

## 47th SESSION

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### The destruction of cultural heritage in Ukraine

#### Declaration 9 (2024)<sup>1</sup>

1. Referring to its Declaration 5 (2022) “The Russian Federation’s war against Ukraine”, Declaration 6 (2023) “The anniversary of Russia’s war against Ukraine” and Declaration 8 (2024) “The second anniversary of the Russian Federation’s war against Ukraine”, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) reiterates its condemnation, in the strongest terms, of the ongoing war of aggression being waged by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, in breach of international law and the Statute of the Council of Europe. It reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.

2. The Congress deplores and condemns once again the fact that this unjustified and unprovoked war against Ukraine continues to cause massive losses of innocent lives and human suffering as well as targeted destruction of vital infrastructures, which represent human rights violations unprecedented in recent history in Europe. Millions of people, the majority of whom are children, continue to be displaced from their homes. Furthermore, thousands of Ukrainians are still in captivity and subject to violence, inhuman treatment and torture.

3. For more than two and a half years, Ukrainians have been courageously defending their country’s freedom in the face of the Russian Federation’s ruthless full-scale aggression. The Congress welcomes the fact that local and regional authorities are playing a central role in Ukraine’s resilience, ensuring the functioning of public services and addressing emergency needs.

4. The Congress deplores the fact that in violation of international humanitarian law, and in particular of the UNESCO Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954 Hague Convention) and its two Protocols, and in spite of numerous calls on it by UNESCO to respect Ukraine’s cultural heritage, the Russian Federation has continually attacked cultural heritage sites in Ukraine. More than a thousand cultural sites have been damaged or destroyed since the beginning of the war, such as the historic centres of Odesa and Lviv, both included in the UNESCO World Heritage list.

5. The Congress underlines that the targeting and looting of cultural sites appear to reflect a systematic policy aiming at erasing Ukraine’s historical and cultural identity, consistent with a genocidal intent.

6. It further emphasises that in addition to reparation for lives lost, injuries and damage to property and infrastructure, the Russian Federation must pay reparations for damage to historical, cultural and religious heritage; in this context, the Ukrainian local and regional authorities have an important role to play in promoting the work of the Register of Damage and in submitting claims to the Register within the scope of their competencies.

7. The Congress underlines that in addition to the need to continue to support Ukraine in its efforts to defend itself from the Russian Federation’s war of aggression as well as Ukrainian citizens forced to

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<sup>1</sup> Debated and adopted by the Congress on 15 October 2024, 1st sitting (see document [CG\(2024\)47-12prov](#)), Rapporteurs: Martine DIESCHBURG-NICKELS, Luxembourg (L, ILDG), Gunn Marit HELGESEN, Norway (R, EPP/CCE).

## Declaration 9 (2024)

flee the country, it is time to put Ukrainian cultural heritage and its recovery high on the political agenda, including at the 2025 Ukraine Recovery Conference to be held in Rome.

8. With reference to the European Cultural Convention (ETS No. 18), ratified by all Council of Europe member States, the Congress emphasises that safeguarding cultural heritage helps connect the past to the future through a shared sense of identity. As such, the European cultural heritage is intrinsically linked to human rights. It further draws attention to the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (CETS No. 199, Faro Convention), and to the Council of Europe Convention on Offences to Cultural Property (CETS No. 221, Nicosia Convention), which aims to prevent and combat illicit trafficking and destruction of cultural property.

9. In the light of the foregoing, the Congress calls on Council of Europe member States to sign and ratify the Faro and Nicosia Conventions, if they have not already done so, to raise awareness about stolen and looted Ukrainian cultural assets, including from Crimea, and to step up efforts to return them to Ukraine.

10. The Congress also calls on local and regional authorities throughout Europe to step up their efforts to help Ukraine in this field and to set up genuine cultural heritage partnerships, bearing in mind that such partnerships can address not only the current need for response measures including for the restoration and urgent protection of cultural heritage, but also damage and risk assessments, including documenting, digitising, securing and stabilising both tangible and intangible heritage. The Congress moreover highlights that cultural heritage partnerships can also support plans for recovery, which should encompass tangible and intangible cultural heritage, be people-centred and place sensitive in the spirit of the Faro Convention.

11. It furthermore encourages local and regional authorities to participate actively in the Council of Europe Cultural Routes of which Ukraine has been a member since 2021, and which helps to promote cultural tourism and development based on a shared cultural heritage route.

12. Finally, it draws the attention of national, regional and local authorities of Council of Europe member States to the fact that, in addition to missiles, the Russian Federation is engaged in a propaganda war and continues to spread fake news and hate speech. It emphasises that more awareness and preventive measures, as well as counter measures, are needed to combat these threats at every level.

13. The Congress will play its part in supporting local and regional authorities in Ukraine to contribute, within their competencies, to the work of the Register of Damages, and in encouraging local and regional authorities throughout the continent to push their national authorities to ratify both the Faro and Nicosia Conventions.

14. The Congress stands by the Ukrainian people and reaffirms its commitment to a common, democratic future and future based on respect for international law and a just peace.

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### The situation in Georgia

#### Declaration 10 (2024)<sup>1</sup>

1. The Congress expresses deep concern over clear signs of democratic backsliding and the weakening of human rights in Georgia, marked by increased polarisation of society and the enactment of legislation that runs counter to Council of Europe standards. These developments have been condemned by the Congress President in statements concerning the enactment of the law on transparency of foreign influence and the anti-LGBTI legislative package as well as by other Council of Europe bodies and the international community.
2. Furthermore, the Congress Monitoring Committee, in its statement of 2 July 2024, highlighted the risk of Georgia's deviation from democratic norms and standards, exacerbated by attacks, intimidation and various forms of pressure exerted against persons expressing dissenting opinions.
3. As a result, there are increasing concerns regarding the Georgian authorities' commitment to upholding European democratic principles and to moving towards a European future based on shared values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law at all levels of government.
4. In this context and bearing in mind the forthcoming parliamentary elections in Georgia on 26 October 2024 as well as the local elections scheduled for 2025, it is all the more important to create conditions that enable all citizens, without discrimination, to participate meaningfully in society and contribute fully, peacefully and equally to the political life of the country at all levels of government.
5. The Congress underlines that local authorities are the carriers of citizens' voices on matters of both local and national importance and their right to exercise self-government without fear of persecution or retaliation must be guaranteed regardless of the political views of their leaders and representatives.
6. The Congress reiterates the need for effective protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including non-discrimination and freedom of assembly. Local authorities must not be put in a position when they are required by law to violate human rights and fundamental freedoms or to implement anti-democratic policies to the detriment of inclusivity, tolerance and peaceful coexistence within their communities.
7. In light of the foregoing, the Congress reiterates its call on the Georgian authorities to reverse the anti-human rights legislation referred to above and to refrain from taking any actions that would further polarise society, threaten political pluralism, infringe on human rights or undermine the foundations of democracy, all of which would be detrimental to local self-government in Georgia. Georgia should return to the path of democratic consolidation and recommit to democratic principles and respect for human rights.
8. The Congress underlines its commitment to pursuing constructive political dialogue with the Georgian authorities, notably in the framework of a high-level visit to Georgia, which the Congress intends to organise once a government is formed following the parliamentary elections.

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<sup>1</sup> Debated and adopted by the Congress on 17 October 2024, 1st sitting, (see document [CG\(2024\)47-22prov](#)), rapporteur Xavier CADORET, France (L, SOC/G/PD).

## Declaration 10 (2024)

9. The Congress will continue to support the critical efforts of Georgian authorities at all levels of government, in collaboration with civil society, to safeguard human rights, uphold the rule of law, and promote democracy at the level closest to the citizens.

10. The national authorities of Georgia must fulfil the obligations and commitments they renewed in the Reykjavik Declaration adopted during the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe and can be held accountable by the Council of Europe's statutory bodies if they fail to respect these obligations.

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# Fostering a circular economy at local and regional levels

Recommendation 512 (2024)<sup>1</sup>

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:
  - a. the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No.122, “the Charter”), in particular its Articles 3, 4 and 9;
  - b. the Priorities of the Congress 2021-2026, in particular Priority d: Environmental issues and climate action in cities and regions;
  - c. Congress Recommendation 510 (2024) “Local and regional responses to natural disasters and climate hazards: from risk preparedness to resilience”;
  - d. Congress Recommendation 484 (2022) “A fundamental right to the environment: a matter for local and regional authorities. Towards a green reading of the European Charter of Local Self-Government”;
  - e. the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development of the United Nations, in particular SDG 1 “End poverty in all its forms everywhere”, SDG 3 “Good health and well-being”, SDG 6 “For clean water and sanitation for all”, SDG 11 “Sustainable Cities and Communities”, SDG 12 on “Ensuring Sustainable Consumption and Production patterns”, SDG 13 “Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”, SDG 14 “For life below water” as well as SDG 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”.
2. The Congress underlines that:
  - a. the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic have exposed significant weaknesses in the global supply chain; coupled with the ongoing consequences of climate change and resulting global warming, these developments underline the urgency of reimagining various aspects of economies and making them more resilient to current political realities and future challenges, notably, climate change;
  - b. the “take-make-waste” linear model used throughout the 20th century causes significant harm to the environment and social justice and is no longer viable;
  - c. the circular economy, a restorative model that decouples economic growth from natural resource use, and emphasises longevity, reuse, and recycling, has emerged as an alternative to the linear economy;

<sup>1</sup> Debated and adopted by the Congress on 15 October 2024 (see document CG(2024)47-14, explanatory memorandum), co-rapporteurs: Linda GILLHAM, United Kingdom (L, ILDG) and Kristoffer TAMSONS, Sweden (R, EPP/CCE).

d. the circular economy has the potential to boost economic efficiency and resilience at local level and to foster equality, enabling redistribution and addressing resource scarcity;

e. a multi-level and multidisciplinary strategic approach is required for making the ambition of a circular economy a reality. Community involvement is crucial for the success of circular initiatives;

f. local and regional authorities are uniquely well-placed to contribute to the development of resilient economies rooted in the particular needs of their communities and foster circular policies.

