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Co-operation activities of the Congress in member States and neighbouring regions

Situation as at 17 October 2019

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Introduction

1. In 2011, the Bureau of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities adopted a new orientation² for the Congress' activities contributing to the Council of Europe Action Plans, which supports member States and States in neighbouring regions in the implementation of legal and institutional reforms, in line with Council of Europe standards. Co-operation activities aim to provide practical responses to the shortcomings and problems identified by the various monitoring bodies of the Council of Europe, with regards to local democracy, and during monitoring visits on the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-government (ETS No.122). The *Guidelines for co-operation activities*³ further specified the framework and the principles of such co-operation activities, whose importance was reiterated in the *Priorities of the Congress 2017-2020*.

2. The Congress is the benchmark in local and regional democracy, whose expertise and experience are widely recognised. Due to this expertise the Congress is in a position to provide local and regional authorities, and their associations, with the assistance and means to acquire new skills and 'know-how', and to strengthen their institutional capacities. The recognition of the Congress' role has led to a substantial increase in the number of Congress co-operation projects. Since October 2012, the total amount contributed by donors has been € 8 500 000.⁴ The activities are based on political dialogue and the monitoring of the provisions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and complement the statutory activities of the Congress, its chambers and committees. They provide a link between the recommendations and resolutions adopted at the sessions and the situation on the ground.

3. The interventions are undertaken in two main directions. Firstly, the programmes and activities that are implemented **bilaterally** in the framework of the Council of Europe Action Plans for specific member States or within the Council of Europe Policy towards neighbouring regions;⁵ and secondly, those that are implemented **multilaterally** in the framework of specific partnerships, such as the European Union's Eastern Partnership. Moreover, the activities organised within the Council of Europe Policy towards neighbouring regions have been implemented following the creation by the Congress of the status of Partner for Local Democracy in 2014.⁶ Currently, the Congress has projects under implementation in Armenia, Ukraine, Morocco and Tunisia, and has submitted proposals for projects to be implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, and Belarus.

4. Peer exchanges are the main component of the Congress' intervention, for which members of the Congress have a key role to play. Since 2011, 76 local and regional elected representatives from 26 member states have taken part in co-operation projects implemented by the Congress. Where necessary, their contribution and the work of the Congress Secretariat are complemented by members of the Group of Independent Experts on the European Charter of Local Self-Government, and experts from the beneficiary countries or other European countries.

5. This document presents the main results that the Congress has attained in partnership with the beneficiaries, and, in this respect, summarises the main developments made by the Congress within each of the thematic fields highlighted in the Guidelines for co-operation activities, as well as the activities implemented in the context of the Council of Europe Policy towards neighbouring regions.

I. Themes and areas of co-operation

6. All 47 member States of the Council of Europe committed themselves to apply provisions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government (hereinafter "the Charter"), which are complemented by the thematic recommendations of the Congress. In addition to these standards of local and regional democracy, the specific needs of the beneficiaries and the local context are taken into account to adapt the methodology of co-operation activities. They are therefore the outcome of an approach based on dialogue and partnership.

7. This chapter presents thematic co-operation activities along four lines of action: [1] empowering of local and regional authorities by fostering dialogue between central government and local and regional authorities and strengthening their associations; [2] building the capacities of local and regional elected

² Framework document for co-operation activities of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities – Document CG/BUR/2011(21)4): <https://rm.coe.int/168071aeb0>

³ "Improving the impact of Congress recommendations: Guidelines for co-operation activities in Council of Europe member States", CG/BUR/2015(27)31, Bureau of the Congress, 23 March 2015. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/168071a684>

⁴ Details of the contributions per project can be found in the appendix.

⁵ "Report on the implementation of the Council of Europe Policy towards neighbouring regions", CM(2017)27-final, Bureau of Ministers, 19 May 2017. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680712371>

⁶ Resolution 376 (2014) Partner for Local Democracy status. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680719fb5>

representatives as agents of change; [3] making young people aware of the principles of local democracy and engaging them at local level; and [4] learning by doing through involvement in local initiatives to improve governance, including through citizen participation.

8. This chapter also highlights the Congress' co-operation work in the field of human rights, in particular with regard to gender equality, and integration and protection of internal displaced persons and minorities. The Congress has an important benchmarking, awareness-raising and enabling role to play in the implementation of human rights by local and regional authorities.⁷ Hence, it has actively got engaged in applying a human rights perspective so as to complement the statutory work with co-operation activities.

1. Empowerment of local and regional authorities and their associations

9. The following section highlights the Congress' various interventions such as the introduction of an institutionalised consultation mechanism, measures to strengthen associations' institutional and/or administrative capacities, or a political mediation between several associations of local and regional authorities. It gives an overview of the Congress' country-specific examples in **Albania, Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine**; and transnational co-operation between **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus**.

1.1. *Dialogue between local and regional authorities and central government*

10. The right to consultation is one of the cornerstones of the Charter. The integration of this right into member States' legislation and the complexity of its practical implementation are regularly underlined in the monitoring of the application of the Charter. It is a priority for the Congress and new guidelines on consultation mechanisms⁸ were adopted by the Congress during its 35th session.

11. The Congress encourages dialogue between local and regional authorities and central government. Moreover, given the asymmetrical nature of the relationship between national and local level, the Congress defends the role of national associations of local and regional authorities as key partners of both – the central government and the authorities they represent. Therefore, the Congress offers its expertise to stakeholders, including national associations of local and regional authorities, who wish to enhance the exercise of the local and regional authorities' right to be consulted by central government. The consultation process may vary due to the context in different countries; therefore, the Congress does not seek to promote a uniform pattern since the States and their local and regional authorities are better placed to decide on the suitable consultation model.

12. **Albania** represents a good example of the Congress assistance in the process of improving and increasing consultation of local authorities. Following the major reform on administrative and territorial decentralisation and organisation in 2013, the Congress provided legislative assistance, including a long and intense process of political mediation. The Congress intervention led to the incorporation of the right to be consulted into the Organic Law on Local Self-Government, adopted in December 2015 and to the establishment of a Consultative Council of Local and Central Authorities⁹ in January 2017.

13. The Congress' intervention took place in an extremely polarised and tense political context, in which local and regional authorities, represented by partisan associations, were neither in a position to present their concerns to central government nor to identify joint lines of action. To set up a joint platform for dialogue, the Congress has maintained regular dialogue with all stakeholders, including the political parties, since 2012. The representation of local authorities on a pluralistic platform remains a challenge in Albania and it is of utmost importance that national and local authorities ensure the sustainable functioning of the Albanian Consultative Council.

14. In **Armenia**, in line with the activities of the Communities Association of Armenia (CAA) to improve the culture of participation, and following a workshop on consultation mechanisms held in September 2018, meetings with high-level representatives of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure were

⁷ "Resolution 296 (2010) Revised" and "Recommendation 280 (2010) Revised on the Role of local and regional authorities in the implementation of human rights", CG(21)15, Bureau of the Congress, 19 October 2011 available respectively at: <https://rm.coe.int/090000168071907c> and <https://rm.coe.int/1680718e80>

⁸ "Resolution 437 (2018) 35th Session The consultation of local authorities by higher levels of government", RES 437(2018), 8 November 2018, <https://rm.coe.int/16808ecb38>

⁹ Institutionalised consultative body where national associations of local and regional authorities represent all local and regional authorities on a parity basis. Within the framework of this new body, the Albanian associations of local and regional authorities were able to present their proposals on the Law on Local Finances, which were taken into account in the final text which came into force in May 2017. Subsequently, they have discussed about the budgetary stances for 2018.

organised in late 2018 and in 2019 to discuss future steps for the establishment of a consultative mechanism. Particular focus was made on the importance of the Government's involvement and commitment to a regular dialogue with local authorities and their associations, as well as further support to be provided to the Association to realise its potential, using fully the structures and procedures put in place under the previous project.

15. In **Ukraine**, the XV Ukrainian Municipal Forum organised by the Congress and the Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC), held on 18-20 June 2019 in Odesa, Ukraine, gathered together more than 400 mayors to share their knowledge and experiences in building inclusive, open and transparent cities. The Forum, celebrated annually, represents a unique platform for consultation and dialogue between all levels of government and is based on a wide communication among the members of the AUC. The Congress is fostering dialogue across various fields that concern local authorities and their competencies, such as the electoral reform, including enfranchising¹⁰ internally displaced persons (IDPs) at local level, accountability of local elected representatives and administrative supervision. Further support was provided to local authorities and their associations in enhancing their role in the implementation of the Fourth National Action Plan of the OGP 2018-2020 in Ukraine.

16. The Congress will continue to support the process of decentralisation and regular and effective consultation between central and local authorities and their associations through the projects implemented in the member States.

1.2. Strengthening associations of local and regional authorities

17. National associations of local and regional authorities are key partners for the central government, as it is the associations' duty to advocate the interests of local and regional authorities and to hold internal consultations with their members on subjects relevant to local and regional democracy. Thus, strengthening the right of local and regional authorities to be consulted by higher levels of government also requires strengthening the capacities of their associations.

