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

Situation as at 19 November 2020

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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 € 10 250 000.⁴ 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. First, there are programmes and activities 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 second, there are programs and activities 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, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Kosovo*,⁷ Morocco and Tunisia, and has submitted proposals for projects to be implemented in Georgia, 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, 90 local and regional elected representatives from 28 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.

Adapting to the Covid-19 pandemic and lessons learnt

6. The Covid-19 pandemic reshaped ways of working, as well as democracy and governance globally. During this period, the Congress co-operation efforts were aimed at assisting local authorities in navigating through challenges and seizing opportunities by adapting the priority areas and the approach to providing its support, to tailor it to the needs on the ground in the context of the pandemic

7. For Congress co-operation activities, challenges were related to the restriction of movement, and

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>

⁷ *All references to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nation's Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

organisation of events, preventing meetings with main partners and stakeholders in person, as well as bilateral discussions often held in the margins of conferences, round tables and official events. Providing assistance in a new context while the main partners, local elected representatives, were at the forefront to the Corona-virus response was another challenge, as they had to act upon pressing issues in their communities, such as unprepared health systems and infrastructures, access to services, social protection gaps, digital divides and many others.

8. The Congress adapted its working methods with partners as well as the areas in which support was provided, and turned the challenges posed by the pandemic into opportunities to learn, innovate and work on more inclusive and accessible resources and approaches.

9. Efforts geared towards the empowerment of local and regional authorities, their associations, and the capacity building of local elected representatives included a focus on managing the pandemic. In this regard, peer exchanges were leveraged for sharing best practices, in handling the crisis and in setting-up mechanisms and procedures for future emergency situations in their role as actors of multi-level governance. Moreover, the pandemic context highlighted the importance of improving the use of open government tools to mitigate the risks imposed by the pandemic, in particular to keep citizens informed, enable public participation and develop and provide access to open data.

10. In the context of national lockdowns and international travel restrictions, project teams took advantage of digital tools in supporting partners. Events were held online or in a hybrid mode, and included trainings, webinars, peer-exchanges and the launch of Congress publications. Online training courses for capacity building were developed as a means to support partners during lockdown, and these can be used outside of the pandemic context as they ensure accessibility and inclusivity.

11. This approach is inclusive as it allows for participants from all over the world to join-in. It also allows to draw on more expertise by hiring experts, including facilitators and trainers, for whom travelling and attending meetings in person might have been difficult or impossible otherwise. In addition, the approach is cost-effective, allowing for funds to be reallocated towards further assistance. Working methods were also adapted internally, through remote work, distant communication within the team and with stakeholders, and the remote event planning through new digital tools for collaboration.

12. The Covid-19 pandemic reshaped ways of working, as well as democracy and governance globally. Lessons learnt include a move towards hybrid events and an improved use of digital tools for increased inclusivity and accessibility, increased focus on open government tools at local level to ensure democratic governance in crisis situations, and greater reliance on field staff who are closer to stakeholders and national context. However, new technologies cannot fully replace in-person interactions and human connection cannot be digitally replaced, and upon the return to “usual modus operandi”, the Congress co-operation activities will encompass the aforementioned lessons learnt and build upon them in future work.

I. Themes and areas of co-operation

13. 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.

14. 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 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.

15. This chapter also highlights the Congress’ co-operation work in the field of human rights, in particular regarding 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.⁸ Hence, it actively engages in applying a human rights perspective to complement the statutory work with co-operation activities.

1. Empowerment of local and regional authorities and their associations

16. 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, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine**; and transnational co-operation between **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine and Belarus**.

1.1. Dialogue between local and regional authorities and central government

17. 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 for that matter, new guidelines on consultation mechanisms⁹ were adopted by the Congress during its 35th session.

18. 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.

19. An example of Congress assistance in such matters can be found in **Albania** where - following the major reform on administrative and territorial decentralisation and organisation in 2013 – Congress intervention led to the incorporation of the right to be consulted into the Organic Law on Local Self-Government (2015) and to the establishment of a Consultative Council of Local and Central Authorities (2017).

20. With its intervention taking place amidst 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, the Congress has maintained regular dialogue with all stakeholders since 2012, including political parties. However, challenges remain, especially with regards to the representation of local authorities on a pluralistic platform and the sustainable functioning of the Albanian Consultative Council.

21. In **Armenia**, the Communities Association of Armenia (CAA) followed-up on a series of meetings held with high-level representatives of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure organised in late 2018 and 2019 on the establishment of a consultative mechanism. In June 2020, with the Congress support, the CAA initiated the development of a strategy to establish a framework for consultations between national and local authorities in Armenia, which is to be proposed to the Government. Focus was put on the importance of the Government's involvement and commitment to a regular dialogue with local authorities and their associations. In addition, the Community of Practice on public integrity and ethics, established in March 2020, allows for a focused dialogue between the local and national level on the aspects such as corruption, open government and transparency in public procurement, as well as on practical mechanisms for the implementation of measures in these areas. This platform involves 23 member communities and three ministries, namely the Ministry of Territorial Development and Infrastructure, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Finance.

22. Moreover, the 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 2019 with the preparation of the annual report on

⁸ "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>

⁹ "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>

decentralisation which was developed on the initiative of the Association's Board and with its own resources. The report was presented to representatives of central and local authorities in early 2020 to advocate for further decentralisation of power and responsibilities to the local level, promote an inclusive and sustainable consultation mechanism, as well as more co-operative and strategic relation between the Government, local authorities and their associations. Additional expert support is provided to the CAA since May 2020 in the elaboration of a strategy and action plan to establishing a consultation framework between national and local authorities. Once validated by the Association's Board, the draft strategy will be proposed to the national Government in view of achieving the right of local authorities to be consulted by higher levels of government and the right of the CAA to be involved in consultations and to represent the interests of their members.

