

ACTIVITY REPORT

(Mid-April – Mid-October 2019)



Communication by the Secretary General of the Congress of Local and regional Authorities

1358th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies
23 October 2019

CG37(2019)23
23 October 2019

Activity Report of the Congress

(Mid-April – Mid-October 2019)

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1358th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies**

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Layout: Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

Print: Council of Europe

Edition: October 2019

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Communication by Andreas KIEFER, Secretary General of the Congress

The communication will be added after 23 October 2019

The last activity report was published on 2 May 2019:

[Activity report \(mid-October 2018 to mid-April 2019\)](#)

L POLITICAL AGENDA

Meeting of the President with the Deputy Prime Minister of Moldova

Strasbourg, 25 June 2019

Andrei NASTASE, Deputy Prime-Minister and newly appointed Minister of the Interior of Moldova as well as Chairman of the Moldovan delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly met with the President and the Secretary General of the Congress at the occasion of the PACE Session. Mr. NASTASE informed the President of the latest political developments in the Republic of Moldova, including the holding of the local elections, scheduled for 20 October 2019, which the Congress was invited to observe. The President assured Andrei NASTASE of the willingness of the Congress to continuing and strengthening its cooperation with the Moldovan authorities, notably in the framework of the post-monitoring dialogue, in order to support the implementation of the recommendations of the last Congress monitoring report on the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. Mr. NASTASE expressed his readiness and that of his government to implement the Congress recommendations in order to create a stable and resilient level of democratic local self-government. He invited the President to pay an official visit to the Republic of Moldova at a date to be determined.



Conference on 'The added value of local and regional authorities in the unification of Europe' on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Congress and the CoR at the European Parliament in Brussels, 27 June 2019

Joint ceremony for the 25th anniversary of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the European Committee of the Regions

Brussels, 27 June 2019

The CoR and the Congress organised a joint event for celebrating their 25th anniversary. They held a ceremony in the hemicycle of the European Parliament, during the CoR plenary session, with the participation of the Congress Bureau members. The ceremony was followed, the same day, by a conference on "The Added Value of Local and Regional Authorities in the Unification of Europe" which included two panel discussions on the state of local and regional democracy in Europe and on the local and regional contribution to implementing national policies in the member states. The participants highlighted the synergies between the work of the two institutions in strengthening local self-government and regional democracy, a priority shared by both CoR and the Congress.

Participation of the President in the Economic Forum of Aix-en-Provence

Aix en Provence, 5 July 2019

During the session entitled "How to Reconcile the Core and the Periphery?", the President recalled that rural exodus and progressive urbanisation have led to major territorial transformations in Europe, widening the gap between urban areas and peripheral areas and problems concerning basic services such as employment, mobility, transport and access to digital infrastructures can create a sentiment of marginalisation or even abandonment amongst the population of peripheral areas. He warned against the loss of public trust in institutions and political representatives, the risk of a shift towards populist parties and the dangers for the democratic functioning of societies and underlined that local and regional authorities play an essential role in rebuilding fairer democratic societies by and for all citizens, as they are at the forefront in assessing the population's needs and contributing to the development and implementation of innovative policies.



Meeting of a delegation of local and regional elected representatives including the President of the Congress, Anders KNAPE with the Secretary General of the United Nations, António GUTERRES in New York, 17 July 2019

Participation of the President in the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
New York, 16 – 18 July 2019

A delegation of 17 local and regional elected officials, including the Congress President participated in several thematic debates at the High Level Political Forum, at the United Nations, as part of the PLATFORMA network, which brings together local and regional authorities and their national, pan-European and global associations. The President addressed in particular the session entitled "Local Action for Global Commitments", which focused on the territorial dimension of the SDGs and the question of their financing at the local level. He also took part, on 17 July, in a "Voluntary National Reviews Lab" aimed at examining progress at the national level but also how national governments can support the localisation of the SDGs by engaging local governments and local stakeholders in the process and integrating local data into their strategies.

On the same day, the President met with UN Secretary General António GUTERRES at a meeting with the delegation. During this exchange, the delegation stressed the need for a transformation of governance and the various decision-making mechanisms and highlighted the importance of taking into account the territorial dimension, in particular in view of the Political Declaration of the SDGs Summit scheduled for September 2019.

The President also participated in the ministerial segment of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, organised under the theme 'Empowering people and ensuring inclusion and equality'. He contributed to various sessions dedicated to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 17 of Agenda 2030.

The Congress President and Secretary General Andreas KIEFER used the opportunity to speak with several European co-ordinators to include the cities and regions in the upcoming voluntary national reviews about the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Statement by the President of the Congress on the suspension of Mayors in Turkey

Strasbourg, 20 August 2019

The President made the following statement:

'I express my grave concern about the decision of the Turkish authorities to suspend the elected mayors of three metropolitan cities in the south-east of the country, namely Diyarbakir, Mardin and Van, and to replace them with governors.

These mayors were elected as a result of the free and fair expression of the will of the Turkish people during the local elections held on 31 March 2019, which were observed by the Congress.

In the past, the Congress expressed its concern about the excessive use of legal proceedings against local elected representatives in Turkey and their replacement by appointed officials. This practice seriously undermines the proper functioning of local democracy.

I also refer to the Congress Recommendation on the situation of local elected representatives in Turkey, adopted in 2017, and I call on the Turkish authorities to address this issue without delay and in particular to restore the capacity of municipal councils to choose a replacement mayor.

The Congress Bureau will continue to follow this situation closely, in particular at its next meeting in Strasbourg on 11 September 2019. This situation will also be addressed during the monitoring mission planned from 1 to 4 October 2019 which aims to assess the implementation of the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Turkey."

Statement by the Bureau on the Congress budgetary resources

Strasbourg, 11 September 2019

In this declaration, the Bureau welcomed the support expressed by the Committee of Ministers for the Congress' contribution to the Helsinki Ministerial Session in May 2019 as the institution responsible for monitoring the European Charter of Local Self-Government within the Council of Europe. With a view to the next biennium 2020-2021, the Bureau called on the Committee of Ministers to restore a 3% share of the Organisation's budget for the Congress. The Bureau also called for a budget that is at least based on zero real growth in order to overcome the structural financial difficulties caused by the application of zero nominal growth for the latest budgets.

Statement by the President following the local elections in Russia

Strasbourg, 11 September 2019

Following the 8 September municipal elections in the Russian Federation, the President underlined the importance of democratic framework conditions in order to ensure genuinely free and fair elections, in particular with regard to the registration of independent candidates. He recalled that civil society organisations, prior to the municipal elections, have pointed to violations at the stage of candidates' registration and stated that the legal requirement for independent candidates to collect 3 percent of the voters from the according constituency is in contradiction to the Guidelines on Elections of the Venice Commission and was too high a hurdle for many independent candidates to run in the elections of 8 September.

The President referred in this context also to the draft Congress Report on local and regional democracy in the Russian Federation which will be debated on 30 October 2019, in the frame of the 37th Congress Session. By this report the Congress asks Russia to abolish the legal provision requiring an excessive number of signatures and recommends guaranteeing equal access to voting rights to independent and opposition candidates.

In reaction to reports about shortcomings on the Election Day, the President encouraged the Russian authorities to reconsider regulations on the admission of international delegations to observe elections also at the municipal level. He recalled that international election observation at the local and regional level is an important contribution to strengthening the integrity of elections and that the Congress who was not invited to observe the 8 September municipal elections stands ready to assist the Russian authorities in improving its electoral processes.

Participation of the President in the UN Summit of Heads of State and Government

New York, 24 - 25 September 2019

At this first UN summit on the SDGs since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in September 2015, the President of the Congress participated in the 2nd High-level Forum for Local and Regional Authorities. He also participated in the meeting of the delegation of local and regional elected representatives of the EU institutions to the United Nations General Assembly in the framework of the CEMR General Assembly/Platform. The President of the Congress met with Åsa REGNER, Deputy Executive Director - Intergovernmental Support and Strategic Partnership of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. He recalled that a more egalitarian society is a prerequisite for achieving the objectives of Agenda 2030, underlining the necessity to take objective 5 (gender equality) into account in the implementation of the other 16 objectives of Agenda 2030. He also urged the UN and its member States to offer representatives of municipalities and regions a place at the negotiating table, and the recognition of the local and regional level's central role in the further implementation of the Agenda.



Seminar between the former Presidents of the Congress and the members of the current Bureau on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, 1 October 2019

Seminar on the Congress' history, achievements and prospects on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe

Strasbourg, 1st October 2019

The Seminar brought together nine former presidents and the current Bureau of the Congress to speak about the Congress's major achievements in promoting local and regional democracy and also about the threats to its future, in particular in terms of its resources and place within the Council of Europe.

In the area of monitoring local democracy, the participants citing the monitoring reports as an example, added that the quality of the Congress's work and the number of those who follow it are both increasing steadily, thereby forming its greatest assets. They expressed particular concern about the increase in the number of threats made against local elected representatives in several countries, a development

that the Congress should be able to address. This increase in threats against local elected representatives was all the more worrying since it could discourage citizens and local elected representatives from standing for election or re-election.

The former presidents decided to address a message to the new Council of Europe Secretary General Marija PEJČINOVIĆ BURIĆ. The text points out the essential role of the Congress for local and regional democracy and encourages the Secretary General to give it the means to implement its political priorities.

At the end of the seminar, the Congress delegation watched the speech by Emmanuel MACRON, President of the French Republic, at the Parliamentary Assembly, before taking part in the official ceremony for the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe at the Strasbourg Opera.

II. ACTIVITIES OF THE CONGRESS BODIES



Meeting of the Bureau of the Congress in Brussels, 26 June 2019

A. THE BUREAU

Brussels, 28 June 2019

The Bureau of the Congress held an exchange of views with the Chairman of the Rapporteur Group on Democracy of the Committee of Ministers (GR-DEM), Ambassador Razvan RUSU. The President of GR-DEM and the members of the Congress discussed in particular the draft reform of the Congress Charter which is currently being examined by the Committee of Ministers, highlighting the Congress' need for human and budgetary resources, its contribution to the Council of Europe's action plans, as well as its monitoring of the situation of local and regional democracy in Europe.

This exchange is part of the Congress' regular political dialogue with the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe as part of its task of monitoring territorial democracy in Europe.

The Bureau also approved Tunisia's request to be granted Partner for Local Democracy status. This request will be examined, for adoption, at the 37th session of the Congress (see VI. COOPERATION ACTIVITIES)

Tunisia is the second North African country to accede to Partner for Local Democracy status, since Morocco obtained it on 2 April 2019 at the 36th session of the Congress.

Strasbourg, 11 September 2019

The Congress Bureau discussed the situation of local and regional democracy in Turkey and Albania, as well as the local elections in the Republic of Moldova (20 October 2019) and the Russian Federation (31 July 2019). Members agreed to invite the Group of Independent Experts to prepare a mapping of the "grey zones" and the territories of inapplicability of the European Charter of Local Self-Government;

The members of the Bureau also examined the agenda of the 37th session, which will take place from 29 to 31 October 2019 be placed under the annual theme 'Mayors safeguarding democracy'. The session will include several debates on the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government as well as on issues related to local and regional governance in Europe.

With a view to safeguarding the functioning of the Congress and its ability to carry out its statutory activities, the Bureau adopted a declaration on the budgetary situation for the 2020/2021 biennium which was sent to the Permanent Representations and the Secretary General.

The revision of the Congress Rules and Procedures was also on the agenda of the meeting.

Following a request from the Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC), the Bureau envisaged a high-level visit to Ukraine beginning of 2020.

