

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities



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Congress resources and its 2010 budget

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Explanatory Memorandum
Bureau of the Congress

Summary :

This is the first of the reports that the Congress Bureau has decided to submit each year, at the first of its two annual sessions, which will enable the Congress to address a recommendation to the Committee of Ministers on the resources and budget of the Congress for the following year. It presents the budget of the Congress and its various structures, evaluates the 2008 budget, makes a first evaluation of the 2009 budget and makes proposals for the 2010 budget in line with the 2009-2010 priorities which the Congress adopted at its 2008 Autumn Session, and which constitute a genuine political commitment by the Congress to strengthening its institutional role in pursuit of local and regional democracy.

R : Chambre des régions / L : Chambre des pouvoirs locaux
GILD : Groupe Indépendant et Libéral Démocratique du Congrès
PPE/DC : Groupe Parti Populaire Européen - Démocrates Chrétiens du Congrès
SOC : Groupe Socialiste du Congrès
NI : Membre n'appartenant à aucun groupe politique du Congrès



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INTRODUCTION

Thanks to the visionary thinking of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe the institutional role to be given to local authorities at the national and international levels was acknowledged from the early 1950s and in 1957 the Council of Europe afforded representatives of the local authorities of its member states an opportunity to come together to discuss questions of joint interest to them, while encouraging the same authorities to make a dynamic contribution to the European unification process.

It is therefore largely due to the impetus given by the Council of Europe that local authorities have today become absolutely essential players and the vital importance of local and regional democracy commands recognition as a genuine foundation of all pluralist societies.

The adoption of the European Charter of Local Self-Government by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 1985 represented a fundamental step on the road to enhanced democratic standards. It was this instrument which clearly stated the principles governing all forms of local democracy and provided for application of the subsidiarity principle. The Charter, a universally recognised standard-setting instrument, has been adopted and ratified by 44 of the 47 member states of the Council of Europe and now constitutes the authoritative legal text defining local authorities' powers and responsibilities.

Recognition of these achievements conferred a fresh importance on this Council of Europe body, known at the time as the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, since - again thanks to a Parliamentary Assembly initiative - it by then included representatives of Europe's regions.

From 1957 to the early 1990s the Conference's activities underwent a considerable expansion, and their relevance became fully evident with the transition to democracy in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

The natural outcome of these developments was a revision of the Standing Conference's statutory and institutional status, and, in 1994, it became the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, a genuine political assembly with two debating chambers whose members respectively represent the local and the regional authorities of the Council of Europe's member states.

With the reinforcement of its statutory position, this new Council of Europe body was given an institutional role: monitoring implementation of the Charter of Local Self-Government in the countries that had signed and ratified it, while seeking to promote, strengthen and preserve local democracy in Council of Europe member states.

It is true that the Congress - like the Conference before it - functions along the lines of a Parliamentary Assembly. It is made up of committees, an executive, political groups and working groups. Like a parliament it holds sessions and debates and adopts legislation. However, the statutory role conferred on the Congress has considerably widened its audience and has made it an essential contributor to national democratisation processes.

I would also recall that the Congress and the Parliamentary Assembly constitute, for local and regional representatives and for parliamentarians, an irreplaceable political forum for the Council of Europe.

Aware of the importance of this image and this role, the Congress has not hesitated to launch other activities also contributing to enhanced local democracy, whether entailing the supply of assistance, work done by specific committees or other institutional tasks.

I wish to make special mention here of the observation of local elections, an activity aimed at helping to "monitor" local democracy, the conclusions of which can serve as a basis for co-operation with the countries concerned, to which the Congress offers the benefits of its know-how and expertise.

In giving this brief overview of the birth and growth of representation of local authorities within the Council of Europe, my aim, as rapporteur, is to show how the Congress's role has changed, along with the scope of its activities, to the point where it is now of crucial importance as both a contributor to fulfilment of the Council of Europe's mission and a genuine partner in building a democratic Europe.

In this respect, the Congress has moreover fully justified the role assigned to it in the follow-up measures to the Warsaw Summit and in the Summit Action Plan aimed at refocusing the activities and tasks of the Council of Europe.

I therefore not only believe that the Congress is a source of added value for the Council of Europe, but am also convinced that this entity, which has absolutely no equivalent on the European institutional scene, could contribute far more to the Council of Europe if the Organisation gave it the means to do so.

The figures set out below reflect the extent of the annual resources at the Congress's disposal. It can be seen that they are on a far more limited scale than those of either the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe or the Committee of the Regions of the European Union. The purpose of this comparison is to enable the reader not just to gauge the results already achieved despite the scant resources available, but also and above all to imagine the far greater benefits that could be derived from the Congress's action if it were granted resources on a significantly bigger scale.