3. In the light of the above, the Congress calls on the Committee of Ministers to invite the respective national authorities of the member States of the Council of Europe to:

a. adopt and implement national policies and legislation that incentivise the development of circular economy, including subsidies for circular business models, tax breaks for sustainable practices;

b. foster collaboration across different levels of government, the private sector, and the civil society to develop and implement circular economy strategies supporting human rights, democracy and social inclusion; develop platforms for knowledge sharing and joint problem-solving;

c. adopt and promote the use and verification of existing harmonised standards and certifications for circular products and services to ensure quality and facilitate trade in a circular economy, helping consumers make informed choices and driving business towards more sustainable practices; where such standards or certificates are not available nationally, develop and adopt them;

d. invest in the necessary infrastructure to support circular practices, such as recycling centres, anaerobic digestion and composting facilities and systems for the separate collection and prevention and treatment of waste (to ensure waste is managed more effectively and turned into material resources as a priority and energy is recovered and used rather than landfilling residues);

e. support demand for recycled and sustainably produced goods by adopting and implementing green procurement policies and practices;

f. support research in technologies that enable circular economy practices, such as advanced recycling technologies, sustainable materials, and systems for product life extension; promote partnerships between academia, industry, and government to foster innovation;

g. provide platforms and funding for local authorities to pilot innovative circular economy projects, scaling up successful projects and promoting them across regions;

h. implement educational initiatives at all levels to raise awareness about the circular economy; include circular economy concepts in the national curriculum and provide training programmes for professionals transitioning from traditional to circular industries and for the public at large;

i. ensure monitoring and evaluation of circular economy policies, tracking progress in meeting sustainable development goals; use data to refine and update circular policies;

j. support international cooperation and partnerships to promote circular economy practices in Europe and beyond; adopt and contribute to the development of relevant international standards and support the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

4. The Congress calls on the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to take account of this recommendation and its explanatory memorandum in their activities relating to Council of Europe member States.

## Monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Iceland

Recommendation 513 (2024)<sup>1</sup>

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:
  - a. Article 2, paragraph 1.b, of the Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities appended to Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2020)1 relating to the Congress, stipulating that one of the aims of the Congress is “to submit proposals to the Committee of Ministers in order to promote local and regional democracy”;
  - b. Article 1, paragraph 3, of the above-mentioned Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2020)1, stipulating that “[t]he Congress shall prepare on a regular basis country-by-country reports on the situation of local and regional democracy in all member States and in States which have applied to join the Council of Europe, and shall ensure the effective implementation of the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government”;
  - c. Chapter XVIII of the Rules and Procedures of the Congress on the organisation of monitoring procedures;
  - d. the Congress priorities set up for 2021-2026, in particular priority 6b that concerns the quality of representative democracy and citizen participation;
  - e. the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities and Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions;
  - f. the guidelines for civil participation in political decision making, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 27 September 2017;
  - g. Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of citizens in local public life, adopted on 21 March 2018;
  - h. Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on supervision of local authorities’ activities, adopted on 4 April 2019;
  - i. the previous Congress Recommendation on the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Iceland [[Recommendation 402/2017](#)];

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1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Local Authorities and adopted by the Congress on 16 October 2024 (see document CPL(2024)47-02, explanatory memorandum), co-rapporteurs: Matthias GYSIN, Switzerland (L, ILDG) and Gudrun MOSLER-TÖRNSTRÖM, Austria (L, SOC/G/PD).



j. the explanatory memorandum on the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Iceland. [CPL32(2017)06].

2. The Congress points out that:

a. Iceland joined the Council of Europe on 7 March 1990, signed the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122, "the Charter") on 20 November 1985 and ratified it in its entirety in 1991. Iceland has ratified the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No. 207);

b. The Committee on the Monitoring of the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and on the respect of Human Rights and the Rule of Law at local and regional levels ("the Monitoring Committee") decided to examine the situation of local democracy in Iceland in the light of the Charter. It instructed Matthias Gysin, Switzerland (L, ILDG) and Gudrun Mosler-Törnström, Austria (R, SOC/G/PD), with the task of preparing and submitting to the Congress a report on the implementation of the Charter in Iceland;

c. The monitoring visit took place from 23 to 25 January 2024. The Congress delegation met representatives of various institutions at all levels of government. The detailed programme of the monitoring is appended to the explanatory memorandum;

d. The co-rapporteurs wish to thank the Permanent Representation of Iceland to the Council of Europe and all those who they had exchanges with during these meetings.

3. The Congress notes with satisfaction that in Iceland:

a. local self-government has a high level of fiscal autonomy;

b. Icelandic municipalities lead globally in terms of female voting and representation;

c. sums of state grants have been increased and initiatives have been made to improve the calculation of costs for some of the transferred services;

d. plans have been approved for the necessary work to revise procedures and the consultation between state and municipalities on public finances;

e. the equalisation system is currently under revision and it is expected that a new one will be in place as soon as some controversial aspects will be resolved;

f. following Congress recommendation 402 (2017) "Local democracy in Iceland", in particular its paragraph 6.f, the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No. 207) has been ratified on 22 May 2017.

4. The Congress notes that the following points call for particular attention:

a. the division of responsibilities between central government and local authorities has not been clarified despite previous Congress recommendations on this matter;

b. the European Charter of Local Self-Government still lacks legal force as a directly applicable source of law in the domestic legal system, despite previous recommendations from the Congress;

c. local authorities do not dispose of financial resources that are commensurate with their competences and sufficient to allow them to undertake optional tasks for the sake of their communities;

d. the current equalisation mechanism does not fully take into account the diverse needs of local authorities;

e. the city of Reykjavik has not been granted a special status;

f. inter-municipal co-operation is mostly single-purpose and often overlapping creating problems of transparency and accountability;

g. the system for consultation with the National Association of local authorities of Iceland on financial matters appears not to be efficient;

h. relevant legislation after the ratification of the Additional Protocol on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority has not been adopted;

5. In light of the foregoing, the Congress requests that the Committee of Ministers invite the authorities of Iceland to:

a. clarify the division of responsibilities between central government and local authorities based on the subsidiarity principle;

b. adopt legislation to give the European Charter of Local Self-Government legal force as a directly applicable source of law in the domestic legal system;

c. ensure that local authorities dispose of financial resources that are commensurate with their competences and sufficient to allow them to undertake optional tasks for the sake of their communities;

d. finalise the modernisation of the equalisation mechanism, to ensure it can effectively respond to the current needs of local authorities;

e. grant the city of Reykjavik a special status, on the basis of Congress Recommendation 452 (2021), establishing different legal arrangements to take into account the particular situation of the capital city compared to other municipalities;

f. further promote amalgamations of municipalities, also by improving and strengthening relevant incentives;

g. improve the system of inter-municipal co-operation through new forms of multi-purpose organisations that could address needs in rural and in urban areas, and would enhance transparency and accountability;

h. strengthen the institutional framework for consultation on financial matters to ensure a more regular and timely consultation process in accordance with the Charter's requirements on consultation and also taking into consideration good practices in other countries;

i. enact relevant legislation after the ratification of the Additional Protocol on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority, following due consultation with local authorities.

6. The Congress calls on the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to take account of this recommendation on the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Iceland and the accompanying explanatory memorandum in their activities relating to this member State.