23. **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 more than 400 mayors with the intention of sharing 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 accountability of local elected representatives, administrative supervision and the electoral reform, including Congress intervention aimed at enfranchising¹⁰ internally displaced persons (IDPs) at local level which contributed to the adoption of legislative provisions on political rights of IDPs in Parliament and the the adoption of the Electoral Code of Ukraine, stipulating full participation of IDPs in local elections held in October 2020. 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.

24. Moreover, legislative support was provided to national and local authorities in Ukraine, on matters related to the local self-government and constitutional reforms. The Council of Europe Preliminary comments on the Draft Law "On Amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine" included discussions with the Parliament, the Government, local authorities and their national associations in February 2020, with the contribution of the Congress Constitutional Advisor. The draft amendments were reviewed in line with the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government Charter, highlighting particular concern with the powers of the prefect and the principle of proportionality in relation to administrative supervision of local authorities. The draft law "On the City of Kyiv - Capital of Ukraine" was also reviewed, and recommendations were provided to enhance the legislative provisions.

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

1.2. Strengthening associations of local and regional authorities

26. 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 reinforcing the capacities of their associations. In this regard support has been provided in strengthening internal governance, decision-making, communication with members and external stakeholders, and improving skills in advocacy, policy analysis and influencing, fighting corruption and legal matters.

27. 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.

28. 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 were launched in March 2020, together with CAA which will act in in order to improve

advocacy capabilities of elected representatives.

29. In addition, continuous expert support is provided to the CAA in the review of amendments related to legal acts on local self-government and preparation of subsequent position papers to be submitted to central authorities. In 2020, two papers and six opinions of the CAA on legislative amendments were developed with the support of the Congress.

30. 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 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.

31. 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 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.

32. The AUC's institutional capacities were strengthened on different levels, including internal planning and management, external communication and advocacy, as well as analytical and legal capacities. The process of the development of the AUC's midterm strategy was launched in 2019 following the results and recommendations of the Baseline Assessment of institutional capacities of the AUC. The elaboration of the strategy gathered more than a hundred members of the association representing all regions of Ukraine. This wide participatory process ensured that both members of the AUC and executive staff share the Association's vision and mission and are committed to achieving it with a unified voice. The draft Strategy was finalised in May 2020 and validated by the AUC Management Board; it will be submitted to the General Assembly for the adoption in December 2020.

33. The strong institutional position and capacities of the AUC are recognised in the dialogue with the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, in particular within the debates on the legislative provisions needed for ensuring political rights of IDPs. This dialogue was based on the Congress Recommendation 419 (2018) and the corresponding Resolution 431 (2018) on local voting rights for the integration of migrants and IDPs. As a result, the Electoral Code of Ukraine, adopted in December 2019, stipulates full participation of IDPs in local elections. IDPs from different regions of Ukraine were included into local electoral registries for voting in local elections held in October 2020, which represents a major step forward towards the inclusion of 1.4 million of IDPs registered in Ukraine.

34. Since January 2020, the AUC is implementing a grant provided by the Congress to improve services to its members, integrate the principles of openness, transparency and equal opportunities in the Association's activities and policies, enhance its analytical capacities, strengthen advocacy and communication, and mainstream gender equality in all of its activities. Although the situation with the Covid-19 pandemic affected the AUC's ability to implement all activities in line with the initial plan, an electronic document management system was introduced and is being used by all members of the AUC Secretariat and Regional Branches. In line with the component on gender equality, the AUC conducted a survey on the implementation of gender policies in member municipalities, with a remarkable response rate of 92.7% of all AUC members. This will provide valuable information for the online gender course "Introduction to Gender Mainstreaming at Local Level".

35. 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 the 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 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 submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers

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

in July 2020. It calls 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 webinar on National-Local Collaboration on Open Government in Ukraine on 17 July 2020, in which the new State Secretary of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine Mr Oleksandr Yarema participated. Attendees discussed ways to enhance the inclusion of Ukrainian local and regional authorities in the design and implementation of the National OGP Strategy and Action Plan, examined formats of consultation and co-creation between national and local authorities, and initiated the discussion on the establishment of a platform for national - local dialogue on open government in Ukraine. It is worth noting that the OGP Local Engagement Strategy¹² approved in May 2019 places an emphasis supporting national-local integration to foster open local government, enhancing the OGP Local Programme by making it more inclusive and open to innovation and co-creation, and developing a collaborative platform for peer learning.

36. To enhance gender equality at local level, and in addition to activities implemented with the grant, the AUC has carried out substantive work within the Association's Committee on Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men and nominated a gender advisor, with more than 80 municipalities signed having signed the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life (CEMR Charter). The role of the Association has been key in this endeavour. The e-course "Introduction to Gender Mainstreaming at Local Level" was developed in close co-operation with the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS) and piloted during April-May 2020 with the participation of several Ukrainian and Georgian local authorities which helped tailor the course to local needs and during November 2020 with 47 staff members of the AUC Secretariat and Regional Branches..

37. Building on the success of the AUC's baseline assessment, the Congress is undertaking a baseline assessment of the institutional position of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities from the **Republic of Moldova** (CALM) until December 2020. The assessment will look at areas such as policy dialogue and advocacy, good governance and municipal management standards, provision of quality services to members, and the relationship between CALM and central authorities. It will serve as a solid foundation for the development of the organisation's future strategic orientation and a basis for co-operation with CALM in the framework of the upcoming Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova.

38. In addition to country-specific work, the Congress encourages exchanges between the associations of different countries. The associations' intention to strengthen 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 AUC, under the auspices of the Congress. Furthermore, the Community of Practice on local democracy,¹³ 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. **Georgian and Ukrainian** local authorities and their associations were able to share good practices and identify common existing challenges during the 2018 5th Open Government Partnership Global Summit.¹⁴ Moreover, a study visit to the World Forum for Democracy (2018) allowed for more interaction between Georgian and Ukrainian local authorities on gender equality and women's rights issues. As a result, apart from the 81 Ukrainian municipalities previously mentioned, four other Georgian municipalities signed the CEMR Charter in September 2019.¹⁵

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

39. 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.