18. The co-operation with the Communities Association of **Armenia** (CAA) highlights the Congress' contribution in this respect. The CAA was supported in establishing its institutional structures and procedures necessary for a functional association, including the introduction of a new culture for internal governance, decision making, communication and policy advocacy. As a result of this "opening", the circle of engagement of the CAA members was broadened during 2019 to involve community councillors, municipal servants and municipal lawyers. Forums of Municipal Councillors and Municipal Servants brought together more than 100 participants for each event, with the aim of creating a platform within the CAA for more targeted advocacy of the interests of these two groups. A meeting of Municipal Lawyers was organised to discuss modalities of co-operation and potentials to draw on their expertise when perusing its policy advocacy objectives.

19. Building on the results of its 2013-2016 project to support and consolidate local democracy in Armenia, and 2014-2019 project on the institutional support to the CAA, as well as following the recommendations of the midterm assessment of the CAA's institutional capacities in 2018, the Congress has launched in July 2019 a new project to strengthen the decentralisation process in the country working together with the CAA. The project aims to support the implementation of a national decentralisation plan, encouraged by constant the dialogue between national and local authorities. Parallely, capacity building activities for local representatives to fight corruption will be started, together with CAA which will act in in order to improve advocacy capabilities of elected representatives.

20. CAA has actively worked on administrative-territorial reform and decentralisation in Armenia through the adoption of policy positions and organising Forums on Local Democracy in Armenia jointly with the Armenian Government. Further steps were taken in 2018 and 2019 to promote an inclusive and sustainable consultation mechanism between the Government, local authorities and their associations.

21. Other objectives of the Congress are to establish close co-operation and lasting relations with the different national associations of local and regional authorities in member States, as well as to provide advocacy support. In **Georgia**, the co-operation with the National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (NALAG) in 2017 led to the drafting of proposals for amendments to the Code of Local Self-Government concerning citizens' participation in local affairs. Similarly, in **Ukraine**, the Congress supported the Association

¹⁰ The Congress rapporteurs called on the Parliament of Ukraine to adopt a relevant legislation to enable IDPs to cast vote in local election which are due in 2020, during a high-level conference in Kyiv. The conference organised in February 2019 in Kyiv brought together national and local stakeholders and international peers, to address the issue of IDPs disfranchisement in local elections. The Conference constituted a platform for local authorities to support equal rights for IDPs.

of Ukrainian Cities (AUC) in the elaboration of comprehensive proposals for amendments to two draft laws, concerning the status of local councillors and State supervision and control over local authorities' activities. Following this support, the Congress enabled local authorities to reach a common position on the amendments, which were then submitted to the Parliament of Ukraine by the AUC. Work on these amendments, which was put on hold due to the presidential and parliamentary elections held on March-April and July 2019 respectively, will be resumed within the dialogue with, and consultation process organised by the new government and the newly elected Parliament.

22. In **Ukraine**, regular meetings are held between representatives of the associations,¹¹ members of the Ukrainian delegation to the Congress, and the beneficiaries of the project being implemented in Ukraine. The Memorandum of Understanding, signed in September 2018, emphasises the Congress and the Association of Ukrainian Cities' (AUC) commitment to enhance institutional capacities and support local elected representatives in their efforts to promote ethical decision-making and more citizen-oriented, inclusive and transparent governance.

23. The baseline assessment of the institutional position and advocacy capacity of the AUC was finalised in April 2019, the conclusions and recommendations of which will serve as a basis for the development of the AUC Strategy on institutional development in line with the needs and expectations of its members and the current context of local self-government reform in Ukraine. Apart from the responses received from 168 members of the AUC to the Baseline assessment questionnaire, it is worth highlighting the commitment of the AUC Management Board. A first strategic planning workshop with the members of the Management Board was held on 19 June 2019, in the margins of the XV Ukrainian Municipal Forum in Odesa, Ukraine, to agree on AUC's mission and way forward. A working group to carry out the future AUC Strategy on behalf of the Management Board was appointed. It held its first meeting jointly with the meeting of the Community of Practice on local self-government in Ukraine on 26-27 September 2019.

24. The AUC has taken steps to increase its advocacy capacity and provide further support to members by lobbying for their needs at national level. Following identification of Ukrainian local authorities' open government successful practices, concrete steps were made for the Association's inclusion in the co-ordination group of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) and subsequent involvement of local authorities in the implementation of the Fourth National Action Plan of the OGP 2018-2020. The consultative process and the dialogue with national authorities has resulted in the preparation of a Road Map for the development of open government and e-governance at local level in Ukraine, which the AUC will submit to the new Cabinet of Ministers. It will call for the Association's formal inclusion in the co-ordination group, along with national authorities and civil society representatives. The dialogue was continued during the global initiative of the Open Gov Week,¹² as part of a collective effort to ensure gender equality at local level and include a gender perspective in open local government practices in Ukraine. It was further followed up and advocated at global level during the 6th OGP Global Summit 2019 in Ottawa, Canada, on 29-31 May, in which a delegation of Ukrainian local authorities and members of the Association of Ukrainian Cities participated. With the support of the Congress, it will continue advocating the inclusion of local authorities in the national plans of the OGP, and promote the participation of Ukrainian municipalities in the OGP Local Engagement Strategy¹³ approved in May 2019. The new strategy will support from 2020 onwards the strategic national-local integration to foster open local government, enhance the OGP Local Programme by making it more inclusive and open to innovation and co-creation, and develop a collaborative platform for peer learning.

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

26. In addition to the country-specific work, the Congress encourages exchanges between the associations of different countries. The associations' intention to strengthen their co-operation was confirmed by the Memorandum of Understanding, signed in June 2017, between the National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (NALAG), the Congress of Local Authorities of Moldova (CALM) and the Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC), under the auspices of the Congress. Furthermore, the Community of Practice on local

¹¹ The Association of Ukrainian Cities, the Association of Village and Settlement Councils of Ukraine, and the Ukrainian Association of District and Regional Councils.

¹² <https://www.opengovweek.org>

¹³ OGP Local Engagement Strategy, approved by the OGP Steering Committee on 29 May 2019, available at: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/SC_Local-Strategy-and-Resolution_20190529.pdf

democracy,¹⁴ established in January 2016, which involved the representatives of the national associations of **Armenia, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine**, as well as representatives of **Azerbaijan and Belarus**, has served as an excellent networking and discussion platform to improve the quality of local democracy and build sustainable transnational relations for strengthening local governance in the region. A side event to the 5th Open Government Partnership Global Summit 2018, which was a follow-up to the activities within the “Partnership for Good Governance” programme, allowed for interaction between **Georgian and Ukrainian** local authorities and their associations, who shared good practices and existing challenges in the implementation of open government principles at the local level.¹⁵ A study visit to the World Forum for Democracy 2018 was organised for Georgian and Ukrainian local authorities, as well as a workshop focused on the local level. This visit represented another good opportunity for interaction between peers on gender equality and women’s rights between. As a result, apart from the above-mentioned 50 Ukrainian municipalities that have signed the CEMR Charter, other four Georgian municipalities have done so in September 2019.¹⁶

2. Capacity building of local and regional elected representatives as agents of change

27. Delivering meaningful, successful decentralisation requires ongoing political support from all the relevant stakeholders, both authorities and citizens. It also requires these stakeholders to have a sense of ownership over, and be deeply committed to, local governance in keeping with European principles.

28. Mayors and local councillors are the level of government closest to citizens. Their primary responsibility is to promote the principles of local democracy and the values of their community, while complying with the national legislation and exercising the competences entrusted to them. Furthermore, local and regional elected representatives have a duty to ensure transparency in public action, to adopt appropriate measures for the prevention of corruption and to develop democratic tools for enhancing citizen participation in local affairs.

29. The promotion of the principles of the Charter and supporting the adoption of innovative and participatory approaches, in response to citizens’ wishes and needs, was the rationale behind designing targeted activities for mayors and councillors.

30. The programme “Leaders for Change” served this purpose and facilitated peer-to-peer exchanges as well as the sharing of good practices with Congress members. The programme focused on specific themes such as the roles and responsibilities of elected representatives, communication with citizens, promoting values at local level, and effective and ethical strategic decision-making. The discussions, with the participation of national and international experts, afforded participants an opportunity to identify ways to effectively and practically implement the above-mentioned principles.

31. The programme “Leaders for Change” proved to be successful in **Armenia**¹⁷ and **Ukraine**¹⁸. It has better placed local elected representatives to lead innovative policies and to involve citizens in decision-making processes. Moreover, interaction between participants and Congress members had an added value to facilitate meaningful change in their local communities.¹⁹

32. Likewise, under the programme implemented within the Council of Europe – European Union “Partnership for Good Governance” (PGG), over 60 mayors and representatives of their national associations from **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine** have taken part in thematic activities and peer-to-peer exchanges on the subjects of public ethics, prevention of corruption, transparency and citizen participation. The four country-specific handbooks on transparency and citizen participation²⁰ and the *Management of change: a tool guide for local and regional authorities*²¹ were the practical tools used to support

¹⁴ The Community of practice on local democracy is a network of experts and practitioners in the fields of local governance and ethics, representatives of national associations of local and regional authorities, and civil society.