1. The budget of the Congress

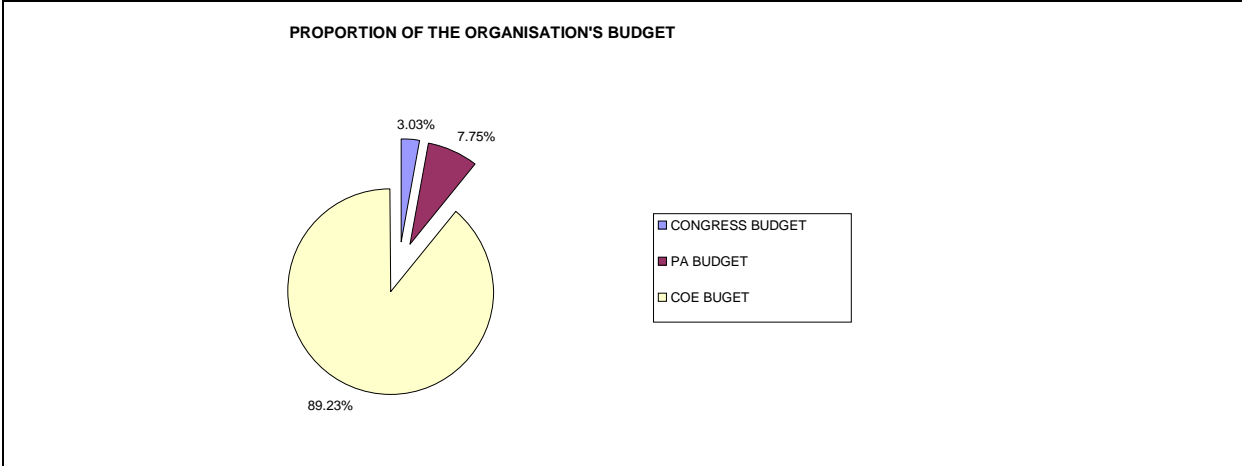
1.1 - The budget of the Congress as compared with the budgets of the Organisation and of the Parliamentary Assembly

At € 6 083 800, the budget of the Congress represented 3.08% of the budget of the entire Organisation (€ 200 999 600) in 2008.

At the same time, with a figure of € 15 570 100, the budget of the Parliamentary Assembly represented 7.90% of the Organisation's budget, or 2.5 times the budget of the Congress.

The Congress has a staff/activity ratio of 51%, whereas that of the Assembly is 62.7%.

It is also important to note a considerable difference in the operation of these two assemblies. Whereas all costs arising from the participation of members of the Parliamentary Assembly in sessions, committee meetings, official visits, etc. are borne by the national parliaments, for members of the Congress these costs are met out of the Congress budget. The cost of Congress members' participation in the various activities - whether or not statutory in nature - stood at € 1 145 005 in 2008, or 18.8% of the total budget.



1.2 - The budget of the Congress as compared with the budget of the Committee of the Regions of the European Union

The Congress, as set up in 1994, is a political assembly with two debating chambers whose elected representatives (318 full members and as many substitutes) represent over 200 000 local and regional authorities in the 47 member states. It has its basis, inter alia, in a so far unique legal instrument: the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

The European Union's Committee of the Regions was also established in 1994. It takes the form of a single-chamber assembly with 344 members representing the local and regional authorities of the 27 EU member states.

In 2008 the budget of the Committee of the Regions was approximately € 71 204 491, eleven times the budget of the Congress. The same disparity can be observed in terms of human resources, which are ten times as big at the Committee of the Regions.