40. 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

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ 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.

measures for the prevention of corruption and to develop democratic tools for enhancing citizen participation in local affairs.

41. 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.

42. 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, gave participants an opportunity to identify ways to effectively and practically implement the above-mentioned principles.

43. The programme "Leaders for Change" proved to be successful in **Armenia**¹⁶ and **Ukraine**¹⁷. 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.¹⁸

44. 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 participation¹⁹ and the *Management of change: a tool guide for local and regional authorities*²⁰ were the practical tools used to support them in developing accountable, effective and transparent institutions.

45. The Congress has acknowledged the role of local and regional authorities to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens. Making 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 one of the priorities of the Congress.²¹

46. In **Ukraine** peer-to-peer exchanges, with the participation of AUC representatives of the Management Board and its regional branches, have started a debate on the role of national associations of local authorities in promoting SDG 5 on gender equality, at local level specifically.²² The adoption of the CEMR Charter by 80 Ukrainian municipalities over the course of one year demonstrates the proactiveness of local authorities to undertake concrete steps for its effective implementation.

47. The e-course "Introduction to Gender Mainstreaming at Local Level", is developed by the AUC with the Congress support, and based on an existing online course developed by NALAS. It is available to all their members as of November 2020. Following the testing phase, the course was adapted to the needs of local elected representatives and civil servants with the aim to build their capacities to develop strategies and approaches for overcoming gender inequality, use different tools and methods for mainstreaming gender in policymaking, learn to integrate gender perspectives throughout the budget process and thus contribute to a more gender equal society.

48. A stronger gender perspective was introduced in all project activities to promote the participation of women in local life and foster gender equality. A guide for women and men in local politics on "Preventing and combatting sexism at the local level in Ukraine" was developed and promoted in an online event to equip local politicians in Ukraine with the knowledge required to recognise and address sexism in their institutions, thereby enabling women's political participation and representation at local and regional levels.

49. The Congress has supported Ukrainian local authorities, in partnership with the AUC and in co-

¹⁶ 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>

¹⁷ Over 150 mayors and 220 local councillors have benefitted from the Congress activities since 2014 in Ukraine.

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/congress/-/handbooks-on-transparency-and-citizen-participation>

²⁰ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/congress/-/management-of-change-a-tool-guide-for-local-and-regional-authorities>

²¹ Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities Priorities 2017-2020, I-g, §72, p.11, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/168071b2cb>

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

operation with the OGP Secretariat, in their applications to the new OGP Local Programme, which is composed of 56 participants worldwide in its first intake. In this regard, the Road Map for the promotion and development of Open Government and e-Governance at local level in Ukraine was presented to the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, in view of further including local and regional authorities in the design and implementation of the National Open Government Partnership (OGP) Action Plan, in line with the principles of consultation and the OGP Local Strategy. Moreover, through a webinar, organised in June 2020 jointly with the AUC and OGP Secretariat, 65 Ukrainian municipalities discussed with representatives from the City of Buenos Aires, the Basque Government, and the e-Governance Academy of Estonia different ways to align their policies with contemporary open local government good practices. As a result, three out of 11 applications from Ukrainian municipalities and one Regional Council were selected to join the Open Government Partnership (OGP) Local Programme, namely Vinnytsia, Ternopil and Khmelnytskyi. Further to this, the Congress keeps on co-operating with the AUC and OGP Secretariat during the global initiative of the Open Gov Week²³ and advocating open local government at global level, including at the 5th and 6th OGP Global Summits held respectively in Tbilisi, Georgia in 2018 and in Ottawa, Canada, in 2019, in which a delegation of Ukrainian local authorities and members of the AUC participated.

50. In **Armenia**, within the framework of the project, a Community of Practice on public integrity and ethics was launched in March 2020, with the aim to act as the focal group for strategic localisation of public integrity and anti-corruption policies and their implementation by local authorities of Armenia. It promotes and advocates for the European standards on political integrity, ethics, transparent and open governance and citizen participation with local authorities in Armenia. To facilitate the work of the Community of Practice, four working groups have been established, each focused on identifying challenges and designing approaches in specific areas, namely: [1] anti-corruption policies, [2] public integrity, [3] transparency in public procurement and [4] transparency and openness in government. Working groups are used as a unique platform for both building the capacities of group members and developing concrete measures and policies, such as a model Code of conduct, and a Roadmap for the involvement of local authorities in the development, implementation and evaluation of the national OGP Action Plan.

51. To support members of the Community of Practice, the online learning platform is being developed to accommodate the current situation with the Covid-19 pandemic and to respond to the capacity development needs of local authorities for the successful implementation of anti-corruption policies at local level.

52. Following discussions with the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of the Republic of Armenia, and in line with the National Anti-Corruption Strategy, expert support will be provided to line ministries in the development of the methodology and activity plan for conducting a corruption risk assessment at local level. A legal and financial analysis of potential corruption risks related to the public procurement procedures will be conducted as part of the process and used as a baseline.

53. 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.

54. In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, capacity development activities are being developed for the local elected representatives from the City of Mostar who will be elected in the long-awaited election on 20 December 2020, to strengthen their capacities to implement new democratic approaches based on citizen deliberations, and therefore create favourable conditions for enhanced citizen engagement at local level.

3. Enhancing the awareness of young people on the principles of local democracy

55. The preamble of the Revised Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life²⁴ states the following:

56. *“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*

²⁴ Adopted by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (10th session – 21 May 2003 – Appendix to Recommendation 128).

decisions and engage in actions and activities so as to contribute to building a better society.” 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**²⁵ and **Ukraine**²⁶ benefited from the Congress’s activities.

57. 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.

58. Twenty young people from the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk in Eastern **Ukraine**, selected in partnership with local authorities and vocational schools, enhanced their awareness of human rights standards and local democracy principles during the training course in January 2020. They had an opportunity to learn how human rights relate to the principles of local democracy. During the interactive exchanges with representatives of local authorities they were encouraged to engage further in the activities and decision-making in their communities. This is a follow-up to the Training for trainers organised in April 2019, which resulted in the creation of a pool of educators who will provide further support and guidance to the youth to apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills in practice, motivate their peers to join them in taking part in local political life and thus in strengthening the community’s social cohesion.