A high-level visit to Albania was also decided to examine the situation after the local elections.

B. THE COMMITTEES

Monitoring Committee

The members of the Congress Monitoring Committee met in Oslo, Norway, on 3 July 2019. They examined, for approval, the draft reports on the situation of local and regional democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Russian Federation. The two local election observation missions in Turkey (31 March and 23 June 2019) gave rise to a debate. The draft report on these missions will be presented for adoption at the 37th Session of the Congress.

The Committee also discussed the ongoing monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Armenia and Portugal. These reports will be submitted for adoption at the 38th Session of the Congress (17-19 March 2020).

The terms of reference for a draft report on the referendum at the local level has also been approved. In addition, with a view to the preparation of the second volume of the Human Rights Handbook for Local and Regional Authorities, the Committee discussed the themes that will be illustrated by good practices at local and regional level in Europe. The first volume, published in 2018, focused on combating discrimination against three groups: refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and displaced persons - Roma and Travellers - and LGBTI people.

In the framework of its cooperation with the Venice Commission, the Committee endorsed the "Venice Principles" on the protection and promotion of the institution of ombudsmen (see II. INSTITUTIONAL CO-OPERATION WITHIN THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE)

The next meeting of the Committee will take place in Strasbourg on 29 October 2019.

Governance Committee

The Committee met on 13 June 2019 in Várpalota, Hungary. Chaired by Robert GRUMAN (Romania, EPP/CCE), the Committee examined two reports on the 'Fair distribution of taxes in trans-frontier areas' and on 'The use of languages by local and regional authorities', presented respectively by Karl-Heinz LAMBERTZ (Belgium, R/SOC) and by Andrew DAWSON (United Kingdom, R/ECR). Both reports will be on the agenda of the 37th Congress Session.

In addition, the Committee held expert hearings on topical issues including home-sharing platforms and challenges for municipalities, the future of the municipal councillor and the development of urban-rural interplay, which will be the subject of future reports.

The Committee meeting was followed on June 14 by a conference entitled "Smart cities: democratic and inclusive cities" which focused on the use of smart-city technologies and how they are transforming cities.

The next meeting of the Committee will take place in Strasbourg on 29 October 2019.

Current Affairs Committee

During their meeting on 28 June 2019 in Stuttgart, Germany, the members of the Committee examined the terms of reference for the draft report on “Fighting sexism against women in politics at the local and regional level”. The debate was held with the participation of Thorhildur Sunna ÆVARSDÓTTIR, Rapporteur of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe’s report on “Promoting parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment”, Ljiljana LONCAR, member of the Gender Equality Commission of the Council of Europe and Anja REINALTER, Councillor for the City of Laupheim and County of Biberach (Baden -Württemberg) (see IV. THEMATIC ACTIVITIES).

The Committee also examined a draft report on “The role of local and regional governments in protecting internally displaced persons (IDPs)”. The report underlines the crucial role that local authorities play in the integration and participation of IDPs in public and political life. These people must be provided with protection, humanitarian assistance and access to basic services such as healthcare, housing, education and employment on one hand, and ensured the right to return to their homes in safety on the other. The resolution and the recommendation will be submitted to the Congress for adoption during its 37th Session.

The Committee also examined a resolution on the 'Revised Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-making process' prepared by a joint working group set up by the Congress and the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe. The two institutions were represented by Thomas ANDERSSON (Sweden, ILDG), Congress rapporteur, and Gerhard ERMISCHER, Vice-Chair of the Democracy Committee of the Conference of INGOs, respectively.

Adopted by the Conference in 2009, the Code explores the means needed to strengthen the mechanisms for both civil and NGO participation in the decision-making process. It proposes, in particular, to develop a 'toolkit' - a repertoire of good practices – for local authorities which would provide guidelines based on the experience of dialogue and cooperation with NGOs.

The resolution will be submitted for adoption to the October 2019 sessions of both institutions.

The 'Pact of Cities and Regions to stop Sexual Violence against Children', initiated by the Congress, was signed by the Baden-Württemberg County Association. The signing ceremony took place at the Baden-Württemberg State Parliament on 28 June 2019 (see IV. THEMATIC ACTIVITIES).

The next meeting of the Committee will take place in Strasbourg on 29 October 2019.

III. MONITORING OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEMOCRACY

A. MONITORING ACTIVITIES

The core mission of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities 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.

Monitoring visits

Since May 2019, the Congress undertook 3 monitoring visits in the following Member States: Armenia, Portugal, Turkey

Armenia, 13 – 14 May 2019

The co-rapporteurs on local and regional democracy in Armenia, Bryony RUDKIN (UK, SOC), and Gunn Marit HELGESEN (Norway, EPP/CCE), considered how local self-government has evolved in the country since the adoption of the Congress’s last recommendation in 2014 and the signature of a post monitoring roadmap in 2016.

Meetings took place in Yerevan, in particular with the Minister of Territorial Administration and Development, the Chair of the Standing Committee on Territorial Administration of the National Assembly, the Chair of the Audit Chamber and a representative of the Office of the Human Rights Defender.

The delegation also held exchanges with the Mayor of Charentsavan and the Mayor of Solak as well as with representatives of several Armenian associations of local and regionally authorities and with members of the Armenian delegation to the Congress.

The draft report will be on the agenda of the Monitoring Committee for approval at its next meeting in February 2020, before being presented for adoption during the session in March 2020.

Armenia ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government in 2002.

Portugal, 17 – 19 June 2019

The co-rapporteurs on local and regional democracy in Portugal, Xavier CADORET (France, SOC), and David ERAY (Switzerland, ILDG), considered how local and regional self-government has evolved in Portugal since the adoption of the Congress' last recommendation in 2012 and the signature of an approved post-monitoring roadmap in 2015.

Meetings took place in Lisbon, Sintra and Alcácer Do Sal, in particular with the Secretary of State for Local Government of the Ministry of the Interior and the Secretary of State for Regional Development of the Ministry of Planning. The delegation also met the Vice-President of the Constitutional court, the President of the Court of Auditors, the Ombudsperson and a member of the Assembly of the Republic Standing Committee on the Environment, Territorial Planning, Decentralisation, Local Government and Housing.

The delegation also held exchanges with the Mayor of Alcácer do Sal and with an elected representative of the city of Lisbon as well as with representatives of the National association of Portuguese municipalities (ANMP) and of the National association of civil parishes (ANAFRE) and with members of the Portuguese delegation to the Congress.

A second part of this monitoring visit which will focus on the two autonomous regions, Acores and Madeira will take place in November 2019

The draft report will be on the agenda of the Monitoring Committee for approval at its next meeting in February 2020, before being presented for adoption during the Congress session in March 2020.

Portugal ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government in 1990.

Turkey, 1 – 3 October 2019

The co-rapporteurs on local and regional democracy in Turkey, Jakob WIENEN (The Netherlands, EPP/CCE) and Yoomi RENSTRÖM (Sweden, SOC) considered how local and regional democracy has evolved in the country since the adoption of the Congress' last recommendations in 2011 and 2014.

Meetings took place in Ankara and Diyarbakır. In Ankara, a joint meeting was held with the members of the Turkish Delegation to the Congress and the presidents of the national associations, including the President of the Union of Municipalities of Turkey and the President of the Union of Provinces and Deputy Minister of the Interior. In addition, the delegation met the Mayor of Ankara, the Ombudsperson, a representative of the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization and the Secretary General of the Constitutional Court. In Diyarbakır, the delegation met with the Governor and Acting Mayor of Diyarbakır, the elected Mayor who was dismissed, and the Mayor of the Yenişehir district of Diyarbakır.

The second part of this monitoring visit will take place in November 2019.

The draft report will be on the agenda of the Monitoring Committee for approval by at its next meeting in February 2020, before being presented for adoption during the Congress session in March 2020.

Turkey ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government in 1992.

B. OBSERVATION OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL ELECTIONS

Over the last 15 years, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities has observed more than 120 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.

Observation missions



Observation mission of the re-run of the mayoral election in Istanbul, 23 June 2019

Turkey, 23 June 2019

Following the decision taken on 6 May by the Turkish Supreme Election Council to cancel the 31 March election of the Mayor of Istanbul, a Congress delegation observed the re-run of the mayoral election on 23 June 2019, at the invitation of the Turkish authorities.

Prior to the Election Day, the delegation, led by Andrew DAWSON held meetings in Ankara and Istanbul with members of the Supreme Election Council of Turkey (YSK) and the Istanbul Province Election Board, representatives of the diplomatic corps, NGOs and the media. Exchanges took also place with candidates running in the election and with party representatives.

On 23 June, the Congress delegation was deployed to polling stations in Istanbul to observe the voting process.

The preliminary conclusions were presented by the Head of the delegation at a press conference on 24 June in Istanbul.

The Congress had observed the local elections held in Turkey on 31 March, deploying 22 observers from 20 European countries in about 140 polling stations across Turkey, including Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir, Antalya, Adana, Erzurum and Diyarbakir. Following the decision of the Turkish Supreme Election Council, the Congress issued several statements calling on the Turkish authorities to guarantee the electoral process in view of the repeat election in Istanbul.

Republic of Moldova, 2 - 4 October 2019 and 20 October 2019

A delegation from the Congress carried out a pre-electoral mission to Chisinau (Republic of Moldova) to assess the campaign and the preparations for the local elections to be held on 20 October. During the visit, meetings were held with representatives of the Central Election Commission, the diplomatic corps, the media and NGOs as well as with the delegation of the Republic of Moldova to the Congress, the local government association and the candidates for Mayor in Chisinau.

On 20 October 2019, at the invitation of the authorities of the Republic of Moldova, the Congress, deployed 11 teams of 24 observers from 21 European countries to observe the local elections around 180 polling stations across the country. Vladimir PREBILIC (Slovenia, SOC), Head of the Congress delegation, stated that the elections were organised by well-prepared committees, the voting was conducted in an orderly manner and the counting was done in a professional manner.

He welcomed the progress made in the campaign financing, notably the reduced ceiling for donations and measures to prevent misuse of administrative resources through stricter procurement-related rules,

the ban of campaigning on the Election Day as well as greater possibilities to verify the accuracy of voters' lists, and the improvement of the situation of the media.

However, he expressed his concern about the registration requirements for independent candidates which are overly cumbersome compared to the situation of candidates from political parties and about the situation of women in local politics and the fact that the legal requirement of a 40% quota for candidate lists is de facto undermined in many cases, recalling that women were present in large numbers at polling stations and that the Republic of Moldova now has a female Prime Minister.

Lastly, he recalled the recommendations already adopted by the Congress, in particular those concerning the introduction of effective measures to combat the misuse of administrative resources, as well as the adoption of legal amendments to enfranchise only those voters who actually have a permanent residence (or domicile) in the constituency concerned, and not only a temporary residence.

The report of the Congress on this fact-finding mission will be examined for approval at the meeting of the Monitoring Committee on 11 February 2020.

IV. THEMATIC ACTIVITIES

The Congress supports local and regional 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 terms of security, integration, dialogue and participation, as well as regarding respect for fundamental human and social rights and the inclusion of vulnerable populations.

It initiates debates and projects on these topics and contributes actively to the work done in this connection within the Council of Europe and at the European level.



Signature of the Pact of Cities and Regions to stop sexual violence against children by the Baden-Württemberg County Association in Stuttgart, 28 June 2019

A. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Pact of Cities and Regions to stop sexual violence against children

The Pact, initiated by the Congress, was signed by the Baden-Württemberg County Association on 28 June 2019. The signing ceremony was held following the meeting of the Congress Current Affairs Committee at the Baden-Württemberg State Parliament in Stuttgart. Alexis v. KOMOROWSKI, Executive Director of the Association, stated that Cities and regions were at the frontline of the fight to stop violence against children and had a key role to play. He underlined that in Germany, the policies in place take into account the protection of victims but also, and above all, focus on prevention.

