

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities



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State of the Congress

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Activity report of the President and priorities of the Congress for 2007-2008



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1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past year, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe whose membership was renewed during the 13th Plenary Session in 2006, has been pursuing its main mission as the watchdog of territorial democracy in Europe, in partnership with national governments, being a unique body mandated to monitor the state and development of local and regional self-government on our continent. The Congress continued its monitoring activities aimed at the proper application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in member states, through country-by-country reports, exchanges with government officials on the follow-up given to Congress recommendations, and observation of local and regional elections. We have recently begun discussions on the procedure of compliance by member states with Congress recommendations.

Among other important axes of Congress action remained promoting interregional and transborder cooperation, empowering territorial communities, setting up and assisting associations of local authorities and their networks, providing expertise to governments on legislation concerning territorial self-government, advising the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly on matters relating to local democracy, and fostering intercultural and interreligious dialogue. All this is reflected in Congress priorities for 2007-2008, which are appended to this report.

The Congress Charter was revised in 2007. The Committee of Ministers adopted on 2 May 2007 a new Statutory Resolution and a new Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in order to consolidate and develop the role of local and regional authorities in the institutional framework of the Council of Europe. These new texts acknowledge that, besides its consultative role, the Congress engages in other activities under the priorities of the Council of Europe as defined on the occasion of the Warsaw Summit of Heads of State and Government in May 2005.

The new Statutory Resolution and the new Charter of the Congress take into account the development of the work of the Congress. Among the main changes, these texts recognise the role of the Congress in observing regional or local elections. They also state that the Congress works in close co-operation with the national associations representing the authorities, and with the other European partners, notably with the Committee of the Regions of the European Union.

The revision of the Charter has significant consequences for the practical functioning of the Congress. The Congress may, for example, hold two plenary sessions per year, subject to available budgetary appropriations. The use of the title "the Congress" is formally adopted and may be used to designate "the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe".

This report also describes the work of the Congress' statutory committees in line with their priorities for 2007-2008, as well as the increased cooperation with the European Union Committee of the Regions, whose members are now participating in Congress election observation missions. Furthermore, the Congress stepped up cooperation with national associations of local authorities, consulting them on Congress texts and engaging them to a larger extent in its work. A recent decision of the Congress Bureau to invite representatives of local authorities' associations to take part in Congress election observation missions is another proof of it.

We have been expanding our activities in South-East Europe and in South Caucasus, as well as beyond European borders, particularly in the Middle East. Substantial progress was made in setting up Euroregions of a new type. The Adriatic Euroregion has become operational, work has advanced on the Black Sea Euroregion, and a Reflection Group was launched on the Baltic Sea Euroregion.

The Congress is participating in various European projects, among which are the Network of Cities for Local Integration Policies (CLIP), Cities for Children, Cities for Peace, and the Berlin Process for disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods. We have also joined in Council of Europe campaigns to fight trafficking in human beings and domestic violence against women. The Declaration against trafficking is available on-line for signature by cities and regions, and poster campaigns to stop domestic violence against women are being carried out in numerous European municipalities. We are now launching a project of City Diplomacy aimed at engaging municipalities in dialogue and joint action for peace and stability.

Last but not least, the year 2007 marks the 50th anniversary of local democracy in Europe. A round table on this occasion will be held during this session, and European Local Democracy Week will be

launched in October 2007, during the Conference of European Ministers responsible for local and regional government, to be held in Valencia, Spain.

We must now build upon our achievements. The growing importance of territorial communities today reinforces the political role of the Congress and gives us a historic opportunity to bring local and regional democracy to a new level, an opportunity which is not to be wasted.

2. SESSIONS

2.1 13th Plenary Session of the Congress (Strasbourg, 30 May – 1st June 2006)

2.1.1 Summary of the work of the Plenary Session

The Congress held its 13th plenary session from 30 May to 1 June 2006. The session was preceded by the meetings of the Bureaux of the Congress and of its two Chambers on 29 May.

The session began by the election of the new President of the Congress, the Presidents of its Chambers of Regions and of Local Authorities, their Vice Presidents, as well as the new constitution of the Congress Committees, as follows:

Halvdan Skard (Norway, SOC) was unanimously elected Congress President for a two-year term. He has served as President of the Congress' Chamber of Local Authorities since 2002. Halvdan Skard succeeded Giovanni Di Stasi (Italy, SOC), who held this position for the past two years as a representative of the Chamber of Regions.