1.3 - The particularities of the Congress's budget

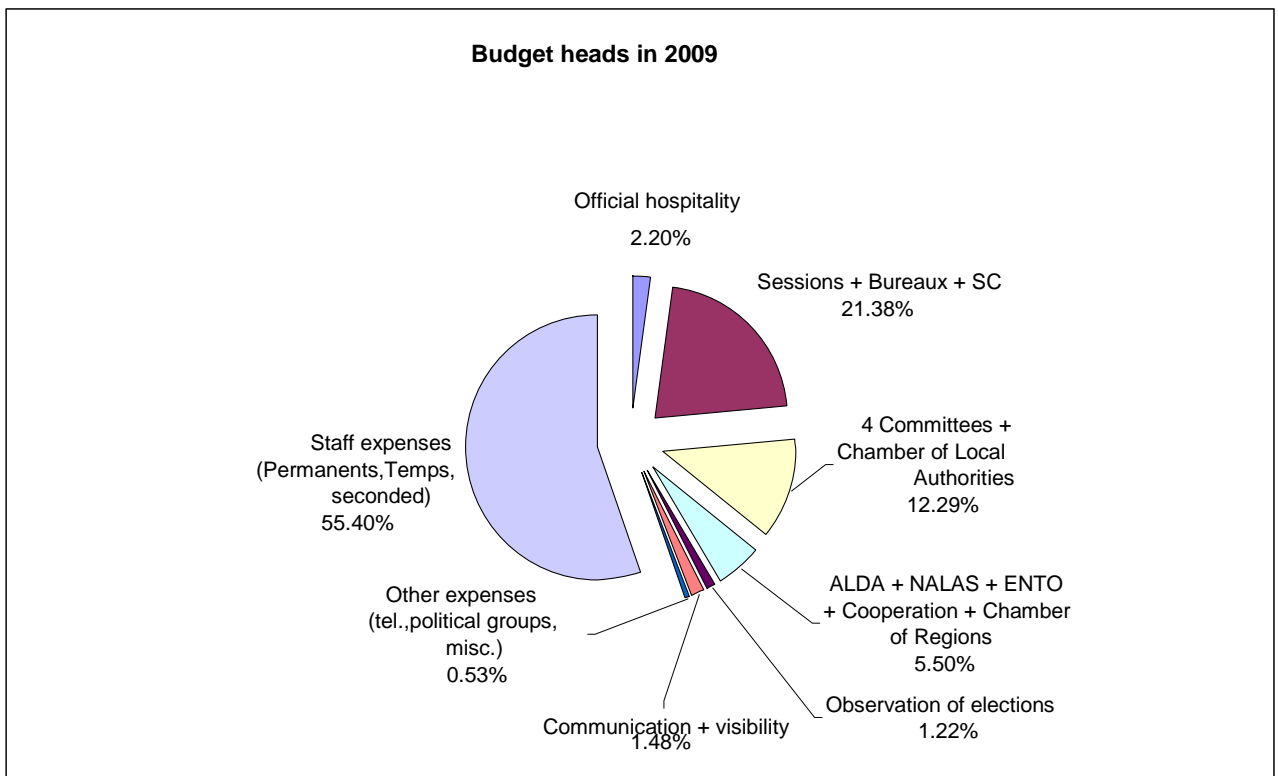
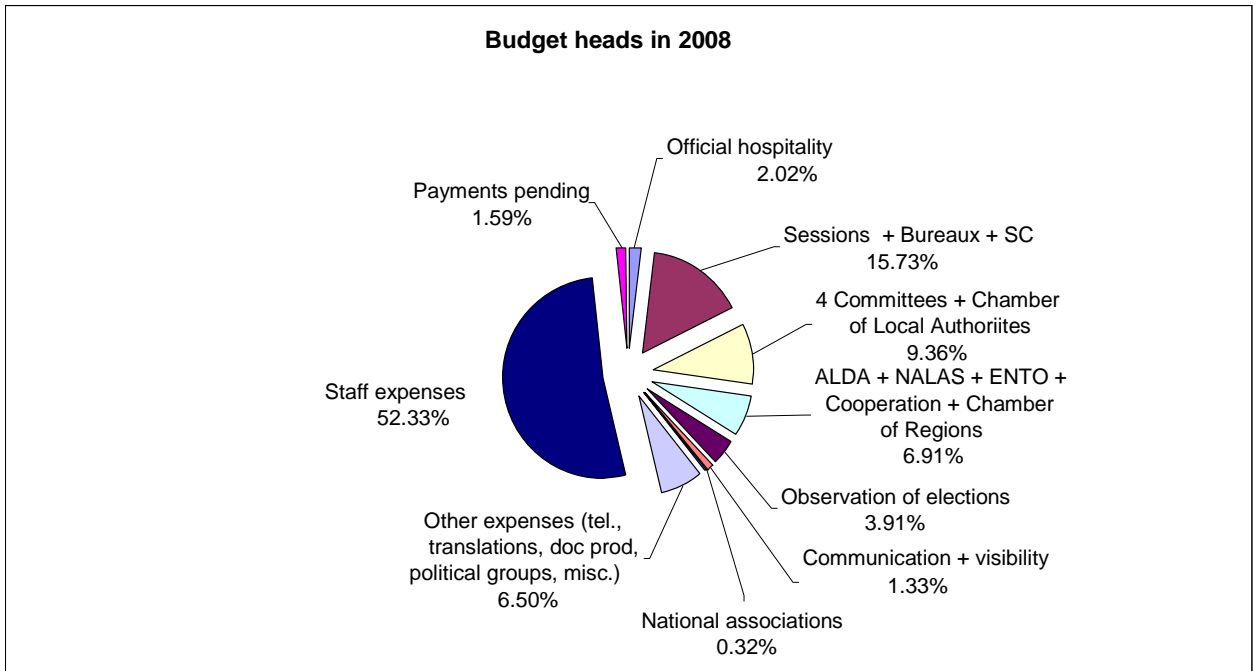
During the annual budgeting exercise the Congress is allocated an overall budget envelope to cover its operations. This allows it to devote part of its resources to activities determined by its priorities, or even by current events. It is indeed important that political assemblies - such as the Congress and the Parliamentary Assembly, which also receives a budgetary envelope - should enjoy a degree of flexibility in allocating their financial resources.

