issues surrounding border regions are of special interest to the Council of Europe, and especially to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. Indeed, out of the 362 regions registered by the Council of Europe within its 47 Member States, more than 140 are border regions. The President underlined that border regions play a crucial role in European integration, territorial cohesion and territorial co-operation, notably through transborder working. He also recalled that the Congress has made over the years a number of recommendations promoting cross-border collaboration.

## **Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE)**

The President of the Chamber of Regions, Harald SONDEREGGER, spoke at the Plenary Assembly of the CALRE in the Parliament of the Canary Islands in Santa Cruz de Tenerife on 26 November 2021. He underlined the areas of common interest shared between the Congress and the CALRE which include the role of the regions in the European architecture, regional identity and state integrity, and regional or minority languages, as well as the regional implementation of the UN Agenda 2030 and the achievement of the SDGs. He highlighted that the Congress advocates the importance of the full application of the principle of subsidiarity in the implementation of the Agenda and the SDGs, including SDG 13 on climate action, at local and regional level.

## **VII. CO-OPERATION PROGRAMMES AND ACTION PLANS**

*The Congress provides practical support by means of co-operation projects to address shortcomings of local democracy identified during the monitoring and post-monitoring of the Charter and the observation of local and regional elections. The Guidelines for co-operation activities<sup>1</sup> further specify the framework and the principles of Congress co-operation activities, whose importance was reiterated in the Priorities of the Congress 2021-2026.<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Improving the impact of Congress recommendations, Guidelines for co-operation activities in Council of Europe member States, CG/BUR/2015(27)31, March 2015, available at <https://rm.coe.int/168071a684>

<sup>2</sup> 2021-2026 Priorities of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, CG (2021)40-05, March 2021, available at <https://rm.coe.int/2021-2026-priorities-of-the-congress-of-local-and-regional-authorities/1680a1b0bd>

*These projects take place within the Council of Europe country-specific Action Plans or within the policy towards neighbouring regions. They are carried out by the Congress secretariat in close co-operation and synergy with the other entities of the Organisation.*

*Currently, the Congress has projects under implementation in Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, and Ukraine, while the projects in Kosovo<sup>3</sup>, Morocco, and Tunisia have come to an end in December 2021. Since 2011, those activities amount to over twelve million EUR, funded by voluntary contributions from member States and the European Union.*

*The co-operation activities are designed to inspire mayors and local councillors to lead the change in their municipalities, in order to strengthen transparency, accountability and citizen participation in their decision-making and promote human rights at local level. In addition, the Congress supports them to commonly defend their interests vis-à-vis central authorities, in close co-ordination with their associations.*

*The prevention of corruption is central to political and operational activities. To support action in this area, the Congress has produced a set of handbooks on open government and public ethics for local authorities in Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, and Kosovo\*. In addition, since 2021, the bE-Open online tool provides quick and easy access to relevant international standards and local context, legislation, examples of case law related to corruption, guidelines and good practices in open local government and public ethics. This set of tools is complemented by capacity development activities.*

*Moreover, in support of open government in Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, a regional roundtable on “Open government and renewal: local governments take action” was organised jointly with the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in February 2022. About 140 representatives of national and local decision makers and civil society shared experiences on the contribution of local authorities in all steps of national open government policy making. The event also facilitated applications of interested local authorities to the global Call for Expression of Interest for endorsement into the OGP Local Programme.*

*Stronger gender equality and human rights perspectives are implemented in all activities to foster gender equality and promote the participation and representation of women in local political life. The support to gender mainstreaming, as well as to the fight against sexism and the participation and inclusion of under-represented groups, especially internally displaced persons, and minorities at local level, is thereby intensified.*

*The co-operation activities contribute to the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – to achieving Sustainable Development Goals 3 (Good health and well-being), 5 (Gender equality), 10 (Reduce inequality within and among countries), 11 (Sustainable cities and communities), 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions), and 17 (Partnership for the goals).*

## **A. ARMENIA**

In Armenia, the Congress contributed to the improvement of local self-governance through a continued support to the Community of Practice on Public Integrity and Ethics in Local Governance in Armenia (CoP). A corruption risk self-assessment tool for local authorities was developed in November 2021. The tool is validated by the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure (MTAI) and it will be piloted jointly with the Corruption Prevention Commission (CPC) in selected municipalities.

The Model Code of Conduct for local elected representatives and municipal civil servants was developed following the example of the Congress' European Code of Conduct for all Persons Involved in Local and Regional Governance. It served as a model for the CPC Code for public officials to be approved in March or April 2022.

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<sup>3</sup> (\*) All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

A Curriculum for a 3-week expert-guided training for local elected representatives was developed and shared with the MTAI with the aim of having it available on their e-learning platform for all 79 municipalities, following the completion of Territorial Administrative Reform in Armenia (TARA).

The Congress supports the Communities Association of Armenia (CAA) in the revision of its Charter considering the reduced number of communities (from 502 to 79 in December 2021) following the finalisation of the TARA. The revised Charter will be adopted at the extraordinary meeting of the CAA General Assembly scheduled for March 2022, where the election of the President and statutory bodies will also be held. In February 2022 experts met with the CAA to discuss the methodology for the development of a new Strategic Plan for the Association, and to launch the process with the involvement of a larger group of Association members to ensure their ownership of the process.

