

49th SESSION

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49th SESSION**Ukraine: Towards a Just Peace**Declaration 13 (2025)¹

1. Referring to its Declaration 5 (2022) “The Russian Federation’s war against Ukraine”, Declaration 6 (2023) “The anniversary of Russia’s war against Ukraine”, Declaration 8 (2024) “The second anniversary of the Russian Federation’s war against Ukraine”, Declaration 9 (2024) “The destruction of cultural heritage in Ukraine” and Declaration 11 (2025) “Recovery and reconstruction in Ukraine”, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) reiterates its condemnation, in the strongest terms, of the ongoing war of aggression being waged by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, in breach of international law and the Statute of the Council of Europe. At a time when geopolitical assumptions are being challenged and multilateralism is under threat, the Congress reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.
2. The Congress utterly deplores and condemns once again the fact that the Russian Federation’s war of aggression against Ukraine, started in February 2014, continues to cause the mass loss of innocent lives and human suffering, as well as the targeted destruction of cultural heritage and of vital infrastructure, which represent human rights violations unprecedented in recent European history. Millions of people, the majority of whom are children, continue to be displaced from their homes. Furthermore, thousands of Ukrainians are still in captivity and subject to violence, inhuman treatment and torture.
3. For more than three and a half years, Ukrainians have defended their country with strength and courage against the Russian Federation’s ongoing brutal, illegal, unprovoked and unjustified full-scale military invasion. The Congress commends the work of Ukraine’s local and regional authorities to ensure the provision of emergency support and the functioning of public services in the most difficult of circumstances, and commends the support subnational authorities from other member states have provided for this.
4. The Congress strongly supports efforts to bring an end to the Russian Federation’s war of aggression, in the understanding that only a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, based on the UN Charter and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within internationally recognised borders extending to its territorial waters, can be a sustainable peace whereby Ukraine’s territory and communities can prosper in safety and security.
5. In this respect, it welcomes the meeting between the American and Ukrainian presidents and the European Union and NATO leaders on 18 August 2025 and, while deploring the Russian Federation’s subsequent armed attacks on Ukraine and the deaths and injuries that this has caused, hopes that a meaningful peace process will soon begin.
6. The Congress is clear that for diplomacy to succeed, there must be the engagement of Europe and the United States, which will both be central to providing the legally binding, robust and credible security guarantees that Ukraine needs. In turn, this will create the conditions for democratic security, whereby the people of Ukraine will be free to live in a future shaped by human rights, democracy and the rule of law, underpinned by effective multilevel governance, including at the local and regional levels.

¹ Debated and adopted by the Congress on 28 October 2025 (see document [CG\(2025\)49-09](#)), co-rapporteurs: Martine DIESCHBURG-NICKELS, Luxembourg (L, ILDG) and Gunn Marit HELGESEN, Norway (R, EPP/CCE).

7. Recognising that accountability will be required for a just peace, the Congress remains committed to its role in supporting local and regional authorities in Ukraine to contribute, within their competencies, to the work of the Register of Damage which records evidence of damage, loss and injury on the ground.

8. The Congress also emphasises that a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine will be an important element of justice. It therefore welcomes the signature on 26 June 2025 of an agreement on establishing that tribunal, including its Statute, by the President of Ukraine and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. This is an important step towards ending impunity for those responsible for the crimes that have caused loss, damage and destruction in so many communities across Ukraine.

9. Equally, there must be specific measures to ensure justice for the youngest Ukrainians, given their particular circumstances. In this regard, the Congress also welcomes the appointment on 5 February 2025 of a Special Envoy of the Secretary General on the situation of children of Ukraine and stands ready to provide what support it can to aid the return of deported or displaced children to their families and local communities, and help Ukrainian local authorities as they seek to provide services including health, education and trauma-informed care that are vital to the welfare of Ukrainian children who have been exposed to various and often terrible experiences during the Russian Federation's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine. Other groups, including veterans and returning IDPs, also require tailored assistance on which the Congress is ready to provide whatever support it can.

10. The Congress underlines that work on the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine must not wait for the agreement of a just peace, but is already underway now and should continue to be implemented at the local and regional levels in line with changing circumstances. This includes the extensive efforts of governments at all levels to support citizens and repair the damage caused by Russian military attacks on homes, businesses and infrastructure, and the commendable work done by local and regional authorities, acting individually and in alliance, to ensure the ongoing provision of vital public services such as housing, transport and the supply of water and energy.

11. The Congress reiterates that the further decentralisation of power in Ukraine will support more efficient recovery and reconstruction. It supports the process on decentralisation reform currently underway, and on which the Congress is working closely with Ukrainian counterparts, including through its Centre of Expertise for Multilevel Governance, with the aim of ensuring empowered citizens and communities that can make a greater contribution to a shared, peaceful and prosperous future. Alongside this, the Congress emphasises the potential of its project "Strengthening multilevel governance and local democracy to support Ukraine's recovery", launched on 4 June 2025 as part of its contribution to the Council of Europe's Action Plan on Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction for Ukraine, as a means to take further positive steps in this direction, noting the importance of transparency, integrity and citizen participation in the future of local and regional governance in Ukraine.

12. The Congress underlines the importance of "rebuilding better" by establishing long-term and predictable funding mechanisms to support local and regional authorities in Ukraine as they lead recovery and reconstruction efforts. In addition to financial support, targeted capacity-building and training programmes are essential to strengthen the institutional resilience of municipalities, particularly in post-conflict governance, service delivery, and citizen engagement. Furthermore, the Congress stresses that reconstruction must be environmentally sustainable, integrating climate resilience and ecological restoration into planning and implementation to ensure a future that is not only peaceful and democratic, but also green and sustainable.

13. At a time of uncertainty, but with the hope that a meaningful peace process to end Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine might be possible, the Congress reaffirms its solidarity with the Ukrainian people and authorities and its commitment to a common, democratic future based on respect for international law and a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.

49th SESSION**Attacks on freedom of expression in political assemblies**Declaration 14 (2025)¹

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to the Reykjavík Principles of Democracy adopted by the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe on 16-17 May 2023. It underlines the commitment expressed by the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe member States to securing and strengthening democracy and good governance at all levels throughout Europe and to working together to protect and promote the three fundamental, interdependent and inalienable principles of democracy, rule of law and human rights, as enshrined in the Statute of the Council of Europe and in the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.
2. The Congress welcomes the Heads of State and Governments’ recognition in these Principles that democracy is the only means to ensure that everyone can live in a peaceful, prosperous and free society. It also welcomes their reaffirmation of their commitment to meet their obligations under international law and to prevent and resist democratic backsliding on our continent, including by standing firm against authoritarian tendencies.
3. The Congress emphasises the particular importance in democratic societies of guaranteeing pluralism and the right to freedom of expression.
4. It draws attention to the established case-law of the European Court of Human Rights, according to which the promotion of free political debate is an important feature of a democratic society, and which recognises that freedom of expression is of the highest importance in this context. The authorities’ margin of appreciation for assessing the necessity of measures restricting freedom of expression is therefore particularly narrow in the political context. The Court has also underlined that one of the principal characteristics of democracy is the possibility it offers of resolving problems through public debate.
5. The Congress expresses its deep concern at the increasing numbers of local and regional elected representatives who have been placed in detention in Council of Europe member States in recent years, the majority of whom belong to parties that are not in the majority at national level.
6. It urges all Council of Europe member States to respect fully the standards of the European Convention on Human Rights, including those concerning freedom of expression, and emphasises in particular that criminal proceedings should never be used as reprisals against persons expressing views contrary to those of the authorities.

¹ Debated and adopted by the Congress on 28 October 2025 (see document [CG\(2025\)49-21](#)), co-rapporteurs: Véronique BERTHOLLE, France (L, SOC/G/PD) and Peter DRENTH, Netherlands (R, EPP/CCE).

49th SESSION

Monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Poland

Recommendation 531 (2025)¹

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:

a. Article 2, paragraph 1.b, of the Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities appended to Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2020)1 relating to the Congress, stipulating that one of the aims of the Congress is “to submit proposals to the Committee of Ministers in order to promote local and regional democracy”;

b. Article 1, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities appended to Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2020)1 relating to the Congress, stipulating that “The Congress shall prepare on a regular basis country-by-country reports on the situation of local and regional democracy in all member States and in States which have applied to join the Council of Europe, and shall ensure the effective implementation of the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government.”;

c. Chapter XVIII of the Rules and Procedures of the Congress on the organisation of monitoring procedures;

d. the Contemporary commentary by the Congress on the explanatory report to the European Charter of Local Self-Government adopted by the Statutory Forum on 7 December 2020;

e. the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Goals 11 on sustainable cities and communities and 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions;

f. the Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 27 September 2017;

g. Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of citizens in local public life, adopted on 21 March 2018;

h. Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on supervision of local authorities’ activities, adopted on 4 April 2019;

i. Congress [Recommendation 431 \(2019\)](#) “Local and regional democracy in Poland”;

j. the explanatory memorandum on the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Poland.

