

The Bureau of the Congress

To all members of the Congress

Meeting of the Bureau of the Congress
Thursday 26 November 2020

Remote meeting

Summary of decisions CG-BUR(2020)35-DEC¹
07 December 2020

The Bureau of the Congress,

meeting via videoconference on 26 November 2020 with Anders KNAPE, President of the Congress, in the chair, considered the following items:

- **draft agenda:** adopted the agenda [CG-BUR(2020)35-OJprov].
- **elections:**
 - was informed by the President of the Congress of the smooth conduct of the remote elections of two vice-presidents of the Chamber of Local Authorities and of the Secretary General of the Congress, which were held from 17 November to 18 November under the supervision of the Council of Europe's Directorate of Information Technology and in full respect of international electoral and data protection standards;
 - congratulated the two new Vice-Presidents of the Chamber of Local Authorities: Kirstine BILLE and Konstantinos KOUKAS on their election and Andreas KIEFER on his re-election as Secretary General of the Congress [\[News\]](#) - [\[CG-BUR\(2020\)35-INF52\]](#).
- **decisions taken by the Bureau: remote meeting (28 September 2020)** took note of the decisions of the remote Bureau meeting of 28 September which had been adopted by written procedure on 20 October 2020. [\[CG-BUR\(2020\)34-DEC\]](#).
- **communication by the President of the Congress:**
 - took note of the political activities of the President (22.09.2020-19.11.2020) [\[CG-BUR\(2020\)35-INF50\]](#);
 - was informed that letters of condolence and support had been sent to the heads of the Turkish and Greek delegations following the earthquake which struck the region of Izmir and the island of Samos [\[News 31.10.2020\]](#);
 - was informed, following the participation of the President of the Congress in the 130th Session of the Committee of Ministers, that a contribution of the Congress had been sent to the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the member states on the role of local and regional authorities in fighting a pandemic and underlining the need for more multilateralism and more multi-level governance;
 - was informed that the Athens Declaration resulting from the session would serve as a guide for the Council of Europe and the Congress's priorities in the coming years, as well as a basis for the discussion at the meeting of the members of the Congress on 7 December 2020 on COVID-19 and the role and responsibilities of local and regional authorities.

¹ Adopted by the Bureau of the Congress on 14 December 2020 by written procedure (e-mail).

- **communication by Secretary General of the Congress:**
took note of the missions and meetings of the Acting Secretary General of the Congress (22.09.2020-19.11.2020) [[CG-BUR\(2020\)35-INF51](#)];
- **budget of the Congress:** was informed by the Director of the Congress of the use of the 2020 budget appropriations [[CG-BUR\(2020\)35-INF53](#)] as at 16 November 2020;
 - was informed that, following the adoption of the Committee of Ministers CM/Res(2020)11, 135,000 euros from the 2020 budget would be carried forward to the 2021 budget in order to organise two monitoring visits and grant an extra day to the Congress' March 2021 Session;
 - and that 900 000 euros of unspent appropriations in the 2020 Ordinary budget was transferred to the special investment account for the implementation of the Digital Strategy of the Organisation
 - took note that the 2021 budget allocated to the Congress remained unchanged.
- **national delegations** (rapporteurs: Harald SONDEREGGER, Austria (R, EPP/CCE), and Barbara TOCE, Italy (L, SOC/G/PD)):
 - approved the proposed changes to the composition of the national delegations of Germany, United Kingdom, the Republic of Moldova, the Netherlands and the Russian Federation concerning the current mandate ending in March 2021; [[CG-BUR\(2020\)35-33](#)] and instructed the secretariat to inform the national authorities and delegations concerned;
 - approved the new delegations of Latvia, Liechtenstein, Malta and North Macedonia for the 2021-2026 mandate [[CG-BUR\(2020\)35-34](#)].
- **reflection on the Code of Conduct of Congress members:**
 - took note of the reflection document [[CG-BUR\(2020\)35-INF66](#)] and the timeline document [[CG-BUR\(2020\)35-INF67](#)];
 - took note of the proposed changes to the Rules and Procedures and the oral contributions from Bureau members and participants;
 - agreed this is a welcome initiative to further strengthen and clarify the provisions on ethical behaviour and introduce a comprehensive Code of Conduct of Congress members according to Art 14.c of the Congress Charter;
 - invited Bureau members and participants to submit written comments by 10 December 2020;
 - entrusted the rapporteurs with preparing a preliminary draft resolution and draft report for approval by the Bureau via written procedure before 31 December 2020;
 - agreed to convene a Statutory Forum on 12 February 2021, before the Bureau meeting of the same day, to adopt the draft resolution before the start of the new Congress mandate 2021-2026;
 - entrusted the Secretary General with ensuring the information of members as laid out in the Congress Charter.
- **Preparation of Congress priorities 2021-2026** : took note of the reflection document [[CG-BUR\(2020\)35-INF63](#)], and invited the rapporteurs to submit a preliminary draft resolution on the priorities including the findings of the Congress event on 7 December 2020 for approval by the Bureau on 12 February 2021 and discussion and adoption by the Congress in the renewal session.
- **Co-operation activities:**
 - took note of the comprehensive information document [[CG-BUR\(2020\)35-INF54](#)] and invited the secretariat to continue implementing these activities funded by extra-budgetary resources as a complement to the statutory work performed by the committees;
 - was informed, through the document [[Voluntary contributions](#) 2019] of data and statistics on extra-budgetary resources of the Council of Europe in 2019.
- **Statutory Forum and meeting of Congress members** (Remote, 7 December 2020):
 - approved inclusion of the Human Rights Handbook vol. II on the agenda of the Statutory Forum, despite a shorter deadline than provided in the Rules and Procedures, in order not to wait until the holding of a further Forum or session;
 - was informed of the participation of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and ministers representing the outgoing Greek and current German presidencies of the Committee of Ministers in the Congress' online event COVID-19: Local and regional authorities at the frontline to be held on the afternoon of 7 December. [[CG-BUR\(2020\)35-INF65](#)].