## **B. BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

The Congress continued co-operation with the City of Mostar in the framework of the project “Building democratic participation in the City of Mostar” implemented until December 2021 and will expand its activities to other local authorities and their associations through the new project “Innovating democratic participation at local level in Bosnia and Herzegovina” until June 2024, as part of the Council of Europe Action Plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina 2022-2025. This project aims to enhance the quality of local democracy and create opportunities for citizens to engage in innovative deliberative processes in Mostar and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to promote new democratic approaches, open government, public ethics, transparent and inclusive local policy making in the country.

In the city of Mostar, the first deliberative process in the form of a citizens’ assembly brought together 48 randomly selected citizens who proposed 32 recommendations on the topic of cleanliness and maintenance in public spaces. These were duly considered by the municipal council and an action plan for their implementation was unanimously approved in November 2021.

The Oversight team of the Citizens’ Assembly of Mostar met in October 2021 to discuss the achievements and next steps in the process. Congress Rapporteur on Deliberative Democracy Karl-Heinz LAMBERTZ and Spokesperson on the Observation of Elections Stewart DICKSON underlined the added value of deliberative democracy for local governance and the potential for building new alliances between the citizens and local authorities.

In November 2021, the President of the Chamber of Local Authorities, Bernd VÖHRINGER and the Chair of the Current Affairs Committee, Thomas ANDERSSON made a visit to Mostar to discuss the follow-up to the Citizens’ Assembly recommendations and future co-operation. The delegation met with the Mayor of Mostar, representatives of the City Council, the academic community, and civil society. It expressed satisfaction with the inclusiveness of the deliberative process and its outcomes and highlighted the importance of engaging young people.

In December 2021, the Congress organised the regional workshop “Provision of municipal services: principles, challenges and models of co-operation” in the City of Mostar, with the participation of the Congress member Vladimir PREBILIĆ as a follow-up to the recommendations of the Mostar Citizens’ Assembly.

In February 2022, the new project was launched at an online conference that brought together some 110 mayors, members of local councils across Bosnia and Herzegovina, the two associations of municipalities and cities, and other stakeholders. Congress member Stewart DICKSON highlighted the importance of complementing representative democracy with such deliberative processes, in multicultural societies”.

## **C. GEORGIA**

In Georgia, the Congress is implementing a project on “Strengthening participatory democracy and human rights at local level” jointly with the Directorate General of Democracy of the Council of Europe.

The Congress is supporting the National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (NALAG) in the development of a platform for dialogue between central and local authorities and civil society organisations to promote, and advocate for, the implementation of human rights standards at local level and to contribute to Georgia national commitments. The platform will include local authorities, the Public



Defender's Office, as well as representatives of the Parliament and of the Government of Georgia, and its mandate will be that of organising consultations and dialogue with the local level to enhance the implementation of human rights policies and further policymaking.

In December 2021, 70% of newly elected local authorities throughout the country participated in the high-level workshop on "Reducing inequalities, advancing human rights at local level in Georgia" organised in Tbilisi to mark the International Human Rights Day. The role of local authorities as front-line stakeholders and the need for multi-level platforms of dialogue and exchange to enhance the implementation and promotion of human rights was highlighted by representatives of the government, the parliament, the Public Defender, the President of NALAG and mayor of Tbilisi.

On this occasion, the Congress Secretary General signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the President of NALAG and with the mayors of thirteen selected local authorities which will work together as a forum of exchange to address challenges for improving social inclusion, promoting equal opportunities and incorporating a gender perspective in local political action, to eliminate discrimination.

## **D. UKRAINE**

In Ukraine, the Congress continues co-operation through the new project "Strengthening local democratic governance in Ukraine", launched in October 2021 to ensure continued support to local and central authorities in their regular dialogue, and in their efforts to promote ethical decision making and more citizen-oriented, inclusive, responsive and transparent local governance.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Congress and the Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC) in December 2021 emphasising the commitment on both sides to further enhance the institutional consultation and dialogue between local and national authorities, as well as to pursue of the irreversibility of reforms and the decentralisation of powers in Ukraine.

A second meeting of the "Platform for national-local dialogue on open government" was organised jointly with the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers and the AUC in December 2021, The Ministry of Youth and Sport and the Ministry of Digital Transformation joined the Platform, which was also attended by the Secretary General of the Congress. Responses to newly emerging and long-standing challenges and the Ukrainian commitments to Open Government Partnership (OGP) were discussed in an open dialogue between peer mayors, representatives of the AUC and central authorities who identified common priorities and paved the way for a new joint Roadmap.

The Congress also contributed to the discussion on the legal personality of local public entities by assessing its applicability and conformity with the European Charter of Local Self-Government and participated in several events, in particular the thematic meeting organised by the Council of Europe Office in Ukraine in January 2022.

## **E. KOSOVO\***

In Kosovo\*, the project on promoting local democracy aimed to improve local self-government and the quality of local democracy by fostering multilevel dialogue and strengthening the capacities of local authorities on political integrity, public ethics and open government principles.

The Congress supported the development of an Action Plan for enhancing the alignment of the local self-government framework in Kosovo\* with European standards, finalised in December 2021. The Action Plan followed from the study on this topic conducted by the Congress in October 2021, in its role of the watchdog for the application of the Charter. The Action Plan was developed in consultation with local and central authorities and identifies the challenges, timeline and responsible stakeholders, and proposes more than thirty concrete activities to local and central authorities, thus providing a basis for future reform work.