The Congress also unanimously elected Ian Micallef (Malta, EPP/CD) as President of the Chamber of Local Authorities, and Yavuz Mildon (EPP/CD) was re-elected President of the Chamber of Regions, a post he has held since 2004.

Institutional Committee

Chair: WHITMORE Keith, United Kingdom (ILDG)

Vice-Chair: BEHR Karsten, Germany (EPP/CD)

Vice-Chair PEREVERZEVA Irina, Russian Federation (SOC)

Committee on culture and education

Chair: ZACH Hilde Austria (EPP/CD)

Vice-Chair: FÄLDT Brith, Sweden (SOC)

Vice-Chair: MUKHAMETSHIN Farid, Russian Federation (ILDG)

Committee on sustainable development

Chair: DOGANOGLU Gaye, Turkey (EPP/CD)

Vice-Chair: KADOKHOV Valery, Russian Federation (SOC)

Vice-Chair: VAN VAERENBERGH Etienne, Belgium (ILDG)

Committee on social cohesion

Chair: PRIGNACHI Valerio, Italy (EPP/CD)

Vice-Chair: HAIDER Erich, Austria (SOC)

Vice-Chair: ROGOV Viatcheslav, Russian Federation (ILDG)

The members of the Congress reviewed the recent initiatives of the Congress, such as the setting up of a Council of Europe centre for interregional and transfrontier cooperation in St Petersburg, and the creation of new types of Euroregions, including the Adriatic Euroregion and the Black Sea Euroregion.

The members also assessed the state of local and regional democracy in Europe. They examined reports on the local elections in Ukraine on 26 March 2006 and on the Referendum on self-determination for Montenegro (Serbia & Montenegro) on 21 May 2006, and debated urban security, access for migrants to social rights and the management of water and waste. The presentation of a report on combating trafficking in human beings was followed by the signing of a declaration by representatives of municipalities. After the session, the declaration was posted on the Congress website, with a possibility of online signature.

The guest speakers who addressed the session included Terry Davis, Council of Europe Secretary General, Thomas Hammarberg, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Michel Delebarre, newly elected President of the European Union's Committee of the Regions, and Jan Olbrycht, Vice-Chairman of the Committee on Regional Development of the European Parliament.

During the session, there were an impressive number of reports and follow-up discussions on Congress monitoring recommendations in eight countries and two entire regions. The session discussed the state of local and regional democracy in Norway, Albania and the three countries of South Caucasus, as well as local and regional democracy in Ukraine, and follow-up to the 6th Forum of cities and regions in South-East Europe. At the local level, there were debates on local democracy in Cyprus, Liechtenstein and Moldova, and on the state of local finances in the Netherlands.

The session adopted Recommendation 197 (2006) on urban security in Europe; Recommendation 187 (2006) on the Adriatic Euroregion; Recommendation 193 (2006) on South-East Europe : 6th Forum of Cities and Regions (Sinaia, Romania 8-9 December 2005); Recommendation 188 (2006) on Good governance in European metropolitan areas; Recommendation 196 (2006) on local democracy in Liechtenstein; Recommendation 191 (2006) on Chernobyl, 20 years on: local and regional authorities dealing with disasters (The Slavutich Appeal, announcing five principles of nuclear plant management); Recommendation 190 (2006) on water management: a European contribution to the 4th World Water Forum; and Recommendation 199 (2006) on Inter-regional co-operation in the Black Sea Basin, aimed at creating a Black Sea Euro-region of the same type as the Adriatic Sea Euro-region.

The session also adopted the following resolutions:

Resolution 220 (2006) on urban security in Europe; Resolution 216 on local and regional elections in Ukraine observed on 26 March 2006; Resolution 217 (2006) on South-East Europe : 6th Forum of Cities and Regions (Sinaia, Romania 8-9 December 2005); Resolution 212 (2006) on the Adriatic Euroregion; Resolution 218 (2006) on effective access to social rights for immigrants: the role of local and regional authorities; Resolution 209 (2006) on the verification of new members' credentials and new appointment procedures; Resolution 211 (2006) on the follow-up to the Referendum on the status of Montenegro (Serbia and Montenegro) observed on 21 May 2006; Resolution 221 (2006) on promoting an entrepreneurial spirit among young people in Europe's regions; Resolution 219 (2006) on reconciling heritage and modernity; Resolution 214 (2006) on water management: a European contribution to the 4th World Water Forum; Resolution 215 (2006) on Chernobyl, 20 years on: local and regional authorities dealing with disasters; and Resolution 213 (2006) on local and regional waste management and the siting of landfills.