¹⁵ Workshop ‘Open governance at local level: cities take action’ held on 17 July 2018, in Rustavi, Georgia, organised by the Congress and the NALAG was a side event to the 5th Open Government Partnership Summit as a follow up to the activities within the PGG programme.

¹⁶ The four Georgian municipalities that have signed the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life are: Ozurgeti, Lagodekhi, Rustavi and the self-governing city of Kutaisi.

¹⁷ Within the scheme some twenty mayors took part from 2013 to 2016 in Armenia and helped to create a space for experimenting with citizen participation. The experiences of Armenian elected officials have been compiled into a publication entitled *Toolkit on Citizen Participation* for the attention of their peers, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/16806cf43c>

¹⁸ Over 150 mayors and 220 local councillors have benefitted from the Congress activities since 2014 in Ukraine.

¹⁹ The project’s closing conference was organized in December 2016, where Armenian Mayors acknowledged the significance of the programme “Leaders for change” for their capacity building.

²⁰ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/congress/-/handbooks-on-transparency-and-citizen-participation>

²¹ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/congress/-/management-of-change-a-tool-guide-for-local-and-regional-authorities>

them in developing accountable, effective and transparent institutions.

33. The Congress has acknowledged the role of local and regional authorities to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens. To make local and regional elected representatives more aware of the human rights dimension in carrying out their responsibilities regarding the daily lives of local residents, including minorities and vulnerable groups, is among priorities of the Congress.²²

34. In **Ukraine** peer-to-peer exchanges, with the participation of AUC representatives of the Management Board and its regional branches, have opened a debate on the role of national associations of local authorities in promoting SDG 5 gender equality, at local level specifically.²³ The adoption of the CEMR Charter by 50 Ukrainian municipalities in a year time demonstrates the proactiveness of local authorities to undertake concrete steps for its effective implementation. In March 2019, more than 40 Ukrainian local authorities had the opportunity to observe gender-sensitive policymaking through the open government lens, and to discuss the approaches for accelerating gender equality through increased transparency, participation and accountability.²⁴ This was further built on during the XV Ukrainian Municipal Forum in June 2019, where local authorities agreed on the importance of gender budgeting and gender impact assessments, which should be supported by the collection of sex-disaggregated data and the provision of training courses on gender equality for local authorities and public officials.

35. The Congress has extended its scope of thematic co-operation work by addressing the issues of full enjoyment of civil, political, economic and social rights of IDPs at local level in Ukraine. A conference and a workshop held in February 2019²⁵ enabled Ukrainian peers to exchange on challenges and solutions for ensuring equal opportunities and better inclusion of IDPs; and created a solid ground to enhance their support and advocate, through the AUC, the necessary legislative and policy changes for an effective protection of the rights of IDPs and their integration as fully-fledged citizens in Ukraine. The inputs received from Ukrainian local authorities and the AUC were duly considered during the drafting of the upcoming report and recommendations on “The role of local and regional governments in protecting internally displaced persons (IDPs)”,²⁶ which will be debated during the 37th Congress Session on 29-31 October 2019.

36. The Congress’ peer-to-peer exchange programme helps to disseminate new practices and to forge closer ties between elected representatives within their countries. This *modus operandi* has also led to the creation of various policy-making platforms and opportunities for experimentation. Improved understanding of the principles of local democracy and their rights, as well as the heightened awareness on advantages of co-operation/joint actions have encouraged mayors and local councillors to uphold the interest of local populations and invest more in them.

3. Making young local leaders aware of the principles of local democracy

37. The preamble of the Revised Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life²⁷ states the following:

“Participation in the democratic life of any community is about more than voting or standing for election, although these are important elements. Participation and active citizenship is about having the right, the means, the space and the opportunity and where necessary the support to participate in and influence decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society.”

²² Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities Priorities 2017-2020, I-g, §72, p.11, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/168071b2cb>

²³ Workshop on “Gender equality at local level: challenges and opportunities in Ukraine” held on 21-22 February 2018

²⁴ Round table on “Gender equality and open government for stronger local democracy” organised jointly with the Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC), within the Open Gov Week, on 13-14 March 2019 in Kyiv, Ukraine, gathered together 50 Ukrainian local elected representatives and public officials, as well as representatives of the Parliament and the Government of Ukraine. Gender budgeting, tackling stereotypes and misconceptions, as well as collecting gender-disaggregated data were identified as the main priorities for the realisation of gender equality action plans at local level.

²⁵ Workshop on “Ensuring better inclusion and protection of Internally Displaced Persons in Ukraine” organised jointly with the Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC) on 28 February 2019 in Kyiv, Ukraine, brought together about 30 Ukrainian mayors and local and regional councillors, representatives of the Government of Ukraine and other national stakeholders.

²⁶ Draft Congress report CG37(2019)09prov on “The role of local and regional governments in protecting internally displaced persons (IDPs)”, available at <https://rm.coe.int/168097f950>

²⁷ Adopted by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (10th session – 21 May 2003 – Appendix to Recommendation 128).

38. This is a guiding notion for the Congress to develop youth-oriented co-operation activities, targeted to the young people who are already engaged at local level, who have been elected to the local council for the first time or might run for office in future elections, or who represent civil society or the media. Since 2014, young local leaders from **Armenia**²⁸ and **Ukraine**²⁹ benefited from the Congress's activities.

39. The seminars designed for young local leaders have three main objectives: [1] to make young people aware of the principles of local and regional democracy; [2] to enhance their capacity to develop and implement initiatives involving both citizens and local authorities; and [3] to give them the desire and the means to participate in local and/or regional elections.

40. In **Ukraine**, where the authorities stressed the need for renewal of the political class, the Congress worked along several lines of action. In addition to the awareness raising seminars, the Congress enabled young Ukrainian leaders to participate in study visits organised alongside the World Forum of Democracy.³⁰ These study visits to Strasbourg are a good platform to meet and talk with elected representatives, journalists and activists from other countries as well as to learn good practices from French and German local authorities. An assessment of the impact of the Congress' youth activities in Ukraine has shown that young Ukrainian local leaders' meetings with other young people and Congress members have inspired them and there is evidence of initiatives being implemented by one in five young local leaders.

41. In April 2019, the Congress organised a training of trainers (ToT) on local democracy and human rights to raise awareness of local and regional democracy among youth and to promote the active participation of young people in civic life to ensuring social cohesion and anchoring democratic principles based on the respect of human rights at local level. The creation of a pool of educators was the first of a series of activities targeting young people, in particular those living in the conflict-affected areas of eastern Ukraine. 25 trainers from all regions of Ukraine enhanced their capacities to carry out educational activities on local democracy and human rights.

42. The Congress work in the field encouraged the creation of informal network of peers, based on which future co-operation activities were designed with a view to respond to the needs of young local leaders from Ukraine, as well as from other beneficiary countries.

4. Local pilot initiatives: learning by doing

43. Local democracy, which is crucial for the functioning of a democratic society, cannot prosper unless local and regional elected authorities are required to act with integrity and to set an example. It is vital that local and regional authorities respond to citizens' needs and expectations quickly in a transparent, ethical and accountable manner and at the same time encourage greater citizen participation based on regular and open exchanges.

44. The implementation of local pilot initiatives is a way of "learning by doing". The Congress offers selected local authorities operational and tailor-made support and expertise. Its activities enabled the mayors and their local administrations to put new skills in practice, using the tools, methodologies and examples of good practice exchanged. Consultative councils, forums and opinion-polling mechanisms are just a few examples of good practice that have resulted from local initiatives.

45. In **Armenia**, four towns were selected in 2015, at the end of the "Leaders for Change" programme, to explore citizen participation in areas such as local development, infrastructure projects and budgetary planning. The idea was also to implement new provisions of the organic law adopted in 2013 following the ratification of the Additional Protocol to the Charter of Local Self-Government (CETS No. 207), and to embrace new processes for citizen participation in decision-making.

46. A similar approach was employed in **Ukraine**, where the launching of a call for projects resulted in the selection of five municipalities in 2017.³¹ A number of local policies and mechanisms, which improved dialogue and strengthened co-operation between local authorities and citizens, were introduced in these five municipalities. These policies represent a concrete and highly visible means to demonstrate the determination of local authorities to lead the change through accountable, transparent and fully democratic governance, committed to the community. The selected municipalities have benefited from peer reviews, expert support and funding in order to adopt a more transparent and participatory mode of governance, and to promote a

²⁸ Two seminars held on European principles of local democracy for young local leaders gathered around 50 Armenian participants.

²⁹ Nearly 300 young Ukrainians have taken part in activities proposed by the Congress since 2014.

³⁰ Approximately 60 young Ukrainian leaders have participated since 2014.

³¹ Detailed information on the local initiatives is available at: <https://rm.coe.int/brief-on-local-initiatives-eng/168072fb11>

gender perspective in their public policies. Finally, an important bridge of trust was built between the government and its constituencies, enhancing both the quantity and quality of citizen engagement in local decision-making.