In February 2022, the central Government included Congress recommendations in the government programme, with a commitment to pursue its implementation together with the newly elected mayors. The support for Action Plan and next steps were voiced at the project closing conference by key stakeholders, such as the Association of Kosovo Municipalities, Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government Administration, representatives of local authorities and international development partners. The Congress Secretary General highlighted the timeliness and relevance of project activities for the

reforms process in Kosovo\* and noted that it can be considered a major success that the findings and the Action Plan were supported by both the central and local levels of the government.

Furthermore, the project, the Association of Kosovo Municipalities (AKM) acquired capacity development and reference materials and other intellectual tools to promote public ethics, and principles of integrity and good governance at the local level. Two training modules on public ethics and integrity, and open government respectively, and a trainer's manual were prepared based on the experience of three workshops on open local government for Chairs of Municipal Assemblies, European Integration Officers and Procurement Officers conducted between the end of September and end of October. These and other learning resources and practical tools reflecting Congress recommendations were developed and shared with the AKM Training Centre in December 2021, thereby strengthening the Association in its capacity building and representational role towards local authorities.

## **F. SOUTH MED PARTNERSHIP**

*The historic events in the countries of the southern Mediterranean in 2011 paved the way for far-reaching changes in the region, including the start of processes of opening up and democratisation.*

*Since 2011, the Council of Europe has conducted a new policy towards its immediate neighbourhood, in particular North Africa, with the aim to enable non-members States to benefit from the experience gained in the democratic transition processes in central and Eastern Europe after 1989.*

*It is against this background that the Congress' cooperation activities with neighbouring countries are carried out, in the framework of the South-Med Partnership Programme, launched in February 2017, to meet the objectives of the local and regional democracy component of the Council of Europe's neighbourhood policy.*

*The South-Med Partnership is designed as a framework for privileged cooperation with the countries involved. It is politically supervised by Rapporteurs. In May 2021, the Bureau appointed Vice-Presidents Xavier Cadoret (France, SOC/V/PD) and Gunn-Marit Helgesen (Norway, EPP/CCE), as well as Konstantinos Koukas (Greece, EPP/CCE) and Carla DeJonghe (Belgium, GILD) as Rapporteurs on the South-Mediterranean Partnership.*

*Through the South-Med Partnership, the Congress wishes to provide a particularly valuable platform for exchanges and encounters and enable its partners to benefit from its achievements, expertise and experience of its members in the following areas:*

- *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, while also promoting the Council of Europe's fundamental values, especially regarding local democracy*
- *legislative assistance and expertise in the Congress's areas of responsibility, in particular in drafting and implementing legislation relating to decentralisation and local and regional governance*
- *assisting with the electoral process and, where applicable, observing local and regional elections*
- *capacity building (especially in terms of leadership) for local and regional elected representatives (and candidates) and their administration through the development of specific awareness-raising and training programmes, with a particular focus on the role of women and young local leaders*
- *helping to set up or strengthen associations of local and regional authorities*
- *supporting the development of participatory democracy, with a particular focus on the role of young people, women and civil society.*

### **Partner for Local Democracy status**

*Introduced in 2014, the Partner for Local Democracy status<sup>4</sup> allows the establishment of a special framework for dialogue and regular institutional contacts between local and regional elected representatives in Council of Europe neighbourhood countries and their European counterparts.*

*The status is granted at the request of the countries concerned and is designed as a tool for strengthening good governance at local and regional level. Through their participation in the work of the Congress, the delegations from the beneficiary countries help to promote local democracy not only in their own countries but at pan-European level.*

*The Kingdom of Morocco and the Republic of Tunisia were granted the status of Partner for Local Democracy of the Congress on 2 April and 29 October 2019 respectively. Since then, the two delegations participate regularly in the Congress' statutory work (Sessions, remote meetings of its Statutory Forum and of its three Committees). According to the Congress' rules and procedures, the delegations were renewed during the Congress' March 2021 Session.*

## **Morocco**

The Congress contributed with its expertise to the revision of the institutional architecture for decentralised governance in Morocco, based on international benchmarking. Recommendations focused on the need for adaptations or legislative and/or regulatory interventions such as the precision of the intrinsic competences at each level of local authorities, the clarification of certain guiding legal concepts, and reconsideration of the relevance of certain competences attributed to levels of local authorities.

Legislative support was provided to improve the framework on participatory democracy and mechanisms of citizen participation at territorial level, local financing mechanisms and financial autonomy of territorial communities, as well as the status of territorial elected representatives. Expert studies were carried out on the three subjects, based on international benchmarking and exchanges with the three associations of local and regional authorities and the Directorate-General of Territorial Authorities (DGCT) of the Interior Ministry, to identify shortcomings in the existing framework and formulate proposals for improvement. Following their completion in December 2021, further work of formulating recommendations for legislative amendments will be pursued in 2022.

## **Tunisia**

In Tunisia, the Congress supported drafting a memorandum of understanding between the Ministry in charge of Local Affairs and the National Federation of Tunisian Communities to establish a platform of regular consultations between central and local authorities.

Dialogue was also promoted between Tunisian and Moroccan central and territorial authorities through their joint participation in the Community of practice on decentralised territorial governance in the South Mediterranean, a platform of peer exchanges and experience sharing launched by the Congress in November 2021. The platform focuses on three initial priority themes: citizen participation at territorial level, the status of territorial elected representatives, and financial autonomy of territorial communities.