## 47th SESSION

# Monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Latvia

Recommendation 514 (2024)<sup>1</sup>

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:

a. Article 2, paragraph 1.b, of the Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities appended to Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2020)1 relating to the Congress, stipulating that one of the aims of the Congress is “to submit proposals to the Committee of Ministers in order to promote local and regional democracy”;

b. Article 1, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities appended to Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2020)1 relating to the Congress, stipulating that “The Congress shall prepare on a regular basis country-by-country reports on the situation of local and regional democracy in all member States and in States which have applied to join the Council of Europe, and shall ensure the effective implementation of the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government”;

c. Chapter XVIII of the Rules and Procedures of the Congress on the organisation of monitoring procedures;

d. Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Goals 11 on sustainable cities and communities and 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions;

e. Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 27 September 2017;

f. Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of citizens in local public life, adopted on 21 March 2018;

g. Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on supervision of local authorities’ activities, adopted on 4 April 2019;

h. the previous Congress Recommendation on the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Latvia [[Recommendation 412 \(2018\)](#)];

i. Congress Recommendation 447 (2020) “Fact-finding report on territorial reform in Latvia”;

j. the explanatory memorandum on the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Latvia;

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1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Local Authorities and adopted by the Congress on 16 October 2024 (see document CPL(2024)47-03, explanatory memorandum), rapporteurs: Jorge SEQUEIRA, Portugal (L, SOC/G/PD) and Gobnait NÍ MHUINEACHÁIN, Ireland (L, ILDG).

k. the Contemporary Commentary by the Congress on the explanatory report to the European Charter of Local Self-Government adopted by the Statutory Forum on 7 December 2020.

2. The Congress points out that:

a. Latvia joined the Council of Europe on 10 February 1995, signed and ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122, "the Charter") on 5 December 1996 with reservations. The Charter entered into force in Latvia on 1 April 1997;

b. the Committee on the Monitoring of the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and on the respect of Human Rights and the Rule of Law at local and regional levels ("the Monitoring Committee") decided to examine the situation of local and regional democracy in Latvia in the light of the Charter. It entrusted Jorge Sequeira, Portugal (L, SOC/G/PD) and Gobnait Ní Mhuineacháin, Ireland (L, ILDG) with the task of preparing and submitting to the Congress a report on the implementation of the Charter in Latvia;

c. the monitoring visit took place from 20 to 22 February 2024. During the visit, the Congress delegation met representatives of various institutions at all levels of government. The detailed programme of the visit is appended to the explanatory memorandum;

d. the co-rapporteurs wish to thank the Permanent Representation of Latvia to the Council of Europe and all those whom they met during the visit.

3. The Congress notes with satisfaction that in Latvia:

a. the legal framework strengthened opportunities for residents to engage in budgetary and decision-making processes at the local government level;

b. digitalisation of processes continues, bringing benefits for citizens, administrators and elected councillors.

4. The Congress expresses its concerns on the following issues:

a. the ongoing dependence of local government on central funding for implementation of their competences, the high proportion of earmarked grants and the limited opportunities for local governments to leverage own resources compromises municipalities' ability to address local priorities effectively and autonomously;

b. there is a lack of commensurate financial resources accompanying the transfer of new competences;

c. in addition to funding gaps, and the need to align local spending with state budget priorities, detailed regulations and centrally-set service standards increasingly strain local resources and limit local autonomy;

d. some ambiguities persist in the division of competences;

e. the discretionary power of the Minister for Environmental Protection and Regional Development to suspend a chairperson of a council continues to pose risks of disproportionate interference by the central government in local affairs;

f. the system of local government supervision by multiple bodies is complex and burdensome;

g. there is no legal obligation to consult local communities concerned in the event of the modification of local authority borders;

h. there are persistent issues concerning the funding of the equalisation system with both financially well-off and less well-off municipalities dissatisfied with the system.

5. In light of the foregoing, the Congress requests that the Committee of Ministers invite the authorities of Latvia to:

a. increase local government's potential to generate own resources by allowing additional local taxes and revise the systems of tax redistribution so as to ensure a stable financial base for municipalities;

- b. assign financial resources to local governments that are wholly commensurate with their competences, thereby strengthening their responsibility in financial management, enabling them to exercise their functions fully and deliver high quality services;
- c. refrain from over-regulating the competences of local authorities to ensure that their capacity to pursue initiatives for the benefit of their communities is not undermined;
- d. further clarify the allocation of powers between the local and state levels to avoid overlapping;
- e. revise the legislation to remove the ministerial powers of suspension in order to prevent disproportional interference by central government in the institutional life of local authorities;
- f. simplify the system of central supervision of local government so as to avoid duplication and reduce excessive bureaucratisation;
- g. legally introduce mandatory consultation of local communities prior to changes to the boundaries of local authorities;
- h. revise the level and criteria of the equalisation fund and increase the predictability of the state's contribution to the Equalisation Fund, to facilitate municipalities' ability to plan and reduce current inter-regional and inter-municipality disparities;
- i. sign and ratify the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority, of 16 November 2009 (CETS No. 207).

6. The Congress calls on the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to take account of this recommendation on the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Latvia and the accompanying explanatory memorandum in their activities relating to this member State.

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## Monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Malta

Recommendation 515 (2024)<sup>1</sup>

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:
  - a. Article 2, paragraph 1.b, of the Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities appended to Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2020)1 relating to the Congress, stipulating that one of the aims of the Congress is “to submit proposals to the Committee of Ministers in order to promote local and regional democracy”;
  - b. Article 1, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities appended to Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2020)1 relating to the Congress, stipulating that “The Congress shall prepare on a regular basis country-by-country reports on the situation of local and regional democracy in all member States and in States which have applied to join the Council of Europe, and shall ensure the effective implementation of the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government;”
  - c. Chapter XVIII of the Rules and Procedures of the Congress on the organisation of monitoring procedures;
  - d. the Contemporary commentary by the Congress on the explanatory report to the European Charter of Local Self-Government adopted by the Statutory Forum on 7 December 2020;
  - e. the Congress priorities for 2021-2026, in particular priority 6b concerning the quality of representative democracy and citizen participation;
  - f. the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Goals 11 on sustainable cities and communities and 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions;
  - g. the Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 27 September 2017;
  - h. Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of citizens in local public life, adopted on 21 March 2018;
  - i. Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on supervision of local authorities’ activities, adopted on 4 April 2019;
  - j. the previous Congress Recommendation on the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Malta [[Recommendation 400 \(2017\)](#)];

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<sup>1</sup> Debated and approved by the Chamber of Local Authorities and adopted by the Congress on 16 October 2024 (see document CPL(2024)47-04, explanatory memorandum), Co-rapporteurs: Cecilia Felicitasz FRIDERICS, Hungary (L, ECR) and Matthias GYSIN, Switzerland (L, ILDG).

k. the Explanatory memorandum on the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Malta.

2. The Congress points out that:

a. Malta joined the Council of Europe on 29 April 1965, signed the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122, "the Charter") on 13 July 1993, and ratified it on 6 September 1993. It did not ratify Article 9.3 of the Charter. The Charter entered into force on 1 January 1994;

b. the Committee on the Monitoring of the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and on the Respect of Human Rights and the Rule of Law at local and regional levels ("the Monitoring Committee") decided to examine the situation of local democracy in Malta in the light of the Charter. It instructed Cecilia Felicitasz Friderics, Hungary (L, ECR) and Matthias Gysin, Switzerland (L, ILDG) with the task of preparing and submitting to the Congress a report on monitoring the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Malta;

c. the monitoring visit took place from 7 to 9 November 2023. During the visit, the Congress delegation met the representatives of various institutions at all levels of government. The detailed programme of the visit is appended to the explanatory memorandum;

d. the co-rapporteurs wish to thank the Permanent Representation of Malta to the Council of Europe and all those whom they met during the visit.

3. The Congress notes with satisfaction that:

a. The 2019 local government reform has led to a more formal recognition of the principle of local government in legislation, established a general right to consultation, clarified the role of executive secretaries, expanded various forms of citizens' participation at the local level, and granted more freedom for local councils in determining the number of employees they can recruit;

b. the minimum age requirement for election to local councils was lowered to 16 with the aim of increasing youth participation in political life;

c. in 2018, Malta signed and ratified the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No. 207).

4. The Congress expresses its concerns on the following issues:

a. The scope of local self-government remains minimal, and local councils are overall not empowered to regulate and manage a substantial share of public affairs under their responsibility. In addition, further functions have been removed from local councils, contrary to the principle of subsidiarity;

b. local authorities' responsibilities must be aligned with nationally defined policies while supervision by the national government, notably through the executive secretaries, is extensive and disproportionate, leading to excessive involvement of the national authorities in local affairs;

c. the effectiveness of consulting with local authorities, including through the Local Councils' Association, needs improvement for all matters affecting them, especially concerning activities that were outsourced to specialised agencies but are relevant to local government;

d. local authorities' financial autonomy is limited as they lack adequate financial resources of their own, of which they may dispose freely within the framework of their powers;

e. mayors are only allowed to work part-time, regardless of the size of their locality and the workload in practice;

f. local councils' flexibility in determining their administrative structures and implementing their own human resources policy is limited;

g. grants to local authorities are mostly earmarked for the financing of specific projects;

h. the status of the capital city of Valetta remains the same as of any other local council and does not take into account specific aspects and needs connected to its role as the capital;

i. while regions have been recognised as a level of local government by domestic law, indirect election of the regional council members and the lack of financial autonomy impede their consideration as genuine regions within the meaning of the Charter.

