

Co-operation activities of the Congress in Ukraine (2015-2017)

Situation as at 1 June 2017

I. Introduction

To provide a practical response to the challenges encountered at grassroots level in the Council of Europe member States, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe increased its commitment to developing its co-operation activities. Initiated in 2011 with the adoption of a new orientation of its action, the Congress involvement in the Council of Europe Action Plans was further specified by the *Guidelines for co-operation activities*, approved by the Bureau of the Congress on 23 March 2015¹, and reaffirmed in its 2017-2020 priorities.²

The Congress and its members are a veritable reference point for territorial democracy and represent a valuable asset to the local democracy components of the Council of Europe Action Plans, some of which are implemented jointly with the Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform.³ The Congress' added-value is widely recognised by other Council of Europe bodies and international donors, and has resulted in an increased number of funded projects being implemented by the Congress Secretariat. The co-operation activities are complementary to the statutory activities of the Congress, its Chambers and Committees, and support the implementation of the Congress recommendations in specific member States, which aim to address the problems identified during monitoring, post-monitoring, and election observation activities.

Building on its expertise and experience in the area of local and regional democracy, the Congress aims at enhancing the competencies and institutional capacities of local authorities and their associations, as well as the capacities of local elected politicians, fostering regular consultation between all levels of government, and increasing dialogue with citizens.

Based on a demand-driven and result-oriented approach, the Congress Secretariat has developed a series of peer-to-peer exchanges and interactive sessions involving Congress members from other Council of Europe member States as well as local and international experts. This set of bottom-up activities are designed to be easily adaptable to specific target groups, relevant themes and local contexts.

Empowering new generations of local politicians

Co-operation activities build on the assumption that the decentralisation processes and good local governance need continuous political support and endorsement by, and empowerment of, all stakeholders, including local authorities and citizens. With its projects, the Congress supports mayors and councillors in their roles as leaders for change and everyday actors of local democracy. Moreover, local governance being a matter for all community residents and in particular for the younger generation, activities for local authorities are complemented with a focus on young people engaged in social and political activities at the local level.

¹ [CG-BUR-2015\(27\)31](#) – “Improving the impact of Congress recommendations, Guidelines for co-operation activities in Council of Europe member states”

² [Congress priorities 2017-2020](#)

³ The Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform is a Unit of the Directorate General Democracy of the Council of Europe Secretariat General.

The Congress is committed to empowering new generations of politicians who are mostly keen on change. Through peer-to-peer exchanges, mayors, councillors and young local leaders increase their knowledge on the European principles of local governance, in particular the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government (CETS No. 122). More specifically, they debate and share experiences on tackling corruption and increasing transparency and accountability in local governance and decision making, and on developing democratic tools to further engage citizens in local affairs.

Promoting the right of local authorities to be consulted

In addition, the Congress creates opportunities for local elected representatives to exchange among themselves and to find common positions, so as to increase their power of advocacy vis-à-vis the central institutions. Activities are therefore designed to facilitate the participation of local and regional authorities in framing national policies within a sustainable institutional framework and to institutionalise a sustainable and formal mechanism of dialogue, to ensure a regular consultation, as provided by the Charter. The Congress also provides support to associations in order to develop their institutional capacities and their structures so as to improve the level of services provided to their members.

Supporting peer-to-peer exchange

Congress members from all 47 member States have a significant role to play in all co-operation activities as they form the basis for peer-exchanges, thereby giving a real added-value to the Congress' work. They not only share their own experience but can also learn and strengthen their network with peers from across the Council of Europe member States. Additional information is available on the [Congress co-operation activities webpage](#).⁴

This document contains detailed, up-to-date information on the co-operation project implemented by the Congress in Ukraine, as well as additional (factual) information in the Appendix.

II. The project “Promoting Local Democracy in Ukraine” (2015-2017)

The project “Promoting Local Democracy in Ukraine”⁵ aims to improve the implementation of democratic principles in Ukraine by enhancing the institutional and leadership capacities of local elected authorities, and disseminating nation-wide best practices of local democracy.⁶ It is built upon the continuous political dialogue that the Congress has with Ukrainian authorities – both at national and local level - within the monitoring, post-monitoring and observation of elections, and as follow-up to the roadmap for the implement of the Congress recommendation signed in May 2015. Detailed information is available on the [project webpage](#).⁷