A strong emphasis was put on the revision of the Code of local taxation, which involved the preparation of an assessment of the current situation by Tunisian and European experts, a benchmark of international systems as well as proposed changes to reinforce fiscal autonomy at the local level. The result of their work was presented during a workshop in December 2021 to gather feedback from relevant national stakeholders at governmental and local levels.

## **Regional activities in the Southern Mediterranean – South Programme IV**

Building on the achievements and relations established through its bilateral co-operation projects in Morocco and Tunisia, and according to the objectives of reinforcing regional cooperation and building networks of the South Programme IV, the Congress launched a regional activity in the Middle East and

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<sup>4</sup> [Resolution 376 \(2014\)](#)

North Africa (MENA)<sup>5</sup> region. This initiative, implemented between October and February 2022, aimed to reinforce decentralised democratic governance in the MENA region by fostering exchanges and networking between relevant stakeholders in the region and providing expertise of the Council of Europe Congress and experience by Congress' members.

Two main activities were implemented in this framework. First, the creation and support to the work of a community of practice, whose activity focuses on participatory democracy, local finances, and status and conditions of office of territorial elected representatives. These four topics are complemented by two transversal dimensions: implementing the principles of open government and fostering dialogue and consultation between central and territorial authorities. The launch of the Euro-Mediterranean network took place online in November 2021 with the participation of Congress Vice-President and Rapporteur of the South-Med Partnership, Xavier CADORET, the Congress Secretary General, representatives of central authorities and delegations of Partners for Local Democracy to the Congress from Morocco and Tunisia, as well as partners from the MENA region representing Jordan and the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities. Three thematic working groups and three webinars took place until February 2022, with the participation of Xavier CADORET, Marc COOLS, Martine DIESCHBURG (Luxembourg, GILD/ILDG) and Karl-Heinz LAMBERTZ.

Second, capacity-building was provided to women, newly elected territorial representatives in Morocco. This activity combined theoretical inputs and peer exchanges and was organised in partnership with the "Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie" (OIF). The first part of this activity, dedicated to institutional mechanisms of territorial governance, was held online in December 2021 and was attended by Karl-Heinz LAMBERTZ and Zohra DARRAS (France, SOC/V/DP), and Xavier CADORET. The second part on improving advocacy, leadership, communication and networking capacities of elected women took place in February in hybrid mode, with the contribution of Xavier CADORET and Zohra DARRAS.

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<sup>5</sup> Targeted beneficiaries: Palestine\*, Libya, Lebanon, Jordan

\*This designation shall not be construed as a designation of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of Council of Europe member States on this issue.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1

### 41st SESSION – October 2021

#### [Adopted Resolutions and Recommendations](#)



#### 41st SESSION

#### Adopted texts

##### Recommendations

<i>Recommendation 463</i>	Home sharing platforms: challenges and opportunities for municipalities
<i>Recommendation 464</i>	Monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in the Netherlands
<i>Recommendation 465</i>	Monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Spain
<i>Recommendation 466</i>	Monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in North Macedonia
<i>Recommendation 467</i>	Monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in the Republic of Cyprus
<i>Recommendation 468</i>	Monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Albania

##### Resolutions

<i>Resolution 475</i>	Home sharing platforms: challenges and opportunities for municipalities
<i>Resolution 476</i>	Verification of new members' credentials

**APPENDIX 2:**  
**42<sup>nd</sup> SESSION – March 2022**  
**Draft Agenda**

CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES



**CG(2022)42-OJ**  
18 March 2022

**42nd Session of the Congress**  
Strasbourg, Palais de l'Europe  
22-24 March 2022

**DRAFT AGENDA**  
**PUBLIC MEETING**

Simultaneous interpretation will be provided in the two official languages of the Council of Europe (English and French) and in German, Italian, Russian and Turkish except where otherwise indicated.

Information on the provision of additional languages available for sittings (valid on the date shown above) is indicated throughout this agenda and on the timetable of meetings [\[CG\(2022\)42-01\]](#)

Key:

**EN** English  
**FR** French  
**DE** German  
**IT** Italian  
**RU** Russian  
**TR** Turkish

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CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES  
CONGRÈS DES POUVOIRS LOCAUX ET RÉGIONAUX  
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## Monday 21 March 2022

### **Bureaux meetings** [EN/FR/DE/IT/RU]

9.30-10.30, Room 6	Bureau of the Chamber of Regions
9.30-10.30, Room 8	Bureau of the Chamber of Local Authorities
10.45-12.15 and 14.00-15.30, Room 9	Bureau of the Congress




### **Political group meetings - 15.45-17.45**

Room 9	European People's Party Group in the Congress (EPP/CCE) [EN/FR/DE/IT/RU/TR]
Room 8	Socialist Group, Greens and Progressive Democrats (SOC/G/PD) [EN/FR/DE/IT/RU/TR]
Room 6	Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (ILDG) [EN/FR/DE/IT/RU/TR]
Room 2	European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR) [EN/IT/RU/TR]

### **Secretaries of delegations meeting**

Information meeting	15.40-16.20, Room 3
Coffee break with the youth delegates	16.20-17.00, outside Room 3

<b>Tuesday 22 March 2022</b>	
<b>Committee meetings</b> [EN/FR/DE/IT/RU/TR]	
Monitoring Committee	8.30-10.00, Room 9
Current Affairs Committee	8.30-10.00, Room 8
Governance Committee	8.30-10.00, Room 6