5. In light of the foregoing, the Congress requests that the Committee of Ministers invite the authorities of Malta to:

a. revise the Local Government Act to increase the share of public affairs under local authorities' own responsibility and refrain from centralisation of already limited local competences, including to the regional level;

b. review the current system of administrative and financial supervision of local authorities to limit it to ensuring legality control;

c. further revise legal provisions concerning executive secretaries to enable local councils to select or remove them without the approval by the national government;

d. set up a consultation mechanism involving relevant specialised agencies to ensure that local authorities are effectively consulted in practice, in due time and in an appropriate way, on all matters that concern them, both by the national authorities and these agencies;

e. in consultation with the Local Councils' Association, develop a system of financing local authorities based on their own financial resources, which should be sufficiently diversified to enable local authorities to adapt their finances to the evolving needs and different economic cycles;

f. legally allow mayors to choose to work full-time or part-time, to enable them to respond to the different needs of their respective localities;

g. provide more freedom to local authorities, including through allocating financial resources, to adapt their own internal administrative structures to local needs;

h. reduce the ratio of earmarked grants and allow local authorities to access the national capital market without prior approval of the national government;

i. consider conferring a special status for Valetta as the capital city, to enable it to meet the specific needs associated with its role as the capital.

6. The Congress calls on the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to take account of this recommendation on the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Malta and the accompanying explanatory memorandum in their activities relating to this member State.



## 47th SESSION

### Monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Finland

Recommendation 516 (2024)<sup>1</sup>

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:

a. Article 2, paragraph 1.b, of the Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities appended to Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2020)1 relating to the Congress, stipulating that one of the aims of the Congress is “to submit proposals to the Committee of Ministers in order to promote local and regional democracy”;

b. Article 1, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities appended to Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2020)1 relating to the Congress, stipulating that “The Congress shall prepare on a regular basis country-by-country reports on the situation of local and regional democracy in all member States and in States which have applied to join the Council of Europe, and shall ensure the effective implementation of the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government”;

c. Chapter XVIII of the Rules and Procedures of the Congress on the organisation of monitoring procedures;

d. the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Goals 11 on sustainable cities and communities and 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions;

e. the Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 27 September 2017;

f. Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of citizens in local public life, adopted on 21 March 2018;

g. Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on supervision of local authorities’ activities, adopted on 4 April 2019;

h. the previous Congress Recommendation on the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Finland [[Congress Recommendation 396 \(2017\)](#)];

i. the Contemporary commentary by the Congress on the explanatory report to the European Charter of Local Self-Government adopted by the Statutory Forum on 7 December 2020.

<sup>1</sup> Debated and adopted by the Congress on 15 October 2024 (see document CG(2024)47-13, explanatory memorandum, co-rapporteurs Konstantinos KOUKAS, Greece (L, EPP/CCE) and Rachel BAILEY, United Kingdom (R, ECR).

2. The Congress points out that:

a. Finland joined the Council of Europe on 5 May 1989, signed the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122, "the Charter") on 14 June 1990 and ratified it without reservations on 3 June 1991. The Charter entered into force in Finland on 1 October 1991. On 21 July 2021, because of the subsequent changes in the administrative structure in Finland that have taken place after the ratification of the Charter, the Government of the Republic of Finland made a declaration according to which the provisions of the Charter apply to the local authorities, i.e. municipalities ("*kunnat*") of Finland. As regards autonomous regions larger than municipalities, i.e. the "wellbeing services counties" of continental Finland ("*Manner-Suomen hyvinvointialueet*"), Finland considers itself bound by all the provisions, except Articles 4.2, 9.3 and 9.8. Because the above-mentioned changes in the administrative structure do not concern the autonomous region of the Åland Islands, the Charter applies on the Åland Islands to local authorities, i.e. municipalities ("*kommuner*");

b. the Committee on the Monitoring of the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and on the respect of Human Rights and the Rule of Law at local and regional levels ("the Monitoring Committee") decided to examine the situation of local and regional democracy in Finland in the light of the Charter. It instructed Konstantinos Koukas, Greece (L, EPP/CCE) and Rachel Bailey, United Kingdom (R, ECR), with the task of preparing and submitting to the Congress a report on local and regional democracy in Finland. The delegation was assisted by Professor Tania Groppi, vice-chair of the Group of Independent Experts on the European Charter of Local Self-Government, and by the Congress Secretariat;

c. The monitoring visit took place from 16 to 18 April 2024. During the visit, the Congress delegation met the representatives of various institutions at all levels of government. The detailed programme of the visit is appended to the explanatory memorandum;

d. The co-rapporteurs wish to thank the Permanent Representation of Finland to the Council of Europe and all those whom they met during the visit.

3. The Congress notes with satisfaction:

a. the overall positive implementation in Finland of the principles enshrined in the Charter;

b. the creation of a second tier of local government at regional level ("wellbeing services counties");

c. the wide range of responsibilities of the local authorities and the role played by municipalities and well-being services counties in the Finnish welfare system;

d. the culture of consultation and loyal collaboration between central government and local authorities in Finland.

4. The Congress expresses its concerns on the following issues:

a. the weakness of the constitutional basis for the new tier of local self-government at regional level;

b. the unclear procedure of consultation of local communities in the event of obligatory merger or compulsory boundaries change of municipalities in a particularly difficult financial situation;

c. the limited financial autonomy of the new tier of local self-government, due to the lack of resources of a sufficiently diversified and buoyant nature;

d. the lack of special status for the City of Helsinki as regards its specificities as the capital city.

5. In light of the foregoing, the Congress requests that the Committee of Ministers invite the authorities of Finland to:

a. further strengthen the constitutional basis for the wellbeing services counties;

b. establish a consultation procedure of local communities in the event of obligatory merger or compulsory boundaries change of municipalities in a particularly difficult financial situation;

c. give the wellbeing services counties more freedom of action with regard to their own financial resources;

d. grant the City of Helsinki a special status as regards its specificities as the capital city.

6. The Congress calls on the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to take account of this recommendation on the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Finland and the accompanying explanatory memorandum in their activities relating to this member State.

## 47th SESSION

### Ageing communities – ensuring access to quality social care for older persons

Recommendation 517 (2024)<sup>1</sup>

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:

a. the explanatory memorandum on “Ageing communities – ensuring access to quality social care for older persons” (CG-SOC(2024)3-02);

b. Resolution 2168 (2017) Europe “Human rights of older persons and their comprehensive care” of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe calling upon member States to ensure the availability, accessibility and affordability of health care and long-term care for older persons;

c. Recommendation CM/Rec(2014)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the promotion of human rights of older persons” making recommendations concerning the autonomy, participation and care of older persons, based on a number of practices identified across Europe;

d. the European Social Charter (revised; ETS No. 163) guaranteeing rights of access to the highest possible standard of health, to social and medical assistance, and to social welfare services, and encourages measures to ensure elderly persons can remain full members of society for as long as possible, choose their lifestyle freely and lead independent lives in their family surroundings;

e. Recommendation COM(2022)441 of the Council of the European Union on “Access to affordable high-quality long-term care” recommending that EU member States “continuously align the offer of long-term care services to long-term care needs”;

f. the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030) and the Age-Friendly City Framework of the World Health Organization (WHO) as international frameworks promoting older people’s rights, health and well-being;

g. the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in particular SDG 3 promoting healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages, and SDG 11 promoting inclusive and sustainable cities and communities.

2. The Congress notes with concern that:

<sup>1</sup> Debated and adopted by the Congress on 16 October 2024 (see document CG(2024) 47-17, explanatory memorandum, co-rapporteurs Carla DEJONGHE, Belgium (R, ILDG) and Joanne LABAN, United Kingdom (L, ECR).

- a. most Council of Europe member States are experiencing an overall trend towards an ageing population and ageing local communities;
- b. local and regional authorities are in the frontline of institutions facing the challenges of an ageing population and growing demand for long-term care services in different settings;
- c. in particular local and regional authorities are confronted with new challenges in the area of long-term care, including increasingly higher costs for home-based and institutional care arrangements, staff shortages, maintaining quality standards in long-term care, the need for better interagency co-operation and changing family patterns;
- d. to address such challenges and cities and make cities and communities more age-friendly, subnational authorities will need better legislative, policy and financial support from national governments first, and through European programmes where available;
- e. while individual local and regional authorities have started developing effective and innovative responses to some of these challenges, these are not yet sufficiently known and applied across Council of Europe member States to guarantee access to quality social care for all older persons.