4. Local initiatives: learning by doing

59. 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.

60. 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.

61. Since 2015, the Congress supported 34 local initiatives in four countries (**Armenia, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine**) in improving transparency, accountability and integrity of local government by introducing higher ethical standards and embracing new processes for citizen participation in decision-making. Establishing a transparent, reliable and efficient local self-government, in line with the provisions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government is the main goal of local initiatives.

62. The local initiatives scheme has made a significant impact in raising the citizen participation and expectations of the public, enabling them to demand higher quality in local governance. In addition, the local initiatives serve as a three-folded tool – effective consolidation of the peer exchanges carried out on transparency, accountability and integrity in local governance, improvement of the level of citizen participation and trust, and strengthened capacities of local elected representatives, civil servants and local public administration overall.

63. Provided with funding, expert support and peer reviews selected municipalities in Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine were able to introduce local policies and mechanisms for transparent decision-making and change of public perception of local government. As a result of the local initiatives, proposals made by citizens were considered and incorporated into municipal budgets. The establishment of active citizen groups in 11 municipalities, one mentoring schemes, and youth and elderly councils led to the identification of community issues and development of local strategic plans. Moreover, direct channels for communication were introduced to increase citizens’ confidence in local public authorities and in their mayors. This enabled higher engagement and simplification in the ways that citizens interact with local elected representatives, particularly for those far from the administrative centre. Supplemented with the incorporation of live streaming of council meetings, web pages and on-line complaint systems, these initiatives ensured that there is a sustainable system in place which enables constituents’ confidence in the representative that they have elected to grow.

²⁵ Two seminars held on European principles of local democracy for young local leaders gathered around 50 Armenian participants.

²⁶ Nearly 300 young Ukrainians have taken part in activities proposed by the Congress since 2014.

64. In Ukraine, 13 Ukrainian local authorities were selected in 2019 to implement initiatives on ethical, transparent and participatory decision-making with a view to foster the awareness, participation and engagement of under-represented groups as well as equal opportunities for women and men to participate in local political life. A team of international and Ukrainian experts are involved and provide on-site and distance guidance on policy development, governance processes as well as on methodologic approaches to ensure sustainability and measure the change.

65. A series of webinars were organised in May, June and October 2020 to develop value-driven leadership and to facilitate the exchange of views and experiences on thematic areas deemed crucial for the effective and sustainable results of the local initiatives, such as participatory budgeting, gender mainstreaming, youth participation, open government and inclusive decision-making, in particular in times of crisis.

66. Local initiatives are 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 which encouraged others to replicate and generate more efficient, accountable and transparent policy-making in their own municipalities.

67. In the city of **Mostar in Bosnia and Herzegovina** where elections have not been held since 2008, the Congress creates opportunities for citizens to engage in dialogue with local decision-makers and among themselves through a deliberative process. The project goal and approach are consistent with the political agenda of the Congress for Bosnia and Herzegovina and follow-up on the recommendations of the Congress Reflection Group on Mostar.

68. While the concept of citizen participation implies the right to take part in local governance and influence decision-making, it is also a process of learning, listening, recognising and accepting different opinions, values and knowledge. Deliberation is a more advanced practice of citizen participation being used in many communities where local, regional or national authorities want to include representative groups of citizens in decision making. It allows for a more rounded and informed public opinion and arguably better decisions, and finally to increased trust towards local authorities. It is through a tailored methodology for the deliberative process that opportunities for citizens to dialogue among themselves and with local decision makers will arise.

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

69. 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.²⁷ In 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).

70. The "Partner for Local Democracy"²⁸ status introduced by the Congress in 2014 further enables delegations from the beneficiary countries to participate in the work of the Congress without having 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.²⁹ 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 the Status was granted to Tunisia during the 37th session of the Congress on 29 October 2019 in Strasbourg. Both delegations can now contribute to the Congress' work including the meetings of its committees, which provides opportunities for peer-to-peer exchange with the members of the Congress. Both delegations took part in an exchange with the Congress' Secretariat and contributed to Committees meetings in September 2020 and coordination meeting of the ELDW in October 2020.

71. 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. 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 democracy³⁰ have been produced in Arabic.

72. In **Morocco**, the Congress helped elaborate the Law on Advanced Regionalisation, adopted in May 2015, which has paved the way for local and regional elections in September 2015. In order 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. Congress Vice-President Xavier CADORET participated in the first Colloquy on regionalisation in Agadir on 20-21 December 2019, which resulted in the preparation of a detailed proposal for strengthening cooperation between all stakeholders of the project.

73. The Congress provided expert support for the development of websites for two associations (AMPCPP and ARM), launched in November 2020, and the upgrade of the existing website for the AMPCC, in order to strengthen their communication capacity for the public and their members. Expert support was also provided to the AMPCPP to improve the legal framework for the prefectures and provinces in Morocco. This included consultations with the Association's members and the Directorate-General of Territorial Authorities (DGCT) of the Interior Ministry, as well as drafting a new law on provinces and prefectures.

²⁷ 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>

²⁸ Resolution 376 (2014) Partner for Local Democracy status, available at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680719fb5>

²⁹ 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 (AMPCPP) – applied for the status of Partner for Local Democracy of the Congress.

³⁰ European Charter of Local Self-Government; the revised European Charter for the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life; the European Code of Conduct for all persons involved in Local and Regional governance and the public ethics collection of the Congress.

74. With regard to the promotion of Congress work in Moroccan and following the translation into Arabic of the Congress “Public Ethics” Collection, a webinar was organised in October 2020 to facilitate an exchange of views and experiences on national and international legal frameworks and the challenges of implementing the principles of public ethics, open government and fight against corruption at local and regional level. In November 2020, another webinar was organised on the theme of consultation mechanisms between central government and local authorities, with the participation of representatives and experts of national associations of local and regional authorities from several European countries.