Budget management is the task of the Secretary General of the Congress, who is responsible for implementing the decisions taken by the Bureau of the Congress, which is nonetheless required to act in accordance with the Financial Regulations of the Council of Europe and must ensure first and foremost the provisioning of expenditure necessary to the functioning of the Congress's statutory organs and two Chambers.

As already mentioned, unlike the Parliamentary Assembly, which does not bear the travel and subsistence expenses incurred for members' participation in its activities, the Congress allocates a substantial share of its budget to cover such costs (18.8% in 2008).

Another significant difference worth mentioning lies in the budget for temporary staff employed during sessions of the two assemblies. The Congress has a temporary staff budget of € 78 000 per session (two per year as from 2009), and the Parliamentary Assembly € 200 000 per session (four per year).

1.4 - Major budget heads (staff, sessions, committees, communication, etc.)



2. 2008 Budget - stocktaking¹

2.1 – Staff expenses

This head covers the basic salaries, allowances and social cover of the Congress secretariat's permanent and temporary staff. In 2008 staff expenses totalled € 2 859 100 for permanent staff, € 83 200 for staff hired on positions, € 204 900 for temporary staff and € 14 600 for one seconded national civil servant.

In 2008 the secretariat included:

1 permanent posts (excluding one A4 and a reclassified A2/3) distributed as follows:

A7	1
A6	1
A5	2
A4	2
A3	4
A2/3	4
B5	4
B4	7
B3	9
B2/3	1
B2	4
Total	39

1 position (1 B4) which are held by permanent staff

12 temporary staff (2 B5s, 2 B4, 2 B3s, 5 B2s and 1 B1)

1 seconded national civil servant (A2).

It should be noted that the Congress's temporary staff are not "reinforcements" but perform statutory tasks of a permanent nature, and in some cases have been assigned to these tasks for several years now. This brings to light a structural shortfall in the number of posts, which needs to be remedied, especially in the light of the new contractual policy now in force at the Council of Europe. To consolidate the structure of the Congress, priority should be given to transforming temporary positions concerning statutory tasks into permanent posts.

2.2 - Statutory activities (sessions, committees and working groups, bureaux)

The Congress's statutory activities are those corresponding to the terms of reference laid down in the Congress's Charter. They represent obligatory expenditure, for which the Congress must ensure that it sets aside the necessary funds.

The Congress held three sessions in 2008, including one plenary session, for a cost of € 482 599, the spring session, for a cost of € 202 268, and the autumn session, for a cost of € 113 714.

The Congress also has four statutory committees,² whose activities cover a variety of fields: monitoring of local and regional democracy, culture and education, sustainable development and social cohesion.

¹ The 2008 budget figures used in this report are those as at 16 December 2008.

² The Institutional Committee, the Culture and Education Committee, the Committee on Sustainable Development and the Committee on Social Cohesion

The Institutional Committee is responsible for drawing up reports on the state of local and regional democracy in member and applicant states. It monitors the honouring of commitments entered into by countries having ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government and performs general monitoring work in the field of local and regional democracy.

In 2008 the Institutional Committee held its three plenary meetings and a further 28 meetings to deal with other business (monitoring visits, fact-finding missions, meetings of groups of experts). It brought out five reports at a total cost of about € 270 000.

The Culture and Education Committee, which is also competent for media, youth, sport and communication, issued a number of reports in 2008 and held 23 meetings (including its two plenary meetings) for a total cost of about € 81 000.

The Committee on Sustainable Development is in charge of questions relating to the environment, spatial development and town planning. In 2008 its activities - reports and various meetings (including two plenary meetings) - cost a total of roughly € 74 000.

The Committee on Social Cohesion is responsible, inter alia, for matters relating to employment, citizenship, inter-community relations, public health and gender equality. In 2008 it published reports and held a number of meetings (including two plenary meetings) for a cost of about € 112 000.

2.3 - Observation of local and regional elections

Along with the monitoring reports, observation of local and regional elections by the Congress's elected representatives is an exclusive preserve of the Congress, for which it has been given specific terms of reference by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

This activity is also now one of the areas of tangible co-operation between the Congress and the Committee of the Regions, members of which participate in the Congress's observer delegations.

In 2008 the Congress observed six elections, involving eight rounds of voting:

- In Gagauzia (Moldova) the Congress observed the two rounds of the parliamentary elections (16 and 30 March 2008). The delegation consisted of six members of the Congress and three members of the Committee of the Regions for the first round, and three members of the Congress and two members of the Committee of the Regions for the second round.

- In Serbia the Congress observed both rounds of the local and provincial elections held on 11 and 25 May 2008. For the first round the delegation comprised 21 members of the Congress and three members of the Committee of the Regions, plus a Finnish expert. For the second, it consisted of three members of the Congress.

- In Armenia the Congress observed the election of the local self-government bodies in five of the twelve communities of the city of Yerevan on 28 September 2008. The Congress delegation included seven members.

