

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 267 (2009)¹ Congress resources and its 2010 budget

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, with its two debating chambers bringing together representatives of local and regional authorities of the 47 Council of Europe member states, is a unique forum for exchange and dialogue within the Council of Europe and, indeed, beyond the Organisation.

2. At their last summit (Warsaw, May 2005), the heads of state and government of Council of Europe member states confirmed and fully acknowledged the Congress's institutional position as a guarantor of, and reference body for, local and regional democracy and reaffirmed the importance of its role in pursuing the Council of Europe's aims.

3. Since then, the new Statutory Resolution Res(2007)6 and new Congress Charter adopted by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers in May 2007, have confirmed and paid tribute to the role of local and regional authorities in the institutional setting of the Congress, in particular by strengthening the Congress's role in monitoring implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122) and regional democracy through the evaluation of the electoral process, in accordance with Resolution 274 (2008) on Congress policy in observing local and regional elections.

4. This enhanced statutory role has increased the Congress's audience and made it a key player in the democratic development of countries in Europe and beyond. It was in order to fulfil its role as a political forum for local and regional authorities in Council of Europe member states more effectively that the Congress decided to hold two plenary sessions a year as from 2009.

5. Again in order to perform its task more effectively, the Congress agreed on priorities for 2009-2010 at its autumn 2008 session. The document in question bears witness to the Congress's political commitment to strengthening its institutional role in pursuit of local and regional democracy and its determination to conduct a policy of enhanced co-operation and dialogue with various partners in connection with priority issues.

6. Despite the discouraging budgetary prospects and the Committee of Ministers' decision not to accede to its requests for additional resources in 2009, the Congress chose to go ahead and hold a second annual plenary session, streamline its work and reduce the cost of certain activities, as well as temporarily suspend others.

7. Unfortunately, it is now clear from the additional budget cuts decided on by the Committee of Ministers for 2009 that, whatever efforts it makes to streamline its work, the

Congress is liable to be unable to carry out activities which, although not statutory, are essential to the consolidation of the Council of Europe's role in promoting co-operation among local and regional authorities.

8. In view of the place it occupies in the European institutional arena and the Council of Europe's role in this field, the Congress cannot, without being harmed, continue to bear a reduction in its budget in a context in which the existing institutional trend in Europe is to afford increasing importance to local and regional authorities and when the overall Council of Europe budget is increasing.

9. The Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress – irreplaceable political forums for parliamentary and locally elected representatives of member states – constitute a real added value for the Council of Europe. It is important to reinforce them.

10. It is, therefore, essential that the Congress should have additional financial resources in 2010 so that it can successfully complete certain activities that have been singled out as taking priority, such as European co-ordination of European Local Democracy Week and a possible Congress contribution to Euro-Mediterranean co-operation policy.

11. The Congress likewise needs sufficient human resources both to meet current requirements and to deal with the increased workload about to result, in particular, from the holding of the second annual session.

12. Consequently, the Congress would ask that its atypical situation be dealt with once and for all by converting the temporary positions of staff currently assigned to tasks of a structural nature into permanent posts and by creating four additional posts (two A2 posts and two B2/B3 posts) in order to consolidate the Table Office and allow the Congress to contribute more effectively to the European co-ordination of Local Democracy Week.

13. Convinced that its status within the Organisation and its position in relation to the other European institutions warrant its being afforded due recognition, the Congress reiterates its request that its Secretary General be given the status of a "specially appointed official", as is the case for the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Secretary General of the European Union Committee of the Regions. When making the same request in its Recommendation 238 (2008) on resources and budget of the Congress for 2009, it pointed out that the cost of the change was modest: a 6% increase in basic salary and an entertainment allowance of about 9 300 euros a year.

14. *In the light of the foregoing, the Congress asks the Committee of Ministers:*

a. with regard to activities, not only to maintain the current level of resources, but to provide the following additional financial resources:

i. 100 000 euros for an enhanced contribution by the Congress to the co-ordination and organisation of European Local Democracy Week in 2010;

ii. 100 000 euros to enable the Congress to organise a contribution to Euro-Mediterranean co-operation at local level;

b. with regard to the human resources of the Congress:

i. to convert the five temporary positions of staff currently assigned to tasks of a structural nature into permanent posts;

ii. to allocate the Congress two B3 posts, one to reinforce the Table Office secretariat and one for the Local Democracy Week secretariat;

iii. to allocate the Congress two A2 posts (one for the deputy to the head of the Table Office division and one for Local Democracy Week);

c. with regard to the Secretary General of the Congress, to reconsider the “rank” of the Secretary General and the Congress’s desire that the post be raised to the same rank as that of the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly, in other words that of a “specially appointed official”;

d. to invite the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to include the needs set out above in the draft 2010 budget he submits to the Committee of Ministers.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 5 March 2009, 3rd Sitting (see Document CG(16)9REP, explanatory memorandum, rapporteur: J.-C. Frécon (France, L, SOC)).