75. The Congress is also supporting the adaptation of its guide on elections’ observations to the Moroccan context as part of its cooperation with the ARM; and the development of an online training platform for the AMCPP as well as organisation of training courses for the national associations’ members.

76. 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, which the Congress observed. 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.

77. In terms of capacity building, the Congress organised a training of trainers of the Decentralisation Training and Support Centre (CFAD) on political mediation, in case of potential conflicts that could arise following the first municipal elections of 6 May 2018. This training was updated and will be adapted to an online version. 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 and second General Assemblies of the FNVT in December 2018 and November 2019. Further support was provided to the FNVT in its process of reform and strengthening of its capacities through an expert study on the internal organisation of local government associations and with a grant to hire two staff members in charge of communication, advocacy and relations with members. The General Assembly on 26-27 September was an important democratic step for the FNVT with the adoption of new statutes for the Federation, which changed its name to FNCT (from “towns” to “communities” to reflect a better inclusion), and the direct election of its new President and governing bodies, thus greatly increasing the legitimacy of the Federation. Long-term experts hired by the Congress will accompany the Federation in building and implementing its advocacy and lobbying strategy. Following the adoption of the Federation’s priorities in November 2020, an exchange was held between the Congress and the FNCT President to identify areas for co-operation support. In addition, co-operation was established with the national body in charge of the fight against corruption (INLUCC) with a view to disseminating good practices and principles among Tunisian local elected representatives, the President of the INLUCC participated, among others, in a webinar on promoting public ethics at the local level.

78. With regards to the promotion of gender equality, a conference on “Women in local politics”,³¹ 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 locally elected women representatives, organised in Tunis in November 2018 and in April 2019, the latter in the format of a “Café of elected women representatives” during the Tunis Forum on Gender Equality.

³¹ 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.

Conclusion

79. 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.

80. 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 improving the quality of local and regional democracy across Europe, as well as in the Council of Europe's neighbouring regions.

81. The Congress' interventions in the field are vital for strengthening local democracy. New projects were launched in 2020 in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, with a specific focus on the city of Mostar, the **Republic of Moldova** and **Kosovo***.³² Furthermore, the Congress Secretariat developed proposals for new bilateral projects in **Georgia** (with a focus on strengthening democratic governance through civil participation to decision-making and on human rights protection at local level) and **Belarus**. 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.

82. 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, the Congress contributes to the implementation of the following SDGs:³³



83. To successfully implement 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, particularly with enhancing the skills of local public administrations and the prevention of corruption.

³² More information about upcoming projects can be found in the Appendix, section I-B and III-A.

³³ Congress contribution to the SDGs and the Agenda 2030: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/congress/sdg>

APPENDIX – Summary of projects ³⁴*(Situation as of 19 November 2020)***I. Bilateral projects implemented in Council of Europe member countries****A. Projects in progress****ARMENIA**[Council of Europe Action Plan for Armenia 2019-2022](#)³⁵

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	<p>Conference on Political Integrity and Ethics in Local Governance in March 2020 with representatives of 23 member communities, Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Finance, CAA and civil society sector.</p> <p>Established the Community of practice on political integrity in local governance was established in March 2020 and acts as the focal group for adopting national integrity and anti-corruption policies and measures at the local level.</p> <p>Established and supported members of four working groups of the Community of practice, namely: [1] anti-corruption policies, [2] public integrity, [3] transparency in public procurement and [4] transparency and openness in government.</p> <p>Supported the CAA in developing position papers and opinions on six legislative amendments.</p> <p>Supported the CAA in dissemination of and dialogue with national authorities on its first “Annual report on the state of decentralisation”.</p> <p>Developed draft strategies on consultation framework and decentralisation and shared with the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure for further reflection and discussion, and the dialogue between local and national authorities.</p> <p>Signed Grant Agreement with the CAA to improve its institutional capacities.</p>

³⁴ <https://www.coe.int/congress-cooperation>³⁵ <https://rm.coe.int/action-plan-armenia-2019-2022-en-web-version/168092014b>

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA[Council of Europe Action Plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina \(2018-2021\)](#)

Project title	Building Democratic Participation in the City of Mostar
Dates	February 2020 – December 2021
Budget	€ 500 000
Funding	Norway
Objectives	To create opportunities for citizens to engage in deliberative processes and participate in local decision making, with the aim of restoring citizens' confidence and trust in public authorities, following a decade without local elections in the City of Mostar. In parallel, the project seeks to develop the skills and knowledge of local stakeholders on democratic approaches.
Activities	<p>Online meeting sessions were organised to introduce the Mayor's Office and local political parties to the project concept.</p> <p>A tailored methodology of deliberative process through mini-publics in the City of Mostar is being developed by a group of experts, to provide citizens of Mostar with opportunities for dialogue among themselves and with the local decision-makers.</p> <p>An online meeting with civil society organisations and media from the City of Mostar was organised to introduce relevant local stakeholders to the project and deliberative process.</p>

THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA[Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova \(2017-2020\)](#)

Project title	Reinforcing the culture of dialogue and consultation of local authorities in the Republic of Moldova
Dates	June 2019 – December 2020
Budget	175 000 €
Funding	Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2017-2020 ³⁶
Objectives	To contribute to strengthening the institutional capacities of the Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova (CALM) in areas such as policy dialogue and advocacy, good governance and municipal management standards, and provision of quality services to members. The project will assess the organisational capacities and institutional position of CALM, including its relationship with the central authorities, as a basis for the development of its future strategic orientation.
Main activities	<p>A baseline assessment of the institutional position and capacities of CALM is underway. The Draft Baseline Assessment Report was discussed with the CALM Secretariat. For the purpose of this baseline assessment, surveys and interviews were conducted with CALM members, representatives of central authorities, international partners of the association, and relevant think-tanks.</p> <p>Advocacy and policy influencing capacity development activities with CALM decision-making bodies are underway to support the association in promoting the interests of local authorities at the central level. These include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draft Action plan for advocacy on local finances developed in collaboration

³⁶ The Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2017-2020 is funded by 7 member States: Bulgaria, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Norway, Romania, Sweden and Switzerland. The Action Plan is available at: <https://rm.coe.int/16806cd3a5>

- with the CALM decision-making bodies.
- **Workshops** for CALM decision-making bodies to refine their skills on advocacy.
- **Webinar on advocacy and policy influencing** with the participation of CALM members and members of associations of local and national associations from other European countries (upcoming at the beginning of December).