- In Bosnia and Herzegovina the Congress observed the municipal elections held on 5 October 2008. The delegation included nine members of the Congress, and four from the Committee of the Regions.

- In Georgia the Congress observed the elections to the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara on 3 November 2008. The Congress delegation included six members.

- The Congress also observed the municipal elections held in Israel on 11 November 2008. Its delegation comprised six members.

It can also be noted that, for the first time, the Congress also observed use of electronic voting in the Finnish municipal elections. It sent one observer to Finland.

In 2008 the total cost of the election observation activity stood at about € 240 000.

2.4 - Co-operation and partnership activities

The Congress has always sought to ensure its members' active participation in projects and associations it has itself helped to set up. For instance, after having established the Local Democracy Agencies (LDA), the Congress continues to support them and their umbrella association. Similarly, it supports the training of local and regional officials, including via the ENTO network and its participation in the Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform. It also provides ongoing support for national associations of local and regional authorities which it helped to set up, such as that in Azerbaijan, and their networks, such as the Network of National Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS).

2008 was also the year of the launch of European Local Democracy Week, in which the Congress played a key co-ordination role at European level.

In 2008 the total cost of these co-operation and partnership activities stood at some € 390 000.

2.5 - Communication

In 2008 expenditure on communication and visibility (including the logistical functioning of the session) totalled some € 83 000.

In view of the Congress's political role in the European institutional framework it would be desirable to increase this communication budget to far more than its current 2.9% of the total budget.

While making all due allowances, it can be noted that over 10% of staff at the Committee of the Regions are employed in communication related tasks and that the financial resources allocated to its communication policy is an annual amount of € 1 407 000.

2.6 - Grant to the political groups

In 2008 the grant to the political groups amounted to € 21 600. Attention has often been drawn to the inadequacy of this grant not just by all the political groups but also even by the Congress's management. The rapporteur wishes to point out that the necessary increase in the Congress's budget should also lead to a higher grant to the political groups.

This is because it is important to facilitate the running of the political groups, enabling them to hold more meetings and to assume to the full their role in the Congress's activities.

As in other fields already mentioned, a comparison with the situation at the Parliamentary Assembly, in terms of both human and financial resources, is sufficiently telling.

The Parliamentary Assembly's political groups have secretaries working for them full time, who are paid at a level equivalent to an A grade official of the Council of Europe.

In 2008 the annual grant to the political groups of the Assembly totalled € 731 200.

In conclusion to this part of the report, I wish to underline that managing the budget for 2008 was no easy matter, mainly as a result of the many unexpected events, such as the political situation in Georgia, the launch of Local Democracy Week, for which the Congress received no extra resources, and the high number of election observation missions, some of which had not been planned, such as the observation of the local elections in Israel.

To meet the challenge of reconciling the Congress's status and political role with the significant budget constraints, the Secretary General of the Congress has decided to introduce, as from 2009, a policy of very strict budgeting of statutory and other expenditure, a move which I can but welcome in my capacity as rapporteur.

3. 2009 Budget – initial analysis

In March 2008 the Congress adopted Recommendation 238 (2008) on the resources and budget of the Congress for 2009 (Appendix 1) in accordance with the spirit of its new Charter, in particular Article 16 thereof, which provides "The Congress shall inform the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the Committee of Ministers of its budgetary needs."

I recall that all the instances of the Organisation were asked to identify efficiency savings in order to finance the essential adjustments that the General Secretary of the Council of Europe had to take into account in his draft budget 2009 proposal presentation for the Deputy Ministers in April 2008. At the initiative of the General Secretary, four organs of the Council of Europe (the Congress, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Court and the Commissioner for Human Rights) were exempted from these measures.

The Congress accordingly requested the Committee of Ministers to "grant an increase of € 121 700 to the budget, equivalent to 1.99% in comparison with the exercise 2008, in order to be able to organise a second annual plenary session and co-ordinate the organisation and holding of a European Local Democracy Week."

Despite the Congress's due expectations regarding its budget, the Committee of Ministers in the end adopted a budget roughly equivalent to that for the 2005 financial year, totalling € 6 019 100, representing an approximately 2 decrease on the 2008 budget, which at 1 January 2008 stood at € 6 117 600.

Apart from cutting the budgets of the Congress, the Parliamentary Assembly and the European Court of Human Rights by 2%, the Committee of Ministers also decided to apply a 1.9% rate of inflation to part of the budgets of the different sectors of the Council of Europe and to reduce certain expenditure items, such as expert travel and some official journeys by members of the secretariat. I wish to point out that this rate of inflation of 1.9% is inconsistent with the real figure and with the Eurostat statistics announcing an annual rate of inflation for France of 3% in October 2008.

As a result, and following the reduction of expert and official journey costs across the Organisation, the Congress budget was finally reduced by 2,5% for 2009.