2. The Congress points out that:

¹. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 28 October 2025 (see document [CG\(2025\)49-10](#), explanatory memorandum), co-rapporteurs: Anders KNAPE, Sweden (L, EPP/CCE) and Andrew BOFF, United Kingdom (R, ECR).

a. Poland joined the Council of Europe on 26 November 1991. It signed the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122, "the Charter") on 19 February 1993 and ratified it on 22 November 1993, with no reservations. The Charter entered into force in Poland on 1 March 1994;

b. the Committee on the Monitoring of the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and on the respect of Human Rights and the Rule of Law at local and regional levels ("the Monitoring Committee") decided to examine the situation of local and regional democracy in Poland in the light of the Charter. It instructed Anders Knape, Sweden (L, EPP/CCE), and Andrew Boff, United Kingdom (R, ECR), with the task of preparing and submitting to the Congress a report monitoring the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Poland;

c. the monitoring visits took place from 22 to 24 October 2024 and on 28 May 2025. During the visits, the Congress delegation met the representatives of various institutions at all levels of government. The detailed programmes of the visits are appended to the explanatory memorandum;

d. the co-rapporteurs wish to thank the Permanent Representation of Poland to the Council of Europe and all those whom they met during the visits.

3. The Congress notes with satisfaction that in Poland:

a. the constitutional and legal regulations provide adequate frameworks for democratic local and regional self-government, which is in line with the principles and requirements of the European Charter of Local Self-Government;

b. the adoption of the 2024 Act on the revenues of local government units, adopted in consultation with subnational representatives, represents significant progress which is expected to offer more predictability and stability in local financial management;

c. a genuine consultation process has recently been re-established with the national associations of subnational governments with the organisation of regular Joint Commission meetings, following the previous Congress recommendation;

d. municipalities, districts and voivodeships enjoy freedom of association to defend their interests.

4. The Congress expresses its concerns on the following issues:

a. many competences remain re-centralised;

b. the central regulation remains too extensive, both for own and delegated tasks, limiting the autonomy of local authorities in how they perform their responsibilities;

c. regulatory constraints and lack of financial means prevent local and regional representatives from hiring and retaining high quality staff;

d. the financial resources attributed to local and regional authorities are not commensurate with their constitutional and legal responsibilities;

e. there is a lack of sufficient financial resources derived from local taxes and charges of which subnational authorities have the possibility of determining the rate.

5. In the light of the foregoing, the Congress requests that the Committee of Ministers invite the authorities of Poland to:

a. continue efforts on the path to decentralisation, starting with a review of the competences that have been re-centralised, in close cooperation with local and regional representatives and their associations;

b. avoid overregulation of both own and delegated tasks;

c. ensure that local and regional governments have the capacity to hire and retain high quality staff;

d. allocate sufficient financial resources to local authorities, thereby respecting the principle that resources should match functions and ensure that the transfer of delegated competences to subnational level is accompanied by concomitant finances;

e. enable all tiers of government to establish local taxes and strengthen fiscal powers at local level in order to increase their fiscal capacity;

f. undertake regular monitoring of the implementation of the new Act on the revenues of local government units and provide the necessary adjustments, in close co-operation with local and regional representatives and their associations;

g. consider signing and ratifying the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No 207).

6. The Congress calls on the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to take account of this recommendation on the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Poland and the accompanying explanatory memorandum in their activities relating to this member State.

49th SESSION

County and municipal elections in Finland (13 April 2025)

Recommendation 532 (2025)¹

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:

a. Article 1, paragraph 3 of the Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities appended to the Committee of Ministers’ Statutory Resolution CM/Res (2020)1 relating to the Congress;

b. Chapter XIX of the Congress Rules and Procedures on the practical organisation of election observation missions;

c. the principles laid down in the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122) which was ratified by Finland on 3 June 1991;

d. Congress Recommendation 408 (2017) on Local elections in Finland (9 April 2017);

e. the invitation by the authorities of Finland, dated 4 November 2024, to observe the county and municipal elections held in the country on 13 April 2025.

2. The Congress reiterates the fact that genuinely democratic local and regional elections are part of a process to establish and maintain democratic governance and that observation of grassroots elections is a key element in the role of the Congress as guardian of democracy at local and regional level.

3. The Congress acknowledges that the legal framework is conducive to holding genuine local and county elections in Finland and guarantees the fundamental principles of transparent, inclusive and fair electoral processes.

4. The Congress notes with satisfaction that:

a. the 2025 wellbeing services county (WSC) and municipal elections embodied the inclusiveness and strength of democratic processes in Finland, which are characterised by a high level of trust;

b. the electoral system offered extensive opportunities for all residents to vote on or before election day, including Swedish-speaking citizens, non-Finnish citizens, voters with disabilities – with nearly all polling stations accessible – and those in institutions; the advanced voting procedures, used by over 50% of all voters, were conducted in a transparent and open manner;

c. the election administration at all levels conducted electoral preparations in a professional and independent manner and enjoyed a high degree of public confidence, embodied in the almost complete lack of electoral disputes;

¹ Debated and adopted by the Congress on 28 October 2025 (see document [CG\(2025\)49-12](#), explanatory memorandum), co-rapporteurs: Gobnait NI MHUIMNEACAIN, Ireland (L, ILDG) and Kristoffer TAMSONS, Sweden, (R, EPP/CCE).

d. the election campaign was competitive, peaceful and centred on local issues and only a few incidents of hostile rhetoric and no systematic disinformation campaigns were reported;

e. despite financial hurdles, Finland's dynamic and vibrant media landscape – supported by strong freedom of expression and integrity safeguards – provided voters with trusted, balanced and extensive information throughout the election period, allowing them to make an informed choice; voters seem well-equipped to counter disinformation, due to strong civic and media education initiatives;

f. the number of women elected in municipal and county council elections increased, exceeding the 50% mark in the county elections, even in the absence of legally mandated quotas. These figures bring Finland closer to gender parity at local and regional levels;

g. the transparency requirements applied to campaign finance were efficient and recourse to voluntary disclosure of interim campaign reports by candidates before the election day increased;

h. election day, from opening to counting, was orderly and well-managed and polling station staff were committed to carrying out their responsibilities effectively and professionally, despite the increased workload of having to handle two elections.

5. At the same time, the Congress points out the following issues:

a. given the recent establishment of the WSCs and the first ever organisation of both elections on the same day, confusion persisted among candidates and voters alike on the role of WSCs, which might have contributed to the lower turnout;

b. the dual voting procedure was not always understood by the electorate, who often confused candidate numbers, leading to unusually high numbers of invalid ballot papers and an increased workload for staff;

c. the fact that a politician could hold up to four distinct political mandates was seen as a challenge for the promotion of political diversity, as well as leading to a level of conflicting responsibilities; on the other hand, both mayoral and county council head positions remain largely unelected, limiting political leadership at both levels of self-government;

d. participation of youth and non-Finnish citizens both as voters or as candidates remained lower than that of the average population;

e. during the campaign, vandalism of electoral billboards reached higher levels than in previous elections, resulting in additional expenses for candidates;

f. the election dispute resolution system offers restricted legal remedies during the electoral process, challenging the right to prompt and effective remedy;

g. the lack of a spending cap and of a requirement for all candidates to submit a financial report – as only elected candidates are required to do so – as well as the high threshold for disclosing private donations, undermined transparency, accountability and the level playing field; moreover, the sanctioning power of the National Audit Office remains limited to non-compliance cases;

h. on election day, despite the electoral system being grounded in trust and experience, some shortcomings regarding ballot handling and security safeguards were noted, including the lack of provisions requiring the total number of ballot papers to be counted upon opening the ballot box, instances of ballot papers being left unattended during counting, diverging opinions on polling station set-up and inconsistencies in sealing of ballot boxes;

i. while Congress observers were generally welcomed, the rights and status of international election observers are not provided for by law, a situation not in line with Article 8 of the Copenhagen Document.

6. In the light of the above, the Congress invites the authorities of Finland to:

- a. strengthen citizen participation efforts to boost their understanding of the role of WSCs. The Congress again highlights the importance of sufficient financial autonomy for the counties to manage a substantial share of local affairs, in accordance with the Congress Recommendation 516 (2024) “Monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Finland”;
 - b. communicate widely on the voting procedures in case of dual elections and consider steps such as double ballot booths, clearer ballot paper design and increased technical assistance to limit the number of invalid ballot papers;
 - c. consider, as part of efforts to promote local and regional democracy, setting up incentives for local councils to elect mayors, in order to strengthen political profile leadership at local level, notably in larger urban zones, and introducing clauses to limit cumulative political mandates;
 - d. intensify voter education efforts targeting the participation of youth and non-Finnish residents as voters and candidates, via incentives and visibility campaigns in different languages;
 - e. promote public messaging that emphasise the respect of political campaign materials;
 - f. strengthen the electoral complaints and appeals framework by introducing clear and timely judicial remedies during the electoral process;
 - g. expand financial transparency by requiring that all candidates, regardless of the election outcome, submit their financial reports, introducing dissuasive sanctions for campaign finance violations and a cap on campaign expenditures;
 - h. introduce mandatory training for all members of the election administration to ensure consistent electoral practice, enhance safeguards for handling of sensitive electoral materials before and after election day and improve reconciliation procedures;
 - i. adopt legislation on the rights and status of domestic and international observers.
7. The Congress calls on the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to take account of this recommendation regarding the 2025 county and municipal elections in Finland and the accompanying explanatory memorandum in their activities relating to this member State.