The Pact proposes various measures and strategies to prevent abuse, protect victims, prosecute perpetrators and ensure the full participation of children in the process as a whole.

B. GENDER EQUALITY

The Congress will continue to contribute to the strategic objectives of the Council of Europe (adopted by the Committee of Ministers in March 2018) which are of relevance for local and regional politicians, also keeping in mind the UN Sustainable Development Goals and, in particular, SDG 5 (achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls). The focus in the coming biennium will be on fighting sexism in politics at the local and regional level as well as gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures.

Debate on Fighting sexism against women in politics at the local and regional level

The members of the Current Affairs Committee examined the terms of reference for the draft report on "Fighting sexism against women in politics at the local and regional level" during their meeting on 28 June 2019 in Stuttgart. The debate was held with the participation of Thorhildur Sunna ÆVARSDÓTTIR, Rapporteur of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's report on "Promoting parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment", Ljiljana LONCAR, member of the Gender Equality Commission of the Council of Europe and Anja REINALTER, Councillor for the City of Laupheim and County of Biberach (Baden -Württemberg)

Congress Rapporteur Jelena DRENJANIN (Sweden, EPP/CCE) stated that it is important not to underestimate sexist violence as it represents a major difficulty for women during elections but also during terms of office and is, therefore, "an obstacle to the functioning of democratic institutions themselves".

She underlined that an important number of elected officials began their political career at the local level and it was therefore vital to combat sexist violence and harassment that target women who wanted to participate in political life at the local and regional level. She explained that sexism is more and more visible in campaigns mostly conducted online and on social networks, aimed at discouraging women or even preventing them from exercising their mandates.

Speakers noted the use of sexist language and stereotyped assessment against women in order to box them in traditional female roles and urged for adoption of policies to change prevailing codes of conduct so that sexist speech and behavior is not only prohibited but also punished within political institutions themselves. This is also the main goal of the report, which will be submitted for adoption at the 38th Congress Session in March 2020.

This issue is part of the Priorities of the Congress 2017-2020, which focus on promoting gender equality and preventing violence against women.

C. INCLUSION OF ROMA AND TRAVELLERS / EUROPEAN ALLIANCE OF CITIES AND REGIONS FOR THE INCLUSION OF ROMA AND TRAVELLERS

Congress participation in the CAHROM

John WARMISHAM (UK, SOC), Congress spokesman, participated in the meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts for Roma Issues (CAHROM) on 11 June 2019 in Toulouse, France.

He stressed that guaranteeing Roma rights is a responsibility of public authorities, which have the means to ensure their integration and security. He recalled the importance of promoting positive images of Roma as full citizens, as well as local initiatives for Roma inclusion such as training, educational funds, vocational training for adults, and incentives for local companies to hire Roma. These initiatives benefit both Roma and municipalities.

John WARMISHAM also highlighted the importance of diffusing the Declaration of local and regional elected representatives against anti-Gypsism, signed by 122 local and regional elected officials from 34 countries, which invite mayors and councilors to take a stand and fight discrimination against Roma.

The Spokesperson welcomed the action of the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion, which aims to establish national networks among mayors to exchange models of good practice.

Unfortunately the Alliance's activities had to be discontinued due to an absence of human and financial resources.

Statement on the Roma Holocaust Memorial Day

Miranda RIRA (Albania, SOC), former Congress spokesperson on Roma, issued a statement on 2 August 2019, on the Roma Holocaust Memorial Day. She stressed that the memory of the persecution suffered by Roma in the past serves as a reminder of the urgent need to put an end to anti-Gypsism today, which Roma and Travellers continue to be subjected to in many European countries.

Dosta! Prize

Every two years, the Congress Dosta! Prize is awarded to municipalities from Council of Europe member states which have implemented initiatives to integrate Roma within their borders on a long-term basis.

Selection of candidates for the Prize 2019 is ongoing. The prize, open to local authorities from Council of Europe member states who have run projects in 2017 and 2018 targeting Roma and/or Travellers, whether they be nationals or more recent migrants, will be given to three projects at the 38th Congress plenary session in March 2020.

D. EUROPEAN LOCAL DEMOCRACY WEEK (ELDW)



Presentation of the ELDW by the Secretary General of the Congress, Andreas KIEFER at the XV Ukrainian Municipal Forum on 'Building Inclusive, Open and Transparent Societies' in Odessa, 19 June 2019

Acting on the proposals of the ELDW national coordinators, the Bureau of the Congress, at its meeting on 4 April 2019, approved the theme 'Local democracy: building trust' as the biennial theme for 2019-2020. To date, some sixty partners from nearly 20 countries have participated in the ELDW under this theme.

The ELDW was presented in Odessa, Ukraine, as part of the XV Ukrainian Municipal Forum 'Building Inclusive, Open and Transparent Societies', organised jointly with the Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC) and international partners from the United States and Canada, from 18 to 20 June 2019. The ELDW stand was an opportunity to introduce the initiative to the more than 400 mayors from all regions of Ukraine, some of whom had the opportunity to pre-register with the ELDW.

On 24 September, the ELDW was also presented by Thematic Spokesperson Bryony RUDKIN at a round table on local democracy and equal participation, as part of the conference on 'The role of the Congress of the Council of Europe in promoting local democracy in Georgia', co-organised with the Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (NALAG) in Tbilisi. The President of the Chamber of Local Authorities, Xavier CADORET also contributed to this event.

V. INSTITUTIONAL CO-OPERATION WITHIN THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

A. THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL SECTOR

The Committee of Ministers

The Congress President and Secretary General hold regular exchanges of views and communications with the *Ministers' Deputies*. The Congress also contributes actively to the activities of the chairmanships of the Committee of Ministers.

Twice a year, the Secretary General of the Congress presents a communication to the Deputies in the Committee of Ministers on-going work, upcoming events, challenges and working conditions of the Congress and its secretariat.

In his communication on 2 May 2019, the Secretary General presented the contribution of the Congress to the ministerial meeting in Helsinki (16-17 May 2019). This text adopted during the 36th Congress session contributed to the reflection on the future of the Council of Europe. Mr. KIEFER stressed that it was an analysis of the current democratic crisis in Europe and the commitment of local and regional authorities to support national governments to reconnect with citizens and to restore confidence in democratic processes and institutions. He underlined that all levels of governance are concerned when it comes to restoring confidence in democratic processes and institutions.

He also informed the Committee of Ministers about the budgetary requirements of the Congress for 2020/2021 stated in the recommendation on “the budget and resources of the Congress for the next biennium (2020-2021)” adopted during the 36th Session. Several delegations expressed their support for an increase in the budget of the Congress to enable the third political assembly of the Council of Europe to perform its missions.

Mr. KIEFER gave an overview of the Congress activities and focused on the two last sessions (35th session on 6-8 November 2018 and 36th session on 2-4 April 2019) and the latest activities in the field of monitoring of local and regional democracy and the observation of local elections - Turkey in March and Albania in June 2019.

The bi-annual communications of the Secretary General to the Committee of Ministers are accompanied by the publication of an activity report summarising the work of the Congress during the preceding six months with key reference documents in an annex.



Participation of the President of the Parliamentary Assembly, Liliane Maury PASQUIER and the President of the Congress, Anders KNAPE to the Ministerial Session in Helsinki, 17 May 2019

The Congress at the Helsinki Ministerial Session

The Congress was represented at the Summit by its President and the President of its Chamber of Regions Gunn-Marit HELGENSEN.

The President of the Chamber of Regions participated in the commemorative ceremony organised on 16 May by the Finnish authorities, in the presence of the President of the Republic of Finland. On the same day, she also participated in a 'treaty event' which enabled the governments of the various countries to sign and ratify a number of Council of Europe conventions.

Speaking at the meeting of the Committee of Ministers in Helsinki on 17 May, the President of the Congress stressed that local democracy was a central pillar of European democracy. Mentioning the current challenging situation faced by member States and European institutions, he underlined that Mayors, councillors, regional governments and parliaments, local and regional elected representatives from 150,000 local and regional authorities, are working every day in the field, for and with citizens across the continent.

He proposed that the ministers of Foreign Affairs participating in this meeting on “the future of the Council of Europe” incorporate, in their reflections, the Congress proposal to rethink the organisational model Europe’s territories.

Other cooperation with the intergovernmental sector

In September, Congress rapporteurs Andrew DAWSON and Martin FODOR (UK, ILDG) participated in the working groups of the European Committee on Democracy and Governance, helping the committee to prepare its guidelines on e-democracy and on public ethics.

On 16 October, Andrew DAWSON also delivered a speech in the opening session of the Intergovernmental Conference on “Achieving Equal Opportunities for All Migrants Through Learning and Assessment: Language and knowledge of society requirements for migrants in Council of Europe member States”, underlining the importance for local authorities of responsible use of language and knowledge of society tests.

Ljiljana LONCAR, member of the Gender Equality Commission of the Council of Europe, participated in the debate to examine the terms of reference for the draft report on “Fighting sexism against women in politics at the local and regional level” on 28 June 2019 in Stuttgart (see IV. THEMATIC ACTIVITIES).

The Secretary General represented the Congress at the Conference of Ministers of Justice in Strasbourg on 14 and 15 October 2019. The conference held under the French Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, discussed access to the law and justice in the digital era and the impact of digital technology on criminal justice.

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 Campaigns.

The President of the Congress attended the third part-session of the Parliamentary Assembly in June 2019 and met the Deputy Prime-Minister and newly appointed Minister of the Interior of Moldova and Chairman of the Moldovan delegation to the PACE, Andrei NASTASE, (see I. POLITICAL AGENDA).

The Rapporteur of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's report on "Promoting parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment" Thorhildur Sunna ÆVARSDÓTTIR participated in the debate to examine the terms of reference for the draft report on "Fighting sexism against women in politics at the local and regional level" on 28 June 2019 in Stuttgart (see IV THEMATIC ACTIVITIES)

On 10 April 2019 the Parliamentary Assembly adopted Resolution 2277(2019) that states among others that "the Parliamentary Assembly decides to initiate a reflection on mechanisms for periodical consultations and permanent co-operation between the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and their structures." Proposals to enhance the co-operation between PACE and Congress are currently being discussed.

C. THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR DEMOCRACY THROUGH LAW

The Congress is working in close co-operation with the Venice Commission, particularly in the field of election observation and the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. The Council for Democratic Elections (CED) is a platform for electoral cooperation between the Venice Commission, in its capacity as legal body, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress, as political organs responsible for election observation in their respective areas.

Members of the Congress on the Council for Democratic Elections are currently the thematic Spokespersons on the Observation of Local and Regional Elections, Jos WIENEN and Stewart DICKSON.

In the framework of its cooperation with the Venice Commission, the Monitoring Committee endorsed, on 3 July 2019, in Oslo, Norway, the "Venice Principles" on the protection and promotion of the institution of ombudsmen.

Presented by Johan HIRSHFELDT, member and rapporteur of the Venice Commission, these principles highlight the role of the Ombudsman as a key element in the rule of law and contain a set of guidelines to ensure the proper functioning of the institution at all levels. Harald BERGMANN (Netherlands, ILDG), spokesperson of the Congress on Human Rights stressed that Ombudsmen are an important interlocutor of the Congress, in particular in its monitoring activities concerning the implementation of the Charter and the promotion of human rights at local and regional level.