This decrease in resources seems to run counter to the current trend within European institutions to accord growing importance to local authorities, which should also mean a greater presence of the Congress on the European scene. The less comfortable budgetary situation in which we will find ourselves will prevent us from allocating additional resources to activities consolidating the Congress's position, and thereby that of the Council of Europe, such as observation of elections, monitoring operations and relations with national associations, which are part of our political priorities for 2009-2010, as adopted in December 2008

3.1 - The two sessions

Following the Bureau's political decision that, as from 2009, the Congress would hold two annual plenary sessions per year, respectively in the spring and the autumn, replacing the single plenary session at the end of May, in May 2008 the Congress adopted Resolution 261 (2008) on a second annual plenary session of the Congress.

At the same time, the joint meetings of the Standing Committee and the statutory committees, known as the spring and autumn sessions, will no longer be necessary, and the Standing Committee will in principle hold a meeting between the two plenary sessions instead.

The additional cost of organising the second annual plenary session must therefore be added to the above-mentioned budget cuts.

3.2 - Promotion of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and monitoring of the state of local and regional democracy in Council of Europe member states

The Congress will continue its activities relating to implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and monitoring of the situation of local and regional government in the member states. It will also continue to respond to requests for expert assistance with the Charter's application in specific circumstances and to focus on follow-up action to recommendations issued to member states' governments. This will therefore remain the Congress's leading activity.

3.3 - Another priority - observation of elections

In this context the Congress will pay special heed to the state of local democracy in the member states and even beyond their borders. Its contribution will now extend to examining the specific situation in each of the states concerned regarding the implementation of the rules on local and regional democracy. The assessment of the electoral process will constitute a contribution to the work on monitoring the Charter's implementation and will result in proposals for tangible measures, in accordance with Resolution 274 (2008) on Congress policy in observing local and regional elections.

3.4 - European Local Democracy Week

The Congress will continue its efforts to promote European Local Democracy Week, an initiative which will now take place each year in October and which is aimed at raising public awareness of the action taken by elected representatives to make local democracy work. In co-operation with the intergovernmental sector of the Council of Europe, the Congress will play a direct role in promoting the week and in co-ordinating the associated national and local events. The Congress's contribution to implementation of the good governance strategy will be devoted to the co-operation activities concerning Local Democracy Week.

3.5 - More dynamic external relations

As decided, in particular, upon the adoption of the Congress's priorities for 2009-2010, the Congress will seek to foster pooling of skills with its privileged partners, namely the national associations, the many European and international associations, the Committee of the Regions, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, the Assembly of European Regions and the Association of European Border Regions.

The Congress will pursue relations with its Euro-Mediterranean and international partners, to whom new approaches will be made. It will also strengthen its co-operation with UN-HABITAT in the fields of decentralisation and strengthening of local authorities.

3.6 - Consolidation of partnerships and co-operation networks

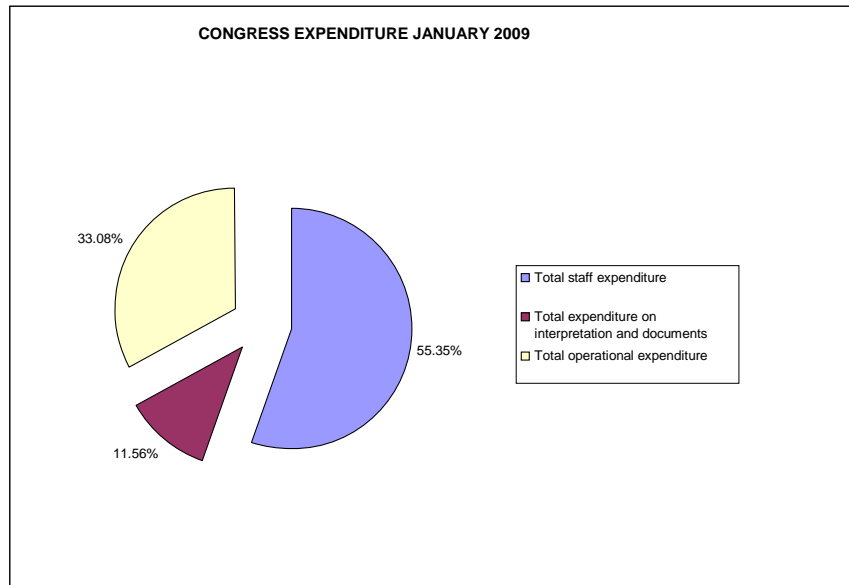
The Congress will continue to develop its links with the ALDA, NALAS and ENTO and will pursue its commitment to the CLIP network (European network of cities for local integration policies for migrants).

3.7 - Making the Congress more efficient and raising its profile

The Congress will implement a new communication policy aimed at raising the profile of its members, its activities and its work, with the principal goal of ensuring the complete success of the two annual sessions and achieving broader dissemination and more intensive follow-up of the instruments it adopts.

