

Oslo Declaration: Democratic Preparedness at the Local and Regional Level as a Foundation for Democratic Security

Following the seminar on Democratic Preparedness at the local and regional level, and on the occasion of the Congress Monitoring Committee meeting, held in Oslo on 29-30 June 2026 respectively, the members of the Monitoring Committee and the President of the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS),

Referring to the European Charter of Local Self-Government (Charter) that enshrines fundamental principles of local democracy and highlighting that strong local democracy is a prerequisite for strong national democracy;

Bearing in mind the Reykjavík Declaration adopted at the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe, which reaffirmed democratic security as key for member States to address current and future challenges together and to secure peace and prosperity in Europe;

Alarmed by growing threats to democratic security on our continent posed by increasingly confrontational and polarised geopolitics, Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine, democratic backsliding, foreign interference, hate speech and disinformation, cyber-attacks, violence against elected representatives, declining public trust and the effects of the climate change;

Guided by the Reykjavík Principles of Democracy, which aim to secure and strengthen democracy and good governance at all levels of government across Europe;

Convinced that strengthening democratic security is a collective responsibility of all levels of government;

Stressing that democratically governed and resilient communities which promote inclusive civic engagement, transparency and accountability, implement human rights, provide effective local service delivery and targeted crisis response serve as a shield against democratic backsliding;

Committed to the objectives of the New Democratic Pact for Europe, which seeks to uphold citizens' trust in democratic institutions and revitalise democracy;

1. Recognise that democratic preparedness at the local and regional level constitutes an important preventive and resilience-building element of democratic security, as it enables local communities to anticipate, prevent, address and recover from current and future challenges to democracy without compromising democratic values;
2. Commit to the use of inclusive, participatory and deliberative tools to enhance democratic learning, social cohesion and citizens' trust, particularly among young people and groups at risk of disengagement, with a view to strengthening democratic participation both during and between elections;

3. Undertake to apply and support measures aimed at countering disinformation and foreign interference, in particular through transparent public communication, co-operation with independent media, fact-checking and the ethical use of digital technologies, including AI, in local and regional governance in conformity with Council of Europe standards;
4. Urge for effective protection of elected representatives and local officials against hate speech and all forms of violence to strengthen democratic preparedness at the local and regional level;
5. Call for the strict adherence to the principles of Charter so as to enable local and regional authorities to develop and strengthen their democratic preparedness through their autonomy, democratic legitimacy, responsibility for local public affairs and leverage of local conditions;
6. Encourage ratification by all Council of Europe member states of the Additional Protocol to the Charter on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority to strengthen citizens participation in local public affairs.