

Governance Committee

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Restricted

23 November 2023

WORK PLAN 2023 - 2024¹ AND TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE COMMITTEE

Document prepared by the Secretariat

¹ This work plan will be subject to adjustment in the light of the Congress Resolution “Delivering on the Reykjavik summit: revised Congress priorities, working procedures and structures”.

Governance Committee work plan

I. Reports 2023-2024

1. The role of second parliamentary chambers in Europe in enhancing the representation of regions and local authorities (Information report)

Terms of reference approved by Bureau on 5 December 2022

Co-rapporteurs: Benoît PILET, France (L, ILDG) and Doerte LIEBETRUTH, Germany (R, SOC/G/PD)

Adopted by Committee at its meeting on 1 June 2023 (Arnhem, Netherlands)

No fewer than 15 Council of Europe member States have Second Chambers in Parliament. In general, larger countries tend to have Second Chambers. Bicameralism helps to conciliate representation of citizens and of territorial entities. The powerful trend of decentralisation and regionalisation has influenced the composition and election procedures of Second Chambers. However, this general trend towards regionalisation and decentralisation has not always led to changes in the way sub-state entities are represented and participate in state-level decision-making. The key feature of bicameralism is diversity: the existence of different forms of representation and different forms of election. The report will examine possible shortcomings in the representation of territorial interests by the second chambers and propose recommendations to overcome these deficiencies in terms of the mandate, composition and functioning of the second chambers. The report follows up to the Congress' cooperation with the Venice Commission on this matter and its work on bicameralism.

2. Report on circular economy (working title)

Terms of reference approved by Bureau on 3 April 2023

Co-rapporteurs: Ms Linda GILLHAM (L, ILDG); regional co-rapporteur to be appointed

Report in preparation, for submission in Committee at its meeting of June/July 2024

Session: October 2024

This report presents a reflexion on benefits of a circular economy in the local and regional context in order to ensure a human economy that provides sufficiently for all. The fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine have exposed significant weaknesses in the global supply chain. Coupled with the ongoing consequences of 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. The “take-make-waste” linear model used throughout the 20th century causes significant harm to environment and social justice and is no longer viable. The concept of a “circular economy” has emerged as an alternative. A circular economy is a restorative model that decouples economic growth from natural resource use, and emphasises longevity, reuse, and recycling. Local and regional authorities have a crucial role to play in making the ambition of a circular economy a reality.

3. Freshwater resources under stress (working title)

Terms of reference approved by Bureau on 9 June 2023

Co-rapporteurs: Mr Teuvo HATVA (R, ILDG); local co-rapporteur to be appointed

Report in preparation, for submission in Committee at its meeting of June/July 2024

Session: October 2024

Freshwater is a vital resource for European societies, economy and environment. Sustainable use and conservation of aquatic resources in the freshwater environment, including lakes, rivers, groundwater and wetland is an imperative for sustainable development, the eradication of poverty and is indispensable for human development, health and wellbeing. Access to drinking water and sanitation have been recognised by the United Nations as a human right. However, in practice still too many people lack safely managed drinking water and sanitation. Furthermore, freshwater resources and ecosystems are under increasing pressure. Historic draughts threaten supply in water. Overexploitation of available water resources and contamination of freshwater supplies have exacerbated water stress. In a circular economy perspective, sustainable water use and management play an important role in preserving a good quality of groundwater and related ecosystems. Transitioning to a circular economy presents an opportunity to accelerate and scale-up technological advances that support greater efficiency in the sector, and to support achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Local and regional authorities also have responsibilities for emergency water supply planning.

II. Committee meetings

- 26 March 2024 (46th Congress session, Strasbourg)
- June/July 2024 (date and place tbc)
- 15 October 2024 (47th Congress session, Strasbourg)

III. Events in preparation

Congress Sessions:

- 46th Congress session, 26-28 March 2024
- 47th Congress session, 15-17 October 2024

Conference on the role of second parliamentary chambers in Europe in enhancing the representation of regions and local authorities (date and venue tbc)

CAI Plenary meeting:

- 8th Plenary meeting, 7-8 December 2023

IV. Co-operation with other Council of Europe bodies

- European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG)

The Congress maintains its working relations with the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG), created by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to develop recommendations, guidelines and reports on democratic governance, at all levels of government (local, regional and national). The President and the Secretary General of the Congress as well as the Chair of the Governance Committee are regularly invited to exchange views during the CDDG plenaries. Congress representatives may also take part in the working groups set up by the CDDG.

- Committee on artificial intelligence (CAI)

The Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAI) has succeeded to the Ad Hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAHAI) since January 2022. The CAI elaborates a Council of Europe convention on the development, design and application of artificial intelligence systems, in coordination with all sectors of the Organisation. A guidance document, a risk and impact assessment methodology (HUDERIA), will be developed later to complement the future Convention. The Spokesperson on digitalisation and artificial intelligence is invited to contribute to the work of the CAI and to report on its activities to the Governance Committee.

Governance Committee terms of reference²

A. General terms of reference

1. The Governance Committee may examine any matter within its specific terms of reference (see relevant provisions of the Rules of Procedure) and Resolution 309 (2010) on the reform of the Congress: structure and working methods.
2. The Committee shall prepare reports, including a resolution and/or recommendation, for debate in the Congress or its chambers:
 - when stipulated in the Congress's Rules of Procedure, in particular Rule 36 and in the present terms of reference;
 - when stipulated in texts adopted by the Congress;
 - when instructed by the Congress Bureau or the Bureaux of the Chambers.
3. The Committee shall examine the action taken on texts adopted by the Congress or its chambers on the basis of their reports.
4. The Committee may propose activities to the Bureau for advancing local and regional democracy, in accordance with the priorities set by the Congress.
5. The Committee may organise conferences, hearings and other events on matters within its specific terms of reference and which are linked to its work programme, subject to availability of funds.
6. The Committee shall prepare the Congress contribution to other Council of Europe activities that come within its competence.
7. The Committee is entitled to establish and is responsible for developing working relations with the relevant Council of Europe structures and bodies, observers to the Congress and the relevant European and international organisations.
8. The Committee shall maintain close working relations with national associations of local and/or regional authorities in Council of Europe member states, with a view to:
 - collecting information on existing and emerging problems;
 - relaying the committee's recommendations for action at territorial level;
 - contributing to the follow-up to these recommendations.

B. Specific terms of reference

9. The Committee shall consider legal and political issues relating to the effective development of good governance and democracy at local and regional levels.
10. The Committee shall in particular consider:
 - 10.1 - extending and developing the Council of Europe's legal instruments and recommendations in the field of local and regional democracy;
 - 10.2 - issues relating to governance and the functioning of local and regional authorities, such as citizen participation at local and regional level, as well as, in accordance with Resolution 309 (2010), public finance, cross-border and interregional co-operation and e-democracy.
11. The Committee shall follow the activities of and prepare the Congress contribution to the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Local and Regional Government and its follow-up.
12. The Committee shall establish and develop working relations with the relevant Council of Europe structures and bodies, in particular with the Parliamentary Assembly's Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development (AS/Soc) and the relevant subsidiary bodies of the Committee of Ministers, such as the European Committee of Democracy and Governance (CDDG) and its subcommittees.

² Approved by the Bureau of the Congress on 3 December 2010, extract of CG/BUR(19)8