47. In **Ukraine**, the project “Strengthening democracy and building trust at local level in Ukraine” launch in mid-October 2019 a call for local initiatives. This scheme will support selected pilot authorities in planning and implementing sustainable and replicable ethical, innovative and inclusive policies and practices in their municipalities with the larger aim to increase trust in local political actors and institutions among citizens. Expert support will be provided to Ukrainian local authorities on three main topics: strengthening ethical, transparent and participatory decision-making; fostering the engagement of under-represented groups (in particular Roma, other ethnic minorities and IDPs) in local affairs; and promoting a gender perspective in local political action and equal opportunities for women and men to participate in local political life.

48. Furthermore, under the PGG programme, the Congress has enabled 12 municipalities (three per country, in **Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine**) to devise procedures and adopt mechanisms for more effective and integrated governance, and greater citizen participation.³² These initiatives were led by mayors determined to deliver meaningful change in their municipalities, who, through an inclusive approach involving citizens, delivered a better quality of local democracy and of public services for their communities. The fact that some tools are now being promoted at national level, with the opportunity to be replicated in other municipalities, highlights their success towards the establishment of a professional, depoliticised, accountable and ethical public administration. In addition, their results were disseminated to mayors in other countries by means of a regional conference in December 2017, which favoured the sustainability of the reforms made and has encouraged others to replicate and generate more efficient, accountable and transparent policy-making in their own municipalities.

II. Co-operation activities as part of the Council of Europe’s policy towards neighbouring countries

49. The co-operation programme “South-Med Partnership” was designed to strengthen local and regional governance in the southern Mediterranean countries, in particular Morocco and Tunisia.³³ In the light of the programme, the Congress Spokesperson and three substitute Spokespersons on the South-Med Partnership were appointed by the Bureau in December 2016 and in February 2017; in January 2019, the Bureau renewed the mandate and appointed two Congress Spokespersons, Piero FASSINO (Italy, L, SOC) and Constance DE PELICHY (France, L, EPP/CCE).

50. The “Partner for Local Democracy”³⁴ status introduced by the Congress in 2014 further enables delegations from the beneficiary countries to participate in the work of the Congress without voting rights. It is a tool to strengthen political dialogue, decentralised co-operation and experience sharing. In April 2019, the Kingdom of Morocco was granted the status of “Partner for local democracy” by the Congress.³⁵ This makes Morocco the first country to enjoy this status, which offers the Council of Europe’s neighbouring countries an ideal platform for dialogue and institutional contacts with their European counterparts. A Memorandum of Understanding on the granting of the status aimed at reaffirming the mutual commitment to cooperation was signed. On this occasion, the Congress President and Vice-Presidents had bilateral meetings with the Moroccan delegation to the Congress and representatives of the Moroccan Government accompanying the delegation. In May 2019, Tunisia submitted a request for the status of Partner of Local Democracy. This request was approved by the Bureau of the Congress at its meeting in Brussels, Belgium, on 28 June 2019 and will be examined, for adoption, at the 37th session of the Congress on 29 October 2019 in Strasbourg.

³² A brief of the local initiatives scheme can be consulted at: <https://rm.coe.int/168074c39a>

³³ Following the Congress Secretariat’s visits to Rabat and Tunis in November 2016 the programme was adopted by the Congress Bureau on 10 February 2017. For further information, see document CG32(2017)26 “Congress South-Med Partnership”, submitted to members of the Congress on 16 March 2017 for information, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/16806fe484>

³⁴ Resolution 376 (2014) Partner for Local Democracy status, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680719fb5>

³⁵ On 30 May 2018 the Ministry of the Interior of Morocco, and three associations of local and regional authorities – the Association of the Regions of Morocco (ARM), the Moroccan Association of Presidents of Municipal Councils (AMPCC) and the Moroccan Association of Prefectural and Provincial Councils (AMPCCP) – applied for the status of Partner for Local Democracy of the Congress.

51. Within the programme, the Congress has provided legislative assistance as well as implemented various activities to develop the capacities of local elected authorities and their associations. The activities mainly focused on regionalisation and decentralisation reforms and the development of participatory democracy. To accelerate the progress of the programme, a number of key documents on European principles and standards in the field of local democracy³⁶ have been produced in Arabic.

52. In **Morocco**, the Congress helped to elaborate the Law on Advanced Regionalisation, adopted in May 2015, which paved the way for local and regional elections in September 2015. To build capacities and raise awareness on the principles of decentralisation, a study on the skills and training resources of elected representatives in Morocco was produced and a parliamentary colloquium on "Regionalisation in Morocco: opportunities and challenges for consolidating decentralised governance" was organised with the Moroccan Parliament in November 2017. Furthermore, a conference on "Building an inclusive community: integrating migrants, fighting violent extremism, involving citizens" was co-organised with the City of Rabat also in November 2017. The conference brought together elected representatives and administrative officials from Moroccan towns and cities, as well as their European counterparts who shared their experiences.

53. In **Tunisia**, the Congress has supported national authorities in the creation of the legal framework for local self-government since 2014. The Congress was involved in drafting the chapter on "local democracy" of Tunisia's new Constitution, adopted in January 2014. The Congress has also contributed to the discussion on Tunisia's draft legislation on local elections, through comparative research on the right to vote of members of the armed forces, in December 2016; the enactment of this legislation in January 2017 prepared the ground for Tunisia's first-ever local elections on 6 May 2018. Furthermore, in July 2017, the Congress commented on four aspects (competences, local goods and services, finances and control) of the draft Code of local authorities, which was later discussed with the members of the Assembly of People's Representatives in September 2017 and adopted in April 2018. The Congress has also prepared eight implementation decrees of the Code on the statute and organisation of elected councils.

54. In terms of capacity building, the Congress organised a training of trainers of the Decentralisation Training and Support Centre (CFAD) on political mediation, in the perspective of the conflicts that could emerge following the first municipal elections of 6 May 2018. Training in project management was offered to the Secretariat of the National Federation of Tunisian Towns (FNVT). The Congress Vice-President contributed to the first General Assembly of the FNVT in December 2018. As regards the promotion of gender equality, a conference on "Women in local politics",³⁷ in September 2017, facilitated an exchange of views and experiences on national and international legal frameworks, the challenges of implementing legislative safeguards and the role of different stakeholders in strengthening women's participation in local affairs. This event was followed by exchanges between European and Tunisian women local elected representatives, organised in Tunis in November 2018 and in April 2019, the latter in the format of a "Café of women elected representatives" during the Tunis Forum on Gender Equality.

Conclusion

55. Through its co-operation activities, the Congress contributes to promoting local and regional democracy in the beneficiary countries and encourages the implementation of the principles of the Charter and the recommendations and resolutions adopted by the Congress. Furthermore, the proximity to field work opens new avenues to explore and feeds into the Congress' work and thematic debates.

56. The operational component of the Congress' action is a demand-driven response and it provides local and regional authorities, their associations, and young people engaged at local level with a platform where they can express their aspirations, needs and concerns, and share their experiences and innovative practices with Congress members and with each other. This approach creates a network of players who are committed to improve the quality of local and regional democracy across Europe, as well as in the Council of Europe's neighbouring regions.

57. The Congress' interventions in the field are vital for strengthening local democracy. New projects in **Armenia** and Southern Mediterranean countries – **Morocco** and **Tunisia** – were launched in 2019.³⁸ Furthermore, the Congress Secretariat developed proposals for new bilateral projects in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** with a specific focus about the City of Mostar, in the **Republic of Moldova**, **Belarus** and in

³⁶ European Charter of Local Self-Government; the revised European Charter for the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life; and the European Code of Conduct for the political integrity of local and regional elected representatives.

³⁷ Conference organised jointly by the Tunisian Ministry of Women, Family Affairs and Childhood and Ministry of Local Affairs and the Environment and the Council of Europe's Directorate General of Democracy in Tunis on 26-27 September 2017.

³⁸ More information about upcoming projects can be found in the Appendix, section I-B and III-A.

Georgia (where the Congress is currently negotiating a project to strengthen democratic governance through civil participation in decision-making and human rights protection at local level). The projects are focused on cross-cutting themes related to governance and local democracy, such as the fight against corruption, the promotion of human rights at local level and gender equality, among others.

58. The Congress co-operation activities also contribute to the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as part of the wider Council of Europe contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – in particular to the implementation of 5 (Gender equality), 10 (Reduced inequalities), 11 (Sustainable cities and communities), 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) and 17 (Partnership for the goals).³⁹ In order to implement successfully the SDGs, the Congress co-operates with institutional partners within the Council of Europe and with a wide range of international actors and networks of local and regional authorities associations, such as the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS), United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), the Assembly of European Regions (AER), the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE), the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) and with European Union institutions such as the European Committee of the Regions. Moreover, the Congress co-operation activities contribute to the EU Eastern Partnership 20 deliverables for 2020, chiefly in the enhancement of the skills of local public administrations and in the prevention of corruption.