3. The Congress calls on the Committee of Ministers to invite the respective national authorities of the member States to the Council of Europe to:

- a. create a favourable national context for the development of age-friendly cities and communities, including through measures in a range of relevant policy areas, according to the WHO Framework for Age-Friendly Cities, including community and healthcare, transportation, housing, social participation, outdoor spaces and buildings, respect and social inclusion, civil participation and employment, communication and information;
- b. develop specific support programmes for local and regional authorities to develop long-term care services in different home-based and residential settings;
- c. co-operate with local and regional authorities and their associations to develop the necessary legal, policy and administrative frameworks for enabling and fostering age-friendly cities and communities in different territories;
- d. set-up special support measures and appropriate equalisation funds for individual territories that are excessively affected by current trends and challenges ;
- e. support local and regional authorities, including by providing appropriate platforms and networks for exchanging about experiences and good practices, for supporting each other in spreading innovative approaches across the country and for building the professional capacities needed;
- f. provide sufficient funding to cover local and regional authorities' expenses for long-term care, which in many countries is a statutory duty for subnational authorities;
- g. provide funding for innovative programmes that enable older people to continue living in their local community and own homes, preserving their autonomy for as long as possible;
- h. support the design and implementation of community-based services and encourage providers to put such services in place at local and regional levels, for instance through financial incentives;
- i. improve coordination between health and social services at all levels by promoting and funding approaches of integrated care and investing into research and model approaches in this area;
- j. improve the working conditions for long-term care workers through legislative, political and awareness-raising measures (notably those related to working times, salaries and psychosocial support), to increase the appreciation and attractiveness of the sector, and to facilitate access for workers coming from abroad and from other professional sectors, including through the mutual transnational recognition of degrees and qualifications.

4. The Congress calls on the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to take account of this recommendation and the accompanying explanatory memorandum in their activities concerning ageing communities and older persons' access to quality care as a human right.

5. The Congress invites the Committee of Ministers in particular, to pay renewed attention to older persons' human rights in undertaking a review of CM/Rec(2014)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the promotion of human rights of older persons and in stepping up its promotional activities related to the relevant paragraphs of the European Social Charter (revised), including in co-operation with the Congress and the Parliamentary Assembly to support relevant multilevel policy and legislative action.

## 47th SESSION

# Recurring issues based on assessments resulting from Congress monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and election observation missions (reference period 2021-2024)

Recommendation 518 (2024)<sup>1</sup>

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:

a. the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122) and its Additional Protocol on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No. 207);

b. The Reykjavík Declaration, adopted at the Fourth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe (Reykjavík, 16 and 17 May 2023), highlighting the need to support the essential role of multilevel governance in delivering the Organisation’s vision, including through the role of the Congress with respect to the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government;

c. Article 2, paragraph 1.b, of the Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities appended to Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2020)1, stipulating that one of the aims of the Congress is “to submit proposals to the Committee of Ministers in order to promote local and regional democracy”;

d. Chapter XVIII, XIX and XX of the Rules and Procedures of the Congress, respectively on the organisation of monitoring procedures, election observation missions, implementation of the post-monitoring/post-electoral political dialogue;

e. the Congress monitoring reports, resolutions and recommendations on the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in the Council of Europe member States;

f. the reports and recommendations adopted by the Congress further to the observation of local and regional elections as well as reports, resolutions and recommendations on transversal issues in electoral matters;

g. Congress recommendation 455 (2021) “Recurring Issues Based on Assessments Resulting from Congress Monitoring and Election Observation Missions (Reference Period 2017-2020);

h. Congress Recommendation 453 (2021) “Ensuring the respect of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in major crisis situations”;

i. Congress Recommendation 395 (2017) “Recurring issues based on assessments resulting from Congress monitoring and election observation missions (reference period 2010-2016)”.

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<sup>1</sup> Debated and adopted by the Congress on 16 October 2024 (see document [CG\(2024\)47-20](#), explanatory memorandum), co-rapporteurs: Thibaut GUIGNARD, France (L, EPP/CCE) and Stewart DICKSON, United Kingdom (R, ILDG).

2. The Congress notes that since the issuance of the previous periodic report in 2021, Europe has undergone significant political, economic and social upheavals driven by the COVID-19 crisis, the reception of migrants and refugees, climate change, the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine, and subsequent challenges related to the cost of living and energy prices. They have reshaped the environment in which national, local and regional governments operate, profoundly impacting their resources and activities.

3. The Congress regrets that the recurring issues of compliance with the Charter highlighted in the previous report have persisted during the current review period, while some of them have been exacerbated by the effects of successive crises. These include inadequate financial resources available to local and regional authorities, a restricted scope of local self-government, and insufficient consultation processes.

4. Furthermore, the pattern of increasing instances of hate speech, disinformation, threats, both verbal and physical aggression directed against locally elected representatives – especially mayors – throughout Europe, particularly evident during elections, has become more pronounced in recent years and continues to pose significant challenges to the working conditions necessary to fulfil elected mandates and exercise local democracy. This trend may have a paralysing effect on political life at local and regional levels.

5. The Congress also stresses that recurring issues in electoral matters continue to include the inaccuracy of voters lists, the misuse of administrative resources during electoral campaigns, the politicisation of the electoral administration at all levels, the decline in voters' confidence in electoral processes and the unequal playing field for candidates. Over the past several years, the Congress has identified increasingly problematic trends that impact local electoral processes, namely the deterioration of the campaigning environment and the rise in foreign interference, while noting with satisfaction the overall progress made to improve electoral procedures and the inclusivity of local and regional elections in Europe.

6. While election observation constitutes a widely accepted barometer of democratic development and a vital instrument to improve electoral processes, the Congress deplores the fact that many member States did not systematically invite it to observe local and regional elections over the reference period. More systematic invitations to the Congress to observe elections would allow it to fully fulfil its institutional mandate as guardian of local and regional democracy and to bring more regularly into focus best practices, progress and recurring issues observed across all member States.

7. The Congress highlights that the systematically identified shortcomings in the compliance with the Charter and European electoral standards can serve as early indicators of potential democratic erosion and increasing institutional fragility, which have already materialised in some parts of Europe.

8. In the light of the above, the Congress invites the Committee of Ministers to call on the national authorities of the member States to:

a. strengthen their efforts, in line with the Reykjavik Declaration, to fully implement the ratified provisions of the Charter, based on the Congress monitoring resolutions and recommendations, with particular emphasis on addressing the recurring issues identified by the Congress, specifically:

- i. make sure that subnational authorities have adequate and commensurate financial resources to fulfil their competencies and enhance local revenue-raising capacities to secure financial autonomy at the subnational level;
- ii. ensure the right of local authorities to be consulted in due time by the central government, on all matters directly affecting them, both in law and in practice, in line with Articles 4.6, 5 and 9.6 of the Charter;
- iii. refrain from re-centralising local competences, over-regulating, and disproportionate supervision and clearly divide competencies among various levels of government to enable local authorities to manage public affairs under their own responsibility and in the interest of the local population;



- iv. introduce measures to strengthen legal protection for mayors, including extending limitation periods and considering specific offenses for attacks or assaults on them while they are performing their duties;
- b. conduct local and regional elections in accordance with European electoral standards and on the basis of the relevant Congress resolutions and recommendations and notably:
- i. pursue efforts to systematically update voters lists and guarantee their accuracy, as local and regional elections should reflect the will of the electorate actually residing in a specific community;
  - ii. ensure an equal playing field for all candidates through dedicated party and campaign finance regulations, effective regulations and dissuasive sanctions to prevent the misuse of administrative resources and measures to enhance women and youth participation;
  - iii. strengthen the professionalisation of the election administration and the transparency of its work, in order to further eliminate election day irregularities and to increase trust in electoral processes;
  - iv. as a means to decrease polarisation, foster political pluralism by amplifying initiatives towards more inclusive electoral processes, preventing the deterioration of campaign conditions and increasing vigilance towards hate speech, disinformation and foreign interference in electoral processes;
- c. systematically send an invitation of the Congress to observe local and regional elections including early, repeat and partial elections, at the latest 60 days before the election day;
- d. enhance post-monitoring and post-electoral political dialogue with the Congress to develop roadmaps for fulfilling their commitments under the Charter and complying with European electoral standards;
- e. use the findings of the Congress monitoring and election observation reports as an early warning mechanism to prevent and resist democratic backsliding in Europe, recommending timely improvements to safeguard and strengthen democracy and good governance at all levels, in line with the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy;
- f. encourage member States which have not done so to sign and ratify the Additional Protocol to the Charter on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority.

## 47th SESSION

### Local elections in Türkiye (31 March 2024)

Recommendation 519 (2024)<sup>1</sup>

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:

a. Article 1, paragraph 3 of the Committee of Ministers’ Statutory Resolution CM/Res (2020)1 on the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe;

b. the principles laid down in the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122) which was ratified by Türkiye on 9 December 1992;

c. Chapter XIX of the Rules and Procedures on the practical organisation of election observation missions;

d. the previous Congress Recommendation 439 (2019) on the Local elections in Türkiye and Mayoral re-run in Istanbul (31 March and 23 June 2019);

e. the invitation by the authorities of Türkiye, dated 18 January 2024, to observe local elections held in the country on 31 March 2024.

2. The Congress reiterates the fact that genuinely democratic local and regional elections are part of a process to establish and maintain democratic governance and that observation of grassroots elections is a key element in the Congress’ role as guardian of democracy at local and regional level. It therefore highly regrets that one of the Congress delegation members was not granted accreditation by the authorities.