UKRAINE

[Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine 2018-2022](#) ³⁷

Project title	Strengthening democracy and building trust at local level in Ukraine ³⁸
Dates	July 2018 –February 2021 ³⁹
Budget	1 600 000 €
Funding	Action Plan for Ukraine 2018-2022 ⁴⁰
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	<p>Three meetings of the Community of practice on Local Democracy in Ukraine held since 2019 to reinforce the capacities and institutional position of Ukrainian local and regional authorities and their national associations, including the latest meeting held in October 2020 focused on local elections in Ukraine in the specific context of the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>AUC Strategic plan finalised in early 2020, approved by the Board in the summer of 2020 and pending approval of the General Assembly in December 2020.</p> <p>A grant agreement signed in January 2020 to support the AUC’s analytical capacities, strengthen advocacy and communication, and mainstream gender equality in all its activities.</p> <p>Expert support to the AUC in improving the legislative framework for decentralisation and local self-government; namely draft laws of Ukraine “On the Capital of Ukraine – Hero City Kyiv” and “On Amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine”.</p> <p>Join agreements with 13 Ukrainian local authorities, signed in December 2019, to implement local initiatives on: [1] ethical, transparent and participatory decision-making; [2] engagement of under-represented groups; and [3] equal opportunities for women and men to participate in local political life.</p> <p>Two series of webinars to support the implementation of the initiatives and address challenges linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as to allow for peer-to peer exchange, in May and October 2020.</p> <p>A training on human rights and local democracy with 20 young people from the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk in Eastern Ukraine in January 2020 in Dnipro. Participants, students from vocational schools, learnt about good practices on youth</p>

³⁷ <https://rm.coe.int/1680794dc5>

³⁸ 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.

³⁹ 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.

⁴⁰ Funded by 19 member States: Canada, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey.

participation at local level, developed short action plans for getting involved in decision-making in their communities, and exchanged with representatives of local authorities in Ukraine.

Facilitation of the participation of Congress member Gudrun MÖSLER-TÖRNSTRÖM (Austria, SOC/G/PD) in the third edition of the **Ukrainian Women's Congress** (10-11 December 2019), an ongoing public platform which shapes the gender policy agenda for the Ukrainian Parliament, Government, civil society and media..

A guide for women and men in local politics on “Preventing and combatting sexism at the local level in Ukraine” to equip local politicians with concrete measures for recognising and fighting sexist behaviour at local level and ensuring that women play an active and meaningful role in the decision-making process.

The development and piloting of the **e-course “Introduction to Gender Mainstreaming at Local Level”** in co-operation with NALAS and several Ukrainian and Georgian local authorities which helped tailor the course to local needs. The first edition of the e-course has been launched on 17 November 2020 for a group of 47 local authorities' representatives.

2 webinars on open government to support to Ukrainian municipalities in their application to the OGP Local Programme, resulting in three successful candidates out of 11 applications, namely Vinnytsia, Ternopil and Khmelnytskyi. In addition, the AUC and the Cabinet of Ministers are in discussions to establish a Platform for National-Local Dialogue on Open Government in Ukraine.

KOSOVO*

Project title	Promoting local democracy in Kosovo*
Dates	July 2020 – December 2021
Budget	400 000 €
Funding	Non-earmarked -- Overview of co-operation activities in Kosovo* (2019)
Objectives	<p>The overall objective is to improve local self-government in Kosovo* in accordance with European standards on local and regional democracy.</p> <p>Based on an assessment of the state of implementation of the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, the Congress will gather together all stakeholders and facilitate discussions on ways to further enhance decentralisation and local self-government.</p> <p>In addition, the project aims to strengthen the capacities of local authorities and elected representatives as drivers of change and addresses key elements of good local governance, including ways to prevent corruption, to address public ethics, and to foster citizens' participation as a means of reinforcing the accountability of local public administration.</p> <p>The activities will be based on a peer-to-peer approach and best practices, involving members of the Congress, and international and local experts. All activities will be developed and implemented in close co-operation with the Association of Kosovo Municipalities (AKM), which enjoys the status of Guest Observer with the Chamber of Local Authorities of the Congress.</p>
Activities	<p>Discussion of a concept paper on the assessment of the application of the principles of the Charter of Local Self-Government in Kosovo*;</p> <p>Development of a concept paper for the creation of a training manual and delivery of a training module on political integrity, public ethics and open government;</p> <p>Working session with the AKM on needs assessment, co-ordination, and</p>

engagement of local authorities throughout the project implemented, on 20 October 2020.

B. Upcoming projects

GEORGIA

Project title	Strengthening participatory democracy and human rights at local level in Georgia
Dates	December 2020 - November 2023
Budget	1 800 000 € (of which 900 000 € for the Congress component)
Funding	Government of Austria ⁴¹
Objectives	<p>The project aims to strengthen human rights protection and democratic public participation at local level in Georgia by strengthening institutional frameworks and by supporting local authorities and their national association in their efforts to promote gender equality and eliminate discrimination. To this end, this project will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthen the capacities the capacities of local authorities and the National Association of Local Authorities (NALAG) to integrate and implement human rights standards and practices in their policies and strategies, and to advocate human rights in Georgia as fully-fledged partners;• Implement human rights-based initiatives to promote social inclusion and equal opportunities for all, incorporate a gender perspective in local political action, and eliminate discrimination;• Improve regulatory frameworks and mechanisms for civil participation to enable an increased public influence on policy and decision-making. <p>The project will be implemented by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the Directorate General of Democracy of the Council of Europe.</p>

⁴¹ <https://rm.coe.int/168098f179>

C. Completed projects

ALBANIA	Co-operation programme for Albania 2012-2014 ⁴² Co-operation programme for Albania 2015-2017 ⁴³
Project title	Strengthening local and regional government structures and cooperation between local elected representatives in Albania ⁴⁴
<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 Mallakstra: 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;

⁴² <https://rm.coe.int/16802ed0b9>

⁴³ <https://rm.coe.int/16802f95e4>

⁴⁴ 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.

