

The Bureau of the Congress

Declaration on the Congress 2020-2021 budget

The Bureau of the Congress, meeting on 11 September 2019 in Strasbourg,

welcomes the reply of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to the Congress contribution for the Ministerial Session held on 26-27 May 2019 in Helsinki, supporting “the activities of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in enhancing resilient local and regional democracy”;

acknowledges that the Ministers of Foreign Affairs confirmed the important monitoring functions of the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, who all “carry out monitoring functions and act as guardians of human rights and democracy in their areas of competence”.

The Bureau of the Congress further welcomes the encouragement addressed by the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, Amélie de Montchalin, to the Presidents of the Congress and of the European Committee of the Regions on the occasion of their 25th anniversaries, which they jointly celebrated on 27 June 2019 in Brussels.

The Bureau looks forward to working with Marija Pejčinović Burić, who will take office as Secretary General of the Council of Europe on 18 September 2019.

The Bureau of the Congress refers to Recommendation 430 on the budget and resources of the Congress for the next biennium (2020-2021) and invites the Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to take into account the needs for a normal functioning of the Congress and its secretariat.

With regard to the Congress’s share of the Organisation’s budget, the Bureau notes with concern that this share has steadily decreased from 2.92% in 2010 to 2.54 % in 2019. The Bureau therefore reiterates its request to the Committee of Ministers, that the Congress budget return to a share of 3% of the Organisation’s budget. The financial crisis has led to a backlog in statutory activities and a significant reduction in our thematic contributions to the objectives of the Council of Europe at local and regional level. Over the last years, the decrease in resources has obliged the Congress to discontinue its work on radicalisation leading to terrorism, on Roma inclusion and its input to intergovernmental bodies, to name just a few areas but, more drastically still, to stop financing the interpretation and translation of the working languages which has had a deleterious effect on the Congress’ work and meetings. A return to a sustainable financial and staff situation is indispensable if it is to be able to perform its duties.

The Bureau of the Congress takes note that all member states have now complied with their financial commitments to the Council of Europe’s budget. This fact does not, however, resolve the structural financial challenges which have been caused by a zero-nominal-growth policy over the past budgets. The Bureau invites the Committee of Ministers to make the best use of the capacities of the Council of Europe and its different actors by providing at least a budget based on zero-real growth.

Links:

Congress recommendations:

<https://rm.coe.int/35th-session-adopted-texts/16808f0496>

CM reply to Congress recommendation for Helsinki:

https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=090000168096fb3c