3. The Congress acknowledges that, overall, the legal framework still contains significant gaps and broad restrictions which are not fully conducive to democratic elections at local and regional levels, and notably, on the freedom of expression, restrictions of the right to vote and stand in elections and the independence of the judiciary. Some of these shortcomings are not in line with international and European standards in the field of elections and the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights.

4. The Congress notes with satisfaction that:

a. the election day was calm and well-organised and the election administration, headed by the Supreme Election Council (SEC), was well trained and worked in a timely and efficient manner, including in areas hit by the 2023 earthquakes;

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<sup>1</sup> Debated and adopted by the Congress on 17 October 2024 (see document [CG\(2024\)47-16](#), explanatory memorandum), co-rapporteurs: David ERAY, Switzerland (R, EPP/CCE) and Vladimir PREBLIC, Slovenia (L, SOC/G/PD).

b. the campaign was competitive and fewer restrictions were imposed on contestants in their interactions with voters than in 2019; it was perceived to some extent as less centred around security concerns, as well as less confrontational than previous electoral campaigns since the failed coup attempt;

c. Turkish citizens showed their genuine commitment to local and regional democracy down to the level closest to them by turning up to vote and by standing as candidates in large numbers but also by actively participating in the work of the election administration;

d. a three-month residency requirement for being registered to vote was implemented to curb fraudulent voter migration and was complemented with a safeguard mechanism to limit disenfranchisement of voters;

e. the use of mobile ballot boxes and tools to support voters with visual impairments contributed to a more inclusive ballot, in addition to the satisfactory accessibility of most polling stations located on the ground floors, to which voters with mobility impairments could be assigned;

f. the preliminary results were quickly acknowledged by all contestants, even in cases leading to political alternation, and recounts were handled swiftly;

g. some political parties strived to get more women to take part in local politics including in leadership positions, which was reflected in the small but noteworthy increase in women in decision-making positions;

h. there have been positive developments since 2019, with only one case of a provincial electoral administration replacing an elected mayor (in Van) with the candidate who obtained the second highest score; this case was subsequently annulled by a decision of the SEC;

i. despite the absence of a legal framework regulating election observation, Congress observers were granted unimpeded access to the electoral process thanks to the efforts of the SEC.

5. At the same time, the Congress expresses its concern on the following issues:

a. while technically proficient, the election administration still suffered from a perceived lack of independence and transparency and only partially communicated with the larger public on preliminary results, decisions and meetings;

b. restrictions to the right to vote persisted, including for conscripts and convicts, as well as limitations on eligibility due to the revocation of civil rights, which *de facto* banned thousands of people from running in elections, predominantly in the southeast;

c. issues related to the accuracy of electoral rolls impacted the integrity of the electoral process and notably due to credible allegations of fraudulent voter migration in the east and voters from the same address being registered in different polling stations;

d. as the official campaign only ran for 10 days, most of the campaign remained under or unregulated and did not guarantee a level playing field among contestants, which is a prerequisite for genuine democratic elections;

e. in parallel the campaign was also marred by numerous allegations of misuse of State resources and official positions which gave an unjustified advantage to the ruling party candidates; it was perceived as a national contest in which the President was the most active protagonist and was not bound to electoral silence. This situation contributed to excessively focussing the campaign on national politics and to blurring the line between the State and the ruling party;

f. despite the citizens' increasing demands for transparency, party and campaign finance remained underregulated therefore challenging the principle of equitable campaigning conditions for all contestants;

g. the deteriorated situation of the freedom of expression and of the media, creating a climate of intimidation, repression and pervasive self-censorship to avoid criminal proceedings, did not provide the citizens with unbiased and balanced information; at the same time, rules ensuring impartiality of media coverage were routinely disregarded, including by public agencies in charge of their oversight;

h. on election day, some inconsistencies were observed in particular, the lack of regulations and confusion on the organisation of mukhtar elections, the presence of candidates near polling stations which, in some instances, culminated in physical confrontations, the substantial presence of security forces which could be perceived as intimidating in certain cases, the instances of overcrowding and the rushed counting procedures;

i. accessibility was not always ensured in some premises, in particular in polling stations not located on the ground floors, and the assisted voting procedure was not applied homogeneously; mobile ballot boxes were only available for bedridden voters living in district and provincial centres, which *de facto* created a difference in treatment for voters living in villages;

j. the limited transparency of the resolution of election disputes which remained held behind closed doors and continued to be perceived as politically biased and was not subjected to final independent judicial review;

k. women and youth remain underrepresented in decision-making positions at local and regional levels and women were also underrepresented at all levels of the election administration;

l. a trustee was appointed by the Ministry of Interior to replace an elected mayor in the municipality of Hakkari, constituting the most recent application of a longstanding practice considered by the Congress and the Venice Commission to undermine the very nature of local self-government and to be based on a very broad interpretation of terrorism-related offenses;

m. last but not least, election observation is not allowed in Turkish legislation and thus independent domestic observers were not granted access to the full electoral process, in contradiction with Türkiye's international commitments.

6. In light of the above, the Congress invites the authorities of Türkiye to:

a. improve clarity of election legislation and harmonise all election-related laws in order to provide a cohesive framework for elections and to guarantee an equal level playing field;

b. terminate overly broad limitations of freedoms of assembly and expression in order to re-establish an environment fully conducive to genuinely democratic elections;

c. enhance transparency of the decision-making at all levels of election administration by providing recordings, opening to the public or streaming meetings of the SEC, publishing decisions and results online on time and allowing for domestic election observers to follow the full electoral process;

d. remove restrictions on voting rights for military cadets and conscripts as well as other blanket restrictions on suffrage rights and on the right to stand in elections, to provide for a more inclusive electoral process;

e. continue efforts to further improve the accuracy of voters lists and proactively investigate and sanction fraudulent voter registration; revise measures to move and merge polling stations and to assign voters from the same area to different polling stations, in line with Venice Commission Opinion on the matter;

f. consider extending the official campaign period to cover more than 10 days in order to establish fair and equal rules for all contestants;

g. step up provisions and investigations on cases of misuse of administrative resources and official positions during the pre-election period and clarify the involvement of the President of the Republic in local elections; consider the re-establishment of the practice to nominate technical ministers bound to impartiality to key ministries in charge of elections to reinforce trust in the impartiality of the process;

h. urgently introduce stronger regulations on party and campaign financing, e.g. through setting a campaign expenditure ceiling, and an effective oversight mechanism to ensure transparency, integrity and accountability, as recommended by the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO);

i. take resolute steps to enhance the overall situation of the media and to establish an effective media monitoring system to ensure impartial media coverage, in particular of public broadcasters, and remove impediments to the freedom of expression of journalists in particular related to the excessive resort to prosecutions and detentions on grounds of anti-terrorism, misleading information or defamation, in particular in electoral contexts;

j. on election day procedures, introduce regulations on the elections of mukhtars, in particular with regard to the campaign environment and presence near polling stations, as a means to decrease overcrowding and physical confrontations, and, if the security situation allows it, consider limiting police presence in and around polling stations and granting the right to invite law enforcement bodies to chairpersons only;

k. continue efforts to guarantee the accessibility of premises and to deploy mobile ballot boxes regardless of the voters' place of residence and further clarify and train polling station officials on assisted voting procedures;

l. consider steps to increase independence and impartiality of the SEC and strengthen effective judicial remedy and the transparency and legal integrity of the election dispute mechanism, including by subjecting SEC's decisions to a final review by an independent judicial body;

m. introduce measures, such as a 30% gender quota, to strengthen the participation of women in decision-making positions in local politics and as members of election administration and consider incentives to support the participation of youth;

n. in line with the 2020 Venice Commission's Opinion on the replacement of elected candidates and mayors, ensure that ineligibility of candidates is assessed prior to the elections and based on a final criminal conviction, repeal Article 45, paragraph 1 added in 2016 to the Municipality Law, and, in the event of a mayor being removed, consider alternative solutions to respect the will of the voters, such as allowing the municipal councils to choose a replacement mayor or repeating the mayoral elections;

o. introduce legislation regarding the accreditation of domestic and international election observers and make election observation by such actors a normal procedure without requesting special measures by the SEC; in additions, refrain from intervening in the composition of future international election observation missions, which the Congress establishes based on its rules and procedures.

7. The Congress calls on the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to take account of this recommendation regarding the 2024 local elections in Türkiye and the accompanying explanatory memorandum in their activities relating to this member State.

## 47th SESSION

# Verification of new members' credentials

Resolution 501 (2024)<sup>1</sup>

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:

a. the provisions of Article 7 of the Charter of the Congress appended to Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2020)1 relating to the Congress;

b. Rule 6 of the Rules and Procedures of the Congress;

c. the Bureau decision of 14 October 2024 based on the opinion of the rapporteurs responsible for the verification of the credentials of new members, concluding that the national delegations as proposed comply with the criteria of the Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

2. The Congress:

a. notes that 434 of the 548 members proposed by the authorities of the member States have already signed the Code of Conduct for Congress members and submitted the Declaration of Interests in accordance with the provisions of Rule 6 of the Rules and Procedures of the Congress;

b. notes that 64 seats are still vacant.

