

# THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

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## Resolution 457 (2020)<sup>1</sup> Fact-finding report on territorial reform in Latvia

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe notes that:

*a.* Latvia joined the Council of Europe on 10 February 1995. It signed and ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No.122, hereafter “the Charter”) on 5 December 1996 and the Charter came into force for Latvia on 1 April 1997; in accordance with Article 12, paragraph 1, of the Charter, Latvia declared that it was not bound by Article 9, paragraph 8, of the Charter;

*b.* on 10 October 2019, the Chair of the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments (Latvijas Pašvaldību savienība”), Gints KAMINSKIS, wrote to the Congress complaining of numerous alleged violations of the Charter in connection with the preparation and implementation of the country’s administrative territorial reform, in particular a problem regarding consultation. In the letter, the association also complained of a significant decline in the budgetary autonomy of local authorities and a risk of changes to legislation that had been declared by the Congress to be in conformity with the Charter;

*c.* further to a decision by the Bureau of the Congress to conduct a fact-finding visit to Latvia to clarify the association’s allegations, the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by member States of the European Charter of Local Self-Government (hereafter “Monitoring Committee”) entrusted the co-rapporteurs, Xavier CADORET (France, L, SOC/G/DP) and Marc COOLS (Belgium, L, ILDG), with the task of conducting the visit to Latvia;

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1. Debated and adopted by the Statutory Forum on 7 December 2020 (see Document [CG-FORUM\(2020\)02-02](#), explanatory memorandum), co-rapporteurs: Xavier CADORET, France ( L, SOC/G/PD) and Marc COOLS, Belgium (L, ILDG).

*d.* during the fact-finding visit, which took place on 4 December 2019, the Congress delegation met representatives of various institutions at all levels of government. The programme of the visit is appended to the explanatory memorandum (Document [CG-FORUM \(2020\)02-02](#)).

2. The Congress notes that the Latvian authorities are planning a wide-ranging administrative territorial reform, which involves a massive reduction in the number of local authorities and is to be passed by law, the bill for which was being debated in the Saeima at the time of the visit.

3. The Congress expresses its concern at the deterioration in the overall situation of local democracy in Latvia since the last monitoring report by the Congress adopted in 2018 and, in particular, the lack of proper consultation, the reduction in the financial autonomy of local authorities and the repeated instances of interference by central government in the institutional life of the city of Riga.

4. In the light of the above, the Congress:

*a.* resolves to continue closely following the state of progress of the local government reform in Latvia;

*b.* undertakes to expand its political dialogue with the Latvian national authorities so that they comply with the provisions set out in the Charter, in particular when implementing the reform, so as to improve the situation of local and regional democracy in Latvia;

*c.* agrees to include monitoring of the situation in Latvia, in particular in the area of non-conformity with the Charter, on the agenda of its Monitoring Committee’s meetings;

*d.* invites its Bureau to consider the possibility of inviting the Latvian Minister for Environmental Protection and Regional Development to address the Congress at one of its forthcoming sessions and discuss the developments planned by the Latvian authorities.