In conclusion, I wish to point out that, in this context of budgetary restrictions, it will be necessary to adopt a very tight budget, setting clear priorities that must be adhered to. It is with this aim in mind and against this background of budgetary constraints that the Congress secretariat has prepared projections for implementing the 2009 budget (Appendix II). It can be seen that, taking into account the budget projections for all the statutory activities of the Congress, no resources will be left over for allocating additional funds to non-statutory activities, which nonetheless serve to consolidate the Congress's role as a political forum and its significance beyond the confines of the Council of Europe.

Vote V of ordinary budget – Congress related expenditure	Credit received at 1st January 2009
Staff related expenditure	
0000001 - Remuneration of permanent staff	3 080 100,00
0000003 - Remuneration and accessory charges in respect of temporary staff	228 900,00
0000013 – Placement of national civil servants on secondment	0,00
0000046 - Remuneration of staff on position	85 700,00
Total	3 394 700,00
Interpretation expenditure - Documents	
0000115 - Interpretation	416 800,00
0000116 – Translation	208 200,00
0000124 – Document production	66 100,00
0000125 - Outsourced production of documents	17 900,00
Total	709 000,00
Operational expenditure	
0000054 - IT and telecommunication equipment	10 400,00
0000079 - Travel and subsistence expenses of members of the Congress	1 018 800,00
0000080 – Official journeys	111 300,00
0000084 - Representational and travel expenses of the President of the Congress	30 600,00
0000085 - Congress events - organisational costs	31 100,00
0000129 - Consultants	52 100,00
0000165 - Official hospitality	26 300,00
0000169 - Co-operation activities of the CLRAE	248 600,00
0000212 - European network of training centres for local and regional staff	20 800,00
0000215 - Communication of the CLRAE	44 200,00
0000216 - Observation of local and regional elections	207 900,00
0000217 - Compliance with member states' commitments	201 200,00
0000370 - Political groups	22 000,00
0000392 - Sundry expenditure	3 600,00
Total	2 028 900,00
GLOBAL COST	6 132 600,00



4. 2010 Budget – Proposals

The Congress has already set out its priorities for 2010 in the context of the adoption of its priorities for 2009-2010. The latter document, officially adopted at the autumn session in 2008, constitutes a genuine political commitment by the Congress for the coming two years.

I accordingly wish to stress the absolute need for an increased budget in 2010 - for the Congress itself of course, but also for the Council of Europe as a whole.

Should such a budget increase be forthcoming, the Congress would wish to be able to allocate additional resources to operational expenditure aimed at consolidating its enhanced institutional role in the continued monitoring of implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and of local democracy and in the evaluation of electoral processes and would also wish to develop its activities in other sectors, such as improved co-operation with, and information and training of, elected representatives and pooling of expertise between the Congress and its privileged partners, so as to enhance opportunities for fruitful synergies.

The Congress will also seek to publicise, promote and explain other key instruments worthy of support which it has adopted, such as the European Urban Charter II - Manifesto for a new urbanity - and the Code of Good Conduct for local elected representatives.

At the same time, it is important that the Congress should seek to spread knowledge of and promote backing for the draft European Charter of Regional Democracy, which it adopted at its 15th plenary session in 2008, among elected representatives and governments.

In view of the above, the rapporteur proposes that the Congress submit to the Committee of Ministers proposals for an increase in resources in 2010. These proposals must concern additional resources for both activities and staff.

4.1 - As regards activities, I propose not only that the current level of resources should be maintained, but that the Congress should receive extra financial resources as follows:

- € 100 000 to enable it to improve its preparation, co-ordination and follow-up work on European Local Democracy Week in 2010.
For the same initiative, it is further suggested that a request be made for the creation of one post at grade A1/A2 and one post at grade B3.

- € 100 000 to enable the Congress to structure its contribution to the Euro-Mediterranean co-operation initiative. This would be a response to the need created by the initiative, launched by France's President Nicolas Sarkozy at the instigation of the Committee of the Regions, to set up a Union for the Mediterranean in the form of a Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM).

The Congress itself has already played a significant role in various co-operation initiatives concerning the Euro-Mediterranean area, in both the Maghreb countries and as part of its relations with Israel and the Palestinian Authority. On account of its remit for promoting local democracy, its track record of establishing and co-operating with associations of local elected representatives and its particularly active role in matters of city diplomacy the Congress has an obligation to make a contribution to the Euro-Mediterranean cause.

4.2 - As regards the staff of the Congress:

1. as already mentioned above, it must above all be borne in mind that five temporary members of staff at the Congress in fact perform tasks of a statutory, structural nature. It is therefore essential that these temporary jobs should be replaced with permanent posts.

2. apart from this issue of the "status" of the jobs concerned, the Congress secretariat needs to be reinforced so that it is in a position properly to assume the extra workload resulting, in particular, from the second annual plenary session and the activities relating to European Local Democracy Week.