3. In the light of the foregoing, the Congress:

a. approves the credentials of members of national delegations as set out in Document CG(2024)47-04, subject to the signature of the Code of Conduct and submission of the Declaration of Interests of Congress members;

b. calls on those members who have not yet done so to sign without delay the Code of Conduct and the Declaration of Interests of Congress members, in accordance with the provisions of Rule 6 of the Rules and Procedures of the Congress;

c. invites the authorities of the member States concerned to fill the vacant seats as soon as possible, in accordance with the applicable provisions.

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<sup>1</sup> Debated and adopted by the Congress during the 47th Session on 15 October 2024, 1st Sitting (see Document [CG\(2024\)47-02](#)), Co-rapporteurs: Andrew BOFF, United Kingdom (R, ECR), Martine DIESCHBURG-NICKELS, Luxembourg (L, ILDG)

## 47th SESSION

# The integration of youth perspectives in local and regional democratic life

Resolution 502 (2024)<sup>1</sup>

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) is convinced that involving young people in public life and enabling them to participate in local and regional decision-making not only improves outcomes and strengthens communities but also empowers young people themselves. The Congress is therefore firmly committed to promoting the integration of youth perspectives in local and regional democratic life.
2. As a pioneer of such commitments, the Congress adopted the European Charter on the participation of young people in local and regional life in 1992 and revised it, with contributions from young people, in 2003. In a world that has seen major transformations over the past decades, the Congress once again launched a process of revision of the Charter in 2024 and is collaborating with youth representatives in various settings to ensure that the revised text reflects the current needs and concerns of young people in Europe. It welcomes the support of the Maltese authorities in this process, which will be completed during their presidency of the Committee of Ministers in 2025.
3. The Congress also launched its Rejuvenating Politics initiative in 2014, bringing together young people aged 18 to 30 from all Council of Europe member States to participate in its plenary and chamber sessions, and in the other activities of the Congress.
4. The Congress welcomes the fact that in the first ten years since the creation of this programme, youth delegates have addressed the Congress and directly contributed to all fields of its action, including for example its work on youth participation, climate change, the environment, promoting diversity, rural regions, the right to water and the impact of artificial intelligence. Congress youth delegates have moreover increasingly been called upon by other Council of Europe entities, both in the youth sector and beyond, to contribute directly to their work across a variety of fields.
5. The grassroots projects run by youth delegates each year have furthermore provided an opportunity for each youth delegate to design and implement a project aimed at promoting the participation of young people in public life in their community through awareness-raising, educational or other activities, and, through both successes achieved and challenges faced, to develop their skills as active citizens.
6. As it celebrates the tenth anniversary of the launch of its Rejuvenating Politics initiative, the Congress reaffirms its commitment to this initiative as a crucial means of promoting the participation of young people in local and regional democratic life, engaging young citizens directly in the work of the Council of Europe, and integrating youth perspectives at all levels of decision-making.

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<sup>1</sup> Debated and adopted by the Congress during the 47th Session on 16 October 2024, 1st Sitting (see document [CG\(2024\)47-21](#)), Co-rapporteurs: Jani KOKKO, Finland (L, SOC/G/PD), Randi MONDORF, Denmark (R, ILDG)

7. The Congress salutes the renewed commitment of Council of Europe member States to supporting the participation of young people in democratic life and decision-making processes, expressed in the Reykjavík Principles for Democracy adopted at the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe member States on 16-17 May 2023. It emphasises that this commitment must be translated by member States into concrete action at all levels, including local and regional levels.

8. The Congress also welcomes the evaluation of the integration of youth perspectives in Council of Europe work that is currently under way in this context and is fully engaged in the process.

9. In the light of the foregoing, the Congress calls on local and regional authorities to:

a. promote the direct participation of young people in local and regional democratic life both as elected members of local and regional assemblies and as voters taking part in local and regional elections;

b. set up if they have not yet done so, evaluate regularly and strengthen wherever necessary co-management structures in line with the model in place in the Council of Europe youth sector, such as youth councils, designed to enable decisions to be made in partnership with young people and youth organisations, not only on youth matters but across all specific policy areas of concern to them; such mechanisms must ensure the participation of marginalised groups, without discrimination;

c. ensure that their channels of communication with citizens include means and forms of communication adapted to the needs and practices of young people, such as online platforms or mobile applications that facilitate youth engagement in policy discussions;

d. build partnerships with schools and other educational institutions to promote democratic citizenship and participation in public life and raise young people's awareness of the role they can play in promoting change in their local and regional contexts;

e. actively support young people's projects and initiatives in their communities.

10. As regards national authorities, the Congress:

a. reiterates the invitation previously made to member States of the Council of Europe in its Resolution 346 (2012), Resolution 386 (2015) and Recommendation 450 (2021) to include young people in their national delegations to the Congress, both as representative and substitute members, so that the composition of the Congress reflects that of European societies;

b. calls on them to ensure that youth policies and educational programmes designed at the national level also include effective and adequately resourced measures to promote the participation of young people in public life at local and regional levels, including by establishing youth advisory boards within ministries.

11. Finally, referring to the Council of Europe evaluation process mentioned above, the Congress invites the Committee of Ministers to give effect to the recommendations that will be made in this context in order to strengthen the inclusion of youth perspectives throughout its intergovernmental work, and underlines that these perspectives, reflecting the diversity of young people themselves, are by nature multiple.



## 47th SESSION

# Fostering a circular economy at local and regional levels

Resolution 503 (2024)<sup>1</sup>

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:

a. the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No.122, “the Charter”), in particular its Articles 3, 4 and 9;

b. the Priorities of the Congress 2021-2026, in particular Priority d: Environmental issues and climate action in cities and regions;

c. Congress Resolution 500 (2024) “Local and regional responses to natural disasters and climate hazards: from risk preparedness to resilience”;

d. Congress Resolution 489 (2022) “A fundamental right to the environment: a matter for local and regional authorities. Towards a green reading of the European Charter of Local Self-Government”;

e. the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development of the United Nations, in particular SDG 1 “End poverty in all its forms everywhere”, SDG 3 “Good health and well-being”, SDG 6 “For clean water and sanitation for all”, SDG 11 “Sustainable Cities and Communities”, SDG 12 on “Ensuring Sustainable Consumption and Production patterns”, SDG 13 “Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”, SDG 14 “For life below water” as well as SDG 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”.

2. The Congress underlines that:

a. the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic have exposed significant weaknesses in the global supply chain; coupled with the ongoing consequences of climate change and resulting global warming, these developments underline the urgency of reimagining various aspects of economies and making them more resilient to current political realities and future challenges, notably, climate change;

b. the “take-make-waste” linear economic model used throughout the 20th century causes significant harm to the environment and social justice and is no longer viable;

c. the circular economy, a restorative model that decouples economic growth from natural resource use, and emphasises longevity, reuse, and recycling, has emerged as an alternative to the linear economy;

<sup>1</sup> Debated and adopted by the Congress on 15 October 2024 (see document CG(2024)47-14, explanatory memorandum), co-rapporteurs: Linda GILLHAM, United Kingdom (L, ILDG) and Kristoffer TAMSONS, Sweden (R, EPP/CCE).

d. the circular economy has the potential to boost social and economic resilience at local level and to foster equality, enabling redistribution of resources and jobs and addressing resource scarcity;

e. a multi-level and multidisciplinary strategic approach is required for making the ambition of a circular economy a reality. Community involvement is crucial for the success of circular initiatives;

f. local and regional authorities are uniquely well-placed to contribute to the development of resilient, circular economies rooted in the particular needs of their communities and foster circular policies.

3. In light of the above, the Congress calls on the local and regional authorities of Council of Europe member States to:

a. develop and actively implement local and regional circular economy strategies and action plans tailored to local and regional contexts and promoting human rights and local democracy; establish clear goals and metrics to define and track the progress towards circularity; support the development of circular practices, such as preparation for reuse, recycling, upcycling, local renewable energy production, urban greening including the undoing of soil sealing, localised food growing, low and zero emission mobility;

b. integrate circular economy principles into urban planning and development; designing spaces that encourage sharing resources, such as tool libraries and community gardens with local food production and incorporating green infrastructure to manage waste and resources more effectively;

c. ensure that circular economy benefits human rights and is accessible to all residents, including marginalised and economically disadvantaged groups; this includes providing access to recycling programmes, repair services, and energy-efficient housing;

d. establish robust local and regional regulatory frameworks that support circular principles; this includes creating incentives for sustainable practices;

e. promote and implement Green Public Procurement, prioritising the procurement of sustainable and recycled products, leading by example and setting a standard for private sectors to follow;

f. encourage collaboration between the public sector, private companies, and the civil society to enhance local democracy and develop new technologies and business models that support circularity; leverage data and technology to monitor waste management, resource usage, and the lifecycle of products;

g. invest in circular infrastructure, building or upgrading facilities that support the circular economy, such as advanced recycling plants, community repair shops, anaerobic digestion and composting centres; making it easier for residents and businesses to participate in circular practices;

h. develop policies to prevent waste and implement separate collection, reuse, recycling and recovery of waste;

i. invest in circular mobility, providing low to zero emission transport options to citizens with easy transfers and access to the entire municipality at low cost, so encouraging the shift away from private vehicles for daily, routine movements;

j. engage the community through education and participation to inform the public about the benefits of this circular economy transformation for them and the ways in which they can engage with it and contribute to it.