49th SESSION

Monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Slovenia

Recommendation 533 (2025)¹

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:
 - a. Article 2, paragraph 1.b, of the Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities appended to Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2020)1 relating to the Congress, stipulating that one of the aims of the Congress is “to submit proposals to the Committee of Ministers in order to promote local and regional democracy”;
 - b. Article 1, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities appended to Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2020)1 relating to the Congress, stipulating that “The Congress shall prepare on a regular basis country-by-country reports on the situation of local and regional democracy in all member States and in States which have applied to join the Council of Europe, and shall ensure the effective implementation of the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government.”;
 - c. Chapter XVIII of the Rules and Procedures of the Congress on the organisation of monitoring procedures;
 - d. the Contemporary commentary by the Congress on the explanatory report to the European Charter of Local Self-Government adopted by the Statutory Forum on 7 December 2020;
 - e. the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Goals 11 on sustainable cities and communities and 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions;
 - f. the Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 27 September 2017;
 - g. Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of citizens in local public life, adopted on 21 March 2018;
 - h. Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on supervision of local authorities’ activities, adopted on 4 April 2019;
 - i. Congress Recommendation 421 (2018) “Local democracy in Slovenia”;
 - j. the explanatory memorandum on the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Slovenia.

¹. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Local Authorities and adopted by the Congress on 29 October 2025 (see document [CPL\(2025\)49-02](#), explanatory memorandum), co-rapporteurs: Ulla Santti, Finland (SOC/G/PD) and Konstantinos Koukas, Greece (EPP/CCE)

2. The Congress points out that:

- a. Slovenia joined the Council of Europe on 14 May 1993. It signed the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122, "the Charter") on 11 October 1994 and ratified it on 15 November 1996. The Charter entered into force in Slovenia on 1 March 1997;
- b. Slovenia signed the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No. 207) on 16 November 2009 and ratified it on 6 September 2011;
- c. the Committee on the Monitoring of the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and on the respect of Human Rights and the Rule of Law at local and regional levels ("the Monitoring Committee") decided to examine the situation of local democracy in Slovenia in light of the Charter. It instructed Konstantinos Koukas, Greece (L, EPP/CCE) and Ulla Santti, Finland (L, SOC/G/PD) with the task of preparing and submitting to the Congress a report on the application of the Charter in Slovenia. The delegation was assisted by Prof. Angel Moreno Molina, President of the Group of Independent Experts on the European Charter of Local Self-Government, and by the Congress Secretariat;
- d. the monitoring visit took place from 17 to 19 December 2024. During the visit, the Congress delegation met the representatives of various institutions at all levels of government. The detailed programme of the meetings is appended to the explanatory memorandum;
- e. the co-rapporteurs wish to thank the Permanent Representation of Slovenia to the Council of Europe and all those whom they met during the visit.

3. The Congress notes with satisfaction:

- a. the positive overall situation of local self-government in Slovenia as well as the satisfactory implementation of the Charter and its Additional Protocol;
- b. a good and strengthened climate of consultation and negotiation between the central government and local authorities, especially regarding financing, as a positive development since the previous monitoring visit;
- c. the agreement reached in 2024 between the Government and the local authorities' associations on the amount of the lump sum for 2025-2026 budget years and the adoption of legal amendments to take into account year-on-year cost growth in the calculation of average expenditure of municipalities;
- d. a variety of judicial mechanisms available to local authorities to defend their rights and the principle of local self-government;
- e. the adoption of legal amendments to improve the financial compensation of mayors.

4. The Congress points out that the following issues should be given particular attention:

- a. overregulation and an excessive number of prior reports and opinions from the State ministries and agencies that the municipalities need to obtain before approving a measure at the local level, in particular in the area of urban development planning, reduce local authorities' scope of action;
- b. municipalities continue to be largely dependent on centrally allocated resources and receive a relatively high amount of earmarked funds, which may limit their financial autonomy within the meaning of the Charter.

5. In the light of the foregoing, the Congress requests that the Committee of Ministers invite the authorities of Slovenia to:

- a. reduce the number of prior reports and opinions that municipalities must obtain from the state level, particularly on urban development plans, to lower the financial and administrative burden on municipalities in implementing these tasks;
 - b. strengthen fiscal powers of municipalities, increase the ratio of non-earmarked grants in comparison to earmarked ones and consistently ensure that the financial resources made available to local authorities cover all actual costs incurred in the implementation of their responsibilities allowing these authorities to have greater financial autonomy;
 - c. in cooperation with the associations of local authorities, pursue discussions about the municipal financing system in order to explore various ways to reduce municipalities' extensive reliance on intergovernmental transfers;
 - d. fully implement the legal amendments on the remuneration of mayors.
6. The Congress calls on the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to take account of this recommendation on the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Slovenia and the accompanying explanatory memorandum in their activities relating to this member State.

49th SESSION**Addressing the housing crisis in European cities through social housing innovations**Recommendation 534 (2025)¹

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe refers (“the Congress”) to:
 - a. the European Social Charter (revised) of the Council of Europe (CETS No. 163), and notably its Articles 30 and 31, respectively guaranteeing the right to protection against poverty and social exclusion and the right to housing;
 - b. the “Vilnius Declaration” adopted by the High-Level Conference on the European Social Charter on 4 July 2024 in Vilnius, Lithuania, which recalls that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, that this includes social rights, such as rights related to work, education, housing, social protection, health and well-being, as well as the human rights aspects of the environment and that local and regional authorities are competent in these areas;
 - c. Congress Resolution 475 (2021) and Recommendation 463 (2021) on Home sharing platforms: challenges and opportunities for municipalities;
 - d. the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25, and the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 11(1), which recognise adequate housing as part of the right to an adequate standard of living ;
 - e. the United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (UNSDG) under which housing contributes directly or indirectly to the implementation of most of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, serving as a precondition for building inclusive, equitable, safe, resilient and sustainable cities;
 - f. the explanatory memorandum on “Addressing the housing crisis in European cities through social housing innovations” (CPL(2025)49-03).
2. The Congress notes with concern that:
 - a. in most Council of Europe member States, different cities and towns are affected by the current European housing crisis to varying degrees;
 - b. the housing crisis is notably characterised by excessive increases in housing prices and the lack of availability of affordable and social housing units, due to trends like the concentration of economic activities in urban agglomerations, the digital platform-led transformations of certain services, as well as demographic dynamics, such as ageing populations and increases in single-person households;
 - c. in many cities and towns, the housing crisis has been further exacerbated following other crisis situations hitting Europe over the past decades which have led to higher levels of inflation and costs of living, increasing socio-economic inequalities and the hyper-mobility of populations;

¹ Debated and approved by the Chamber of Local Authorities and adopted by the Congress on 29 October 2025 (see document [CPL\(2025\)49-03](#), explanatory memorandum), co-rapporteurs Doris KAMPUS, Austria (R, SOC/G/PD) and James MOLONEY, Ireland (L, ILDG).

- d. in the context of an overall cost-of-living crisis in many European cities and towns, the excessive costs of rental housing, generally representing the highest share of household expenses, are no longer manageable for an increasing number of residents and categories of population;
- e. there are increasing gaps between social housing supplies and needs, both overall and for specific target groups, including youth and older people, as well as groups in particularly vulnerable situations, including migrants and refugees or the homeless, whose situations all need specific local responses;
- f. in addition to low-income groups, there is a widening number of people belonging to middle-income groups who can no longer afford market rents in urban agglomerations, which may justify the extension of certain social housing tools to the affordable housing segment and the extension of social housing criteria to additional income groups;
- g. housing has reached unprecedented levels of commodification which threaten its fundamental role as shelter and as a human right, and the increased perception of this phenomenon as a profound social injustice contributes to political polarisation and weakens democracy;
- h. despite such trends undermining social rights and social justice, public authorities have for a long time relied on the self-regulatory powers of housing markets and decreased their investments in the social rental housing sector over the past decades;
- i. national, regional and local governments are only slowly starting to re-invest into more ambitious social housing programmes or promoting more innovative forms of social housing based on new kinds of partnerships or community-oriented approaches;
- j. in the multilevel governance systems characterising housing policies in most countries, local authorities play a key role for the implementation of housing policies, but are not always given the resources to deploy the full potential and range of social housing measures aimed at increasing the social housing supply, or to enable them to make the best use of the full range of measures available;
- k. in many housing policies at national, regional and local levels, transversal links between different social policies, such as housing, employment, health and social services, are neglected and the comprehensive development of inclusive local communities is not yet sufficiently promoted.