The Congress session also had an exchange of views with Valentina MATVIENKO, Governor of St Petersburg (Russian Federation), and Gabriella CUNDARI, Minister responsible for Town and Country Planning of Campania Region (Italy). Several personalities intervened during the debate on the prospects of regionalisation, including statements by Eisaku SATO, Governor of the Fukushima Prefecture (Japan); Norbert MORIN, member of the Quebec National Assembly (Canada); Adrien ZELLER, President of the Region Alsace (France); Alessandro TESINI, President of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Regional Council and President of the Conference of the Italian Regional Councils; Antonio DA SILVA PAIVA, President of the Commission for Constitutional Affairs, European Governance and the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice of the Committee of the Regions of the European Union; and Riccardo NENCINI, President of the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE), President of the Parliament of Tuscany (Italy).

Lazaros S. Salvides, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior of Cyprus, participated in the debate on local democracy in his country, and Vitalie Vrabie, Minister of Local Public Administration of Moldova, did the same for his Republic. Paul van KALMTHOUT, Deputy Director General for Kingdom Relations and Governance, took part in the debate on the state of local finance in the Netherlands, where the proposed local finance reform received sharp criticism from Congress members.

Dag-Henrik SANDBAKKEN, Deputy Minister for Local Government and Regional Development (Norway), informed the Congress of recent developments in local and regional democracy in his country, and Deputy Minister of Interior Ferdinand PONI reported on the state of local and regional democracy in Albania.

The Congress session also debated the promotion of urban security in Europe, with the participation of Solange CHAREST, member of the Quebec National Assembly (Canada) and Jean-Marie BOCKEL, Mayor of the City of Mulhouse (France).

Other issues on the session's agenda included a wide-ranging debate on the state of local and regional democracy in the South Caucasus, with the participation of high-level government officials from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, and a discussion on the promotion of access to social rights for migrant workers, following which a Network of European cities for local integration policies (CLIP) was launched on 11 September 2006 in Dublin (Ireland), in cooperation with the European Foundation for Working and Living Conditions.

2.1.2. Summary of the work of the Plenary Session of the Chamber of Local Authorities

At its session on 30 and 31 May 2006, the Chamber of Local Authorities elected Ian MICALLEF as president of the chamber.

Highlights of the session included debates on local democracy in Cyprus and Moldova as a follow-up to the Chamber's monitoring reports on the subject. The Chamber heard statements by Lazaros S. SAVVIDES, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior, Cyprus, and Vitalia VRABIE, the recently appointed Minister of Local Administration of Moldova outlining the measures that their countries had taken to implement the recommendations in the respective reports. The Chamber also debated a report on Local democracy in Liechtenstein, following its monitoring mission to this country, and adopted a recommendation on the subject.

A debate was held on the follow-up to the Chamber's report on the state of local finances in the Netherlands, with the participation of Paul VAN KALMTHOUT, the Deputy Director General for Kingdom Relations and Governance of the Netherlands.

The Chamber debated reports on Heritage and Modernity and on Urban Security and adopted a resolution and recommendation on both subjects. The debate on urban security included a statement by Solange CHAREST, member of the Quebec National Assembly, Canada and Jean-Marie BOCKEL, Mayor of the City of Mulhouse, France.

Finally, Wolfgang SCHUSTER, Mayor of Stuttgart, gave a presentation on the new Network of European cities for local integration policies (CLIP).

2.1.3. Summary of the work of the Plenary Session of the Chamber of Regions

The Chamber of Regions opened its session on 30 May 2006 by electing Yavuz Mildon (Turkey, EPP/CD) President, by acclamation. It then elected seven vice-presidents: Günther Krug (Germany, SOC), Suvi Rihntiemi (Finland, EPP/CD), Herwig Van Staa (Austria, EPP/CD), Ludmila Sfirloaga (Romania, SOC), Anatoly Saltykov (Russian Federation, SOC), Hans-Ulrich Stöckling (Switzerland, ILDG) and Istvan Borbely (Hungary, EPP/CD).

Eisaku Sato, Governor of the prefecture of Fukushima in Japan, addressed the Chamber on the state of regionalisation in his country.