The draft resolution invites the national authorities of Council of Europe member states to ensure that the Venice Principles are applied to Ombudsman institutions that are already functioning at all levels but also in situations where such institutions are established. These principles will be debated during the 37th session.

In 2016, the Congress had already approved as a reference document, the checklist on the rule of law drawn up by the Venice Commission. The checklist is used by the Monitoring Committee to assess the legal and political context of the functioning of local and regional democracy in Council of Europe member states when monitoring the implementation of the Charter.

On 21 June 2019, the Chair of the Monitoring Committee, Leendert VERBEEK (Netherlands, SOC) took part in the 119th Plenary Session of the Venice Commission and presented an overview of Congress activities concerning the monitoring of local and regional democracy and the observation of local elections. Mr VERBEEK also took part in 120th Plenary Sessions of the Venice Commission on 11 October 2019.



Awarding of the North-South Prize in Lisbon, 13 September 2019: Vice-President Xavier CADORET with the prize winners: Damien CAREME, France, and Jaha MAPENZI DUKUREH, Gambia

D. THE NORTH-SOUTH CENTRE

The Congress pursued its participation in the quadrilogue governance of the North-South Centre and its commitment to contribute to the Centre's activities.

Thomas ANDERSSON, Congress Spokesperson on Youth, held an exchange of views with young people from South Mediterranean countries during a seminar on "Broadening the Space for Youth, Peace and Security", organised by the 7th Mediterranean University on Youth and Global Citizenship (UniMed) in Hammamet in Tunisia on 14-15 June 2019.

Vice-President Xavier CADORET represented the Congress at the Award Ceremony of the 2018 North-South Prize of the Council of Europe held on 13 September 2019 in Lisbon. The laureates Damien CARÈME, France and Jaha MAPENZI DUKUREH, Gambia, were rewarded for their work in the fields of human rights protection and raising public awareness of global solidarity issues. Damien CARÈME, mayor of Grande-Synthe – known as the "mayor of migrants" – was a candidate proposed by the Congress.

On 27 September 2019, Xavier CADORET participated in the meeting of the North-South Centre in Strasbourg to discuss, among other things, the preparation of the Lisbon Forum of 25-26 November 2019, which will mark the 30th anniversary of the Centre. and will focus on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

VI. EXTERNAL COOPERATION 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 Cooperation Agreement, revised most recently in March 2018. 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. This co-operation is based on the common objectives and activities for reinforcing local and regional democracy, devolution and self-government in Europe.

Eastern Partnership: The Congress and CoR co-operate within the Conference of Regional and Local Authorities of the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP) as well as in the CoR Task Force on Ukraine;

South Mediterranean: The Congress and CoR co-operate within the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) as well as in the Council of Europe's North-South Centre where both institutions represent the local and regional dimension of the quadrilogue;

South-East Europe: The Congress and CoR co-operate within the Congress Reflection Group on Mostar (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and the CoR Working Group on Western Balkans; the Congress also shares its monitoring and election observation findings (for example, on Serbia, Turkey and Moldova) with other relevant working groups.

On 18 June 2019 in Brussels, Lucia KROON (Netherlands, EPP/CCE), Congress co-rapporteur on local and regional democracy in Serbia, participated in the meeting of the CoR Joint Consultative Committee on Serbia. She contributed to the thematic debate on the rule of law in Serbia from a local and regional perspective. She focused on the state of implementation by Serbia of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in light of the Congress recommendation on local and regional democracy in that country.

On 19 June in Brussels, during his participation in the 'Enlargement Day' event organised by CoR, Marc COOLS (Belgium, ILDG) recalled the importance of assistance programmes for strengthening local and regional democracy in Europe. He highlighted the results of the Congress' action for improving territorial governance. He stressed that the Congress was well-placed to translate financial support into concrete assistance to local authorities but regretted that the local and regional dimension was not a priority in the EU's assistance programmes, in particular in its joint programmes with the Council of Europe.

On 27 June 2019 in Brussels, the CoR and the Congress organised a joint event for celebrating their 25th anniversary (see I Political agenda).

On 12 September 2019 in Turku (Finland), President KNAPE addressed the 9th annual meeting of CORLEAP, stressing the importance of cross-border cooperation in reducing disparities between territories, promoting cohesion and contributing to long-term cross-border economic integration. He referred to the Congress' work in this field, based on the 1980 Madrid Convention, adopted by the Council of Europe. The President pointed out that the 37th session of the Congress will examine a report on the fair distribution of taxes in cross-border areas and hold a debate on cross-border cultural development in the territories. He also referred to the Congress' cooperation activities in Ukraine and Armenia, aimed at strengthening the capacities of local authorities and their associations, which would also enable them to pursue cooperation with their counterparts across borders.

On 11 September 2019 in Strasbourg, Franco IACOP, CoR Rapporteur on the European Commission Communication on "Strengthening the Rule of Law", had an exchange of views with the Bureau of the Chamber of Regions, in preparation of the CoR opinion, with a view to taking into consideration the relevant Congress expertise (in particular with regard to corruption prevention in local and regional administrations, transparency, Open government and good administration).

B. EUROPEAN ASSOCIATIONS

On 4 June 2019, the Congress and the Assembly of European Regions (AER) jointly organised a debate on the role of local and regional authorities in peace-building, held in Caen (France) as part of the World Peace Forum in Normandy, which took place on the eve of the commemorations of the 75th anniversary of the D-Day Landings.

Among current threats to peace, the speakers mentioned societal fragmentation, exacerbated by challenges surrounding diversity management within societies, a loss of confidence in public institutions and a problem of access to reliable information.

Thomas ANDERSSON drew attention to the significant contribution made by local and regional authorities to a country's stability, pointing out that frequently dialogue is more fruitful at local level than at national level. Vice-President Xavier CADORET emphasised that progress is often made by taking the local route, making specific reference to the Congress's monitoring and post-monitoring activities. Dörte LIEBETRUTH (Germany, SOC) underlined the importance of the exchanges between local authorities and communities made possible by cross-border co-operation and exchange programmes between towns and cities.

On 12 September 2019 in Brussels, the Secretary General of the Congress held an annual coordination meeting with the Secretaries General of the main European Associations of Local and Regional

Authorities on the SDGs to ensure synergy according to their respective tasks, mandates and memberships.

On 8 October 2019, Thomas ANDERSSON participated in a workshop on “REGIONerating Europe”, organised by the AER in Brussels. Speaking as Congress rapporteur on civil participation and Thematic spokesperson on youth, he underlined that democracy is a process that develops from bottom to top, and the local level must be the first to promote citizens’ greater involvement, both in terms of voter turnouts and membership in political parties. He also presented the revised “Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-making process”, the result of a joint effort by the Congress and the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe.

VII. COOPERATION PROGRAMMES AND ACTION PLANS

The Congress’ co-operation activities support member States in implementing the recommendations adopted by the Congress to address the problems identified during the monitoring and post-monitoring of the Charter and the observation of local and regional elections.

These activities are carried out by the Congress secretariat within the framework of the action plans of the Council of Europe, in close co-operation and synergy with the other entities within the Organisation.

Principles and methodology

Since October 2012, more than 1 500 local authorities (mayors, councillors and young local leaders) benefited from the Congress activities in Albania, Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. Those activities amount to more than 8 500 000 EUR, funded by voluntary contributions from member States and the European Union.

The activities implemented are diverse and adapted to the needs of the beneficiaries: workshops, regional seminars, platforms for exchanges and networking, direct support, political mediation, and advocacy support and legal advice. Thanks to an intersectoral, institutional and multilevel approach based on peer exchanges, Congress members and beneficiaries on the ground are enabled to debate on principles and standards of local democracy, and to share innovative practices of governance. Such peer exchanges are the Congress added value; and as of today, more than 76 Congress members representing 26 member States have taken part in peer work, in addition to the members from the respective national delegations of Albania, Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

The Congress does not promote a “one-size fits all” local self-government model. Its activities are designed to inspire mayors and councillors to lead the change in their municipalities, so as to strengthen transparency, accountability and citizen participation in their decision-making. In addition, the Congress supports them to commonly defend their interests vis-à-vis the national authorities, in close co-ordination with their associations.

The prevention of corruption is a central theme of the political and operational activities. It is based on a set of handbooks on transparency and citizen participation for local authorities in Albania, Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine which result from previous project activities. The work in this field draws from Congress resolutions and recommendations on public ethics, transparency and open government, as well as on the European Code of Conduct for all Persons involved in Local and Regional Governance.

The right of local authorities to be consulted is also a core feature of the Congress’ project activities, which are focused on equipping local and regional authorities and their associations with analytical skills, enabling them to defend the positions and advocate the comprehensive legislative and institutional changes needed.

In addition, a stronger gender perspective is mainstreamed in all Congress project activities to foster gender equality and promote women participation at local level. This includes raising awareness among local and regional elected representatives and applying a human rights approach to the activities in the field, also ensuring the participation and inclusion of under-represented groups, especially internally displaced persons, Roma and other minorities at local level.

The Congress secretariat is developing proposals for new bilateral projects in Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Belarus, as well as a project for Bosnia and Herzegovina with a specific focus on the situation in the City of Mostar, and projects on cross-cutting themes of interest for local authorities.

Moreover, the Congress co-operation activities directly contribute to the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, elaborating on the wider Council of Europe contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – in particular to the realisation of the SDGs 5 (Gender Equality), 10 (Reduced inequalities), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) and 17 (Partnership for the goals). Moreover, they contribute to the EU Eastern Partnership 20 deliverables for 2020, chiefly in the enhancement of the skills of local public administrations and in the prevention of corruption.

A. ARMENIA

The Congress has successfully finalised the 56-month-long implementation of its project funded by the Government of Switzerland, which was aimed at enhancing the institutional capacities of the Communities Association of Armenia (CAA). Based on the overall progress achieved and the positive findings of the donor-commissioned evaluation, the new project “Strengthening the Communities Association of Armenia and transparent, participatory local governance in Armenia” was approved for an overall duration of 36 months. The project is part of a multi-organisation “Local Governance Programme” which was officially launched on 26 September 2019 with the participation of the Congress Director.

The new Congress project in Armenia has a two-fold approach: 1) to provide further support to the CAA in voicing the needs of local authorities and introducing a regular consultation mechanism between central and local authorities, and 2) to support local authorities in increasing their transparency, accountability, fighting corruption and introducing participatory mechanisms at local level.

In co-operation with the Armenian Ministry of Justice, the project will also contribute to drafting the national corruption risk assessment. In parallel, a Core Group on political integrity and ethics in local governance will be established with the participation of local authorities, as well as the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure and Ministry of Justice to steer work on the localisation of national integrity and anti-corruption policies and their use by local authorities in Armenia.



Meeting between the Georgian authorities and a Congress delegation in Tbilisi, 23 September 2019

B. GEORGIA

The Congress is committed to pursue greater co-operation with Georgia, and to build upon the achievements of its previous work.

To mark the 20th anniversary of Georgia's accession to the Council of Europe, the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe and the 25th anniversary of the Congress, the conference "The role of the Congress in the promotion of local democracy in Georgia", focused on the promotion of local democracy in Georgia, was coorganised by the Congress and the National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (NALAG) on 24 September 2019 in Tbilisi.

The conference brought together Georgian local authorities, parliamentarians, government officials, Congress representatives and the international community. Xavier CADORET, Congress Vice-President and President of the Chamber of Local Authorities, and Congress Secretary General Andreas KIEFER addressed the conference, which included a panel discussion on local democracy and equal participation. Congress Spokesperson Bryony RUDKIN presented the European Local Democracy Week.

