

COVID-19

LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES ON THE FRONT LINE

7 DECEMBER 2020


14h30 - 17h00 CET

ONLINE
EVENT

bit.ly/congress-covid-event-2020-en

In the face of the Covid-19 crisis, local and regional authorities have been at the forefront of the responses to contain the spread of the disease and mitigate the impact of the outbreak on their communities. To hear the stories of those who have been organising, coordinating and delivering responses to the crisis in towns and cities, provinces and Départements, regions and Länder, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe is holding an online event on Monday, 7 December 2020 from 14h30 to 17h00 CET. The results of the discussions will feed into the Congress' cross-cutting report "Ensuring the respect of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in times of crisis" to be presented to the Congress Session in March 2021.

 The event is open to the public

 Interpretation will be provided in English, French, German, Italian, Russian and Turkish

 #congress-covid-2020

 congress.session@coe.int

The Congress



Le Congrès

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

🕒 14h30

Effectively responding to a public health crisis in full respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law: the Athens Declaration



Anders KNAPE

President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

Since November 2018, Anders Knape is the President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. He is President of the Swedish Association of Local and Regional Authorities (SALAR) since March 2019 and Lord Mayor of the City of Karlstad since 2014. He is also a member of the Bureau of the Committee of the Regions, Executive President of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and Member of the Executive Bureau and World Council of the United Cities and Local Government (UCLG)



Marija PEJČINOVIĆ-BURIĆ

Secretary General of the Council of Europe

On 26 June 2019, Marija Pejčinović Burić was elected as the 14th Secretary General of the Council of Europe. She was Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia and Deputy Prime Minister of Croatia from 19 June 2017 to 19 July 2019, and Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe from May to November 2018. From 2008 to 2011, she served as a Member of the Croatian Parliament.



Michael ROTH | Video message

Minister of State of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, Special Representative of the Federal Government for the German Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

Michael Roth is Minister of State for Europe at the Federal Foreign Office since December 2013 and Commissioner for Franco-German Cooperation since 2014. He is a directly elected Member of the German Bundestag for Werra-Meißner – Hersfeld-Rotenburg since 1998. He has been Spokesperson of the SPD Members of the Bundestag from Land Hesse from 2009 to 2014 and again since 2017 and SPD parliamentary group spokesperson on Europe from 2010 to 2013.

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Responding to the crisis – the role of local and regional authorities



Gunn Marit HELGESEN

President of the Chamber of Regions

In October 2016, Gunn Marit Helgesen was elected as President of the Chamber of Regions and she was re-elected on 6 November 2018. Mrs Helgesen was President of the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) since 2012 and was elected First Vice-President in 2020. She is the Head of the Norwegian delegation to the Congress. Ms. Helgesen was elected as Vice-President of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) in 2000 and was the President of the North Sea Commission between 2004 and 2012. In 2013, Gunn Mart Helgesen became the Vice President of the Executive Bureau of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) In 2016, she was elected Co-President and member of the presidency of the organisation. Ms. Helgesen also represents Norway in the World Council and Executive Bureau of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).



Xavier CADORET

President of the Chamber of Local Authorities

In November 2018, Xavier Cadoret was elected President of the Chamber of Local Authorities. He is the mayor of Saint-Gérard-le-Puy, in the Allier region, French department located in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region, since 1991, Member of the Executive Committee of the Association of French Mayors (AMF) and since 2010, he has been a member of the French delegation to the Congress of the Council of Europe.

Video presentation by a youth delegate



Kostas BAKOYANNIS

Mayor of Athens

In June 2019, he was elected Mayor of Athens. Previously, he served as governor of central Greece from 2014 to 2019, and as mayor of Karpenissi from 2011 to 2014. He worked at the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs and as executive manager in an investor relations and corporate communications company. He also held positions in the European Parliament in Brussels and the World Bank in Kosovo. Mr. Bakoyannis is vice president of the Hellenic Agency for Local Development and Local Government, council member of the European Council on Foreign Relations, and a Greek Leadership Council member of the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN).



Gabriele NEFF

President of the Current Affairs Committee of the Congress

Gabriele Neff is President of the Current Affairs Committee of the Congress since October 2016 and Councillor of the City of Munich since May 2002. Mrs Neff is also a member of the Bavarian and German Association of Cities, member of the German – Polish Committee and of the German – French Committee of the German Section of the CEMR and was representative of the City of Munich in EUROCITIES from 2009 - 2020.

Video presentation by a youth delegate

Context

The Covid-19 pandemic has a profound impact on our societies. Not only does it put human lives and citizen well-being at risk, but it also endangers the functioning of democratic governance institutions at all levels, as well as the economic prosperity of our countries, challenging the unity of European states and their ability to respond in a unified manner.

Municipalities, cities and regions provided emergency services, implemented aid plans, distributed medical equipment, provided support to businesses, ensured communication with citizens and applied new public safety rules through adequate, transparent and accountable procedures that had to be established practically overnight.

Local and regional politicians also coordinated with national governments and other partners from all sectors of society, reaching out to their counterparts in other territories and countries to

ensure the care and protection of those affected. They not only managed the public health response, but also educated and communicated with citizens, developed and implemented measures to address the complex needs of citizens during the crisis, and looked forward to prepare their communities for the new realities of a post-COVID world.

With its profound social and emotional repercussions, the pandemic's impact has outweighed the health and economic consequences, testing citizens' trust in governance and confidence in their elected representatives. The crisis has left a profound imprint on the way our societies are organised and will function in the future. The way local and regional governments have responded to the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted their leadership role and will influence citizen's trust as well as society's well-being in the years to come.

Challenges at local and regional levels

Some questions which will be addressed:

- ▶ How to **avoid the "lockdown" of territorial democracy** and maintain the legitimacy of elected councils and elected representatives when political processes in councils can only be held electronically, when means of consultations with citizens are reduced, and elections postponed.
- ▶ How to **ensure effectiveness** of their action when competences and financial resources are re-centralised.
- ▶ How to strike the **right balance** between centralised and decentralised action which must complement each other in the inter-active **multi-level governance system**.
- ▶ How to improve the **role of local and regional authorities within national crisis management**, and ensure the competences and means necessary for them to handle the crisis.
- ▶ How to ensure that **restrictive measures** are **proportional** to the requirements and are implemented **under democratic control**, to provide transparency and oversight of all aspects of governmental responses, and guard against the closing of civic space.
- ▶ How to guarantee the democratic link between mayors or executives and their local or regional assemblies, and the **accountability** of the executive to their assemblies in a time of crisis.
- ▶ How to **communicate with citizens**, address their needs and support them in times of crisis, and maintain the climate of trust, necessary to better respond to an emergency.

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