- **40th Session of the Congress** (Strasbourg, 23-26 March 2021):
- entrusted the President of the Congress and presidents of the chambers with drawing up a series of proposals and options for the first session of 2021 and the renewal of national delegations in the case of impossibility of holding an in-person session in March 2021 due to the sanitary conditions;
 - were informed of the launching of a call for youth delegates from 10 member states (Austria, Bulgaria, France, Georgia, Hungary, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco and the Slovak Republic) for 2021, as a follow-up to the decision of the Bureau at its last meeting, with a deadline of 30 December.
- **activities of the committees:**
- took note of the activity reports by the chairpersons of the committees;
 - approved the following terms of reference for activities contained in document [\[CG-BUR\(2020\)35-35\]](#):
 - the Monitoring and Governance committees' joint report on "Ensuring the respect of the European Charter of Local Self-government in Major Crisis Situations", and
 - the Governance Committee's report on "Deliberative democracy at the local and regional level";
 - took note of the presentation on the fact-finding visit to Poland on LGBTI+² conditions. (2-3 November 2020) [\[News\]](#) given by Yoomi RENSTRÖM and Andrew BOFF, co-rapporteurs;
 - took note that a report on the fact-finding mission would be submitted to the Congress and other Council of Europe institutions and that its findings would serve for the preparation of a report on the "role and responsibilities of local authorities in the protection of LGBTI people" to be considered by the Congress at its Spring 2021 session;
 - was informed of the results of the feedback from members on the committee meetings held in September 2020 [\[CG-BUR\(2020\)35-INF61\]](#).
- **local and regional elections:**
- approved the information report [\[CG-BUR\(2020\)35-37\]](#) on the local elections held in Ukraine (25.10.2020) and endorsed its conclusions which will form the basis for continued political dialogue with the Ukrainian authorities in the field of elections and may lead to further activities to address specific issues raised by the report, including in the broader context of the Congress' co-operation with the Venice Commission;
 - took note of the information provided by Stewart DICKSON, Congress Spokesperson on the observation of local and regional elections, concerning the remote observation of these elections;
 - took note of Stewart DICKSON's presentation of the remote observation of the local elections held in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 15.11.2020;
 - took note of the information given by the Secretariat that on 20 December the first local elections since 2008 would take place in Mostar in Bosnia and Herzegovina and that a report on the remote observation of these elections would be proposed for information at the next Bureau meeting on 12 February 2021;
 - took note that all remote election observation missions were carried out with the assistance of an accredited observer on the ground;
 - took into account the [\[Calendar\]](#) of local and regional elections 2020.
- **local and regional democracy:**
- Turkey:*
- took note of the report of the Monitoring Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe [\[Doc. 15171\]](#) "New crackdown on political opposition and civil dissent in Turkey: urgent need to safeguard Council of Europe standards";
 - took note of the presentation by Yoomi RENSTRÖM, Congress co-rapporteur on Turkey, in the online meeting of the PACE Monitoring Committee and confirmed its determination to continue dialogue with the Turkish authorities with a view to the implementation of the recommendations of the Venice Commission and the Congress [\[News 13.11.2020\]](#) - [\[News 01.10.2020\]](#) - [\[News 01.10.2020 PACE\]](#)
 - was informed that the situation of Nurhayat ALTUN, currently in detention, remained unchanged;
 - took note of the exchange of correspondence with Leyla GÜVEN, Co-chair of the Democratic Society Congress (DTK), Marija PEJČINOVIĆ BURIĆ, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, and Anders KNAPE, President of the Congress [\[CG-BUR\(2020\)35-INF55\]](#).
- Nagorno-Karabakh:*
- took note of the exchanges of correspondence concerning Nagorno-Karabakh with the Head of the Azerbaijani delegation, the National Association of City Municipalities of Azerbaijan and the Armenian youth delegates [\[CG-BUR\(2020\)35-INF56\]](#);