<b>Tuesday 22 March 2022</b>	
<b>Plenary sitting</b> [EN/FR/DE/IT/RU/TR]	
10.30-13.00, Hemicycle (salle d'écoute, Room 1)	
* <i>Deadline for tabling amendments: 10.00 Tuesday 15 March 2022</i>	
10.30	<b>Opening of the 42nd Session of the Congress by the President</b> Leendert VERBEEK
10.35	<b>Verification of new members' credentials</b> [CG(2022)42-06] [CG(2022)42-20] Presentation by the co-rapporteurs: Xavier CADORET, France (L, SOC/G/PD) and Aleksandra MALETIĆ, Serbia (R, EPP/CCE) Debate and vote on the draft resolution [CG(2022)42-02]* 
10.45	<b>Adoption of the draft agenda of the 42nd Session</b> [CG(2022)42-OJ] <b>Adoption of the draft minutes of the last sitting of the 41st Session (28 October 2021)</b> [CG(2021)41-PV-03] <b>Adoption of the composition of Congress committees</b> [CG(2022)42-03] 
10.50	<b>Communication by the President</b> Debate
11.00	<b>Involving children in sustainable development in their cities</b> Presentation by the rapporteur: Brigitte VAN DEN BERG, Netherlands (L, ILDG) Statements by: - Baroness Doreen E. MASSEY, Rapporteur on "The right to be heard: child participation, a foundation for democratic societies", Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe - Grace O'HAGAN, United Kingdom, member of the advisory group of children on the Congress "Booklet on the Sustainable Development Goals for Children"  Video feedback from the pilot projects Debate Vote on the amendments [CG(2022)42-10-AMDT] and draft resolution [CG(2022)42-10]*
12.15	<b>Statement by Marija PEJČINOVIĆ-BURIĆ, Secretary General of the Council of Europe</b> Questions
13.00	<b>Suspension of the sitting</b>





**Tuesday 22 March 2022**

**Plenary sitting** [EN/FR/DE/IT/RU/TR]

14.30-19.30, Hemicycle (salle d'écoute, Room 1)

\* *Deadline for tabling amendments: 10.00 Tuesday 15 March 2022*

14.30	<b>Italian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (17 November 2021 – May 2022)</b> <b>Statement by Mariastella GELMINI, Minister of Regional Affairs and Autonomy, on behalf of the Italian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers</b> Questions
15.30	<b>The aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Statement by H.E. Mr Volodymyr ZELENSKYY, President of Ukraine (tbc)</b></li></ul> Questions Debate Vote on the amendments [CG(2022)42-21-AMDT] and vote on the draft declaration [CG(2022)42-21]* 
18.30	<b>Monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-government: Germany</b> Presentation by the co-rapporteurs: Konstantinos KOUKAS, Greece (L, EPP/CCE), and Jani KOKKO, Finland (R, SOC/G/PD) Debate and vote on the draft recommendation [CG(2022)42-16]*  <b>Statement by a representative of the German authorities (tbc)</b> Questions
19.30	<b>Close of the sitting</b>



Wednesday 23 March 2022

Chamber of Local Authorities [EN/FR/DE/IT/RU/TR]

9.00-12.00, Hemicycle

\* Deadline for tabling amendments: 10.00 Wednesday 16 March 2022

9.00	<b>Opening of the session of the chamber by the President</b> Bernd VÖHRINGER	
9.02	<b>Adoption of the draft agenda of the chamber</b> [CPL(2022)42-OJ]	
9.04	<b>Communication by the President</b> [CPL(2022)42-01] Debate	
9.15	<b>Report on the observation of local elections in Georgia (2 October 2021)</b> Presentation by the rapporteur: David ERAY, Switzerland (R, EPP/CCE) Debate and vote on the draft recommendation <a href="#">[CPL(2022)42-02]</a> *	
10.00	<b>Monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-government: Luxembourg</b> Presentation by the co-rapporteurs: Christine CHEVALLEY, Switzerland (L, ILDG) and Marjorie CROVETTO, Monaco (L, NR) Debate and vote on the draft recommendation <a href="#">[CPL(2022)42-03]</a> * <b>Statement by Taina BOFFERDING, Minister of the Interior and Minister of Equality between Women and Men, Luxembourg</b> Questions	
10.45	<b>Information report on the observation of the partial local elections in Armenia (5 December 2021)</b> <a href="#">[CPL(2022)42-04]</a> Presentation by the rapporteur: Stewart DICKSON, United Kingdom (R, ILDG) Debate	
11.05	<b>Thematic debate: Fake news, threats and violence – pressures on mayors in the current crises in Europe</b> Statements by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Wilma DELISSEN VAN TONGERLO, Co-Rapporteur on "Impact of hate speech and fake news on the working conditions of local and regional politicians", Netherlands (L, ILDG)</li><li>- Michael BRYAN, Youth delegate, United Kingdom</li></ul> Debate	
11.59	<b>Adoption of the draft abridged report of the session of the chamber</b> [CPL(2022)42-DEC]	
12.00	<b>Close of the session of the chamber by the President</b>	