On 23 September 2019, Congress Vice-President Xavier CADORET and Secretary General Andreas KIEFER held bilateral meetings with the Georgian Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure, Maya TSKITISHVILI, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lasha DARSALIA, as well as Zaza GABUNIA, Head of the Committee of Regional Policy and Self-Government in the Parliament of Georgia. Discussions were focused, among others, on the forthcoming Georgian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers. The Congress delegation also met with Kahka KALADZE, Mayor of Tbilisi, Head of the Georgian Delegation to the Congress and President of NALAG, as well as with the Georgian Delegation to Congress.

The new project on Human Rights at local level developed as part of the Council of Europe Action Plan for Georgia 2020-2023 was discussed with stakeholders. The aim is to promote the role of local authorities as safeguards of human rights at local level in Georgia, to enhance human rights delivery and strengthen human rights complaints mechanisms, in cooperation with the Georgian Human Rights Ombudsman.

C. UKRAINE

The project "Strengthening democracy and building trust at local level in Ukraine",¹ implemented within the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine 2018-2021, aims to improve the quality of local

¹ "Strengthening democracy and building trust at local level in Ukraine" – Project leaflet: <https://rm.coe.int/project-leaflet-ukraine-eng/16808ff88e>

democracy by strengthening institutional frameworks and by supporting local authorities and their national associations in their efforts to promote ethical decision-making and more citizen-oriented, inclusive, responsive and transparent local governance. The co-operation with the Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC) is being strengthened in this framework, and on the basis of the Memorandum of understanding signed with the Congress in September 2018.²

Joint work with the AUC has continued on ethics, open government and gender equality. The XV Ukrainian Municipal Forum, organised by the Congress and the AUC, gathered in Odessa on 18-20 June 2019, more than 400 mayors to share their knowledge and experiences in building inclusive, open and transparent cities. This annual Forum represents a unique platform for consultation and dialogue between all levels of government and is based on a wide communication among the members of the AUC.

To enhance gender equality at local level, AUC has carried out substantive work within the Association's Committee on Equal Rights and Opportunities of Women and Men and nominated a gender advisor. About 50 Ukrainian municipalities have adopted the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life and some 30 additional municipalities got actively engaged in a year time.

The AUC has taken steps to increase its advocacy capacity and provide further support to members by lobbying for their needs at national level. The dialogue with the Cabinet of Ministers on open government and e-democracy continued. It was further followed up and advocated at global level during the 6th OGP Global Summit 2019 in Ottawa, Canada, on 29-31 May, in which a delegation of Ukrainian local authorities and members of the AUC participated. The AUC will continue advocating the inclusion of local authorities in the national plans of the OGP and will be supported for the participation of Ukrainian municipalities in the OGP Local Engagement Strategy³, approved in May 2019.

The AUC has engaged in strengthening and developing its strategy and institutional capacities. Members of the Association widely contributed to the baseline assessment of the AUC's institutional position which was finalised in April 2019 and represents the basis for the development of the AUC's mid-term strategy. A first strategic planning workshop with the members of the AUC Management Board was held in June 2019, in the margins of the above-mentioned XV Ukrainian Municipal Forum in Odesa, Ukraine, to agree on the AUC's mission and way forward, and to appoint a working group to develop the future AUC Strategy. The first meeting of the working group was held jointly with a meeting of the Community of Practice on local self-government in Ukraine on 24-25 September 2019 in Kyiv (Ukraine).

As part of the engagement to enhance the quality of local democracy, in April 2019, the Congress organised a training of trainers (ToT) on local democracy and human rights to raise among youth and to promote their active participation in civic life to ensure social cohesion and anchor democratic principles based on the respect of human rights at local level. This ToT enabled 25 trainers from all regions of Ukraine to enhance their capacities to carry out educational activities on local democracy and human rights. The creation of a pool of educators was the first of a series of new activities targeting young people, in particular those living in the conflict-affected areas of eastern Ukraine.

D. BELARUS

On 29 and 30 April 2019, the Congress held several high-level meetings with the Belarusian authorities in Minsk. The Congress President met President of the Republic of Belarus Alexander LUKHASHENKO, as well as President of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly Mikhail MASNIKOVICH, and Alexander POPKOV, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Council of the Republic. A Congress delegation composed of members (the President of the Chamber of Regions Gunn Marit HELGENSEN and Vladimir PREBILIC (Slovenia, SOC) and experts participated in a round table and a meeting of the Cooperation Council of Local Self-Government Authorities under the auspices of the Council of the Republic, both devoted to 'improving the legislation of the Republic of Belarus on local self-government'. The participants discussed the situation of local self-government in Belarus, in the light of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, and the functioning of associations of local and regional authorities.

² Memorandum of Understanding between the Congress and the Association of Ukrainian Cities, signed on 25 September 2018, available at: <https://m.coe.int/mou-between-the-congress-and-the-auc-eng/16808da1ae>

³ OGP Local Engagement Strategy, approved by the OGP Steering Committee on 29 May 2019, available at: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/SC_Local-Strategy-and-Resolution_20190529.pdf

Welcoming the interest of the Belarusian authorities to improve local self-government, President KNAPE underlined the Congress readiness to support the current process in this area. During the meeting with the Congress President, President LUKHASHENKO emphasized that Belarus had its vision of the development of local governance while benefiting from good practices in European countries. He said that Belarus will make progress towards greater autonomy of local authorities, and close contacts between local authorities and relevant bodies of the Council of Europe are an efficient tool in realising these plans. He confirmed that Belarus hopes to develop contacts with the Council of Europe with regards to local governance.

E. SOUTH MED PARTNERSHIP



Granting of the Partner for Local Democracy status to Morocco in Strasbourg, 2 April 2019

Morocco

Following the granting of Partner for Local Democracy status to Morocco on 2 April 2019, at the Congress' 36th session, a delegation of Moroccan local and regional elected representatives will participate in the 37th session (29-31 October). On this occasion, the members of the delegation will participate for the first time in the work of the three Congress committees.

Tunisia

On 24 April 2019, the Congress organised a workshop for exchanges between European and Tunisian women local elected representatives in Tunis during the Forum on Gender Equality, with the participation of 3 members of the Congress: Constance de PELICHY (France, EPP-CEC), Carla DEJONGHE (Belgium, GILD) and Gudrun MOSLER-TÖRNSTRÖM (Austria, SOC).

On 16 October 2019, Congress Vice-President Xavier CADORET addressed a seminar on the 'Role of the High Authority of Local Finance in the Tunisian decentralisation process'. On this occasion, he presented a comparative analysis on the exercise of local financial power in the 47 member states of the Council of Europe.

On May 6, 2019 (the anniversary of the first municipal elections in the country), Tunisia submitted a request for the Partner for Local Democracy status with the Congress. This request was approved by the Congress Bureau at its meeting in Brussels on 28 June 2019. It will be examined for adoption during the 37th Session of the Congress (from 29 to 31 October), in the presence of a Tunisian delegation composed of local elected representative and government officials.

The status of Partner for Local Democracy was created by the Congress as a specific status for countries in the Council of Europe neighbourhood in October 2014 to offer the countries concerned which so request a special framework for dialogue and regular institutional contacts with their European counterparts (Resolution 376(2014)).

Co-operation between the Congress and Tunisia began, in 2013, following a request for the Congress' expertise on the local self-government provisions of the draft Tunisian Constitution, which was integrated into the opinion of the Venice Commission on the draft Constitution. This co-operation was further reinforced in the framework of the co-operation activities implemented by the Congress in Tunisia under the South-Med Partnership with, in particular, a contribution to the draft code of local authorities adopted by the Tunisian Parliament in April 2018 and the observation of the first municipal elections since the Revolution of 6 May 2018.

On 6 May 2019, seeking to reinforce its relations with the Congress, Tunisia addressed a request for the status of Partner for Local Democracy to the Congress President.

APPENDIX 1: DECLARATION ON THE CONGRESS 2020-2021 BUDGET

The Bureau of the Congress, meeting on 11 September 2019 in Strasbourg,

welcomes the reply of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to the Congress contribution for the Ministerial Session held on 26-27 May 2019 in Helsinki, supporting “the activities of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in enhancing resilient local and regional democracy”;

acknowledges that the Ministers of Foreign Affairs confirmed the important monitoring functions of the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, who all “carry out monitoring functions and act as guardians of human rights and democracy in their areas of competence”.

The Bureau of the Congress further welcomes the encouragement addressed by the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, Amélie DE MONTCHALIN, to the Presidents of the Congress and of the European Committee of the Regions on the occasion of their 25th anniversaries, which they jointly celebrated on 27 June 2019 in Brussels.

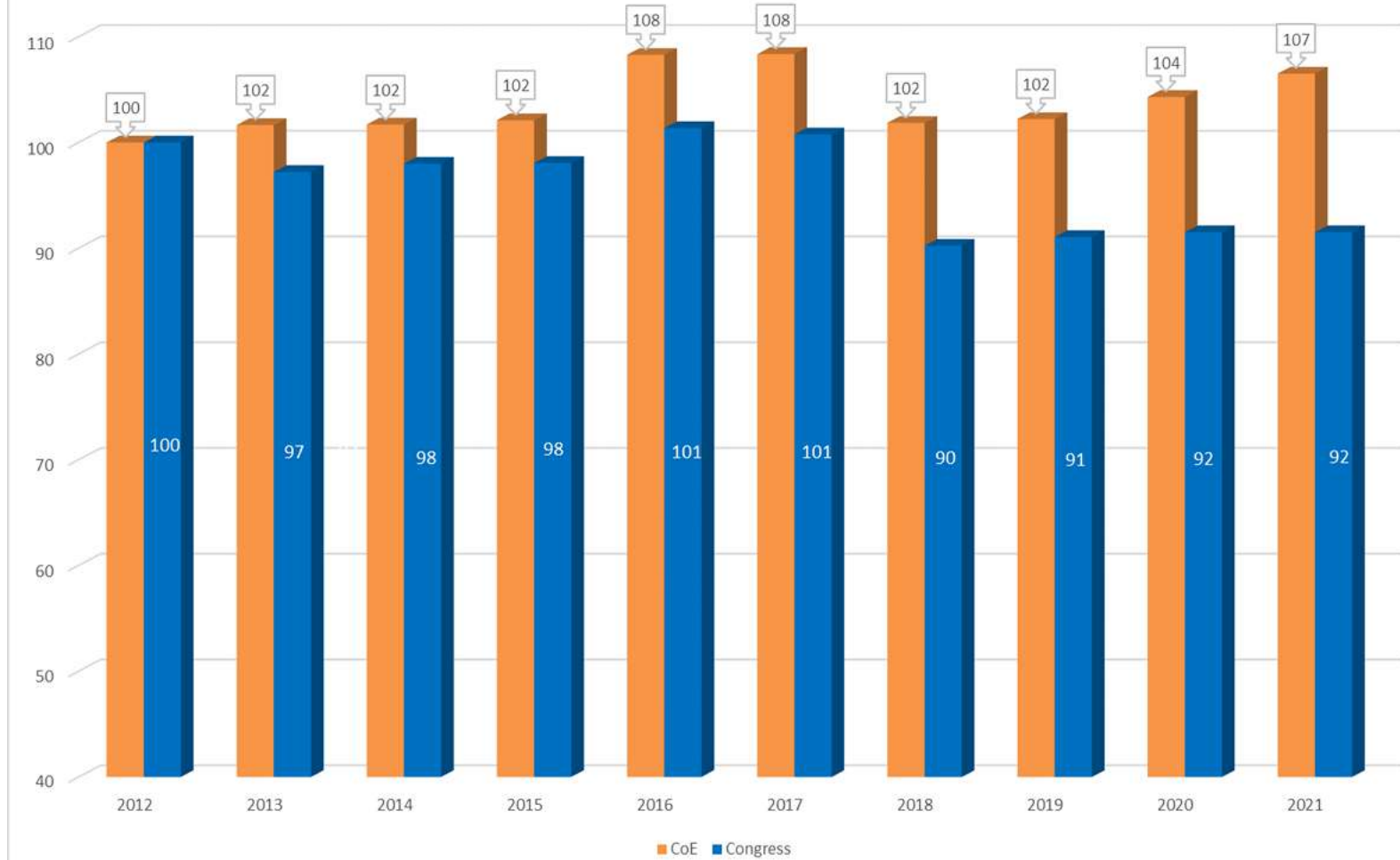
The Bureau looks forward to working with Marija PEJČINOVIĆ BURIĆ, who will take office as Secretary General of the Council of Europe on 18 September 2019.