4. The Congress calls on the local and regional authorities and their national associations to take account of this resolution and the accompanying explanatory memorandum, on this specific issue. It also asks its statutory bodies to take the present resolution into account in their activities.

## 47th SESSION

### Ageing communities – ensuring access to quality social care for older persons

Resolution 504 (2024)<sup>1</sup>

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:
  - a. the explanatory memorandum on “Ageing communities – ensuring access to quality social care for older persons” (CG-SOC(2024)3-02);
  - b. Resolution 2168 (2017) “Human rights of older persons and their comprehensive care” of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe calling upon member States to ensure the availability, accessibility and affordability of health care and long-term care for older persons;
  - c. Recommendation CM/Rec(2014)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on “human rights of older persons” making recommendations concerning the autonomy, participation and care of older persons, based on a number of practices identified across Europe;
  - d. the European Social Charter (revised; ETS No. 163) , guaranteeing rights of access to the highest possible standard of health, to social and medical assistance, and to social welfare services, and encourages measures to ensure elderly persons can remain full members of society for as long as possible, choose their lifestyle freely and lead independent lives in their family surroundings;
  - e. Recommendation COM(2022)441 of the Council of the European Union on “Access to affordable high-quality long-term care” recommending that EU member States “continuously align the offer of long-term care services to long-term care needs”;
  - f. the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030) and the Age-Friendly City Framework of the World Health Organization (WHO) as international frameworks promoting older people’s rights, health and well-being;
  - g. the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in particular SDG 3 promoting healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages, and SDG 11 promoting inclusive and sustainable cities and communities.
2. The Congress notes with concern that:
  - a. most Council of Europe member States are experiencing an overall trend towards an ageing population and ageing local communities;

<sup>1</sup> Debated and adopted by the Congress on 16 October 2024 (see document CG(2024)47-17, explanatory memorandum, co-rapporteurs Carla DEJONGHE, Belgium (R, ILDG) and Joanne LABAN, United Kingdom (L, ECR).

b. local and regional authorities are in the frontline of institutions facing the challenges of an ageing population and growing demand for long-term care services in different settings;

c. in particular local and regional authorities are confronted with new challenges in the area of long-term care, including increasingly higher costs for home-based and institutional care arrangements, staff shortages, maintaining of quality standards in long-term care, the need for better interagency co-operation and changing family patterns;

d. to address such challenges and cities and make cities and communities more age-friendly, subnational authorities will need better legislative, policy and financial support from national governments first, and through European programmes where available;

e. while individual local and regional authorities have started developing effective and innovative responses to some of these challenges, these are not yet sufficiently known and applied across Council of Europe member States to guarantee access to quality social care for all older persons.

3. The Congress calls on local and regional authorities in member States to create a favourable context for ageing communities and ensure the well-being, social inclusion and full enjoyment of human rights by older persons by:

a. developing age-friendly cities and communities through measures in a range of relevant policy areas, according to the WHO Framework for Age-Friendly Cities, including community and healthcare, transportation, housing, social participation, outdoor spaces and buildings, respect and social inclusion, civil participation and employment, communication and information;

b. providing accessible age-friendly services and environments, including by offering a variety of solutions of home-based and institutional long-term care services;

c. supporting older persons to live autonomously for as long as possible and facilitate their full participation in the social, economic and political life of their local community;

d. investing into innovative measures and approaches to respond to the key challenges identified for local communities across Europe, including by investing in prevention programmes, developing effective long-term care services, strengthening interagency co-operation and community-based solutions, upholding quality standards, and guaranteeing equal access to and quality of services within local communities and between the territories of each country;

e. fostering and supporting volunteering work, community-centred initiatives and other forms of informal care;

f. designing and developing services for older persons in a more effective manner by using communication technology where appropriate;

g. engaging older persons in co-production approaches to ensure that policies and services correspond to their actual needs;

h. establishing quality assurance tools through local regulations, supervisory mechanisms and procurement policies;

i. supporting formal and informal carers, often women, in improving their working conditions (notably those related to working times, salaries and psychosocial support), by strengthening their professional training and development, by making work in the care sector generally more attractive, and by facilitating access to it for professionals coming from abroad and other sectors;

j. promoting, within their respective national contexts, the integration of local and regional action into comprehensive national strategies for older persons' care, thus supporting the coherent development of age-friendly societies across the country in a balanced manner;

k. exchanging good practices in a European and international context to constantly improve long-term care and other services for older persons, for example by joining the WHO network of age-friendly cities and communities.

4. The Congress commits to supporting the implementation of this Resolution by disseminating and promoting innovative action to be taken to guarantee the fully enjoyment of older person's human rights and the effective provision of quality care services at the local level closest to citizens.

## 47th SESSION

# Recurring issues based on assessments resulting from Congress monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and election observation missions (reference period 2021-2024)

Resolution 505 (2024)<sup>1</sup>

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:
  - a. the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122) and its Additional Protocol on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No. 207);
  - b. The Reykjavík Declaration, adopted at the Fourth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe (Reykjavík, 16 and 17 May 2023), highlighting the need to support the essential role of multilevel governance in delivering the Organisation’s vision, including through the role of the Congress with respect to the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government;
  - c. Chapter XVIII, XIX and XX of the Rules and Procedures of the Congress, respectively on the organisation of monitoring procedures, election observation missions, implementation of the post-monitoring/post-electoral political dialogue;
  - d. the Congress monitoring reports and recommendations on the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in the Council of Europe member States;
  - e. the reports and recommendations adopted by the Congress further to the observation of local and regional elections as well as reports, resolutions and recommendations on transversal issues in electoral matters;
  - f. Congress Resolution 467 (2021) “Recurring Issues Based on Assessments Resulting from Congress Monitoring and Election Observation Missions (Reference Period 2017-2020)”;
  - g. Congress Resolution 466 (2021) “Ensuring the respect of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in major crisis situations”;
  - h. Congress Resolution 413 (2017) on the comparative analysis of the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in 47-member States;
  - i. Congress Resolution 412 (2017) “Recurring issues based on assessments resulting from Congress monitoring and election observation missions (reference period 2010-2016)”;

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<sup>1</sup> Debated and adopted by the Congress on 16 October 2024 (see document [CG\(2024\)47-20](#), explanatory memorandum), co-rapporteurs: Thibaut GUIGNARD, France (L, EPP/CCE) and Stewart DICKSON, United Kingdom (R, ILDG).

2. The Congress notes that since the issuance of the previous periodic report in 2021, Europe has undergone significant political, economic and social upheavals driven by the COVID-19 crisis, the reception of migrants and refugees, climate change, the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine, and subsequent challenges related to the cost of living and energy prices. They have reshaped the environment in which national, local and regional governments operate, profoundly impacting their resources and activities.

3. The Congress regrets that the recurring issues of compliance with the Charter highlighted in the previous report have persisted during the current review period, while some of them have been exacerbated by the effects of successive crises. These include inadequate financial resources available to local and regional authorities, a restricted scope of local self-government, and insufficient consultation processes.

4. In addition, local and regional elected representatives throughout Europe have increasingly encountered virulent online hate speech and disinformation, as well as physical and verbal aggressions, creating a hostile environment for the execution of their mandates. This pattern, particularly evident during elections, has become more pronounced in recent years, exerting paralysing effects on European democracies and political life at the local and regional levels.

5. Similarly, on electoral matters, despite important efforts made by national authorities to ensure compliance with electoral standards, the Congress continues to highlight the relevance of the previously identified recurring issues regarding the inaccuracy of voters' lists, the misuse of administrative resources and official positions, the politicisation of the electoral administration, the low public confidence in electoral processes and the breaches to the principle of equal level playing field for all candidates.

6. At the same time, the Congress identified over the past few years emerging trends that increasingly impact local and regional elections, namely the deterioration of campaigning environments and the rise of foreign interference, while noting with satisfaction the overall progress made to improve the inclusivity of local and regional electoral processes in Europe.

7. Therefore, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe:

a. invites the Monitoring Committee to continue preparing a review of recurring issues approximately every three years, based on assessments from Congress monitoring and election observation missions conducted during that period;

b. entrusts the Monitoring Committee with the task of expanding and intensifying its activities in the field of local and regional elections, in particular on election observation missions, post-electoral dialogue and fact-finding missions;

c. invites country rapporteurs to continue focusing on recurring issues when monitoring the implementation of the Charter, conducting election observation missions, and performing mid-term reviews of the Charter's implementation;

d. urges all relevant Congress bodies to further integrate the recurring issues into their activities, develop effective tools and policies to assist member States in addressing these challenges, and promote the dissemination of relevant good practices.