Wednesday 23 March 2022	
Chamber of Regions <small>[EN/FR/DE/IT/RU/TR]</small>	
9.00-12.00, Room 9 (salle d'écoute, Room 1)	
* Deadline for tabling amendments: 10.00 Wednesday 16 March 2022	
9.00	<b>Opening of the session of the chamber by the President</b> Harald SONDEREGGER
9.02	<b>Adoption of the draft agenda of the chamber [CPR(2022)42-OJ]</b> 
9.04	<b>Communication by the President [CPR(2022)42-01]</b> Debate
	<b>Statement by Jean-Claude MARCOURT, President of the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE) and President of the Walloon Parliament, Belgium</b> Exchange of views
	<b>Democratic pluralism in regional governance: the relationship between the majority and the opposition (Opinion of the Venice Commission) [CPR(2022)42-02]</b> Statements by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pierre GARRONE, Head of the Division of elections and political parties, the European Commission for Democracy through Law of the Council of Europe (the Venice Commission)</li> <li>- Vladimir PREBILIC, Slovenia (L, SOC/G/PD), Rapporteur on "The situation of independent candidates and the opposition in local and regional elections"</li> <li>- Benno SCHERRER, President of the Zurich Cantonal Council, Switzerland</li> <li>- Josef NEUMANN, Member of the State parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany</li> </ul> Debate
	<b>Regions and diaspora: diaspora representation in host regions and relations with regions of origin [CPR(2022)42-02]</b> Statements by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ingo ERRICHER, Tirol International Network for Tyroleans living abroad</li> <li>- Pedro FARIA E CASTRO, Member of the Regional Parliament of the Azores, Portugal</li> <li>- Sharon AMADI, youth delegate, Italy</li> </ul> Debate
	<b>Free debate</b>
	<b>Date of the next session - October 2022</b>
11.59	<b>Adoption of the draft abridged report of the session of the chamber [CPR(2022)42-DEC]</b> 
12.00	<b>Close of the session of the chamber by the President</b>

## Wednesday 23 March 2022

### Plenary sitting [EN/FR/DE/IT/RU/TR]

14.00-19.30, Hemicycle (salle d'écoute, Room 1)

\* Deadline for tabling amendments: 10.00 Wednesday 16 March 2022

14.00	<b>Adoption of the draft minutes of the sitting of the Congress on 22 March 2022</b> [CG(2022)42-PV-01] 
14.02	<b>Formal adoption of texts approved by the Chamber of Local Authorities</b> [CG(2022)42-04] 
14.05	<b>Statement by Roberto GUALTIERI, Mayor of Rome, Italy</b> Exchange of views
14.50	<b>Monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-government: Turkey</b> Presentation by the co-rapporteurs Vladimir PREBILIC, Slovenia (L, SOC/G/PD) and David ERAY, Switzerland (R, EPP/CCE) Debate Vote on the amendments <a href="#">[CG(2022)42-14-AMDT]</a> * and on the draft resolution and draft recommendation <a href="#">[CG(2022)42-14]</a> * 
16.00	<b>Statement by Tiny KOX, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe</b> Questions
16.45	<b>Presentation of the TERRI study (Territorial Governance, Powers and Reforms in Europe) of the CEMR</b> Statement by Stefano BONACCINI, President of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) Exchange of views
17.15	<b>Beyond elections: the use of deliberative methods in European municipalities and regions</b> Presentation by the rapporteur: Karl-Heinz LAMBERTZ, Belgium (R, SOC/G/PD) Statement by: - Mario KORDIĆ, Mayor of the City of Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina Debate and vote on the draft resolution and the draft recommendation: <a href="#">[CG(2022)42-12]</a> * 
18.15	<b>Statement by Apostolos TZITZIKOSTAS, President of the European Committee of the Regions</b> Exchange of views
18.45	<b>Rural youth and the role of local and regional authorities</b> Presentation by the co-rapporteurs: Aida JALILZADE, Azerbaijan (R, ECR) and James MOLONEY, Ireland (L, ILDG)  Statement by: - youth delegate (tbc) Debate and vote on the draft resolution and the draft recommendation <a href="#">[CG(2022)42-15]</a> *
19.30	<b>Close of the sitting</b>

**Thursday 24 March 2022**

**Plenary sitting** [EN/FR/DE/IT/RU/TR]

9.00-12.45, Hemicycle (salle d'écoute, Room 1)

\* *Deadline for tabling amendments: 10.00 Thursday 17 March 2022*

9.00	<b>Adoption of the draft minutes of the sessions of the chambers and of the sitting of the Congress on 23 March 2022</b> [CPL(2022)42-PV], [CPR(2022)42-PV] and [CG(2022)42-PV-02]
9.05	<b>Ceremony awarding the Congress medal to an honorary member</b> Gaye DOGANOGLU, Turkey
9.25	<b>Monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-government in the United Kingdom</b> Presentation by the co-rapporteurs: Vladimir PREBILIĆ, Slovenia (L, SOC/G/PD) and Magnus BERNTSSON, Sweden (R, EPP/CCE) Debate and vote on the draft recommendation <a href="#">[CG(2022)42-18]</a> * <b>Statement by Neil O'BRIEN MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Levelling Up, The Union and Constitution), United Kingdom</b> Questions
10.45	<b>Report on the observation of local and regional elections in Denmark (16 November 2021)</b> Presentation by the rapporteur: Gunn Marit HELGESEN, Norway (R, EPP/CCE) Debate and vote on the draft recommendation <a href="#">[CG(2022)42-17]</a> * 
11.15	<b>The situation of independent candidates and opposition in local and regional elections</b> Presentation by the rapporteur: Vladimir PREBILIC, Slovenia (L, SOC/G/PD) Debate and vote on the draft resolution and draft recommendation <a href="#">[CG(2022)42-13]</a> * 
12.15	<b>Report on the observation of municipal and regional elections in Morocco (8 September 2021)</b> <a href="#">[CG(2022)42-19]</a> Presentation by the rapporteur: Vladimir PREBILIC, Slovenia (L, SOC/G/PD) Debate
12.44	<b>Adoption of the draft abridged report of the 42nd Session</b> [CG(2022)42-DEC] 
12.45	<b>Close of the 42nd Session by the President of the Congress</b>