The Bureau of the Congress refers to Recommendation 430 on the budget and resources of the Congress for the next biennium (2020-2021) and invites the Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to take into account the needs for a normal functioning of the Congress and its secretariat.

With regard to the Congress’s share of the Organisation’s budget, the Bureau notes with concern that this share has steadily decreased from 2.92% in 2010 to 2.54 % in 2019. The Bureau therefore reiterates its request to the Committee of Ministers, that the Congress budget return to a share of 3% of the Organisation’s budget. The financial crisis has led to a backlog in statutory activities and a significant reduction in our thematic contributions to the objectives of the Council of Europe at local and regional level. Over the last years, the decrease in resources has obliged the Congress to discontinue its work on radicalisation leading to terrorism, on Roma inclusion and its input to intergovernmental bodies, to name just a few areas but, more drastically still, to stop financing the interpretation and translation of the working languages which has had a deleterious effect on the Congress’ work and meetings. A return to a sustainable financial and staff situation is indispensable if it is to be able to perform its duties.

The Bureau of the Congress takes note that all member states have now complied with their financial commitments to the Council of Europe’s budget. This fact does not, however, resolve the structural financial challenges which have been caused by a zero-nominal-growth policy over the past budgets. The Bureau invites the Committee of Ministers to make the best use of the capacities of the Council of Europe and its different actors by providing at least a budget based on zero-real growth.

Compared evolution (2012 - 2019) of the CoE (Orange) and the Congress Budget (Blue)
Base 100 (2012)



APPENDIX 2: STATEMENT BY THE FORMER PRESIDENTS OF THE CONGRESS

Gathered in Strasbourg on 1 October 2019 on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe, the former Congress presidents addressed a message to the new Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejčinović Burić, in which they expressed their conviction as to the value of the Congress within the intergovernmental institution of the Council of Europe.

We, the former Presidents of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, meeting in Strasbourg on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe, wish to welcome the Congress' positive evolution and encouraging developments within the architecture of the Council of Europe.

We are, more than ever, convinced of the value of the Congress within the intergovernmental institution of the Council of Europe, just as our governments are convinced of the essential role that their local and regional authorities play in the democratic functioning of their societies.

We appreciate the growing interest of governments in the Congress' monitoring of local democracy, through the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, the observation of local elections, post-monitoring activities and the resulting co-operation programmes, and welcome the increased willingness of governments to participate in debates on the quality of their own local governance at Congress sessions.

That is why, at the beginning of the mandate of the new Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejčinović Burić, we solemnly address her to encourage her to give the Congress the political priority it deserves and the means it needs to fulfil its mission. We are addressing the new Secretary General at a crucial political moment in European history. The crisis of confidence felt by our citizens in the institutions confers on us a special mandate, an imperative duty to rise to this challenge.

As our communities are the institutions closest to the citizens, our responsibility is huge; this is why, as local elected representatives our ability to engage and animate a real local democratic life is essential to the robustness of our societies.

We, the former Presidents, are convinced of the importance of the support of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in giving the Congress the place it deserves within the Organisation.

Lucien SERGENT, France (1990/1992)

Bengt MOLLSTEDT, Sweden (1992/1994)

Alexander TCHERNOFF, The Netherlands (1994/1996)

Claude HAEGI, Switzerland (1996/1998)

Alain CHÉNARD, France (1998/2000)

Llibert CUATRECASAS, Spain (2000/2002)

Herwig VAN STAA, Austria (2002/2004-2012/2014)

Giovanni DISTASI, Italy (2004/2005)

Halvdan SKARD, Norway (2006/2008)

Yavuz MILDON, Turkey (2008/2009)

Ian MICALLEF, Malta (2009/2010)

Keith WHITMORE, United Kingdom (2010/2012)

Gudrun MOSLER-TÖRNSTRÖM, Austria (2016/2018)

APPENDIX 3: CONTRIBUTION OF THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES TO THE UNITED NATIONS 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is an assembly of grassroots elected politicians representing 150,000 territorial communities in the 47-member States of the Council of Europe. It is a consultative organ for the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly and a forum of exchange for politicians from the wider Europe.

Its primary mission is to monitor the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government across the continent and to promote, defend and improve the rights of local and regional authorities and the working conditions of local and regional elected representatives as well as citizen participation. This is being achieved in permanent dialogue with national governments.

The Congress regularly assesses the quality of local and regional democracy. It prepares monitoring reports, organises missions to observe local and regional elections and implements cooperation programmes in several member States in the framework of the Council of Europe Action plans. These activities on the ground provide local and regional politicians, cities and regions as well as their associations with the means to acquire new skills and know-how, and to strengthen their institutional capacities. Handbooks and guidelines on Human Rights at local level and a toolkit for organising intercultural and interreligious activities, a strategy on preventing corruption and promoting public ethics and transparency and the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma inclusion complement the reports and legal and policy recommendations which are prepared by the Congress members and adopted in its sessions. All this aims at contributing to building more inclusive and sustainable societies.

Our focus on the SDGs

Based on its mandate as an international organisation with a focus on democracy, human rights and the rule of law, the Council of Europe contributes especially to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16 and 17, defined in the United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development⁴.

The Congress believes that several key principles must form the basis of the action in achieving Sustainable Development Goals through integrated community development in a broader sense. These principles are the following:

Achieving SDGs is a shared responsibility of all levels of government: global, European, national, local and regional. The final objective of SDGs is improving the well-being of the citizens and of the communities where they live. It is impossible to implement a policy nationally if its implementation fails locally. National governments must therefore establish a constant dialogue with regional and local authorities on implementing SDGs, through proper consultation mechanisms.

Local and regional authorities must have proper autonomy of action and decision making to achieve SDGs – which includes proper competences, financial and budget autonomy, and freedom to make decisions on the use of local resources and planning local development.

Citizens must always remain at the heart of the action for achieving SDGs. Local and regional authorities bear the primary responsibility for addressing citizens' needs, as the authorities closest to them. Citizens

⁴ Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Goal 17: Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

must therefore be engaged in local decision making on the issues of community development. They must be co-owners of the decisions on integrated territorial planning and the use of resources of their communities.

Our partners

Within the Council of Europe, the Congress contributes to the implementation of 12 of the 17 objectives at the local and regional level and co-operates closely with the Parliamentary Assembly, the Commissioner for Human Rights and the inter-governmental sector.

In order to facilitate the implementation of the SDGs and in the spirit of SDG 17 “Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development”, the Congress cooperates with international actors and networks representing local and regional authorities or their associations, such as United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR); the Assembly of European Regions (AER); the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE); the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS) and with European Union institutions such as the European Committee of the Regions.

The adopted texts, publications and handbooks listed in this information note give an overview of the Congress’ work and its contribution to the implementation of the SDGs in the framework of the Council of Europe. Recommendations (REC) are addressed to member states and Resolutions (RES) to local authorities as well as their national and European associations.

Download this document at:

<https://rm.coe.int/congress-contribution-to-the-un-2030-agenda-sdg/1680967366>

SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere



Congress action

By its local dimension, the Congress battles against poverty, by promoting policies ensuring sustainable livelihood and equality. The Congress adopted the following texts in relation with the SDG 1:

[REC381 \(2015\)](#) and [RES391 \(2015\)](#) - Fighting the increasing poverty of women: the responsibility of local and regional authorities

[REC210 \(2007\)](#) and [RES229 \(2007\)](#) - The evolution of extreme poverty in European towns

SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages



Congress action

The Congress adopted the following texts in relation with SDG 3:

[REC414 \(2018\)](#) and [RES428 \(2018\)](#) - Unaccompanied refugee children: the role and responsibilities of local and regional authorities

[REC406 \(2017\)](#) - A better future for Europe’s rural areas

[REC223 \(2007\)](#) and [RES242 \(2007\)](#) - Balanced distribution of healthcare in rural regions

[REC224 \(2007\)](#) and [RES243 \(2007\)](#) - Ensuring territorial continuity of social services in rural regions

[REC212 \(2007\)](#) and [RES231 \(2007\)](#) - E-health and democracy in the regions

[REC175 \(2005\)](#) - Outermost regions: a challenge to the balanced and sustainable development of European territory

[REC107 \(2002\)](#) and [RES128 \(2002\)](#) - The problems of Europe’s countryside

[REC26 \(1996\)](#) and [RES41 \(1996\)](#) - Health and citizenship: care for the poorest in Europe

SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all



Congress action

The Congress encourages public authorities to make education accessible to all: free, equitable and of quality. In relation with the SDG, the Congress adopted the following texts:

[REC433 \(2019\)](#) and [RES442 \(2019\)](#) Social rights of young people: the role of local and regional authorities

[RES414 \(2017\)](#) - Forever young? The role of youth policies and youth work at local and regional levels in supporting young people's transition to autonomy and working life

[REC365 \(2014\)](#) and [RES375 \(2014\)](#) - Promoting diversity through intercultural education and communication strategies

[RES332 \(2011\)](#) - Education for democratic citizenship – tools for cities

[REC174 \(2005\)](#) and [RES204 \(2005\)](#) - Youth education for sustainable development: the role of the regions

[REC17 \(1996\)](#) and [RES28 \(1996\)](#) - Responsibilities and initiatives of cities in respect of education

Publications :

Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life

[Human Rights Handbook](#)

Congress website:

[Human Rights](#)

[Youth participation](#)

SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls



Congress action

The Congress actively supports efforts to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls at the local and regional level through both the adoption of texts and participation by its members in events/conferences.

To strengthen gender equality, the Congress has developed activities and encourage local authorities to provide political efforts to: increase the decision-making power of women, guarantee women's rights and guarantee the integration of women from religious and cultural minorities.

Furthermore, The Congress is undertaking work on women participation to public life, equality between men and women, as well as on women's rights, for example by introducing quotas in its national delegations, adopting resolutions and recommendations on gender equality, and contributing to actions fighting violence against women. Through its co-operation activities, it also stresses the importance of adopting and implementing the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life as a sound step towards gender equality, gender mainstreaming and the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men in local political and public life.