3. The Congress calls on the Committee of Ministers to invite the respective national authorities of the member states to the Council of Europe to:

- a. withdraw any reservations to Articles 30 and 31 of the European Social Charter (revised) dealing with the right to protection against poverty and social exclusion and the right to housing;
- b. commit to the creation of legal and policy frameworks which, in the context of multilevel governance systems for housing policies that prevail in most countries, facilitate specific local and regional responses to the current housing crisis, notably by providing funding, via existing or new mechanisms, and by making investments in the social housing segment more attractive for private investors;
- c. assign competences to local and regional authorities in the most effective and needs-based manner and equip them with sufficient levels of resource to develop adequate social housing policies;
- d. increase, where appropriate, national expenditure on social rental housing policies and put in place specific support programmes and measures for different territories (urban agglomerations, rural areas) where needed, and for different target groups (youth, older people, low- and middle-income groups), including groups in particularly vulnerable situations (migrants and refugees, the homeless);
- e. create a national framework for addressing homelessness as the most extreme situation of lack of access to housing, leading to social exclusion, by supporting local and regional projects following the "Housing First" approach;
- f. regularly monitor progress made in the national housing sector on the basis of measurable targets, and adapt national responses needed in the overall context of multilevel governance housing systems;

g. encourage, via competent institutions and bodies of the European Union, a revision of the Services of General Economic Interest (SGEI) criteria for social housing to extend public support measures to the affordable housing segment thus facilitating access to housing for additional middle-income groups which are increasingly affected by excessive housing prices;

h. promote, both at national and international levels, the exchange of good practices in the area of social housing innovations so that towns, cities and regions can benefit from each other's experiences.

4. The Congress also calls on the Committee of Ministers to initiate future activities specifically targeting housing as a human right and to support future co-operation activities between competent Council of Europe institutions and bodies, including the European Committee of Social Rights, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress, to ensure that coherent and cross-cutting approaches are followed in promoting and implementing the right to housing via coordinated action taken at national, regional and local levels.

49th SESSION

State Elections in Hamburg, Germany (2 March 2025)

Recommendation 535 (2025)¹

8. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:

a. Article 1, paragraph 3 of the Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities appended to the Committee of Ministers’ Statutory Resolution CM/Res (2020)1 relating to the Congress;

b. Chapter XIX of the Congress Rules and Procedures on the practical organisation of election observation missions;

c. the principles laid down in the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122) which was ratified by Germany on 17 May 1988;

d. the invitation by the authorities of Hamburg, Germany, dated 11 December 2024, to observe the elections for the State Parliament of Hamburg, held on 2 March 2025.

9. The Congress reiterates the fact that genuinely democratic local and regional elections are part of a process to establish and maintain democratic governance and that observation of grassroots elections is a key element in the role of the Congress as guardian of democracy at local and regional level.

10. The Congress acknowledges that the legal framework is conducive to holding regular and genuine democratic elections in Hamburg and commends the stability and foreseeability of the electoral legislation.

11. The Congress notes with satisfaction that:

a. overall, the Hamburg elections showed a great commitment to genuine and inclusive democracy from voters and election administration alike, as evidenced by an increased turnout, the extensive use of postal voting provisions and the high confidence in the integrity of electoral processes;

b. despite the overlap with the preparation of the snap federal elections preparation, the election administration acted professionally and independently, benefitted from the trust of all stakeholders and was sufficiently resourced to conduct elections efficiently;

c. while complex, the electoral system provided a unique method for ensuring that citizens could choose their representatives without being limited by political affiliation, leading to a sense of highly personalised political representation;

d. the campaign was competitive and calm and media coverage was balanced and extensive and provided voters with opportunities to compare programmes and make an informed decision through various debates and interviews;

¹ Debated and approved by the Chamber of Regions and adopted by the Congress on 29 October 2025 (see document [CPR\(2025\)49-02](#), explanatory memorandum), co-rapporteurs: David ERAY, Switzerland (R, EPP/CCE) and Güneş PEHLIVAN, Türkiye (R, SOC/G/PD).

- e. both candidate and voter registrations were conducted in an open and timely manner. The Congress, referring to Resolution 387 (2015) "Voting at 16 – Consequences on youth participation at local and regional level", particularly welcomed the fact that the voting age was established at 16, and welcomed civic education efforts towards young voters;
- f. the election day unfolded in a calm, well-organised and orderly manner and was managed by committed staff. No complaints and objections were raised during the day, showing the high level of professionalism and trust in the procedures.

12. At the same time, the Congress points out the following issues:

- a. the complexity of the electoral system and of the process of allocating seats may not be widely understood by the electorate;
- b. despite Hamburg being the highest ranking German State in terms of representation of women and approaching gender parity, no regulations, notably gender quotas, are in place to formally ensure women's representation, leading to important discrepancies among parties;
- c. the heated atmosphere of the campaign for the snap federal elections held a week earlier impacted the Hamburg elections, resulting in a small but increasing number of cases of vandalism, disinformation, tensed encounters and Hamburg-specific issues being overshadowed by national topics;
- d. local media could only dedicate limited resources to campaign coverage, due to financial constraints, which created limited opportunities for lists not represented in State Parliament to get access to equal airtime;
- e. the absence of a spending cap for Hamburg elections, the lack of a requirement to submit a dedicated and timely campaign report and the still high amount for disclosure of private donations, did not fully ensure a level playing field among political subjects nor provide voters with full information, thereby limiting transparency and accountability in a context of suspected foreign or illicit donations;
- f. dedicated training was limited to Electoral Bureau chairpersons and their deputies, despite the fact that federal elections with different procedures and protocols were held just a week apart;
- g. on election day, while the physical design of ballot boxes was functional and secure, their resemblance to rubbish bins was perceived as sending the wrong message about the symbolic value of a vote. Additionally, campaign materials were occasionally observed just outside of polling stations, within view of the voters;
- h. while the electoral dispute resolution mechanism was not used during these elections, the applicable regulations lacked clear deadlines for resolving complaints and provisions governing the publication of all decisions;
- i. the absence of a legal basis for domestic and international election observation led to some nervousness and misunderstandings of polling station staff when interacting with Congress observers and is not in line with Article 8 of the Copenhagen Document.

13. In the light of the above, the Congress invites the authorities to:

- a. pursue efforts to enhance voter education and public understanding of the electoral system;
- b. introduce a 40% gender quota and additional provisions to strengthen the participation of women in Hamburg politics, regardless of political parties' internal rules, and consider collecting gender and age disaggregated data on candidates and electoral officials, as a good practice to further promote gender equality;
- c. continue efforts to raise voter awareness and combat disinformation, including content generated by artificial intelligence and on social media, within the limits of freedom of expression, and to collaborate with all electoral stakeholders to promote a healthy campaign environment and support quality local journalism in Hamburg;

d. implement outstanding GRECO recommendations and strengthen the legal framework applicable to campaign and party finance in Hamburg, notably on the introduction of a spending cap, a dedicated campaign report and lower thresholds for disclosure of private donations;

e. consider the introduction of systematic and compulsory training for all members of Electoral Boards;

f. review the design of ballot boxes and regulate the display of campaigning material outside polling stations;

g. review or establish deadlines applicable to complaints and appeals and publish data on the number and content of disputes online to increase transparency;

h. adopt legislation on the rights and status of domestic and international observers.

14. The Congress calls on the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to take account of this recommendation regarding the 2025 Hamburg State elections in Germany and the accompanying explanatory memorandum in their activities relating to this member State.

49th SESSION

An additional protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the environment

Recommendation 536 (2025)¹

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:
 - a. the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ETS No. 5) and the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights’ regarding the environment;
 - b. the European Social Charter (revised) (ETS No. 163);
 - c. the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122) and its Additional Protocol on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No. 207);
 - d. the European Landscape Convention (ETS No. 176);
 - e. the United Nations Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus, 1998);
 - f. the Final Declaration by the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers on Environmental Protection and Human Rights, Strasbourg, 27 February 2020;
 - g. the Reykjavík Declaration “United around our values”, adopted at the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe in May 2023, in particular its Appendix V “The Council of Europe and the environment”;
 - h. Congress Resolution 465 (2021) “2021-2026 Priorities of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities”, in particular as regards the priorities on environmental issues and climate action in cities and regions;
 - i. Congress Resolution 489 (2022) “A fundamental right to the environment: a matter for local and regional authorities, towards a green reading of the European Charter of local self-government”;
 - j. Congress Recommendation 484 (2022) “A fundamental right to the environment: a matter for local and regional authorities, towards a green reading of the European Charter of local self-government”;
 - k. the Committee of Ministers’ reply to Congress Recommendation 484 (2022), adopted on 18 October 2023 at the 1478th meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies;
 - l. Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the principles of good democratic governance, adopted on 6 September 2023;
 - m. Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)20 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on human rights and the protection of the environment, adopted on 27 September 2022;

¹. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 29 October 2025 (see document [CG\(2025\)49-11](#), explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: Meropi-Spyridoula YDRAIOU, Greece (L, EPP/CCE).

n. the Explanatory memorandum “An additional protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the environment”.

2. The Congress highlights the urgency of additional efforts to protect the environment, and to counter the impact of the triple planetary crisis of pollution, climate change and loss of biodiversity on human rights, democracy and the rule of law, as recognised in the Reykjavík Declaration, in particular its Appendix V “The Council of Europe and the environment”.

3. Acknowledging the role of local authorities as a central element of the response to the triple planetary threat that our societies face, the Congress stresses the importance of a comprehensive multilevel governance approach to address this threat effectively.

4. Furthermore, to provide legal means for local authorities to fulfil their responsibilities and contribute effectively to the global response to climate change, the Congress considers that the European Charter of Local Self-Government should be supplemented with an additional protocol specifically dedicated to environmental protection at the local level.