³⁹ Congress contribution to the SDGs and the Agenda 2030: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/congress/sdg>

APPENDIX – Summary of projects ⁴⁰

(Situation as of 17 October 2019)

I. Bilateral projects implemented in Council of Europe member countries

A. Projects in progress

ARMENIA [Council of Europe Action Plan for Armenia 2019-2022](#)⁴¹

Project title	Strengthening the Communities Association of Armenia and transparent, participatory local governance in Armenia
Dates	July 2019 – June 2022
Budget	900 000 €
Funding	Federal Government of Switzerland
Objectives	<p>To support implementation of the genuine decentralisation strategy through regular and effective dialogue between local and national authorities, as well as improved transparency and citizen participation at local level;</p> <p>To build capacities of local elected representatives to prevent corruption and increase openness of local government;</p> <p>To improve the advocacy capacities of local elected representatives through the work with Communities Association of Armenia (CAA).</p>
Activities	Joint Programme event with participation of the Armenian Government, donor community, national and local stakeholders and programme implementing partners to mark the official launch of the second phase of the Programme “Improvement of the Local Self-Governance System in Armenia”.

UKRAINE [Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine 2018-2021](#)⁴²

Project title	Strengthening democracy and building trust at local level in Ukraine ⁴³
Dates	July 2018 – December 2020 ⁴⁴
Budget	1 500 000 € (secured funding until December 2019 = 790 000 €)
Funding	Action Plan for Ukraine donors ⁴⁵
Objectives	<p>To implement genuine decentralisation and local self-government reforms through regular and effective consultation mechanisms between local authorities, their associations, and the national authorities;</p> <p>Local elected representatives implement ethical, innovative and inclusive policies and practices in their municipalities.</p>
Main activities	<u>Support to local authorities and their national associations on decentralisation and</u>

⁴⁰ <https://www.coe.int/congress-cooperation>

⁴¹ <https://rm.coe.int/action-plan-armenia-2019-2022-en-web-version/168092014b>

⁴² <https://rm.coe.int/1680794dc5>

⁴³ This project is based on the needs and recommendations voiced by relevant stakeholders and beneficiaries during the implementation of the project ‘Promoting local democracy in Ukraine’ (2015-2017) and builds upon the Congress co-operation activities carried out in Ukraine since 2014.

⁴⁴ A follow-up to this project under the framework of the Action Plan for Ukraine 2018-2021 (approved by the Committee of Ministers on 21 February 2018) was submitted for funding in November 2017 and is still pending.

⁴⁵ Funded by 17 member States: Canada, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey.

for effective contribution to consultations

Participation in the “Day of the Dialogue with the Government”, a forum between Ukrainian central and local authorities organised by the Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC) in Ternopil, Ukraine, on 24 September 2018;

Signature of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Congress and the AUC for the implementation of the project in Kyiv, Ukraine, on 25 September 2018⁴⁶;

Expert support to the AUC to improve the quality of its outputs and advocacy capacity towards legislative amendments concerning the status of local councillors and administrative supervision;

Baseline assessment of the institutional position of the AUC, as well as on needs and expectations of its members in view of the development of a mid-term strategy;

Round table event on prospects on the status of local councillors in Kyiv, Ukraine, on 13- 14 December 2018;

Working session on theory of change and knowledge management of the AUC in Kyiv, Ukraine, on 17- 18 December 2018;

Strategic Planning Workshop with the AUC Management Board in Odesa, Ukraine, on 19 June 2019;

First meeting of the Community of practice on local democracy in Kyiv, Ukraine, on 26 September 2019;

AUC Midterm Strategy Working Group meeting in Kyiv, Ukraine, on 27 September 2019.

Enhancing public ethics, and open local government

Study visit to the 5th Open Government Partnership (OGP) Global Summit in Tbilisi, Georgia, on 16-19 July 2018;

Workshop on “Open Governance at Local Level: Cities Take Action”, side-event to the Summit, co-organised with the National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (NALAG) in Rustavi, Georgia, on 17 July 2018;

Focus group meeting on “Introducing e-governance tools at local level” held in Kyiv, Ukraine, on 12 October 2018;

Round table on “Open Government Partnership: opportunities for networking” in Kyiv, Ukraine, on 14 December 2018;

Round table on “Open Government Partnership: A way forward to enhance local self-governance” in Kyiv, Ukraine, on 29- 30 January 2019;

Study visit to the 6th Open Government Partnership (OGP) Global Summit in Ottawa, Canada, on 28-31 May 2019;

“Day of the Congress” within the XV Ukrainian Municipal Forum, co-organised with the Association of Ukrainian Cities in Odesa, Ukraine, on 19 June 2019: three round tables on: public ethics to address local challenges; open local government – a driver for resilient democratic societies; and gender equality for inclusive local self-government.

Promoting human rights and equal opportunities at the local level

Conference on “Voting rights of Internally Displaced Persons at local level in Ukraine: *Strengthening integration and grassroots democracy* in Kyiv, Ukraine, 27 February 2019;

Workshop on “Ensuring better inclusion and protection of internally displaced people at local level in Ukraine”, in Kyiv, Ukraine, on 28 February 2019;

Workshop “Gender equality at local level: Fostering participation and equal opportunities” in Strasbourg, France on 22 November 2018;

Round table on “Gender equality and open government for stronger local democracy” in Kyiv, Ukraine, on 14-15 March 2019;

Round table on gender equality for inclusive local self-government as part of the “Day of the Congress” within the XV Ukrainian Municipal Forum in Odesa, Ukraine,

⁴⁶ Memorandum of Understanding (English): <http://rm.coe.int/mou-between-the-congress-and-the-auc-eng/16808da1ae>

on 19 June 2019.

Peer exchanges and networking platform

Round table on “Open Government Partnership: opportunities for networking” in Kyiv, Ukraine, on 14 December 2018;

Participation in the European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) event on “Youth participation: good practices,” in Fastiv, Ukraine on 11 October 2018;

Study visit to the World Forum for Democracy 2019 - *Gender equality: Whose battle?*, in Strasbourg, France, on 19-21 November 2018;

Participation in the sixth meeting of the European Committee of the Regions' Task Force on Ukraine in Brussels, Belgium, on 13 February 2019;

Meeting of the Community of Practice on Transparency and Open Government of the United Cities and Local Governments in San Sebastian, Spain, on 19 February 2019;

Participation in the Eastern Partnership Co-ordination Seminar on “A new political framework for Ukrainian local and regional governments” in Kyiv, Ukraine, on 5-6 September 2019.

B. Completed projects

ALBANIA

[Co-operation programme for Albania 2012-2014](https://rm.coe.int/16802ed0b9)⁴⁷

[Co-operation programme for Albania 2015-2017](https://rm.coe.int/16802f95e4)⁴⁸

Project title	Strengthening local and regional government structures and cooperation between local elected representatives in Albania ⁴⁹
<i>Congress Component</i>	<i>To build a sustainable, pluralistic and unified platform of dialogue for local government representatives in Albania</i>
Dates	October 2012 – June 2017
Budget	1 630 473 € (of which 637 018 € for the Congress component)
Funding	Federal Government of Switzerland
Objectives	Strengthening local and regional government structures; Strengthening cooperation between local elected representatives in Albania to ensure effective decentralisation and local self-government, in line with the principles enshrined in the European Charter of Local Self-Government
Main activities	3 regional workshops for 150 local government representatives to contribute to the ongoing legislative process, as regards territorial and administrative reform; 5 round tables between experts and representatives of municipalities on specific issues related to the territorial and administrative reform; Development of a report on the functions of local authorities and their finances, with 49 recommendations; Study on reinforcing the political role of local and regional authorities and their associations in Albania, with 11 guidelines for improved cooperation between Albanian associations for local authorities; 3 workshops on "Mayors, leaders for change"; Study visit by 8 municipal representatives to Switzerland to observe Swiss practices of direct democracy; Pilot initiatives on direct democracy in the municipalities of Tirana and Mallakastra:

⁴⁷ <https://rm.coe.int/16802ed0b9>

⁴⁸ <https://rm.coe.int/16802f95e4>

⁴⁹ Programme jointly implemented with the Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform, a unit of the Directorate General of Democracy of the Council of Europe Secretariat.

15 meetings with 250 citizens, schoolchildren, members of municipal staff and municipal councillors;

Study visit by 5 representatives of local and regional authorities and 1 representative of the Latvian Agency for Implementation of Territorial Reform to observe the functioning of consultation in the country and the role of the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments;

National conference for representatives of newly formed municipalities, organised jointly with the government, CoE, SDC, USAID, UNDP and SIDA, on the challenges following Territorial and Administrative Reform, and the needs to improve local democracy in Albania;

Contribution to the National Strategy on Decentralisation 2015-2020, amendments on the right to be consulted in law 8652/2000, and Organic Law on Local Self-Government;

Establishment of the Local Self-Government and Central Government Consultative Council, based on the draft Decision of the Council of Ministers on the Consultative Council, explanatory memorandum and draft rules of procedures developed;

Consultancy assistance and peer-to-peer approach training for the Consultative Council/Technical Secretariat;

4 regional workshops to inform Albanian mayors of the setting up of the Consultative Council and explain how it works.