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](#)⁴⁵].

ARMENIA

[Council of Europe Action Plan for Armenia 2015-2018](#)⁴⁶

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	<p>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;</p> <p>To support the CAA in the process of achieving financial sustainability;</p> <p>To strengthen the capacity of the CAA to improve its image as a recognised political institution and communicate effectively.</p>
Main activities	<p>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;</p> <p>Regular meetings of the governing bodies and consultations with members (regional seminars and specialised working groups);</p> <p>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;</p> <p>1st General Assembly for more than 10 years organised in February 2017, with high attendance (400 mayors);</p> <p>8 meetings of the Republican Council and 3 meetings of the Board in 2017 and 2018;</p> <p>1 meeting of the Oversight Committee of the CAA in 2017; 9 meetings of the Standing Committees in 2018;</p> <p>Adoption of 8 policy papers/recommendations, 9 policy briefs, 3 calls addressed to the Government and 1 call addressed to the new Prime Minister;</p> <p>Strengthening of the association's capacities to advocate, with input from experts and implementation of trainings;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>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-a-vis the local government reform agenda;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>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</p>

⁴⁵ <https://rm.coe.int/168071af10>

⁴⁶ <https://rm.coe.int/1680471d82>

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 ⁴⁷ Council of Europe Action Plan for Armenia 2015-2018 ⁴⁸
Project title	Support for the consolidation of local democracy in Armenia ⁴⁹
<i>Congress Component</i>	<i>Strengthening local elected representatives' leadership</i>
Dates	October 2013 - December 2016 ⁵⁰
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 ⁵¹ Armenian ⁵²].

⁴⁷ <https://rm.coe.int/16802ed0ba>

⁴⁸ <https://rm.coe.int/1680471d82>

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.

⁵⁰ A follow-up to this project was submitted for funding in January 2017 and is still pending.

⁵¹ <https://rm.coe.int/16806cf43c>

⁵² <https://rm.coe.int/16806cf43e>

UKRAINE	Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine 2015-2017 ⁵³
Project title	Promoting local democracy in Ukraine ⁵⁴
Dates	July 2015 – December 2017 + January – February 2018
Budget	1 498 433 € (2015-2017) + 107 007 € (2018)
Funding	Action Plan for Ukraine donors ⁵⁵
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>

⁵³ <https://rm.coe.int/16802f600e>

⁵⁴ 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 €).

⁵⁵ 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](#)⁵⁶ | [Ukrainian](#)⁵⁷];
 “Study on the Ukrainian Law on the Status of Local Councillors” [[English](#)⁵⁸ | [Ukrainian](#)⁵⁹];
 Study on “Powers and Duties of Local Councillors in the Framework of Decentralisation of Power in Ukraine” [[English](#)⁶⁰];
 Discussion paper on “Gender Equality in Local Political Life and the Gender Perspective in Local Policies in Ukraine” [[English](#)⁶¹ | [Ukrainian](#)⁶²];
 Study on “Voting Rights of Internally Displaced Persons at Local Level in Ukraine” [[English](#)⁶³] | [[Ukrainian](#)⁶⁴].

UKRAINE

Project title Strengthening the capacity of local authorities in Ukraine⁶⁵

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

⁵⁶ <https://rm.coe.int/metropolitan-governance-in-eur-and-ukr-eng/168078549e>

⁵⁷ <https://rm.coe.int/metropolitan-governance-ukr-ukr-web/1680785e45>

⁵⁸ <https://rm.coe.int/2018-01-24-study-law-on-local-councillors-eng/1680783ffd>

⁵⁹ <https://rm.coe.int/2018-01-25-study-law-on-local-councillors-ukr/1680784064>

⁶⁰ <https://rm.coe.int/study-on-powers-and-duties-of-local-councillors-in-the-framework-of-de/168078fafa>

⁶¹ <https://rm.coe.int/gender-equality-in-local-political-life-and-the-gender-perspective-in-/16807bebde>

⁶² <https://rm.coe.int/16808a2a51>

⁶³ <https://rm.coe.int/voting-rights-of-idps-at-local-level-in-ukraine-strengthening-democrac/1680933f7e>

⁶⁴ <https://rm.coe.int/ukr-voting-rights-of-idps-at-local-level-in-ukraine-strengthening-demo/1680933f7f>

⁶⁵ 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

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.

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 \(2015-2017\)](#)⁶⁶

Project title	Thematic programme “Strengthening institutional frameworks for local governance” ⁶⁷
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>

⁶⁶ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/congress/european-union-council-of-europe-partnership-for-good-governance>

⁶⁷ 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](#)⁶⁸ | [Russian](#)⁶⁹];

Institutionalised citizen participation: assessment of existing mechanisms - Georgia [[English](#)⁷⁰ | [Georgian](#)⁷¹];

Management of Change: A tool guide for local and regional authorities [[English](#)⁷² |

⁶⁸ <https://rm.coe.int/168071b235>

⁶⁹ <https://rm.coe.int/168071b345>

⁷⁰ <https://rm.coe.int/geo-institutionalised-citizen-participation-eng/1680784817>

⁷¹ <https://rm.coe.int/geo-institutionalised-citizen-participation-ka/1680784818>

⁷² <https://rm.coe.int/tool-guide-management-of-change-eng-web-version/16807848d6>

[Armenian](#)⁷³ | [Georgian](#)⁷⁴ | [Romanian](#)⁷⁵ | [Ukrainian](#)⁷⁶];
Handbook on Transparency and Citizen Participation in Armenia [[English](#)⁷⁷ | [Armenian](#)⁷⁸];
Handbook on Transparency and Citizen Participation in Georgia [[English](#)⁷⁹ | [Georgian](#)⁸⁰];
Handbook on Transparency and Citizen Participation in the Republic of Moldova [[English](#)⁸¹ | [Romanian](#)⁸²];
Handbook on Transparency and Citizen Participation in Ukraine [[English](#)⁸³ | [Ukrainian](#)⁸⁴].