## MEMBERS' ATTENTION IS DRAWN TO:

- Electronic voting will take place in the Hemicycle and in Room 9 via the meeting platform KUDO.
  - Participants are reminded that access to the hemicycle is strictly limited to holders of badges which indicate the specific hemicycle symbol.
  - The conditions and deadlines for tabling amendments ([congress.session@coe.int](mailto:congress.session@coe.int)): at the latest at **10.00, 7 days before** the day when the texts to which they refer are to be discussed. Amendments must be signed by 5 delegates from at least two delegations for texts debated in plenary sittings or by five delegates from at least two national delegations sitting in a chamber for texts debated in that chamber.
  - Registration for speakers: the form for registration of speakers for the debates, available at the entrance of the hemicycle and Room 9 (plenary sittings and chamber sessions) must be submitted to the Table Office secretariat seated in front of the President's rostrum for sittings in the hemicycle or to the secretariat of the President for the chamber meeting in Room 9.
  - **Finance Office:** Offices 1035/1040/1033
  - **Table office** for any other question: Office 10814
  - **SPEAKING TIMES APPLIED IN THE DEBATES - Rule 30 paragraphs 6 and 7 of the Rules and Procedures of the Congress**
6. Speaking time for delegates is limited as follows:
- a. Single rapporteurs presenting reports: ten minutes;
  - b. Co-rapporteurs presenting reports: six minutes each;
  - c. Single rapporteurs replying to debates: five minutes;
  - d. Co-rapporteurs replying to debates: three minutes each;
  - e. Chairs of committees replying to debates (at their request): three minutes;
  - f. Other speakers (except on personal statements; on setting the agenda; on any procedural question or on amendments): three minutes;
  - g. Speakers on personal statements; on setting the agenda; on any procedural question or on amendments or sub-amendments: one minute.
7. When sufficient time is not available for all speakers to be heard for the times provided under Rule 30.6, the President may decide that speaking time will be reduced or that not all those who have entered their name in the register may speak.
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## APPENDIX 3:

### Rapporteurs of the Bureau and thematic spokesperson:

Introduction

This document presents the list of bureau rapporteurs and Congress representatives in outside bodies.

### Congress BUREAU rapporteurs

	Topic / Sujet	Rapporteur
1.	Verification of Credentials of New Members and New Appointment Procedures / <i>Vérification des pouvoirs des nouveaux membres et des nouvelles procédures de désignation</i>	Xavier CADORET France (L, SOC/G/PD - SOC/V/PD)
		Aleksandra MALETIĆ Serbia / Serbie (R, EPP/CCE - PPE/CCE)
2.	Budget and Resources of the Congress / <i>Budget du Congrès</i>	Lia MONTALTI Italy / Italie (R, SOC/G/PD - SOC/V/PD)
		Konstantinos KOUKAS Greece / Grèce (L, EPP/CCE - PPE/CCE)
3.	Congress Priorities for 2021-2026 <i>Priorités du Congrès pour 2021-2026</i>	Bernd VÖHRINGER Germany / Allemagne (L, EPP/CCE - PPE/CCE)
		Harald SONDEREGGER Austria / Autriche (R, EPP/CCE - PPE/CCE)
4.	Congress Charter and Congress Rules and Procedures / <i>Charte du Congrès et Règles et procédures du Congrès</i>	Gunn Marit HELGESEN Norway / Norvège (R, EPP/CCE / PPE/CCE)
		John WARMISHAM United Kingdom / Royaume-Uni (L, SOC/G/PD - SOC/V/DP)

## Congress representatives in outside bodies

	Outside bodies / <i>Instances extérieures</i>	Congress representatives / <i>Représentants du Congrès</i>	Committee / <i>Commission</i>
1.	North-South Centre / <i>Centre Nord-Sud</i> <b>// CUR<sup>6</sup></b>  * Congress representatives to this body are <i>de facto</i> rapporteurs on the South-Med Partnership/ * Les représentants du Congrès à cet organe sont de facto rapporteurs sur le Partenariat Sud-Med.	Xavier CADORET France (L, SOC/G/PD - SOC/V/PD)	MON
		Gunn Marit HELGESEN Norway / <i>Norvège</i> (R, EPP/CCE – PPE/CCE)	MON
		Konstantinos KOUKAS Greece / <i>Grèce</i> (L, EPP/CCE - PPE/CCE)	MON
		Carla DEJONGHE Belgium / <i>Belgique</i> (R, ILDG - GILD)	CUR
2.	Venice Commission's Council for Democratic Elections* / <i>Conseil des élections démocratiques de la Commission de Venise*</i> <b>// MON<sup>7</sup></b>  * Congress representatives to this body are <i>de facto</i> rapporteurs on the Observation of Local and Regional Elections (see II – 8.) / *Les représentants du Congrès dans cette instance sont de facto rapporteurs pour l'observation des élections locales et régionales (voir II – 8.)	Stewart DICKSON United Kingdom / <i>Royaume-Uni</i> (R, ILDG/GILD)	MON
		Gunn Marit HELGESEN Norway / <i>Norvège</i> (R, EPP/CCE / PPE/CCE)	MON
		Randi MONDORF Denmark/ <i>Danemark</i> (R, ILDG - GILD)	MON
		Vladimir PREBILIC Slovenia / <i>Slovénie</i> (L, SOC/G/PD - SOC/V/PD)	MON