Publications and tools Study on the strengthening of the political role of Local and Regional Authorities and their Associations in Albania [[English](#)]⁵⁰.

ARMENIA [Council of Europe Action Plan for Armenia 2015-2018](#)⁵¹

Project title Institutional support to the Communities Association of Armenia (CAA)

Dates November 2014 – June 2019

Budget 1 025 000 €

Funding Federal Government of Switzerland

Objectives To establish the regular participation of local authorities in framing national policies within a sustainable institutional framework and to formalise a consultation mechanism between the CAA and the Armenian government;
To support the CAA in the process of achieving financial sustainability;
To strengthen the capacity of the CAA to improve its image as a recognised political institution and communicate effectively.

Main activities Consolidation of the CAA's decision-making procedures to make them more transparent and democratic: revision of the CAA Charter in 2016 and clear definition of the functions of the governing bodies, new elections in 2017 for the Presidency in 2017, Republican Council (108 members), Board (36 members) and oversight committee, with a gender representation quota;
Regular meetings of the governing bodies and consultations with members (regional seminars and specialised working groups);
Six thematic committees established in 2017 on: Financial, economic, budgetary issues; Legal affairs; Education, culture, sport and youth issues; Sustainable development; Gender, social and healthcare issues; and Rural, mountainous, borderline communities' development and inter-community cooperation;
1st General Assembly for more than 10 years organised in February 2017, with high attendance (400 mayors);
8 meetings of the Republican Council and 3 meetings of the Board in 2017 and 2018;
1 meeting of the Oversight Committee of the CAA in 2017; 9 meetings of the

⁵⁰ <https://rm.coe.int/168071af10>

⁵¹ <https://rm.coe.int/1680471d82>

Standing Committees in 2018;

Adoption of 8 policy papers/recommendations, 9 policy briefs, 3 calls addressed to the Government and 1 call addressed to the new Prime Minister;

Strengthening of the association's capacities to advocate, with input from experts and implementation of trainings;

First Forum on local democracy in Armenia organised in co-operation with the government on Local Self-Government Day (10 November 2017), themes: transfer of competencies to local level and financial decentralisation;

Consultative meeting between the Republican Council of the CAA and the Government of Armenia led by the President of Armenia (8-9 December 2017): an exchange between the mayors and the Government on mutual expectations vis-à-vis the local government reform agenda;

Second grant to the CAA being implemented from March 2018 with four staff members employed as a part of the development of institutional capacities of the CAA;

Study visit to the Serbian National Association of Local Authorities and exchanges with two municipalities organised in July 2018 for the CAA Heads of thematic committees and the CAA leadership and staff;

Mid-term assessment finalised in July 2018.

On-the-job coaching for the CAA Secretariat ensured through the engagement of experts during July – December 2018 on communication (13 coaching sessions), advocacy (two coaching sessions), fund raising (nine coaching sessions);

Modernisation of the association's communication tools (visual identity, website, etc.);

Workshop on good governance and citizen participation organised jointly with the CAA and the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development in September 2018 to discuss effective mechanisms at local level;

Workshop on consultation mechanisms between local and national authorities organised in September 2018 to create a framework for institutionalisation of a functional consultation mechanism in Armenia;

Forum of rural communities organised on 5 October 2018 jointly with the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development of Armenia;

Workshop for journalists covering issues of local self-government on 27-28 October 2018;

Six workshops for PR co-ordinators of the CAA member communities organised during October – November 2018;

Restructuring of internal financial procedures; Financial Sustainability Strategy developed; rules of procedure drafted and in the process of adoption;

HR Audit of the CAA Secretariat conducted during October – December 2018;

Second Forum on local democracy organised on 12 November 2018 on the theme "Decentralisation and local economic development";

Forum of Municipal servants and Forum of Municipal councillors organised on 13 and 15 December 2018, respectively;

Publication of the CAA brochure in April 2019

ARMENIA[Council of Europe Action Plan for Armenia 2012-2014](#)⁵²[Council of Europe Action Plan for Armenia 2015-2018](#)⁵³**Project title** Support for the consolidation of local democracy in Armenia⁵⁴**Congress Component** *Strengthening local elected representatives' leadership***Dates** October 2013 - December 2016⁵⁵**Budget** 1 579 301 € (of which 608 236 € for the Congress component)**Funding** Government of Denmark

Objectives

- To establish a legal framework in line with European principles and standards of local democracy;
- To raise awareness of these principles and standards;
- To strengthen ethical governance and the prevention of corruption;
- To reinforce leadership and governance skills and capacities of local authorities;
- To strengthen the involvement of young people and create mechanisms enabling citizens to participate in decision-making at local level.

Main activities

- Consultation with mayors and councillors on the implementation of Recommendation 351 (2014) on local democracy in Armenia, resulting in a "Call to the government of Armenia", made public in January 2015, by the three associations dealing with local self-government issues;
- 2 series of regional seminars on the participation of citizens in decision-making at local level in Armenia, attended by over 170 Armenian mayors and councillors;
- Leadership programme for a group of Armenian mayors in the form of 6 thematic interactive workshops aimed at supporting them in their role as leaders of change;
- Support programme for the implementation of citizen participation initiatives in 4 Armenian communities, to enable mayors having participated in the leadership programme to put the skills developed into practice - these initiatives were followed up by peer reviews;
- 3 regional workshops for newly elected municipal councillors and councillors of merged communities;
- 2 seminars on European principles of local democracy for young local leaders;
- Closing ceremony for the project to provide the Armenian participants (mayors, councillors and young local leaders) with an opportunity to present and share their experience with their peers, local and international experts, representatives of the Armenian government, associations of local authorities, as well as members of the Congress.

Publications and tools Toolkit "Enhancing Citizen Participation in Armenia" [[English](#)⁵⁶ | [Armenian](#)⁵⁷].⁵² <https://rm.coe.int/16802ed0ba>⁵³ <https://rm.coe.int/1680471d82>⁵⁴ Programme jointly implemented with the Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform, a unit of the Directorate General of Democracy of the Council of Europe Secretariat.⁵⁵ A follow-up to this project was submitted for funding in January 2017 and is still pending.⁵⁶ <https://rm.coe.int/16806cf43c>⁵⁷ <https://rm.coe.int/16806cf43e>

UKRAINE	Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine 2015-2017 ⁵⁸
Project title	Promoting local democracy in Ukraine ⁵⁹
Dates	July 2015 – December 2017 + January – February 2018
Budget	1 498 433 € (2015-2017) + 107 007 € (2018)
Funding	Action Plan for Ukraine donors ⁶⁰
Objectives	<p>To support local elected representatives in the strengthening of their institutional and leadership capacities, to encourage them to be more responsive, be accountable in the exercise of their powers and better involve citizens in their policies;</p> <p>To support the implementation of local self-government reform by strengthening the capacities of local elected representatives to provide better co-ordination, planning and management;</p> <p>To promote active democratic citizenship and support the implementation of local democratic participatory processes, including the observation of local elections.</p>
Main activities	<p>2015-2017:</p> <p>6 "Mayors, leaders for change" workshops, involving over 130 Ukrainian mayors;</p> <p>6 "Councillors: everyday actors of local democracy" workshops, with over 200 participants in total;</p> <p>1 workshop organised specifically for the municipal council of the city of Kyiv (50 participants);</p> <p>3 round tables organised in partnership with the Ukrainian delegation to the Congress and the Association of Ukrainian Cities;</p> <p>1 round table on good governance in metropolitan areas;</p> <p>7 seminars for over 200 young local leaders;</p> <p>3 study visits organised for 50 young local leaders, at the occasion of the World Forum for Democracy;</p> <p>The first Forum for local democracy in Ukraine, with the participation of around 100 mayors, municipal councillors and young local leaders;</p> <p>5 municipalities selected to implement local initiatives for more transparent and participatory governance (involving financial support, input from specialist experts, exchanges between peers and a study visit by mayors during the 33rd session of the Congress).</p> <p>Discussion paper on gender equality in local political life in Ukraine;</p> <p>Meeting and debate with representatives of the Ukrainian Parliament on the law on the status of municipal councillors;</p> <p>Seminar for exchange of good practices following the implementation of initiatives supported by the Congress, in Kyiv, Ukraine (around 75 participants).</p> <p>2018:</p> <p>External assessment of the results of the project "Promoting local democracy in Ukraine";</p> <p>1 workshop on the challenges and opportunities for gender equality at the local level in Ukraine, jointly organised with the Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC).</p>

⁵⁸ <https://rm.coe.int/16802f600e>

⁵⁹ This project is a follow-up to activities implemented within the framework of the "Immediate measures package for Ukraine" in 2014 (275 969 €) and the project entitled "Strengthening the capacity of local authorities in Ukraine" in 2015, funded by Denmark (184 462 €).

⁶⁰ Funded by 20 member states: Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Czech Republic, Romania, United Kingdom, Sweden, Switzerland, and Turkey.