5. Accordingly, the Congress:

a. calls on the Committee of Ministers to consider drafting and adopting an Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government in order to ensure that member states enable local authorities to integrate environmental considerations in local governance to address the challenges arising from the triple planetary crisis and environmental degradation;

b. invites the Committee of Ministers to initiate this process, in cooperation with the Congress, and taking into consideration the proposed contribution of the Congress.

49th SESSION

European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life

Recommendation 537 (2025)¹

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe refers to:

a. Its Recommendation 128 (2003) on the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life and Recommendation Rec(2004)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of young people in local and regional life, and the recent evolutions in youth participation and youth policies which justify that the texts be replaced by the present ones;

b. the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122) and its Additional Protocol on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No. 207);

c. the most recent and relevant recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member States, in particular:

- Recommendation CM/Rec (2025)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the social, economic, and political participation of rural youth;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2024)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on young people and climate action;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on Roma youth participation;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on deliberative democracy;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on protecting youth civil society and young people, and supporting their participation in democratic processes;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of citizens in local public life;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on young people's access to rights;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights;

d. the Reykjavík Principles for Democracy (Appendix III of the Reykjavík Declaration) which underline the importance of supporting young people's participation in democratic life and decision-making processes as an investment in a democratic future;

e. the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and notably Goal 16 "Peace, Justice and Institutions" and its sub-goals 16.6 to "develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels" and 16.7 to "ensure responsive,

¹ Debated and adopted by the Congress on 29 October 2025 (see document [CG \(2025\)49-14](#), explanatory memorandum), co-rapporteurs Aida Karimli, Sweden (R, ILDG) and Roberto Pella, Italy (L, EPP/CCE).

inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels”.

2. The Congress considers that:

a. the participation of young people is a determining factor for a sustainable democratic future of Europe;

b. youth participation and youth policies at all levels should be evidence-based, tailor-made and intersectional with a view to addressing the diversity of young people and support needed by young people in vulnerable situations;

c. permanent and reliable structures for youth participation are of utmost importance next to youth civil society in learning, practicing, defending and innovating democracy;

d. support systems should facilitate the participation of young people, including via youth centres, youth work and youth civil society;

e. the consultative process and its outcomes supported by the Congress and the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) are a good practice example of a participatory process involving young people and youth civil society, as well as local and regional authorities;

f. the conclusions of the European Youth Conference “Young people in local and regional life: democracy in action!” held in Braga, Portugal, on 5-7 February 2025, are an example of fruitful co-operation between the Council of Europe Youth Department, the Congress and youth civil society, as well as national and local authorities of a member State.

3. The Congress calls on the Committee of Ministers to invite the respective national authorities of the member States to the Council of Europe to:

a. create a national legal and political framework that promotes and strengthens youth participation and youth policies across all relevant political areas, including by creating favourable conditions for local and regional action;

b. invite national associations of local and regional authorities as well as other relevant organisations at local and regional levels, to take into account the principles set out in the Charter appended hereto in their own activities, to promote the Charter’s implementation among local and regional authorities so as to strengthen the participation of young people in decision-making processes at local and regional levels;

c. support the translation and wide dissemination of the Charter, including in accessible and youth-friendly formats, among local and regional key stakeholders addressing any political issues that may be of relevance for youth;

d. support the regular review, by the Congress and the Committee of Ministers, of the implementation of this resolution at local and regional levels.

4. The Congress also calls on the Committee of Ministers to continue supporting the exemplary partnership developed between the Congress and the Council of Europe Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) in the framework of the latest Charter revision, with a view to ensuring that youth participation and youth policies are being continuously addressed in a multilevel perspective, as a substantive contribution to the new Democratic Pact for Europe by the Council of Europe.

49th SESSION

Monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in the Republic of Moldova

Recommendation 538 (2025)¹

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:
 - a. Article 2, paragraph 1.b, of the Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities appended to Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2020)1 relating to the Congress, stipulating that one of the aims of the Congress is “to submit proposals to the Committee of Ministers in order to promote local and regional democracy”;
 - b. Article 1, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities appended to Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2020)1 relating to the Congress, stipulating that “The Congress shall prepare on a regular basis country-by-country reports on the situation of local and regional democracy in all member States and in States which have applied to join the Council of Europe, and shall ensure the effective implementation of the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government.”;
 - c. Chapter XVIII of the Rules and Procedures of the Congress on the organisation of monitoring procedures;
 - d. the Contemporary Commentary by the Congress on the explanatory report to the European Charter of Local Self-Government adopted by the Statutory Forum on 7 December 2020.
 - e. the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Goals 11 on sustainable cities and communities and 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions;
 - f. the Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 27 September 2017;
 - g. Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of citizens in local public life, adopted on 21 March 2018;
 - h. Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on supervision of local authorities’ activities, adopted on 4 April 2019;
 - i. Congress [Recommendation 436 \(2019\)](#) “Monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in the Republic of Moldova”;
 - j. the explanatory memorandum on the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in the Republic of Moldova.

¹. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 30 October 2025 (see document [CG\(2025\)49-16](#), explanatory memorandum), co-rapporteurs: Gudrun Mosler-Törnström, Austria (L, SOC/G/PD) and Urs Janett, Switzerland (R, ILDG).

2. The Congress points out that:

- a. the Republic of Moldova joined the Council of Europe on 13 July 1995. It signed the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122, "the Charter") on 2 May 1996 and ratified it on 2 October 1997;
- b. the Republic of Moldova has not signed or ratified the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the rights to participate in the local government affairs (CETS No. 207);
- c. the Committee on the Monitoring of the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and on the respect of Human Rights and the Rule of Law at local and regional levels ("the Monitoring Committee") decided to examine the situation of local and regional democracy in the Republic of Moldova in the light of the Charter. It instructed Gudrun Mosler-Törnström, Austria (L, SOC/G/PD) and Urs Janett, Switzerland (R, ILDG) with the task of preparing and submitting to the Congress a report on the implementation of the Charter in the Republic of Moldova. The delegation was assisted by Professor Tania Groppi, Vice-Chair of the Group of Independent Experts on the European Charter of Local Self-Government, and by the Congress Secretariat;
- d. the monitoring visit took place from 4 to 6 March 2025. The Congress delegation met the representatives of various institutions at all levels of government. The detailed programme of the visit is appended to the explanatory memorandum;
- e. the co-rapporteurs wish to thank the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Moldova to the Council of Europe and all those whom they met during the visit.

3. The Congress notes with satisfaction that in the Republic of Moldova:

- a. important progress has been made in the implementation of the previous Congress Recommendation 436 (2019). This includes improved collaboration and political dialogue between central government and local authorities, the adoption of measures aimed at enhancing fiscal decentralisation, and improvements in the conditions of office of elected officials, including their financial compensation;
- b. the government is committed to territorial reforms aimed at overcoming the fragmentation of local government, including through the Public Administration Reform Strategy for 2023-2030;
- c. local authorities have access to increased funding for infrastructure investments through the local investment fund.

4. The Congress expresses its concerns on the following issues:

- a. the weakness and fragmentation of local authorities, especially in rural areas, which undermines their capacity to fulfil their competences, as well as the uncertain role of the second-tier authorities (districts), especially following the recentralisation of their competences over social services;
- b. the overlapping and unclear competences of local authorities, which does not align with the principle of subsidiarity;
- c. the lack of local authorities' discretion to act on any matter that is neither excluded from their competences nor assigned to any other authority;
- d. the lack of formal rules on consultation of local authorities, which remains largely dependent on the political will of the government;
- e. local authorities' inability to recruit high-quality staff and provide for adequate training opportunities, competitive salaries or clear career prospects;
- f. persistently limited financial autonomy of local authorities, with their financial resources often insufficient to cover all responsibilities and community needs, as well as local authorities' high dependence on State transfers and subsidies;
- g. the lack of appropriate delimitation of municipal land, preventing land evaluation for tax purposes and leading to a potential loss of local revenue;

h. although administrative supervision over local authorities is now more balanced and proportionate, the involvement of multiple oversight bodies places an excessive reporting burden on local authorities, as they often lack adequate administrative and legal personnel;

i. despite some improvements in the conditions of office for local elected officials, including financial compensation, a gap remains between the level of responsibility and compensation at the local level.

5. In the light of the foregoing, the Congress requests that the Committee of Ministers invite the authorities of the Republic of Moldova to:

a. continue implementing the reform agenda, in consultations with the Congress of local authorities from Moldova (CALM), to achieve more effective decentralisation and address territorial fragmentation more effectively, including at the district level, and with a view to enhancing the capacity of local authorities to exercise their competences;

b. revise and clarify the system of local competences, including those that are delegated, in order to prevent overlaps between local and central responsibilities, and to uphold the principle of subsidiarity;

c. grant local authorities greater discretion in adapting the exercise of their tasks to local conditions, notably in the context of inter-municipal cooperation;

d. strengthen the normative framework for consultation with local authorities, by ensuring a structured and institutionalised consultation mechanism and guaranteeing the regularity and continuity of the consultation process;

e. enhance the managerial capacity of local authorities, by providing them with greater freedom and flexibility in human resources management, enabling the recruitment of high-quality staff;

f. ensure the allocation of adequate financial resources to local authorities, in accordance with the principle that financial resources should be commensurate with assigned functions;

g. increase the fiscal capacity of local authorities, including by completing the delimitation of municipal lands to allow their re-evaluation for tax purposes;

h. simplify and standardise reporting requirements to ease the bureaucratic burden on local authorities;

i. continue efforts to align the financial compensation level, particularly for mayors, with their level of responsibility;

j. sign and ratify the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No. 207) in the near future.