Achievements and recent developments

Through this project, the Congress aims to create a community of local development actors – mayors, local councillors and young local leaders⁸ – who are empowered as drivers of change and who will translate the reforms into renewed governance at the local level. In this regard, the Congress contributes to fostering the awareness of/on reform and democratisation, and the ownership of all relevant local stakeholders. It therefore participates in the change which Ukraine has embarked on – with the contribution and experience from experts and local politicians from twelve Council of Europe member States.⁹

As a result of these exchanges and of newly acquired knowledge, the participants are inspired to develop and implement initiatives in their communities. Those local initiatives are being monitored in order to identify good practices to be further disseminated in forthcoming activities. A mid-term evaluation will be conducted to provide evidence on the influence of the project, in order to enhance the promotion of local democracy in Ukraine and to better meet the upcoming needs of the target groups. Most of the participants noted a positive influence of the Congress on their ability to engage further with their community and on their

4 <http://www.coe.int/t/congress/Activities/cooperation/>

5 As part of the [Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine 2015-2017](#).

6 Started in July 2015 building on the results of the activities carried out under two previous projects: “Immediate Measures Package for Ukraine” (April 2014-December 2014) and “Strengthening the capacity of local authorities in Ukraine” (April 2014-May 2015).

7 <http://www.coe.int/t/congress/Activities/Cooperation/Ukraine>

8 Young local leaders are local elected representatives (mayors and local councillors), representatives of civil society organisations and of media who are aged between 18 and 35.

9 Congress members and experts who shared their experience with the participants were from Albania, Armenia, Finland, Georgia, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, in addition to members of the Ukrainian delegation to the Congress.

understanding of the role they can play in inducing change. In particular, they underlined the inspiration and motivation drawn from hearing concrete examples of change from their peers.

In total, 120 mayors and 165 local councillors, including heads of local councils, strengthened their institutional and leadership capacities; and 180 young local leaders were inspired and empowered to get further engaged at local level. Debates within activities¹⁰ revolve around the principles of local self-government and good governance, the current reform in the country and experience of amalgamation, measures to increase the transparency and accountability of local authorities when answering to the needs of their citizens, and various ways to further engage at local level.

Good practices related to ethical behaviour and anti-corruption measures were identified and discussed, as well as new experiences of citizen participation. As a specific example, following a Congress activity in April 2016, the Kyiv City Council introduced a number of policies to enhance transparency and public ethics¹¹, and to further engage with citizens through participatory budgeting¹². Kyiv city councillors were invited to share their experience with peers from other regions in December 2016.

A call for proposals for mayors involved in the project to implement local initiatives aimed at enhancing transparency and accountability, was launched in late April. Up to six municipalities will be selected and benefit from expert support, peer reviews and a small grant.

In addition, an analytical paper on the powers and duties of local councillors in the framework of decentralisation in Ukraine was drawn up and is regularly updated and disseminated during all activities.

Prospects

A networking event, Forum for Local Democracy in Ukraine, will be organised during the first week of July 2017, addressing the same target groups (mayors, local councillors and young local leaders). In addition, thematic roundtables will gather representatives of central and local authorities and their associations to discuss future legislation to be adopted, in particular on powers and responsibilities of local elected representative, thereby promoting regular consultation between central and local authorities, one of the key principles of the Charter.

Furthermore, negotiations for the new Action Plan 2018 – 2020 are currently underway with the Ukrainian national authorities, with a view to endorsement by the end of 2017. Within this framework, the Congress stands ready to pursue its support to the decentralisation process, and to local and regional authorities in tackling upcoming challenges in a modern, responsible and efficient manner.

III. EU-CoE Partnership for Good Governance (PGG) for Eastern Partnership countries (2015 – 2017)¹³

Ukraine is part of the thematic programme “Strengthening institutional frameworks for local governance”, implemented by the Congress¹⁴ since the beginning of 2015, through the Partnership for Good Governance for 2015-2017 for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus. The Congress has made significant headway in enhancing the institutional frameworks and establishment of a transparent, reliable and efficient local self-government, in line with the provisions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government within the thematic programme. Detailed information is available on the [project webpage](#).¹⁵

10 7 workshops – Mayors leaders for change; 4 workshops – Councillors: everyday actors of local democracy; 7 seminars: young local leaders: driving force of local democracy

11 New regulations were adopted: a new territorial community statute of Kyiv, with articulated values and principles of ethical standards of co-operation between the city council and the territorial community (Kyiv City Council regulation No. 08/231-2047, registered on 29.04.2016); a new regulation of Kyiv city council (adopted 7 July 2016 N 579/579) which for the first time clearly stipulated provisions on prevention of corruption (Art.7), conflict of interest (Art.8) and ethics in the city council (Art.9), based on the European Code of conduct for the political integrity of local and regional elected representatives. In addition, Kyiv city councillors are now declaring potential conflict of interest during the plenary sessions and during committees meetings.