Publications and tools *Metropolitan Governance in Europe and in Ukraine: Legitimacy, Ownership and Efficiency* [[English](#)⁶¹ | [Ukrainian](#)⁶²];
 “Study on the Ukrainian Law on the Status of Local Councillors” [[English](#)⁶³ | [Ukrainian](#)⁶⁴];
 Study on “Powers and Duties of Local Councillors in the Framework of Decentralisation of Power in Ukraine” [[English](#)⁶⁵];
 Discussion paper on “Gender Equality in Local Political Life and the Gender Perspective in Local Policies in Ukraine” [[English](#)⁶⁶ | [Ukrainian](#)⁶⁷];
 Study on “Voting Rights of Internally Displaced Persons at Local Level in Ukraine” [[English](#)⁶⁸] | [[Ukrainian](#)⁶⁹].

UKRAINE

Project title Strengthening the capacity of local authorities in Ukraine⁷⁰

Congress Component *Congress post-monitoring dialogue and training of young political leaders*

Dates April 2014 – May 2015

Budget 600 000 € (of which 120 000 € for the Congress component)

Funding Government of Denmark

Objectives Improving the quality of local self-governance;
 Developing national legal framework in line with the principles of the European Charter for Local self-government and standards on local democracy

Main activities 3 regional seminars in Chernihiv, Odessa or Dnipro for around 75 young local leaders to exchange on the European standards and of the principles of local democracy;
 2 thematic round tables, in Kyiv, on constitutional revision and transfer of competencies and on constitutional reform and the financial independence of local authorities, organised with the relevant ministry around the main Congress recommendations.

UKRAINE

Project title Immediate Measures Package for Ukraine

Congress Component *Local Democracy*

Dates April 2014 – December 2014

Budget 2 500 000 € (of which 295 288 € for the Congress component)

Funding Pool of donors

Objectives Implementation of democratic reforms in line with the principles and standards of

⁶¹ <https://rm.coe.int/metropolitan-governance-in-eur-and-ukr-eng/168078549e>

⁶² <https://rm.coe.int/metropolitan-governance-ukr-ukr-web/1680785e45>

⁶³ <https://rm.coe.int/2018-01-24-study-law-on-local-councillors-eng/1680783ffd>

⁶⁴ <https://rm.coe.int/2018-01-25-study-law-on-local-councillors-ukr/1680784064>

⁶⁵ <https://rm.coe.int/study-on-powers-and-duties-of-local-councillors-in-the-framework-of-de/168078fafa>

⁶⁶ <https://rm.coe.int/gender-equality-in-local-political-life-and-the-gender-perspective-in-/16807bebde>

⁶⁷ <https://rm.coe.int/16808a2a51>

⁶⁸ <https://rm.coe.int/voting-rights-of-idps-at-local-level-in-ukraine-strengthening-democrac/1680933f7e>

⁶⁹ <https://rm.coe.int/ukr-voting-rights-of-idps-at-local-level-in-ukraine-strengthening-demo/1680933f7f>

⁷⁰ Programme jointly implemented with the Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform, a unit of the Directorate General of Democracy of the Council of Europe Secretariat.

local and regional democracy;
Improvement of local political governance.

Main activities	<p>Observation of the pre-term municipal elections on 25 May 2014; High level visit to Kyiv and Odessa; 1 thematic roundtable as part of the Congress post-monitoring dialogue with Ukrainian national authorities; 1 regional seminar for around 25 young local leaders on European standards of local and regional democracy; 1 study visit for 20 young local leaders in Strasbourg, in parallel to the 2014 World Forum for democracy; 1 workshop “Mayors, leaders for change”, for 30 mayors who have been newly elected in May 2014.</p>
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II. Multilateral projects implemented in the framework of specific partnerships

[Partnership for good governance between the European Union and the Council of Europe for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus \(2015-2017\)](#)⁷¹

Project title	Thematic programme “Strengthening institutional frameworks for local governance” ⁷²
Dates	January 2015 – December 2017
Budget	1 352 089 €
Funding	European Union
Objectives	<p>To support the ongoing process of local self-government reform in the beneficiary countries;</p> <p>To promote the adoption of ethical standards and practices by local elected representatives in the region;</p> <p>To support the alignment of local administrations’ financial and human resources management with European standards, led in co-operation with the Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform.</p>
Main activities	<p>3 meetings of the Steering Committee of the thematic programme;</p> <p>Introductory conference in Tbilisi, Georgia, with around 100 participants from the 6 Eastern Partnership countries (local elected representatives, members of the Congress, experts, representatives of central authorities, representatives of national associations of local and regional authorities and civil society);</p> <p>Study on the roles and responsibilities of mayors and local councillors in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus;</p> <p>7 national “Mayors, Leaders for change” workshops for 14 Armenian, 9 Georgian, 20 Moldovan and 19 Ukrainian mayors, on defining and leading successful public policies based on ethical values and standards;</p> <p>Regional seminar on “Local public ethics: from vision to action”, Kyiv, Ukraine, with around 80 participants (local elected representatives, members of the Congress, experts, representatives of central authorities, representatives of national associations of local and regional authorities and civil society);</p> <p>Regional seminar on “Citizen participation: an essential tool in local democracy”, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova, with around 50 participants (local elected representatives, members of the Congress, experts, representatives of central authorities, representatives of national associations of local and regional authorities</p>

⁷¹ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/congress/european-union-council-of-europe-partnership-for-good-governance>

⁷² Thematic programme jointly implemented with the Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform, a unit of the Directorate General of Democracy of the Council of Europe Secretariat.

and civil society);

5 meetings of the Community of practice on local democracy in the Eastern Partnership countries in Strasbourg, France, Kyiv, Ukraine, and Tbilisi, Georgia;

12 municipalities (in Armenia, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) selected (benefiting from support from their peers and input from experts) to implement local initiatives for more efficient and accountable governance;

Conference on local governance in Georgia and the effectiveness of the institutionalised mechanisms for citizen participation, for around 65 participants (representatives of central and local authorities, officials, international organisations, NALAG, members of the Congress and experts);

Study on institutionalised citizen participation: assessment of existing mechanisms in Georgia, developed on the basis of working groups with experts and providing recommendations to amend the Code of Local Self-Government in Georgia;

Signature of a Memorandum of Understanding between the National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia, the Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova, and the Association of Ukrainian Cities;

Further exchanges between mayors and their respective national associations were organised during the 5th Open Government Summit in Tbilisi, Georgia from 16 to 19 July 2018;

A workshop 'Open Governance at Local Level: Cities Take Action' was organised as a side event to the OGP Summit on 17 July 2018, allowing for the exchange of practices and experiences between peers from Georgia and Ukraine;

Meeting and peer reviews on "Sharing the vision: local democracy and ethical governance in practice" for 3 Moldovan mayors implementing local initiatives and 7 mayors from the municipalities of the Stefan Voda district;

Handbook on 'Transparency and citizen participation in Ukraine' is used as a basis for the development of new activities within the Congress project 'Strengthening democracy and building trust at local level in Ukraine', the e-learning tool and training curricula for local councillors;

Management of change: a tool guide for local and regional authorities available in English, Armenian, Georgian, Romanian and Ukrainian;

Country-specific Handbooks on transparency and citizen participation for local and regional representatives in Armenia, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine (available in English and in their respective national languages);

Meeting on "Local initiatives: Managing and communicating the change", Tbilisi, Georgia, with around 30 participants (mayors and project co-ordinators for the local initiatives on ethical governance and transparency, representatives of national associations of local and regional authorities, and experts);

Regional conference for exchange of good practices following the implementation of initiatives supported by the Congress, Tbilisi, Georgia, with around 100 participants (local elected representatives, experts, representatives of central authorities, representatives of national associations of local and regional authorities and civil society).

Publications and tools *Roles and responsibilities of mayors and local councillors in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus* [[English](#)⁷³ | [Russian](#)⁷⁴];

Institutionalised citizen participation: assessment of existing mechanisms - Georgia [[English](#)⁷⁵ | [Georgian](#)⁷⁶];

Management of Change: A tool guide for local and regional authorities [[English](#)⁷⁷ |

⁷³ <https://rm.coe.int/168071b235>

⁷⁴ <https://rm.coe.int/168071b345>

⁷⁵ <https://rm.coe.int/geo-institutionalised-citizen-participation-eng/1680784817>

⁷⁶ <https://rm.coe.int/geo-institutionalised-citizen-participation-ka/1680784818>

⁷⁷ <https://rm.coe.int/tool-guide-management-of-change-eng-web-version/16807848d6>

[Armenian](#)⁷⁸ | [Georgian](#)⁷⁹ | [Romanian](#)⁸⁰ | [Ukrainian](#)⁸¹];

Handbook on Transparency and Citizen Participation in Armenia [[English](#)⁸² | [Armenian](#)⁸³];

Handbook on Transparency and Citizen Participation in Georgia [[English](#)⁸⁴ | [Georgian](#)⁸⁵];

Handbook on Transparency and Citizen Participation in the Republic of Moldova [[English](#)⁸⁶ | [Romanian](#)⁸⁷];

Handbook on Transparency and Citizen Participation in Ukraine [[English](#)⁸⁸ | [Ukrainian](#)⁸⁹].