6. The Congress calls on the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to take account of this recommendation on the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in the Republic of Moldova and the accompanying explanatory memorandum in their activities relating to this member State.

49th SESSION

Monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Greece

Recommendation 539 (2025)¹

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“Congress”) refers to:

k. Article 2, paragraph 1.b, of the Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities appended to Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2020)1 relating to the Congress, stipulating that one of the aims of the Congress is “to submit proposals to the Committee of Ministers in order to promote local and regional democracy”;

l. Article 1, paragraph 3, of the above-mentioned Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2020)1 relating to the Congress, stipulating that “The Congress shall prepare on a regular basis country-by-country reports on the situation of local and regional democracy in all member States and in States which have applied to join the Council of Europe, and shall ensure the effective implementation of the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government”;

m. Chapter XVIII of the Rules and Procedures of the Congress on the organisation of monitoring procedures;

n. the contemporary commentary by the Congress on the explanatory report to the European Charter of Local Self-Government adopted by the Statutory Forum on 7 December 2020.

o. the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Goals 11 on sustainable cities and communities and 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions;

p. the Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 27 September 2017;

q. Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of citizens in local public life, adopted on 21 March 2018;

r. Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on supervision of local authorities’ activities, adopted on 4 April 2019;

s. Congress [Recommendation 372 \(2015\)](#) “Monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Greece”;

t. the Explanatory memorandum on the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Greece.

¹ Debated and adopted by the Congress on 30 October 2025, (see document [CG\(2025\)49-17](#), explanatory memorandum), rapporteurs: Tanja JOONA, Finland (L, ILDG) and Katrien PARTYKA, Belgium (R, EPP/CCE)

2. The Congress points out that:

a. Greece joined the Council of Europe on 9 August 1949. It signed the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122, "the Charter") on 15 October 1985 and ratified it on 6 September 1989. Pursuant to Article 12.2 of the Charter, Greece declared itself not to be bound by Article 5, Article 7.2, Article 8.2, and Article 10.2 of the Charter;

b. the Committee on the Monitoring of the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and on the respect of Human Rights and the Rule of Law at local and regional levels ("the Monitoring Committee") decided to examine the situation of local and regional democracy in Greece in the light of the Charter. It instructed Tanja Joona, Finland (L, ILDG) and David Eray, Switzerland (R, EPP/CCE) with the task of preparing and submitting to the Congress a report on the implementation of the Charter in Greece. Following the resignation of Mr Eray from his position as rapporteur on regional democracy, the Chair appointed Katrien Partyka, Belgium (R, EEP/CCE) to replace him;

c. the monitoring visit was conducted in two parts, given the country's specific context, including its many islands, in order to address the situation in both insular and mountainous municipalities. The first part of the visit took place from 26 to 28 November 2024. The second part took place from 7 to 9 April 2025. During the visit, the Congress delegation met the representatives of various institutions at all levels of government. The detailed programmes of the two parts of the visit are appended to the explanatory memorandum;

d. the rapporteurs wish to thank the Permanent Representation of Greece to the Council of Europe and all those whom they met during the visits.

3. The Congress notes with satisfaction that in Greece:

a. the application of the Charter was extended to the regions by a 2018 Act, in line with the previous Congress recommendations;

b. the system of local governments has made clear progress in terms of modernisation, and in advancing the values of transparency, accountability and objectivity at local level;

c. the national Government intends to carry out legal reform of the current system, in the direction of the principles of the Charter, despite facing a difficult economic situation and a long-term programme of austerity;

d. inter-institutional dialogue between the central government and the local and regional authorities has improved;

e. the principles of the Charter are protected by appropriate legal mechanisms, which have produced relevant case-law of the Greek Council of State on this matter.

4. The Congress expresses its concerns with respect to the following issues:

a. Greece continues to be a centralised country while local self-government is in many cases limited or conditioned by the need for central approval and opinions for many local measures, actions or initiatives;

b. local authorities lack the power to approve binding local regulations, except in limited cases, which reduces their ability to regulate and manage a substantial share of public affairs under their own responsibility;

c. there is a lack of clarity in the distribution of competences among the municipalities, the regions, the "delegated" State administrations and the State central administration;

d. most local and regional authorities face significant under-staffing, which reduces their operational capacity to effectively perform their functions;

e. the financial resources of local and regional authorities are not commensurate with the tasks and services that they must deliver and their “own source” revenues are limited as they are mainly funded from State grants and transfers;

f. the fiscal autonomy of local authorities is very weak due to limited local tax-raising powers, including in tourism;

g. the free exercise of mayoral functions is negatively affected by national criminal legislation making it very easy to make criminal accusations against mayors for any sort of malfunction of the municipal administration; the growing frequency of such proceedings and the length of consequent suspensions from office hinder mayors’ ability to effectively fulfil their local mandates;

h. the regional level of government remains weak and lacks the necessary autonomy and political visibility.

5. In the light of the foregoing, the Congress requests that the Committee of Ministers invite the authorities of Greece to:

a. complete the on-going drafting of the reform of the legal scheme governing municipalities and regions so as to deepen decentralisation in line with the subsidiarity principle;

b. grant local authorities the general power to adopt local regulations in order to strengthen their capacity to regulate local affairs;

c. clarify the allocation of competences among the municipalities, the regions, the “delegated” State administrations and the State central administration, especially in sectors such as civil protection, urban planning and construction;

d. enhance the capacity of local and regional governments to hire highly qualified staff in sufficient numbers;

e. ensure that the revenues of local and regional authorities match the expenses they incur when fulfilling their responsibilities, so as to strengthen local financial autonomy;

f. enhance local taxation powers to enlarge fiscal autonomy and modify the existing legal scheme, so that local authorities can keep a significant share of the collection of the State taxes and fees that are applied to tourism and related activities with a local dimension;

g. revise the current criminal legislation concerning the criminal liability of mayors so that its application does not undermine the status of local elected representatives by disproportionately affecting their ability to perform their duties;

h. increase the autonomy of regional governance in accordance with the Charter;

i. ratify the non-ratified Articles 5, 7.2 and 10.2 of the Charter, since they are applied;

j. sign and ratify the Additional Protocol to the Charter on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No. 207).

6. The Congress calls on the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to take account of this recommendation on the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Greece and the accompanying explanatory memorandum in their activities relating to this member State.

49th SESSION

Verification of new members' credentials

Resolution 512 (2025)¹

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe ("the Congress") refers to:
 - a. the provisions of Article 7 of the Charter of the Congress appended to Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2020)1 relating to the Congress;
 - b. Rule 6 of the Rules and Procedures of the Congress;
 - c. the Bureau decision of 27 October 2025 based on the opinion of the rapporteurs responsible for the verification of the credentials of new members, concluding that the national delegations as proposed comply with the criteria of the Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.
2. The Congress:
 - a. notes that 434 of the 560 members proposed by the authorities of the member States have already signed the Code of Conduct for Congress members and submitted the Declaration of Interests in accordance with the provisions of Rule 6 of the Rules and Procedures of the Congress;
 - b. notes that 52 seats are still vacant.
3. In the light of the foregoing, the Congress:
 - a. approves the credentials of members of national delegations as set out in document CG(2025)49-04, subject to the signature of the Code of Conduct and submission of the Declaration of Interests of Congress members;
 - b. calls on those members who have not yet done so to sign without delay the Code of Conduct and the Declaration of Interests of Congress members, in accordance with the provisions of Rule 6 of the Rules and Procedures of the Congress;
 - c. invites the authorities of the member States concerned to fill the vacant seats as soon as possible, in accordance with the applicable provisions.

¹ Debated and adopted by the Congress on 28 October 2025 (see document [CG\(2025\)49-02](#)), co-rapporteurs: Andrew BOFF, United Kingdom (R, ECR) and Martine DIESCHBURG-NICKELS, Luxembourg (L, ILDG).

49th SESSION

Amendments to the Congress Rules and Procedures and the Code of Conduct of Congress members

Resolution 513 (2025)¹

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:
 - a. the Charter of the Congress appended to Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2020)1 relating to the Congress;
 - b. the Rules and Procedures of the Congress;
 - c. the Bureau decisions concerning the Rules and Procedures of the Congress taken on 26 May 2021, 12 June 2025 and 12 September 2025;
 - d. the Policy on Respect and Dignity in the Council of Europe, which applies to all persons involved in Council of Europe activities.
2. The Congress adopts amendments to its Rules and Procedures and to the Code of Conduct of Congress members as set out in the Appendix to the present Resolution.