It is consequently necessary that the Congress should be given the following additional posts:

1. three B3 posts and two B2 posts, which would replace the current temporary positions (table office, Chamber of Regions, Co-ordination and Management Division, Communication Unit);

2. two B3 posts: one to reinforce the table office secretariat and another for the Local Democracy Week secretariat;

3. two A2 posts (one for a Deputy to the Head of Table Office and another for the Local Democracy Week).

4.3 - At the same time, with regard to the Secretary General of the Congress, I consider it appropriate to come back to the question of the "rank" attaching to this post, which it would be desirable to place on a par with that of the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly, thereby granting our Secretary General the status of "specially appointed official".

In the context of the request submitted in 2008 (Recommendation 238) it was pointed out that the cost of this change would be small, since it entails a 6% increase in basic salary and an official hospitality allowance of about € 9 300.

I therefore propose that the Congress reiterate this request, which I would like to see satisfied in the budget for the 2010 financial year.

CONCLUSIONS

In this report I have sought to underline the importance of the priorities the Congress has set itself for 2009 and 2010, which are inherent in the Congress's recognised status as a political assembly of the local and regional elected representatives of Council of Europe member states.

It is moreover with the aim of endowing itself with a more appropriate institutional framework that the Congress has decided to hold a second annual plenary session.

In 2010 the Congress will naturally continue to organise two annual plenary sessions and will strive to ensure that its adopted texts are more widely distributed and better followed up. It will also devote additional resources to activities that are not solely statutory in nature, such as the training of elected representatives in election observation or participation in representation missions.

In this context, the Congress cannot, without being harmed, continue functioning with reductions on the scale of the cuts made in its budget for 2009 but will, on the contrary, ask the Committee of Ministers to increase its activities budget for 2010 so as to guarantee that it retains fully credibility in the performance of its role and is capable of fulfilling all the tasks assigned to it.

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 238 (2008) Resources and budget of the Congress for 2009

The Congress,

1. Convinced that:

a. local and regional democracy is the cornerstone of our societies, which we want to be inclusive and inspired by the respect for human rights, the rule of law and democracy;

b. local and regional authorities are at the heart of this ambition and are therefore called upon to participate directly in the construction of Europe;

c. the institutional representation of territorial authorities at the Council of Europe, the first European organisation, which, already fifty years ago, wished to include them in its mission, illustrates this role. The Congress has thereby become an important component of our Organisation and of the European institutional landscape;

d. the increased status of the representation of territorial representatives at the Council of Europe and the establishment of the Congress, has made this a unique assembly, with a bicameral structure, where local and regional representatives of the 47 member states dialogue and confer on questions of their competence;

e. a venue for debates and exchanges, but also the guardian of the principles of local autonomy enshrined in the European Charter of Local Self-Government, the Congress is an important added value to the action and unique mission of the Council of Europe, with an institutional status that recognises this situation by means of Resolution (2007) 6;

f. the Congress is of the opinion that its Secretary General should be able to benefit from the status of “specially appointed official”, in line with the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly, so as to have a level which is commensurate with the status of the Congress within the Organisation;

g. the Congress takes note of, and appreciates, the concern to accord a high priority to the growing needs of the European Court of Human Rights, but regrets that this is done at the expense of other sectors of the Council of Europe, on which a decrease in the budget is imposed;

h. in this spirit, the Congress is deeply concerned about the consequences that the combined effects of the legitimate increase of certain costs, such as salaries and a sustained zero-growth budget, might have on the level of activity of the Congress, and therefore the impact of its mission;

i. the Congress also considers that it is important that it disposes of the necessary financial and human resources to allow it to play a proper role on the European stage and it is in this spirit that it has formulated requests for specific increases for the years to come in its priority activity sectors, in conformity with Article 16 of the Charter;

j. however, given the efforts requested from the different sectors of the Organisation so as to be able to present a budget for 2009 which is close to zero growth, the Congress accept reducing the requests that it originally formulated for 2009 but nevertheless maintains the requests concerning the organisation of a second annual plenary session and the European co-ordination of “Local Democracy Week”;

2. Consequently, in the light of the above, the Congress requests that the Committee of Ministers:

a. grant the status of “specially appointed official” to the Secretary General of the Congress, without any other supplementary posts;

b. grant an increase of €121 700 to the budget, equivalent to 1.99% in comparison with the exercise 2008, in order to be able to organise a second annual plenary session and co-ordinate the organisation and holding of a European Local Democracy Week (October 2009), bearing in mind that the additional cost for the second annual session is approximately €200 000 and €100 000 for the Local Democracy Week, with 59% of the required funding being found through internal savings within the Congress;

c. invite the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to include the needs formulated above in the budget proposal that he will present to the Committee of Ministers.

1. Debated and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 14 March 2008 (see Document CG(14)39REC, draft recommendation presented by G. Krug (Germany, R, SOC) on behalf of J.-C. Frécon (France, L, SOC), rapporteur).