12 495 projects were proposed, among which 41% were initiated by women

13 The Eastern Partnership is the European Union’s policy initiative based on shared values of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law. Co-operation activities in the EU Eastern Partnership countries are being implemented by the Council of Europe under a “Partnership for Good Governance” (PGG) (2015-2017).

14 In partnership with the Directorate General of Democracy and its Centre of Expertise for local government reform.

15 <http://www.coe.int/t/congress/Activities/cooperation/PCF>

Achievements and recent developments

Three municipalities from Ukraine (Nemishaeve, Netchyntsi, Slavutyč) were selected in December 2016, and signed joint agreements with the Council of Europe in March 2017, to implement local initiatives on efficiency, accountability and integrity in local governance thereby reflecting the knowledge acquired from the peer-to-peer work.¹⁶

Prospects

A “Community of practice”¹⁷ was established in January 2016 as a regional platform for exchange providing regular updates on the current developments in the countries concerned and adapting the programme to local needs while adopting a differentiated approach. It has led to concrete proposals by national associations of local authorities for additional country-specific activities in 2017, enabling a better response to, and implementation of, Congress monitoring recommendations and roadmap for their implementation in the respective countries. Next meeting of the Community of practice will be held in Kyiv, Ukraine on 29 June 2017, to discuss the support to local initiatives on ethics, transparency and accountability. It will be also used as an opportunity to mark the beginning of closer co-operation between three associations of local authorities from Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova by signing a Memorandum of understanding.

APPENDIX – SUMMARY OF PROJECT (situation as at 1 June 2017)

UKRAINE	The activities are included in the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine 2015-2017, approved by the Committee of Ministers on 21 January 2015. They build on the experience gained during the implementation of two projects within the previous Action Plan and the “Immediate measures package”.
Title of the project led by the Congress	Promoting local democracy in Ukraine
Funding	Donors of the Action Plan Ukraine 2015 - 2017
Overall project budget	€2,217,450
Duration	July 2015 – December 2017
Congress staff recruited for the project	Strasbourg: Part-time project co-ordinator (B5) – 50% Part-time project assistant (B3) – 75% Kyiv: Project manager (A2) Project officer (B4) Project assistant (B2)
Congress members involved	Liisa Ansala, Finland (L, ILDG), Pikria Avaliani, Georgia (L, SOC), Robert Biedron, Poland (L, SOC), Andrew Boff, United Kingdom (R, ECR), Marc Cools, Belgium (L, GILD-ILD), Svitlana Bohatyrychuk-Kryvko, Ukraine (L, ECR), Eva Cernigoj, Slovenia (R, ILDG), Mairi Evans, United Kingdom (L, NR), Mary Hanna Hourigan, Ireland (L, EPP), Saara Ilvessalo, Finland (R, SOC), Anders Knape, Sweden, (L, EPP/CCE), Bernardka Krnc, Slovenia (L, ILDG), Serhiy Mazur, Ukraine (L, ECR), Dobrica Milovanovic, Serbia (L, EPP/CCE), Sergiy Morgunov, Ukraine (L, NR), Vitaliy Oluyko, Ukraine (R, SOC), Saimir Plaku, Albania (R, NR), Vladimir Prebilič, Slovenia (L, SOC), Volodymyr Prokopiv, Ukraine (L, EPP), Oleksii Reznikov, Ukraine (L, ILDG), Nataliya Romanova, Ukraine (R, ILDG), Sevdia Ugrehelidze, Georgia (R, EPP/CCE), Luzette Wagenaar-Kron, the Netherlands (L, EPP), Robert Zeman, Czech Republic (L, EPP), Nino Zurabishvili, Georgia (L, SOC) (<i>since September 2015</i>)

¹⁶ They were supported by information sessions organised in each country, in co-operation with the national associations of local authorities.

¹⁷ The Community of practice on local democracy in the Eastern partnership countries gathers together representatives of national associations of local authorities, experts and civil society who share their knowledge, experience and know-how.