Appendix

Amendments to the Rules and Procedures of the Congress and the Code of Conduct of Congress members adopted by the Congress on 28 October 2025

1. In the Rules and Procedures of the Congress:
 - a. replace the entire text of Rule 3.6 with the following text: “In the case of local and/or regional elections taking place up to four months prior to the opening of a renewal session, the five-year period foreseen in Article 5.4 of the Charter may be extended, for the outgoing delegation, for a maximum of six months after the election, with the proviso that a new delegation be nominated in time for the second session of the new mandate. In the case of local and/or regional elections taking place up to two months after the opening of a renewal session, the term of office of the outgoing delegation may be extended for a maximum of six months after the opening of the renewal session, with the same proviso”;
 - b. in Rule 49.3, first sentence, replace the words: “Committee meetings” with the following words: “The meetings of the Monitoring Committee are held *in camera*, except where the committee expressly decides, upon the proposal of the chair, to open all or part of a meeting to other participants. The meetings of the other committees”;
 - c. in Rule 49.3, first sentence, delete the words “, on a case-by-case basis,”;

¹ Debated and adopted by the Congress on 28 October 2025 (see document [CG\(2025\)49-20](#)), co-rapporteurs: Xavier CADORET, France (L, SOC/G/PD) and Gunn Marit HELGESEN, Norway (R, EPP/CCE).

d. in Rule 49.3, at the end of the first sentence, insert the following sentence: “A committee may decide to exclude from a meeting, or part of a meeting, any persons it considers necessary to exclude, except the members elected to that committee.”;

e. insert a new Rule 49.4, as follows: “Committee members may be accompanied to committee meetings, by no more than one advisor, who must not be under the authority of any national government for the purposes of this work.”;

f. insert a new Rule 65.4, as follows: “In exercising their duties as members of the Congress, members shall also be bound by the standards of conduct set out in the Policy on Respect and Dignity in the Council of Europe. In particular, they shall refrain from engaging in any disrespectful behaviour, harassment, sexual harassment or other forms of unacceptable conduct, as defined in the aforementioned Policy, towards any other persons involved in Congress activities, including but not limited to other Congress members, delegation secretaries, experts, consultants, youth delegates and members of the Secretariat, all of whom shall also be bound by the same standards of conduct.”;

g. insert a new Rule 106, entitled “Youth delegates”, as follows: “The participation of youth delegates in the work of the Congress shall be governed by an Administrative Rule.”, and renumber the subsequent Rules accordingly.

2. In the Code of Conduct of Congress members, insert a new paragraph 17, as follows: “Members shall be bound by the standards of conduct set out in the Policy on Respect and Dignity in the Council of Europe. In particular, they shall refrain from engaging in any disrespectful behaviour, harassment, sexual harassment or other forms of unacceptable conduct, as defined in the aforementioned Policy, towards any other persons involved in Congress activities, including but not limited to other Congress members, delegation secretaries, experts, consultants, youth delegates and members of the Secretariat.”, and renumber the subsequent paragraphs accordingly.

49th SESSION**Addressing the housing crisis in European cities through social housing innovations**

Resolution 514 (2025)¹

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:
 - a. the European Social Charter (revised) of the Council of Europe (CETS No. 163), and notably its Articles 30 and 31, respectively guaranteeing the right to protection against poverty and social exclusion and the right to housing;
 - b. the “Vilnius Declaration” adopted by the High-Level Conference on the European Social Charter on 4 July 2024 in Vilnius, Lithuania, which recalls that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, that this includes social rights, such as rights related to work, education, housing, social protection, health and well-being, as well as the human rights aspects of the environment and that local and regional authorities are competent in these areas;
 - c. the Congress Resolution 475 (2021) and Recommendation 463 (2021) on Home sharing platforms: challenges and opportunities for municipalities;
 - d. the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article. 25, and the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 11(1), which recognise adequate housing as part of the right to an adequate standard of living ;
 - e. the United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (UNSDG) under which housing contributes directly or indirectly to the implementation of most of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, serving as a precondition for building inclusive, equitable, safe, resilient and sustainable cities;
 - f. the explanatory memorandum on “Addressing the housing crisis in European cities through social housing innovations” (CPL(2025)49-03).
2. The Congress notes with concern that:
 - a. in most Council of Europe member States, different cities and towns are affected by the current European housing crisis to varying degrees;
 - b. the housing crisis is notably characterised by excessive increases in housing prices and the lack of availability of affordable and social housing units, due to trends like the concentration of economic activities in urban agglomerations, the digital platform-led transformations of certain services, as well as demographic dynamics, such as ageing populations and increases in single-person households;
 - c. in many cities and towns, the housing crisis has been further exacerbated following other crisis situations hitting Europe over the past decades which have led to higher levels of inflation and costs of living, increasing socio-economic inequalities and the hyper-mobility of populations;

¹ Debated and approved by the Chamber of Local Authorities and adopted by the Congress on 29 October 2025 (see document [CPL\(2025\)49-03](#), explanatory memorandum), co-rapporteurs Doris KAMPUS, Austria (R, SOC/G/PD) and James MOLONEY, Ireland (L, ILDG).

d. in the context of an overall cost-of-living crisis in many European cities and towns, the excessive costs of rental housing, generally representing the highest share of household expenses, are no longer manageable for an increasing number of residents and categories of population;

e. there are increasing gaps between social housing supplies and needs, both overall and for specific target groups, including youth and older people, as well as groups in particularly vulnerable situations, including migrants and refugees or the homeless, whose situations all need specific local responses;

f. in addition to low-income groups, there is a widening number of people belonging to middle-income groups who can no longer afford market rents in urban agglomerations, which may justify the extension of certain social housing tools to the affordable housing segment and the extension of social housing criteria to additional income groups;

g. housing has reached unprecedented levels of commodification which threaten its fundamental role as shelter and as a human right, and the increased perception of this phenomenon as a profound social injustice contributes to political polarisation and weakens democracy;

h. despite such trends undermining social rights and social justice, public authorities have for a long time relied on the self-regulatory powers of housing markets and decreased their investments in the social rental housing sector over the past decades;

i. national, regional and local governments are only slowly starting to re-invest into more ambitious social housing programmes or promoting more innovative forms of social housing based on new kinds of partnerships or community-oriented approaches;

j. in the multilevel governance systems characterising housing policies in most countries, local authorities play a key role for the implementation of housing policies, but are not always given the resources to deploy the full potential and range of social housing measures aimed at increasing the social housing supply, or enable them to make the best use of the full range of measures available;

k. in many housing policies at national, regional and local levels, transversal links between different social policies, such as housing, employment, health and social services, are neglected and the comprehensive development of inclusive local communities is not yet sufficiently promoted.

3. The Congress calls on local and regional authorities in member states to re-invest in the social rental housing sector in the most targeted, evidence-based, needs-based and innovative manner, and promoting both supply-oriented and demand-oriented measures, by:

a. developing local and regional housing strategies, policies and action which are based on needs assessments and partnerships between different stakeholders (public, non-governmental and private) and calling on support from national governments as needed;

b. investing in new social rental housing developments both via new developments and measures mobilising dwellings in the existing building stock, including by managing vacant buildings, preventing the use of residential buildings for other commercial purposes and introducing rent price regulations where appropriate;

c. defining specific programmes and measures for different target groups (youth, older persons, low- and middle-income groups, including specific professional categories), and notably groups in particularly vulnerable situations (migrants and refugees, the homeless), striving for increased social inclusion and a new social and intergenerational mix and countering current trends of segregation;

d. addressing homelessness as the most extreme situation of lack of access to housing, leading to social exclusion, by following the “Housing First” approach and seeking responses via the social rental housing sector and community-oriented projects;

e. regularly monitoring progress made in the local housing sector, and adapting local responses needed in the overall context of multilevel governance housing systems and by making use of participatory approaches to better understand the local needs of specific categories of population;

f. taking part in national and international exchanges on housing policies and innovative housing projects, so as to learn from other cities and towns in developing and supporting the most innovative, participatory and community-based initiatives and mobilise all possible local and regional resources for addressing the current housing crisis in specific territories;

g. fostering social housing innovations of a technical, procedural, social and environmental nature to provide new impetus for the development of the social housing rental sector in a context marked by a mismatch between supply and demand, via the following measures among others:

i. as regards technical innovations: promoting more industrialised and standardised forms of construction, identifying new forms of construction making use of available space within urban agglomerations, or investing in infrastructure that will accelerate or facilitate tenant-driven initiatives or make new locations more appealing for private investments;

ii. as regards procedural innovations: accelerating land mobilisation, planning and authorisation procedures, including by training municipal or regional staff and improving the coordination between different local and regional services, applying fiscal tools to mobilise housing units within the existing building stock (e.g. vacancy taxes, penalising uses other than residential uses, imposing higher taxes on short-term rental or second homes), applying rent caps to excessive rents in certain areas and according to certain criteria, and extending the offer of social housing to additional income groups where appropriate;

iii. as regards social innovations: investing or engaging in community-oriented projects via different formal or contractual partnerships with housing companies and/or social housing providers, fostering the development of local housing cooperatives and co-housing projects and setting up platforms facilitating house swaps or subletting arrangements for underoccupied private dwellings;

iv. as regards environmental innovations: by promoting constructions making use of recycled material, new garbage and waste-water concepts and energy technologies, both to reduce construction and rental costs and provide new social purposes for the local tenant community;

h. exploring funding opportunities provided by local, national and European and international organisations, such as new programmes targeting local and regional authorities developed by the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB), alongside traditional European funding schemes, to implement and showcase new pilot projects as inspiring examples to others, or to back up existing initiatives of social innovation in response to housing challenges.