² LGBTI+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex is an acronym intended to encompass anyone who is diverse in their sex, sexuality and/or gender.

Famagusta (Cyprus):

- took note of the exchanges of correspondence concerning Famagusta (Cyprus) with the Greek Cypriot President of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities, Mr. Andreas VYRAS, and Mahmut ÖZCINAR, President of the Union of Turkish Municipalities of Cyprus [[CG-BUR\(2020\)35-INF57](#)];

Moldova:

- took note of the declaration by the Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova (CALM) concerning Moldova's proposed capping of local taxes;
- listened to the statements of the co-rapporteurs on Moldova, Gunn Marit HELGESEN and Marc COOLS [[CG-BUR\(2020\)35-36](#)] concerning Moldova fiscal policy in light of Congress Recommendation 436(2019) about the respect of the financial autonomy of local authorities;
- decided to send the file to the Monitoring Committee for follow-up in the context of the road map being drawn up with the Moldovan authorities.

→ **European Local Democracy Week (ELDW)** (12-18 October 2020): took note of the News on the European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) welcoming the importance of dialogue with citizens and the trust established by local authorities in this time of pandemic [[News](#)] and took note of the themes discussed during the ELDW distance coordination meeting with the national coordinators on 9 October 2020 [[Programme](#)].

→ **World Forum for Democracy 2020/2021 – “Can Democracy Save the Environment?”**: took note of the themes discussed at the World Forum for Democracy held from 13 to 18 November 2020 [[DC-154\(2020\)](#)].

→ **Committee of Ministers (CM)**

- **130th Session of the Committee of Ministers (Athens, 4 November 2020)**

- took note of the Athens Declaration [[CM\(2020\)110-final](#)] by the Committee of Ministers Presidency on: “Effectively responding to a public health crisis in full respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law”;
- took note of the letter [[CG-BUR\(2020\)35-INF62](#)] from Congress President A. KNAPE addressed to the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs informing him of the Congress' willingness to contribute to the reflection of Council of Europe member states on "Responding effectively to a health crisis with full respect for democracy, the rule of law and human rights" during the 130th Session of the Committee of Ministers on 4 November 2020 in Athens and took note of the Congress' contribution [[Congress contribution](#)] containing recommendations for dealing with emergency situations.

- **Committee of Ministers presidencies:**

- took note of the activities proposed by the forthcoming presidencies of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe [[CG-BUR\(2020\)35-INF64](#)];
- took note of the stocktaking of the Greek Presidency of the Committee of Ministers (15 May – 18 November 2020) [[CM/Inf\(2020\)22](#)] - [[News – handover](#)]
- took note of the priorities of the German Presidency (18 November 2020–May 2021) [[CM/Inf\(2020\)23](#)]

→ **European Committee of the Regions (CoR)**: took note of the draft agenda and the postponement until 2021 of the meeting of the High-Level Group of the European Committee of the Regions originally planned for 11 December 2020.