In relation with SDG 5, the Congress has adopted the following texts:

[RES405 \(2016\)](#) - Gender Budgeting

[REC390 \(2016\)](#) and [RES404 \(2016\)](#) - Women's political participation and representation at local and regional levels

[REC370 \(2015\)](#) and [RES380 \(2015\)](#) - Guaranteeing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people's rights: a responsibility for Europe's towns and regions

[RES318 \(2010\)](#) - Cultural Integration of Muslim Women in European Cities

[REC288 \(2010\)](#) and [RES303 \(2010\)](#) - Achieving sustainable gender equality in local and regional political life

Achieving sustainable gender equality in local and regional political life

[REC260 \(2009\)](#) and [RES279 \(2009\)](#) - Combating domestic violence against women

[REC211 \(2007\)](#) and [RES230 \(2007\)](#) - Freedom of assembly and expression for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered persons

[REC148 \(2004\)](#) and [RES176 \(2004\)](#) - Gender mainstreaming at local and regional level: a strategy to promote equality between women and men in cities and regions

[REC111 \(2002\)](#) and [RES134 \(2002\)](#) - Women's individual voting rights: a democratic requirement

[REC68 \(1999\)](#) and [RES85 \(1999\)](#) - Women's participation in political life in the regions of Europe

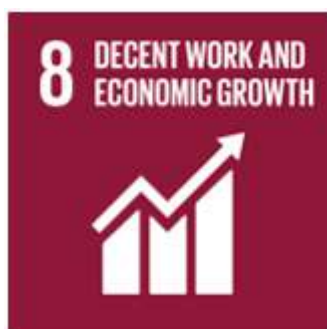
Congress website:

[Human Rights](#)

[Gender Equality](#)

[Cooperation programmes](#)

SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all



Congress action

The Congress has adopted a few texts relating to the economic inclusion:

[RES414 \(2017\)](#) - Forever young? The role of youth policies and youth work at local and regional levels in supporting young people's transition to autonomy and working life

[REC394 \(2017\)](#) and [RES411 \(2017\)](#) - From reception to integration: the role of local and regional authorities facing migration

[REC381 \(2015\)](#) and [RES391 \(2015\)](#) - Fighting the increasing poverty of women: the responsibility of local and regional authorities

[REC347 \(2013\)](#) and [RES362 \(2013\)](#) - Migrants' access to regional labour markets

[REC343 \(2013\)](#) and [RES358 \(2013\)](#) - Integration through self-employment: promoting migrant entrepreneurship in European municipalities

[REC315 \(2011\)](#) and [RES333 \(2011\)](#) - The situation of Roma in Europe: a challenge for local and regional authorities

[REC262 \(2009\)](#) and [RES281 \(2009\)](#) - Equality and diversity in local authority employment and service provision

[REC129 \(2003\)](#) and [RES153 \(2003\)](#) – Employment and vulnerable groups

[REC62 \(1999\)](#) and [RES81 \(1991\)](#) – Local authorities and employability

[REC52 \(1998\)](#) and [RES72 \(1998\)](#) - The regions and employment: contribution to social cohesion in Europe

[REC25 \(1996\)](#) and [REC40 \(1996\)](#) - Unemployment/employment: new activities and occupations

Publications:

[Making Public Procurement transparent at local and regional levels](#)

Congress website:

Migrants and integration

SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation



Congress action

In relation with the SDG, the Congress adopted the following texts:

[RES394 \(2015\)](#) - E-media: game changer for local and regional politicians

[REC287 \(2010\)](#) and [RES302 \(2010\)](#) - Intra-regional transport: a challenge for sustainable development and territorial cohesion

[REC274 \(2009\)](#) and [RES290 \(2009\)](#) - E-democracy: opportunities and risks for local authorities

[REC263 \(2009\)](#) and [RES282 \(2009\)](#) - The digital divide and e-inclusion

in the regions

[REC249 \(2008\)](#) and [RES267 \(2008\)](#) - Electronic democracy and deliberative consultation on urban projects

[REC248 \(2008\)](#) and [RES266 \(2008\)](#) - E-tools: a response to the needs of local authorities

[REC212 \(2007\)](#) and [RES231 \(2007\)](#) - E-health and democracy in the regions

[RES137 \(2002\)](#) – Integrated transport policies

SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries



Congress action

In 2014, the [European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers](#) was set up to encourage inclusive policies, bringing together 130 cities from 29 countries. The Congress promotes the Declaration against Anti-Gypsyism which, to date, has been signed by 122 local and regional authorities from 34 countries, indicating their determination to fight discrimination against Roma. The Congress also awards the [Dosta! Prize](#) biannually to municipalities that implement innovative initiatives to ensure long-term inclusion of Roma.

The Congress has adopted the following texts relating to social inclusion:

[REC433 \(2019\)](#) and [RES442 \(2019\)](#) - Social rights of young people: the role of local and regional authorities

[REC422 \(2017\)](#) and [RES432 \(2018\)](#) - Border regions facing the migration phenomenon

[REC419 \(2018\)](#) and [RES431 \(2018\)](#) - Voting rights at local level as an element of successful long-term integration of migrants and IDPs in Europe's municipalities and regions

[REC414 \(2018\)](#) and [RES428 \(2018\)](#) - Unaccompanied refugee children: the role and responsibilities of local and regional authorities

[REC394 \(2017\)](#) and [RES411 \(2017\)](#) - From reception to integration: the role of local and regional authorities facing migration

[REC388 \(2016\)](#) and [RES403 \(2016\)](#) - The situation of Roma and travellers in the context of rising extremism, xenophobia and the refugee crisis in Europe

[REC354 \(2014\)](#) and [RES66 \(2014\)](#) - Empowering Roma youth through participation: effective policy design at local and regional levels

[REC315 \(2011\)](#) and [RES333 \(2011\)](#) - The situation of Roma in Europe: a challenge for local and regional authorities

[RES319 \(2010\)](#) - Integration of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods

[RES270 \(2008\)](#) - Improving the integration of migrants through local housing policies

[REC246 \(2008\)](#) and [RES264 \(2008\)](#) - Social approach to the fight against racism at local and regional level

[REC194 \(2006\)](#) and [RES218 \(2006\)](#) - Effective access to social rights for immigrants: the role of local and regional authorities

[REC153 \(2004\)](#) and [RES181 \(2004\)](#) - A pact for the integration and participation of people of immigrant origin in Europe's towns, cities and regions

[REC115 \(2002\)](#) and [RES141 \(2002\)](#) - The participation of foreign residents in local public life: consultative bodies

[REC76 \(2000\)](#) and [RES92 \(2000\)](#) - The participation of foreign residents in local public life

[REC11 \(1995\)](#) and [RES44 \(1997\)](#) - Towards a tolerant Europe: the contribution of Roma (Gypsies)

Publications:

[Local Voting rights for the integration of migrants and IDPs](#)

[Human Rights Handbook](#)

Congress website:

[Human Rights](#)

[Migrants and integration](#)

[Roma and Travellers](#)

[Cooperation programmes](#)

SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable



Congress action

In 2015, faced with the rise of hate speech and the terrorist threat, the Congress has adopted a Strategy to fight radicalisation at grassroots level and developed a [Toolkit](#) (for the use by local authorities) to promote intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Furthermore, it organised 3 [Summits of Mayors for the Alliance of European Cities against Violent Extremism](#). It also developed the first edition of a human rights handbook for local and regional authorities on the right of non-discrimination towards refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and IDPs, Roma and Travellers and LGBTI people and adopted a Declaration against Anti-Gypsyism which it proposes for signature to the local and regional

authorities over Europe.

To support local public administrations in leading in a more informed manner, addressing the needs of their communities, and developing demand-driven and responsive policies, the Congress has developed the "[Management of Change: Tool Guide for Local and Regional Authorities](#)".

In relation with the SDG, the Congress has adopted the following texts:

[REC406 \(2017\)](#) - A better future for Europe's rural areas

[REC392 \(2016\)](#) and [RES407 \(2016\)](#) - Good governance in metropolitan areas

[RES384 \(2015\)](#) - Guidelines for local and regional authorities on preventing radicalisation and manifestations of hate at the grassroots level

[RES339 \(2012\)](#) - Making cities resilient

[REC253 \(2008\)](#) and [RES271 \(2008\)](#) - The social reintegration of children living and working on the streets

[REC251 \(2008\)](#) and [RES269 \(2008\)](#) - European Urban Charter II - Manifesto for a new urbanity

[REC249 \(2008\)](#) and [RES267 \(2008\)](#) - Electronic democracy and deliberative consultation on urban projects

[REC241 \(2008\)](#) and [RES258 \(2008\)](#) – Child in the city

[REC232 \(2008\)](#) and [RES249 \(2008\)](#) - Biodiversity policies for urban areas

[REC230 \(2008\)](#) – Local and regional accounting for responsible local action

[REC225 \(2007\)](#) and [RES245 \(2007\)](#) - Challenges and opportunities for peripheral and sparsely populated regions

[REC220 \(2007\)](#) and [RES240 \(2007\)](#) - Environmental accounting for responsible local action

[REC197 \(2006\)](#) and [RES220 \(2006\)](#) – Urban security in Europe

[REC191 \(2006\)](#) and [RES215 \(2006\)](#) - Chernobyl, 20 years on: local and regional authorities dealing with disasters

[REC188 \(2006\)](#) – Good governance in European metropolitan areas

[REC175 \(2005\)](#) - Outermost regions: a challenge to the balanced and sustainable development of European territory

[REC134 \(2003\)](#) and [RES159 \(2003\)](#) - Tackling terrorism – the role and responsibilities of local authorities

[REC80 \(2000\)](#) and [RES99 \(2000\)](#) - Crime and urban insecurity in Europe: the role of the local authorities

[REC51 \(1998\)](#) and [RES70 \(1998\)](#) – Social cohesion in towns

[REC36 \(1997\)](#) and [RES57 \(1997\)](#) - Crime and urban insecurity in Europe

[RES33 \(1996\)](#) - Crime and urban insecurity in Europe

[REC19 \(1996\)](#) and [RES32 \(1996\)](#) – Aspects of urban policies in Europe

Publications:

[Toolkit for organising intercultural and interreligious activities](#)

[Urban Charter](#)

[Compendium of texts on Promoting human rights at local and regional level](#)

[Human Rights Handbook](#)

[Management of Change: Tool Guide for Local and Regional Authorities](#)

Congress website:

[Preventing radicalisation and building inclusive societies](#)

[Migration and integration](#)

[Cooperation programmes](#)

SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns



Congress action

In relation with the SDG, the Congress adopted the following texts:

[REC266 \(2009\)](#) and [RES284 \(2009\)](#) - The future of cultural tourism – towards a sustainable model

[REC259 \(2009\)](#) and [RES278 \(2009\)](#) - Public water and sewer services for sustainable development

[REC244 \(2008\)](#) and [RES263 \(2008\)](#) - Responsible consumption and solidarity-based finance

[REC230 \(2008\)](#) and [RES247 \(2008\)](#) - Local and regional authorities

committed to sustainable consumption

SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts



Congress action

The Congress recognizes the right to a healthy environment. In relation with the SDG, the Congress adopted the following texts:

[RES335 \(2011\)](#) - Energy supply and energy efficiency at local and regional level: promoting energy transition

[REC298 \(2010\)](#) and [RES317 \(2010\)](#) - Coastal towns and cities tackling threats from the sea

[REC281 \(2010\)](#) and [RES298 \(2010\)](#) - After Copenhagen, cities and regions take up the challenge

[REC276 \(2009\)](#) and [RES292 \(2009\)](#) - Improving indoor air quality: a new challenge for local authorities

[REC271 \(2009\)](#) and [RES288 \(2009\)](#) - The global challenge of climate change: Local responses

[REC243 \(2008\)](#) and [RES262 \(2008\)](#) - Public local and regional action: for a new energy culture

[REC231 \(2008\)](#) and [RES248 \(2008\)](#) - Climate change: building adaptive capacity of local and regional authorities

[REC220 \(2007\)](#) and [RES240 \(2007\)](#) – Environmental accounting for responsible local action