4. The Congress commits to supporting, via relevant activities, the implementation of this Resolution by promoting innovative action to be taken in the area of social rental housing to contribute to the implementation of Articles 30 and 31 of the European Social Charter (revised), respectively promoting the right to protection against poverty and social exclusion and the right to housing.

49th SESSION**Reform of the European Local Democracy Week:
engaging citizens in local democracy**

Resolution 515 (2025)¹

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:

a. the Declaration adopted by the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Local and Regional Government on 16 October 2007 in Valencia, which recognised the importance of increasing citizen participation in decision making at the grass-roots level and introducing participatory mechanisms into our democratic systems, and which endorsed the launching of the joint initiative of the Congress and the European Committee on Local and Regional Democracy, the European Local Democracy Week (ELDW);

b. the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No. 207);

c. Congress [Resolution 238 \(2007\)](#) “Proposed European Local Democracy Week”;

d. Congress [Resolution 326 \(2011\)](#) “Citizen participation at local and regional level in Europe”;

e. Congress [Resolution 423 \(2017\)](#) “Ten years of the European Local Democracy Week”;

f. Congress [Resolution 430 \(2018\)](#) “European Local Democracy Week (ELDW): a new momentum”.

2. The Congress underlines that:

a. the European Local Democracy Week was officially launched in Madrid on 15 October 2008 following the Valencia conference, to foster dialogue between citizens and local and regional authorities and involve citizens more actively in local decision-making processes;

b. it was opened to the participation of cities, regions and national associations and coordinated by the secretariat of the Congress, and included elements such as an annual theme, an annual coordination meeting and a dedicated website;

c. in 2017, the Congress renewed its commitment to advancing this initiative, and subsequently implemented reforms in 2018, introducing more flexibility for the organisation of events, a yearly award of Partner Status, a renewed list of criteria for participation and a greater involvement of youth.

3. The Congress considers that:

a. local democracy is an essential pillar of democracy, which can widely contribute to countering democratic backsliding and restoring citizens' confidence in democratic systems and institutions;

¹ Debated and adopted by the Congress on 29 October 2025 (see document [CG\(2025\)49-18](#), explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: Konstantinos KOUKAS, Greece (L, EPP/CCE).

b. stepping up its action in favour of local governance and deliberative and participatory democracy forms part of the Council of Europe's efforts to revitalise democracy;

c. citizens' growing desire for greater consultation, open dialogue and consideration is reflected in the development of initiatives and projects such as the European Local Democracy Week (ELDW);

d. the commitment of local and regional authorities and their associations to the ELDW is essential for it to fulfil its role as a tool for promoting participatory democracy and exchanging good practices among elected representatives in the field;

e. the initiative's development should enable increased participation and networking, by making it more relevant, flexible, attractive and adapted both to the constraints of local and regional authorities and to the expectations of their citizens.

4. In the light of the above considerations, the Congress decides to:

a. renew its commitment to advancing the aims pursued by the European Local Democracy Week and further developing the initiative, with the aim of promoting the participation and consultation of citizens in the life of their local and regional communities across Europe;

b. introduce new elements of reform to the initiative, with effect from 2026, and in particular to:

i. change the name of the initiative to European Local Democracy Action (ELDA) in order to demonstrate that the events it covers may take place throughout the year;

ii. adopt a restructured thematic framework composed of a permanent overarching theme, "Engaging citizens in local democracy", and two rotating specific themes, to broaden the range of activities which can be reported;

iii. upgrade the current award system of certificates of partner status into the ELDA Prize, composed of one general prize and two thematic prizes in order to increase the visibility of the good practices it recognises;

c. entrust the Congress Bureau with the adoption of more detailed regulations in this respect, where needed.

49th SESSION

European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life

Resolution 516 (2025)¹

5. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:

a. Its Recommendation 128 (2003) on the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life and Recommendation Rec(2004)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of young people in local and regional life, and the recent evolutions in youth participation and youth policies which justify that the texts be replaced by the present ones;

b. the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122) and its Additional Protocol on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No. 207);

c. the most recent and relevant recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member States, in particular:

- Recommendation CM/Rec (2025)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the social, economic, and political participation of rural youth;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2024)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on young people and climate action;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on Roma youth participation;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on deliberative democracy;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on protecting youth civil society and young people, and supporting their participation in democratic processes;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on supporting young refugees in transition to adulthood;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of citizens in local public life;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on young people’s access to rights;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights;

d. the Reykjavík Principles for Democracy (Appendix III of the Reykjavík Declaration) which underline the importance of supporting young people’s participation in democratic life and decision-making processes as an investment in a democratic future;

e. the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and notably Goal 16 “Peace, Justice and Institutions” and its sub-goals 16.6 to “develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels” and 16.7 to “ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels”.

6. The Congress considers that:

¹ Debated and adopted by the Congress on 29 October 2025 (see document [CG \(2025\)49-14](#), explanatory memorandum), co-rapporteurs Aida Karimli, Sweden (R, ILDG) and Roberto Pella, Italy (L, EPP/CCE).

- a. the participation of young people is a determining factor for a sustainable democratic future of Europe;
 - b. youth policies at all levels should be evidence-based, tailor-made and intersectional with a view to addressing the diversity of young people and support needed by young people in vulnerable situations;
 - c. permanent and reliable structures for youth participation are of utmost importance next to youth civil society in learning, practicing, defending and innovating democracy;
 - d. support systems should facilitate the participation of young people, including via youth centres, youth work and youth civil society;
 - e. the consultative process and its outcomes supported by the Congress and the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) are a good practice example of a participatory process involving young people and youth civil society, as well as local and regional authorities;
 - f. the conclusions of the European Youth Conference “Young people in local and regional life: democracy in action!” held in Braga, Portugal, on 5-7 February 2025, are an example of fruitful co-operation between the Council of Europe Youth Department, the Congress and youth civil society, as well as national and local authorities of a member State.
7. The Congress resolves to endorse the new European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life as appended to the present resolution as part of its contribution to the highest standards of youth participation and the protection of sustainable democracies in Council of Europe member States.
8. The Congress calls on local and regional authorities in member States to:
- i. promote and apply, through policies and action, the principles and measures set out in the Charter, which aim to strengthen the participation of young people in decision-making processes at local and regional levels, and to ensure an enabling environment for their active and meaningful democratic engagement;
 - j. in implementing the Charter, give due consideration to the specific needs and situations of all young people in all their diversity;
 - k. translate and widely disseminate the Charter appended hereto, including in accessible and youth-friendly formats, among local and regional key stakeholders addressing any political issues that may be of relevance for youth;
 - l. support, within the Congress, the regular review of the implementation of this resolution.
9. The Congress makes the commitment to take into account and respect the present resolution in the framework of relevant activities led by its statutory bodies, and in particular its committees.

49th SESSION

Congress Strategy on the Rule of Law at Local and Regional Levels (2025-2028)

Resolution 517 (2025)¹

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (“the Congress”) refers to:
 - a. the Statute of the Council of Europe (ETS No. 1);
 - b. the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122);
 - c. the Reykjavik Declaration “United around our values”, adopted at the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe in May 2023, and especially the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy (Appendix III), stressing the need to strengthen “the separation of powers through appropriate checks and balances between different State institutions at all levels, to prevent any excessive concentration of power”;
 - d. the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and particularly SDG 16 “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”;
 - e. the Rule of Law Checklist of European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), CDL-AD(2016)007;
 - f. Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 2437 (2022) “Safeguarding and promoting genuine democracy in Europe”;
 - g. the Congress Human Rights Strategy (2023-2025);
 - h. Congress Resolution 499 (2024) “Local and Regional Authorities as Actors and Guarantors of the Rule of Law”;
 - i. the Congress Strategy on the rule of law at local and regional levels appended to this resolution.
2. The Congress reiterates that genuine democracy, as defined in the Statute of the Council of Europe, cannot be achieved or preserved without the effective implementation of the rule of law at all levels of public authority. Moreover, ensuring the rule of law at local and regional levels plays a key role in countering democratic backsliding across Europe.
3. In line with the Reykjavik Declaration, the Congress emphasises the importance of strengthening the role of local and regional authorities in upholding the rule of law. This includes enhancing their capacities, as part of a system of checks and balances that is essential to healthy and efficient democratic governance.

¹ Debated and adopted by the Congress on 30 October 2025 (see document [CG\(2025\)49-13](#), explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: Stewart DICKSON, United Kingdom (R, ILDG).

4. The Congress adopts the appended Strategy on the rule of law at local and regional levels to reinforce the rule of law pillar in its activities and streamline the implementation of this principle throughout the work of all its entities.
5. It invites its Committee on Monitoring the Implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, and on Respect for Human Rights and the Rule of Law at Local and Regional Levels (“the Monitoring Committee”) to collaborate with other Congress Committees to ensure the effective implementation of this Strategy.
6. It also invites its Monitoring Committee to provide a contribution to the work of the Venice Commission on updating the Rule of Law Checklist, notably by incorporating a local and regional perspective.