→ **meetings of the bureaux and sessions in 2021**: took note of the provisional calendar 2021 [[CG-BUR\(2020\)35-INF58](#)]

→ **timetable of events** : took note of the Congress timetable of events until October 2021 [[CG-BUR\(2020\)35-INF59](#)]

The next meeting of the Bureau of the Congress will be held remotely on Friday 12 February 2021.

Items and documents for information on the meeting agenda:

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| 11. | CG-FORUM(2020)02-OJprov | Draft agenda |
| 20. | Draft agenda | Meeting of High-level Group (11.12.2020) - European Committee of the Regions |

Copy for information:

Secretariat: Director of the Private Office, Miroslav PAPA; Markus ADELSBACH
Secretariat of the Committee of Ministers: Geneviève MAYER; Katherine ANDERSON
Parliamentary Assembly: Secretary General; Private Office of the President; AS/Soc Committee
Directors General
Secretaries of the national delegations and political groups of the Congress
Congress Secretariat
Brussels Office
Permanent Representations to the Council of Europe

List of participants

Members of the Bureau:

Anders KNAPE, Sweden (L, EPP/CCE), President of the Congress
Gunn Marit HELGESEN, Norway (R, EPP/CCE), President of the Chamber of Regions
Xavier CADORET, France (L, SOC/G/PD), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities
Karl-Heinz LAMBERTZ, Belgium (R, SOC/G/PD)
Barbara TOCE, Italy (L, SOC/G/PD)
Harald SONDEREGGER, Austria (R, EPP/CCE)
Liisa ANSALA, Finland (L, ILDG)
Tamar TALIASHVILI, Georgia (R, SOC/G/PD)
John WARMISHAM, United Kingdom (L, SOC/G/PD) excused
Yuliya SVITLYCHINA, Ukraine (R, ILDG) excused
Clemens LAMMERSKITTEN, Germany (L, EPP/CCE)
Anna MAGYAR, Hungary (R, EPP/CCE)
Emin YERITSYAN, Armenia (L, EPP/CCE) excused
Alexander DROZDENKO, Russian Federation (R, EPP/CCE)
Kirstine BILLE, Denmark (L, SOC/G/PD)
Tunç SOYER, Turkey (R, SOC/G/PD) excused
Konstantinos KOUKAS, Greece (L, EPP/CCE)

Past President:

Gudrun MOSLER-TÖRNSTRÖM, Austria (L, SOC/G/PD)

Chairs of Congress political groups:

Bernd VOEHRINGER, Germany (L, EPP/CCE)
Yoomi RENSTRÖM, Sweden (L, SOC/G/PD), Chair *ad interim*
Marc COOLS, Belgium (L, ILDG)
Svitlana BOHATYRCHUK KRYVKO, Ukraine (R, ECR) [*replaced by Andrew BOFF, United Kingdom*]

Chairs of committees:

Leendert VERBEEK, Netherlands (R, SOC/G/PD), Monitoring Committee
Robert-Csongor GRÜMAN, Romania (R, EPP/CCE), Governance Committee
Gabriele NEFF, Germany (L, ILDG), Current Affairs Committee

Statutory partners:

Assembly of European Regions (AER): Christian SPAHR, Secretary General
Council of European Municipalities and Regions: Carol THOMAS, Adviser – Governance and Institutional Relations

Advisors:

Andreas GREITER (advisor to Harald SONDEREGGER)
Knut HJORTH-JOHANSEN (advisor to Gunn Marit HELGESEN)
Laura KAMISLI (advisor to Bernd VOEHRINGER)
Richard KITT (advisor to John WARMISHAM)

Congress secretariat:

Andreas KIEFER, Acting Secretary General of the Congress
Rafael BENITEZ, Director of the Congress
Dolores RÍOS TURÓN, Head of the Table Office and Secretary of the Bureau
Renate ZIKMUND, Executive Secretary of the Chamber of Local Authorities
Dmitri MARCHENKOV, Acting Executive Secretary of the Chamber of Regions
Cécile CHEVALIER-LAIGNEL, Assistant to the Bureau

Sedef CANKOCAK, Secretary of the Current Affairs Committee
Stéphanie POIREL, Secretary of the Monitoring Committee
Saïda THEOPHILE, Head of the Congress Communication Unit
Delphine WEISSHAUPT, National delegations Officer
Imogen HATTENVILLE, Assistant to the Table Office