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 ⁸⁵
Project title	Strengthening democratic governance at local and regional level in Morocco
Dates	April 2019 – February 2021
Budget	€ 294 000 (funding secured until 28 February 2021)
Funding	Multiple donors funding the Council of Europe Neighbourhood Partnership with Morocco ⁸⁶
Objectives	<p>To strengthen the legal framework of Morocco through the implementation of the law on regionalisation and its rightful application by the sub-national authorities;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>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.</p>
Main activities	<p>Granting of the status of “Partner for local democracy” to the Kingdom of Morocco by the Congress on 2 April 2019. Participation of the delegation of Moroccan representatives in the 36th Congress Session;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>Contribution to the National Seminar on Advanced Regionalisation in Agadir, Morocco, on 20 December 2019;</p> <p>Creation of the websites of two associations (AMPCPP and ARM) and upgrading of</p>

⁷³ <https://rm.coe.int/management-of-change-hye-web/1680786ae4>

⁷⁴ <https://rm.coe.int/management-of-change-kat-web/1680785c77>

⁷⁵ <https://rm.coe.int/management-of-change-ron-web/1680786ac6>

⁷⁶ <https://rm.coe.int/management-of-change-ukr-web/16807850ef>

⁷⁷ <https://rm.coe.int/handbook-arm-eng/168078a58c>

⁷⁸ <https://rm.coe.int/handbook-armenia-hye/168078bbe6>

⁷⁹ <https://rm.coe.int/handbook-georgia-eng/1680786b7d>

⁸⁰ <https://rm.coe.int/handbook-georgia-kat/1680793678>

⁸¹ <https://rm.coe.int/handbook-moldova-eng/168078406b>

⁸² <https://rm.coe.int/handbook-moldova-ron/1680788ff5>

⁸³ <https://rm.coe.int/handbook-ukraine-eng/168078406c>

⁸⁴ <https://rm.coe.int/handbook-ukraine-ukr/168078541c>

⁸⁵ <https://rm.coe.int/neighbourhood-partnership-2018-2021-with-morocco/168090801d>

⁸⁶ The Neighbourhood Partnership with Morocco 2018-2021 document available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/programmes/morocco>

the website for AMPCC;
 Support for the associations' members trainings (consultants framework contract);
 Support in applying the principle of Public Ethics in the political life at the local and regional levels;
 Expert support for the revision of the legislative framework, in particular for provinces and prefectures;
 Participation of the secretaries of the three national associations of territorial elected representatives in the webinar "The ELDW in the digital age";
 Webinar on Public Ethics and prevention corruption;
 Webinar on consultation mechanisms between local authorities and central government;
 Expert support to adapt the Congress' guide on Election observations to the context in Morocco.

TUNISIA

[Neighbourhood Partnership with Tunisia 2018-2021⁸⁷](#)

Project title	Promoting local governance in Tunisia
Dates	April 2019 – February 2021
Budget	€346 096 (secured funding until February 2021)
Funding	Multiple donors funding the Council of Europe Neighbourhood Partnership with Tunisia ⁸⁸
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> <p>Participation of the Congress Vice-President in the second General Assembly of the FNVT, 22 November 2019.</p> <p>Grant to the FNVT for the recruitment of two staff members in charge of communication, advocacy and relations with the members.</p> <p>Study on the internal organisation and functioning of associations of local authorities.</p> <p>Finalisation of a training module on the prevention of conflict at the local level.</p> <p>Expert support to the media coverage of the General Assembly of the FNCT.</p> <p>Awareness-raising and information of the members of the FNCT during the General Assembly on 26 September 2020 in Hammamet, including dissemination of the "public ethics collection" of the Congress.</p> <p>Webinar on the promotion of ethics and the fight against corruption and the promotion of ethics at the local level, 16 October 2020.</p> <p>Recruitment of 2 long-term experts to support the drafting and implementation of the advocacy and communication strategy of the Federation.</p>

⁸⁷ <https://rm.coe.int/prems-119218-gbr-1501-neighbourhood-partnership-with-tunisia-2018-2021/16808e4515>

⁸⁸ The Neighbourhood Partnership with Tunisia 2018-2021 document available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/programmes/tunisia>

Webinar on consultation mechanisms between local authorities and central government, 24 November 2020.

B. Completed projects

MOROCCO	Neighbourhood Partnership with Morocco 2015-2017 ⁸⁹
Project title	Strengthening local and regional democracy in Morocco
Dates	January 2016 – December 2017 ⁹⁰
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>
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-</p>

⁸⁹ <https://rm.coe.int/16802f7c60>

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.

TUNISIA

[Neighbourhood Partnership with Tunisia 2015-2017](#)⁹¹

Project title

Promoting local and regional democracy in Tunisia

Dates

January 2016 – December 2017⁹²

Budget

99 358 €

Funding

Norway, Estonia, France, Italy, Monaco and Portugal

Objectives

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;

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;

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;

To strengthen the role and capacities of associations of local and regional authorities (especially in terms of leadership);

To support the development of participatory democracy, with a particular focus on the role of young people, women and civil society.

Main activities

Revision of the Charter of the National Federation of Tunisian Towns and preparation of a manual of internal procedures and rules (in progress);

Study visit during the 32nd session of the Congress (Strasbourg, 27-30 March 2017);

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 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)

⁹¹ <https://rm.coe.int/16802f7dfa>

(Tunis, 20-21 October 2018);

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