[REC215 \(2007\)](#) and [RES236 \(2007\)](#) - Climate change: approaches at local and regional level

[REC191 \(2006\)](#) and [RES215 \(2006\)](#) - Chernobyl, 20 years on: local and regional authorities dealing with disasters

[REC189 \(2006\)](#) and [RES213 \(2006\)](#) - Local and regional waste management and the siting of landfills

[RES183 \(2004\)](#) - The quality and the quantity of drinking water

[REC174 \(2005\)](#) and [RES204 \(2005\)](#) - Youth education for sustainable development: the role of the regions

[REC169 \(2005\)](#) and [RES201 \(2005\)](#) - Major oil spills: the role of local authorities

[REC168 \(2005\)](#) and [RES200 \(2005\)](#) - Natural and industrial disasters: local authorities facing emergencies

[REC166 \(2005\)](#) and [RES197 \(2005\)](#) - The regeneration of mining and industrial areas

[REC161 \(2005\)](#) and [RES193 \(2005\)](#) - Local and regional authorities and renewable energy sources

[REC160 \(2005\)](#) and [RES192 \(2005\)](#) - Coastal management and local and regional authority policy in Europe

[REC138 \(2003\)](#) and [RES164 \(2003\)](#) - Sustainable regions under global rules

[REC108 \(2002\)](#) and [RES129 \(2002\)](#) – Local authorities confronting natural disasters and emergencies

[REC106 \(2002\)](#) and [RES127 \(2002\)](#) – Sustainable development and the liberalization of the energy market

[REC57 \(1999\)](#) - Local and regional economic instruments for the environment

[RES55 \(1997\)](#) - Local and regional financial instruments for the environment

[RES54 \(1997\)](#) - Sustainable development at local and regional levels

SDG 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels



Congress action

The Congress acts for the promotion of inclusive and sustainable societies, by fostering regional democracy, based on human rights, respectful of its citizens rights, liberties and freedoms. It also monitors the situation of local and regional democracy in the 47 Member States of the Council of Europe in the light of the European Charter on Local Self-Government and provides recommendations to all governments in order to improve local self-government in Europe and, pending an official invitation, it observes local and regional elections on a peer-to-peer basis, involving local and regional politicians from the 47 Council of Europe member States.

To enable a better understanding of the role and responsibilities of local authorities in promoting public ethics and in the prevention and fight of political and administrative corruption, the Congress has recently adopted a series of thematic reports which propose mechanisms to report any wrongdoings.

The Congress has also developed country-specific [Handbooks on Transparency and Citizen Participation](#) and a guide for local authorities on the [misuse of administrative resources and fair elections](#). These publications provide local authorities with guidance to develop more effective, accountable and transparent institutions and thus regain the trust of their constituencies.

In relation with the SDG, the Congress has adopted the following texts:

[REC435 \(2019\)](#) and [RES444 \(2019\)](#) - The protection of whistleblowers: challenges and opportunities for local and regional government

[REC428 \(2019\)](#) and [RES441 \(2019\)](#) - Fighting nepotism within local and regional authorities

[REC424 \(2018\)](#) and [RES435 \(2018\)](#) - Transparency and open government

[REC423 \(2018\)](#) and [RES434 \(2018\)](#) - Conflicts of interest at local and regional level

[RES433 \(2018\)](#) - European Code of Conduct for all persons involved in local and regional governance

[RES430 \(2018\)](#) - European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) : a new momentum

[RES427 \(2018\)](#) - Promoting human rights at local and regional level

[REC419 \(2018\)](#) - Voting rights at local level as an element of successful long-term integration of migrants and IDPs in Europe's municipalities and regions

[REC405 \(2017\)](#) and [RES421 \(2017\)](#) - Making public procurement transparent at local and regional levels

[REC398 \(2017\)](#) and [RES417 \(2017\)](#) - Open data for better public services

[REC395 \(2017\)](#) and [RES412 \(2017\)](#) - Recurring issues based on assessments resulting from Congress monitoring and election observation missions (reference period 2010-2016)

[REC394 \(2017\)](#) and [RES411 \(2017\)](#) - From reception to integration: the role of local and regional authorities facing migration

[Report CG32\(2017\)](#) - Checklist for compliance with international standards and good practices preventing misuse of administrative resources during electoral processes at local and regional level

[RES402 \(2016\)](#) - The misuse of administrative resources during electoral processes: the role of local and regional elected representatives and public officials

[RES401 \(2016\)](#) - Preventing corruption and promoting public ethics at local and regional levels

[RES394 \(2015\)](#) - E-media: game changer for local and regional politicians

[REC383 \(2015\)](#) and [RES393 \(2015\)](#) - Conditions of office of elected representatives

[REC382 \(2015\)](#) and [RES392 \(2015\)](#) - Championing children's rights in times of austerity

[RES389 \(2015\)](#) - New forms of local governance

[RES387 \(2015\)](#) - Voting at 16 – Consequences on youth participation at local and regional level

[REC376 \(2015\)](#) and [RES386 \(2015\)](#) - Bringing down barriers to youth participation: adopting a lingua franca for local and regional authorities and young people

[RES385 \(2015\)](#) - Fostering active citizenship by building partnerships with civil society

[REC369 \(2015\)](#) and [RES378 \(2015\)](#) - Electoral lists and voters residing de facto abroad

[REC364 \(2014\)](#) and [RES374 \(2014\)](#) - The role of regional media as a tool for building participatory democracy

[REC361 \(2014\)](#) and [RES371 \(2014\)](#) - Promoting equal opportunities for people with disabilities and their participation at local and regional levels

[RES368 \(2014\)](#) - Strategy on the right of local authorities to be consulted by other levels of government

[REC332 \(2012\)](#) and [RES350 \(2012\)](#) - Regional legislation and action to combat sexual exploitation and abuse of children

[REC328 \(2012\)](#) and [RES347 \(2012\)](#) - The right of local authorities to be consulted by other levels of government

[REC327 \(2012\)](#) and [RES346 \(2012\)](#) - Youth and democracy: the changing face of youth political engagement

[RES343 \(2012\)](#) - Policy of the Council of Europe towards neighbouring regions: the role of the Congress

[REC325 \(2012\)](#) and [RES342 \(2012\)](#) - The changes underway in the Arab countries – opportunities for local and regional democracy

[RES332 \(2011\)](#) - Tools for democratic citizenship

[REC309 \(2011\)](#) and [RES327 \(2011\)](#) - The office of Ombudsman and local and regional authorities

[REC307 \(2011\)](#) and [RES326 \(2011\)](#) - Citizen participation at local and regional level in Europe

[RES316 \(2010\)](#) - Rights and duties of local and regional elected representatives: the risks of corruption

[REC278 \(2009\)](#) and [RES293 \(2009\)](#) - Regions with legislative powers: towards multi-level governance

[REC274 \(2009\)](#) and [RES290 \(2009\)](#) - E-democracy: opportunities and risks for local authorities

[REC273 \(2009\)](#) - Equal access to local and regional elections

[REC272 \(2009\)](#) and [RES289 \(2009\)](#) - Preventing violence against children

[REC265 \(2009\)](#) and [RES283 \(2009\)](#) - Good governance: a key factor for the sustainable economic development of regions

[REC263 \(2009\)](#) and [RES282 \(2009\)](#) - The digital divide and e-inclusion in the regions

[REC253 \(2008\)](#) and [RES271 \(2008\)](#) - The social reintegration of children living and/or working on the streets

[REC249 \(2008\)](#) and [RES267 \(2008\)](#) - Electronic democracy and deliberative consultation on urban projects

[REC248 \(2008\)](#) and [RES266 \(2008\)](#) - E-tools: a response to the needs of local authorities

[REC242 \(2008\)](#) and [RES259 \(2008\)](#) - Integration and participation of young people at local and regional level

[RES244 \(2007\)](#) - The Principles governing Regional Democracy: proposals and strategy

[REC209 \(2007\)](#) and [RES228 \(2007\)](#) - Intergenerational co-operation and participatory democracy

[REC208 \(2007\)](#) and [RES227 \(2007\)](#) - Access to public spaces and amenities for people with disabilities

[REC159 \(2004\)](#) and [RES191 \(2004\)](#) - Regional Ombudspersons: an institution in the service of citizens' rights

[REC153 \(2004\)](#) and [RES141 \(2004\)](#) - A pact for the integration and participation of people of immigrant origin in Europe's towns, cities and regions

[REC115 \(2002\)](#) and [RES141 \(2002\)](#) - The participation of foreign residents in local public life: consultative bodies

[REC76 \(2000\)](#) and [RES92 \(2000\)](#) - The participation of foreign residents in local public life

[REC61 \(1999\)](#) and [RES80 \(1999\)](#) - The role of local and regional mediators/ombudsmen in defending citizens' rights

[REC59 \(1999\)](#) and [RES78 \(2000\)](#) - Europe 2000 - Youth participation: the role of young people as citizens

[REC53 \(1999\)](#) and [RES74 \(1999\)](#) - Policies for deprived children/adolescents and families

[REC5 \(1994\)](#) - Europe and its elderly people: towards a pact between generations and Conclusions of the Sienna Conference

Publications:

[Local voting rights for the integration of migrants and IDPs](#)

[Conflicts of interest at local and regional levels](#)

[Making public procurement transparent at local and regional levels](#)

[Transparency and open government](#)

[Administrative resources and fair elections](#)

[European code of conduct for all persons involved in Local and Regional Governance](#)

[Human Rights Handbook](#)

[European Local Democracy Week](#)

Congress website:

[Human Rights](#)

[Preventing corruption and promoting public Ethics](#)

[Migration and integration](#)

[E-democracy](#)

[European Local Democracy Week \(ELDW\)](#)

[Cooperation programmes](#)

SDG 17: Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development



Congress action

The Congress plays an active role in the field by promoting cooperation at all levels. In this context, the Congress has a vital function as a pan-European political assembly of local and regional elected representatives from the 47 Council of Europe member States, debating common interests and challenges and seeking common solutions to many of the issues addressed in the SDGs. The Congress is also working towards the implementation of Objective 17 by working with partners such as UCLG or the Open Government Global Summit and by networking with NGOs and elected officials in different discussion forums. The Congress also cooperates closely with national associations

of local and regional authorities. This partnership allows to establish a truly inclusive dialogue.

Also, within the Council of Europe the Congress focuses on the local and regional dimension of the action of its institutions, organs and bodies.

Congress website:

[Cooperation programmes](#)

The websites of the Congress and of the Council of Europe are regularly updated. Please visit:

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities website on SDGs

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/congress/sdg>

Council of Europe website on SDGs

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/un-agenda-2030/home>

Parliamentary Assembly website on SDGs

<http://www.assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/News/News-View-EN.asp?newsid=7575&lang=2&cat=15>

Commissioner for Human Rights on SDGs:

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/the-new-development-agenda-should-fulfil-human-rights>

As part of its monitoring of local and regional democracy in Europe, the Congress maintains a regular dialogue with member states of the Council of Europe. The Committee of Ministers, which includes the 47 Foreign Ministers of these states, the Conference of Ministers responsible for local and regional authorities, as well as its Steering Committees are partners in this regard.

Several times a year, the President and the Secretary General of the Congress provide the representatives of the 47 member states in the Committee of Ministers with a record of its activities.



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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, including all members of the European Union. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is an institution of the Council of Europe, responsible for strengthening local and regional democracy in its 47 member states. Composed of two chambers – the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions – and three committees, it brings together 648 elected officials representing more than 150 000 local and regional authorities.

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