6 CUR = Current Affairs Committee

7 MON = Monitoring Committee



Introduction

This document presents the list of Congress thematic spokespersons appointed on 6 December 2021 and 11 February 2022.

	<b>Theme / Thème // Committee(s) in charge / Commission(s) responsables</b>	<b>Spokesperson - Committee // Porte-parole - Commission</b>
1.	European Local Democracy Week / <i>Semaine européenne de la démocratie locale</i> <b>// MON</b>	Bryony RUDKIN* United Kingdom / <i>Royaume-Uni</i> (L, SOC/G/PD - SOC/V/DP) / MON
2.	Human Rights / <i>Droits de l'Homme</i> <b>// three committees</b>	Harald BERGMANN* Netherlands / <i>Pays-Bas</i> (L, ILDG - GILD) / GOV
3.	Gender Equality / <i>Egalité des genres</i> <b>// CUR</b>	Eirini DOUROU** Greece / <i>Grèce</i> (R, SOC/G/PD - SOC/V/DP) / CUR
4.	Youth / <i>Jeunes</i> <b>// CUR</b>	Laura LAURO** Italy / <i>Italie</i> (R, PPE/CCE - EPP/CCE) / CUR
5.	Ethics and Prevention of Corruption / <i>Ethique et prévention de la corruption</i> <b>// GOV</b>	Vladimir PREBILIC** Slovenia / <i>Slovénie</i> (L, SOC/G/PD - SOC/V/DP) / GOV
6.	Environment and climate change / <i>Environnement et changement climatique</i> <b>// CUR</b>	Cemal BAS** Turkey / <i>Turquie</i> (L, PPE/CCE - EPP/CCE) / CUR  Deputy spokesperson / <i>Porte-parole adjoint</i> : Amelie TARSCHYS INGRE** (L, GILD – ILDG) / CUR
7.	Digitalisation and artificial intelligence / <i>Numérisation et intelligence artificielle</i> <b>// GOV</b>	David ERAY* Switzerland / <i>Suisse</i> (R, EPP/CCE / PPE/CCE) / GOV

\* Appointed on 6 December 2021

\*\* Appointed on 11 February 2022

## APPENDIX 4:

### Bureau declaration on the Congress Budget 2022-2023



The Bureau of the Congress / *Le Bureau du Congrès*

CG-BUR(2021)42-46REV  
Bilingual / *Bilingue*  
6 December / *décembre* 2021

### Bureau declaration on the Congress Budget 2022-2023

### *Déclaration du Bureau sur le budget du Congrès 2022-2023*

The Bureau of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, in light of the Committee of Ministers Resolution CMRes(2021)22 approving the Council of Europe Programme for 2022-2025 and the Budget for 2022, as well as the Budget for 2023 on a provisional basis:

1. Welcomes the Committee of Ministers' decision to adopt a budget for 2022 and 2023 taking into account inflation in line with the principle of Zero Real Growth;
2. Thanks the heads of its national delegations for their support in light of Congress Recommendation 454 (2021) on the Budget of the Congress for 2022-2023;
3. Regrets that the Congress' requests as set out in its Recommendation 454 (2021) on the Budget of the Congress for 2022-2023 have not been met;
4. Further regrets that the Congress' call to concentrate activities of the Council of Europe for and with local and regional authorities under the Congress has not been met;
5. Welcomes the measures proposed by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and approved by the Committee of Ministers in respect of monitoring bodies, including the Congress, to address the backlog caused by the delays due to Covid-19, including operational and staff resources;
6. Underlines, however, that these measures do not address the structural staff problems of the Congress which have led to delays in monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government resulting in the fact that for more than one fifth of member States the monitoring cycle is longer than 5 years;
7. Commits to continuing to improve its functioning and working methods and to identify resources outside the Council of Europe budget in order to allow the Congress to fulfil its mandate and achieve the expected results;
8. Resolves to assess the possibilities proposed by national delegations and national authorities and to take decisions about activities to be continued or discontinued in view of the available ordinary and extrabudgetary resources;
9. Invites national delegations, national associations of local and regional authorities, and national authorities of member States to facilitate the Congress' return to a capacity to fulfil its mandate as set out in the Congress Charter by:
  - a. seconding staff to the Congress secretariat and
  - b. making voluntary contributions to finance concrete activities and projects such as the European Local Democracy Week, the Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion, the Pact of Towns and Regions against Sexual Exploitation of Children, the Summit of Mayors against Radicalisation or other activities, which are not fully funded;
10. Invites the Secretary General and the Committee of Ministers to make full use of the Congress' unique role in the institutional architecture of the Council of Europe and its potential to achieve the objective of improving democracy, human rights and the rule of law serving the women, men and children living in our 47 member States.