III. Projects implemented in the framework of the Council of Europe's policy towards neighbouring regions

A. Ongoing projects

MOROCCO [Neighbourhood Partnership with Morocco 2018-2021](#)⁹⁰

Project title Strengthening democratic governance at local and regional level in Morocco

Dates April 2019 – December 2021

Budget 624 000 € (secured funding until 30 June 2020: 146 000 €)

Funding Norway

Objectives

- To strengthen the legal framework of Morocco through the implementation of the law on regionalisation and its rightful application by the sub-national authorities;
- To help the national associations of local and regional authorities becoming key players in facilitating decentralised co-operation and the dialogue between the central, regional and local levels of government;
- To enhance the capacities of elected representatives and administration staff for them to assume their new competences and sustained training is provided to support their continuous learning.

Main activities

- Granting of the status of “Partner for local democracy” to the Kingdom of Morocco by the Congress on 2 April 2019. Participation of delegation of Moroccan representatives in the 36th Congress Session;
- Meeting of the Congress President and Vice-Presidents with a Moroccan delegation composed of representative of the DGCL (General Directorate of Local Authorities) of the Moroccan Ministry of the Interior), the Moroccan delegation to the Congress (members of ARM, AMPCC and AMPPP) as well as the Consul General and Vice-Consul of Morocco.

⁷⁸ <https://rm.coe.int/management-of-change-hye-web/1680786ae4>

⁷⁹ <https://rm.coe.int/management-of-change-kat-web/1680785c77>

⁸⁰ <https://rm.coe.int/management-of-change-ron-web/1680786ac6>

⁸¹ <https://rm.coe.int/management-of-change-ukr-web/16807850ef>

⁸² <https://rm.coe.int/handbook-arm-eng/168078a58c>

⁸³ <https://rm.coe.int/handbook-armenia-hye/168078bbe6>

⁸⁴ <https://rm.coe.int/handbook-georgia-eng/1680786b7d>

⁸⁵ <https://rm.coe.int/handbook-georgia-kat/1680793678>

⁸⁶ <https://rm.coe.int/handbook-moldova-eng/168078406b>

⁸⁷ <https://rm.coe.int/handbook-moldova-ron/1680788ff5>

⁸⁸ <https://rm.coe.int/handbook-ukraine-eng/168078406c>

⁸⁹ <https://rm.coe.int/handbook-ukraine-ukr/168078541c>

⁹⁰ <https://rm.coe.int/neighbourhood-partnership-2018-2021-with-morocco/168090801d>

TUNISIA [Neighbourhood Partnership with Tunisia 2018-2021⁹¹](#)

Project title	Promoting local governance in Tunisia
Dates	April 2019 – December 2021
Budget	614 000 € (secured funding until 30 June 2020: 193 000€)
Funding	Norway
Objectives	<p>To support the development of the legal and electoral frameworks allowing for the implementation of decentralisation;</p> <p>To strengthen capacities of the national association of local and regional authorities to ensure its regular participation in framing national policies within a sustainable institutional framework'</p> <p>To reinforce knowledge and leadership capacities of elected representatives while also enhancing confidence and trust in local authorities.</p>
Main activities	<p>One roundtable "Café of women elected representatives" organised during the Tunis Forum on Gender Equality on 24 April 2019 allowing for the exchange of good practices between local elected women from both sides of the Mediterranean;</p> <p>Participation of the Congress Vice-President in a Seminar on the role of the High Instance of Local Finances in the decentralisation process in Tunisia.</p>

B. Completed projects**MOROCCO** [Neighbourhood Partnership with Morocco 2015-2017⁹²](#)

Project title	Strengthening local and regional democracy in Morocco
Dates	January 2016 – December 2017 ⁹³
Budget	196 770 €
Funding	Norway, Estonia, France, Italy, Liechtenstein, Malta, Monaco and Portugal
Objectives	<p>To strengthen the implementation of local and regional democracy in Morocco by enhancing the capacities of local elected representatives and their associations;</p> <p>To promote and raise awareness of European standards of local and regional democracy.</p> <p>To enhance political dialogue between European elected representatives and their counterparts from the South and increasing decentralised co-operation between local and regional authorities on the two sides of the Mediterranean;</p> <p>To bring legislative assistance and expertise in drafting and implementing legislation concerning decentralisation and local and regional governance; and assisting with the electoral process and, where applicable, observing local and regional elections;</p> <p>To raise awareness and train local and regional elected representatives and their officials, with a particular focus on the role of women and young local leaders;</p> <p>To strengthen the role and capacities of associations of local and regional authorities (especially in terms of leadership);</p> <p>To enhance the capacities of local and regional associations to defend their interests, particularly in the regionalisation process;</p> <p>To support the development of participatory democracy, with a particular focus on the role of young people, women and civil society.</p>

⁹¹ <https://rm.coe.int/prems-119218-gbr-1501-neighbourhood-partnership-with-tunisia-2018-2021/16808e4515>

⁹² <https://rm.coe.int/16802f7c60>

Main activities	<p>Study visit during the 32nd session of the Congress (Strasbourg, 27 to 30 March 2017);</p> <p>Study on the role of national associations of local and regional authorities in the national consultation mechanisms in Europe, with a view to the development of such a mechanism in Morocco and Tunisia;</p> <p>Study on the powers and responsibilities of local and regional authorities in Morocco and their training resources, with a view to the setting up of a training mechanism for local and regional elected representatives (future project);</p> <p>Study on the modalities of the organisation of study visits for local and regional elected representatives;</p> <p>Arrangements between the Regions of Morocco (ARM) and Région Grand Est for the organisation of a study visit of Moroccan elected representatives and administrators;</p> <p>International conference “Building an inclusive community: integrating migrants, fighting violent extremism, involving citizens”, organised with the city of Rabat (Rabat, 20 - 22 November 2017);</p> <p>Parliamentary colloquy “Regionalisation in Morocco: opportunities and challenges for consolidating decentralised governance”, organised with the Moroccan Parliament (Rabat, 28 - 29 November 2017);</p> <p>Meeting with a Moroccan delegation, composed of representatives of the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, of the DGCL (General Directorate of Local Authorities), of the Moroccan Ministry of the Interior, as well as the Consul General and Vice-Consul of Morocco. In 2018, Morocco submitted request for the Partner for Local Democracy status with the Congress, approved by the Bureau on 18 June 2018 for adoption by the Congress.</p>
TUNISIA	Neighbourhood Partnership with Tunisia 2015-2017 ⁹⁴
Project title	Promoting local and regional democracy in Tunisia
Dates	January 2016 – December 2017 ⁹⁵
Budget	99 358 €
Funding	Norway, Estonia, France, Italy, Monaco and Portugal
Objectives	<p>To enhance political dialogue between European elected representatives and their Tunisian counterparts and increase decentralised co-operation between local and regional authorities on the two sides of the Mediterranean;</p> <p>To provide legislative assistance and expertise in drafting and implementing legislation concerning decentralisation and local and regional governance; and assisting with the electoral process and, where applicable, observing local and regional elections;</p> <p>To Raise awareness and train local and regional elected representatives and their officials, with a particular focus on the role of women and young local leaders;</p> <p>To strengthen the role and capacities of associations of local and regional authorities (especially in terms of leadership);</p> <p>To support the development of participatory democracy, with a particular focus on the role of young people, women and civil society.</p>
Main activities	<p>Revision of the Charter of the National Federation of Tunisian Towns and preparation of a manual of internal procedures and rules (in progress);</p> <p>Study visit during the 32nd session of the Congress (Strasbourg, 27-30 March 2017);</p> <p>Study on the role of national associations of local and regional authorities in national consultation mechanisms in Europe, with a view to the development of such a</p>

⁹⁴ <https://rm.coe.int/16802f7dfa>

mechanism in Morocco and Tunisia;

International conference on "Women in local politics" (Tunis, 26-27 September 2017) intended to promote the exchange of knowledge and better practices regarding the role of women in politics at local level and the building of their capacities, with a view to the next local elections;

Legislative assistance towards the draft Code of local authorities submitted to the Assembly of the Representatives of the People and a workshop organised with the participation of Tunisian and Congress experts to exchange on and debate the draft code, as well as decentralisation;

Expert support to the drafting of eight implementation decrees of the Code of Local authorities (in progress);

Training of Trainers of the Training and Support Centre for Decentralisation in conflict management and political mediation (Tunis, 16-18 November 2017);

Training for the staff of the National Federation of Tunisian Towns (FNVT) in project management (Tunis, November 2017).

Drafting of a training module on prevention and management of conflict at municipal level (January-February 2018);

Activities in Tunisia not funded by the voluntary contribution

Mission of electoral assessment of the 6 May 2018 municipal elections (Tunisia, 4-6 May 2018);

Participation in Franco-Tunisian local elected representatives meetings organised by the Institut Français and the National Federation of Tunisian Towns (FNVT) (Tunis, 20-21 October 2018);

Participation in the General Assembly of the National Federation of Tunisian Towns (FNVT) (Mahdia, 8 December 2018).