Jean-Claude Van Cauwenberghe (Belgium, SOC) presented the report on prospects for regionalisation in Europe (CPR (13) 4), which was followed by a discussion, with contributions from Norbert Morin, member of the Quebec national assembly, Adrien Zeller, President of the Alsace region of France, Alessandro Tesini, President of the Friuli-Venezia-Giulia region and of the conference of regional councils of Italy, and António Da Silva Paiva, Chair of the Commission for Constitutional Affairs, European Governance and the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice of the European Union's Committee of the Regions.

On 31 May 2006, the Chamber of Regions considered a report on promoting an entrepreneurial spirit among young people in Europe's regions, and adopted a recommendation and a resolution.

Valery Kadokhov (Russian Federation, SOC) and Ludmila Sfirloaga (Romania, SOC) presented a report on inter-regional co-operation in the Black Sea Basin and the Chamber adopted a recommendation on the subject.

The Chamber also discussed transfrontier co-operation with Jan Olbrycht, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Regional Development of the European Parliament (Poland) and Jens Gabbe, Secretary General of the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR).

Finally, it approved a proposed resolution on the establishment of a South Eastern European telemedicine and virtual education network, for subsequent consideration by the Bureau of the Congress.

2.2. Autumn Institutional Session (Moscow, 14-15 November 2006)

2.2.1. Summary of the work of the Autumn Institutional Session in plenary

The Congress held its Autumn Session from 13 to 15 November 2006 in Moscow, in the framework of the Russian Federation's Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. It was the first session of the Congress held outside Strasbourg, with some 200 participants, and we hope that it will start a tradition of having Congress spring or autumn sessions in one of the member states. The Congress members and its Secretariat wish to express their gratitude to the Russian authorities, and in particular the Council of the Federation of the Federal Assembly, for the excellent organisation of the Session, both in political and logistical terms.

The Bureaux of the Congress and of its two Chambers met on Monday 13 November. The Bureau of the Congress considered in particular the initiative of launching a Local Democracy Week in all Council of Europe member States at the 15th session of the Conference of European Ministers responsible for local and regional government, to be held in Valencia, Spain, on 15 and 16 October 2007, and considered that Local Democracy Week should also focus on "50 years of local democracy at the Council of Europe". The Bureau also approved the reports on partial local repeat elections in Azerbaijan (6 October 2006) and municipal elections in Georgia (5 October 2006), and agreed to the proposed election observation timetable, including the election of the Bashkan (Governor) of Gagauzia, Moldova, on 3 December, the local elections in Albania (January 2007 – date to be confirmed), and the local elections of 1st May 2007 in Moldova, pending receipt of the official invitations to observe some of these elections.

The Institutional Committee of the Congress, meeting also on 13 November, discussed the implementation of the new compliance procedure for Congress Recommendations and approved amendments to the latest reports on local and regional democracy in Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as regional democracy in the Slovak Republic. According to these amendments, the authorities of the evaluated countries are requested to submit a written report on the measures taken to implement the Congress recommendation two years after the adoption of the recommendation. They are also requested to continue the practice of appointing a senior representative of the government to present prior to that date an interim report on the measures taken at a Session of the Congress.

The Committee also approved unanimously the draft opinion on the Preliminary Draft Recommendation on Local and Regional Public Services (prepared by the CDLR) underlining the need for a reference to the European Charter of Local Self-Government, the 2002 Helsinki declaration on regional self-government, the principle of subsidiarity and other Congress instruments such as Recommendation 114 (2002) and Resolution 140 (2002) on local authorities and public utilities which give concrete and practical examples on how to address challenges in the management of public services.

The Committee then discussed the reports currently under preparation on:

- Regional Democracy in Greece
- Local and Regional Democracy in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"
- Inter-municipal Co-operation
- The status of capital cities; as well as the state of preparation of the additional and amending protocols to the European Self-Government Charter, the preparation of a new legal instrument on Regionalisation (Reflection Group), and the initiative to launch a European Local Democracy Week.

On 14 November, the Session was opened by Congress President Halvdan Skard and Chairman of the Federation Council **Sergey Mironov**, followed by debates on national projects for a sustainable socio-economic development at local and regional level and on the Russian Chairmanship of the

Committee of Ministers, with the participation of First Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation **Dmitry Medvedev**, Foreign Minister **Sergey Lavrov**, and Deputy Mayor of Moscow **Andrey Petrov**, who made statements during those respective debates. A particular point of discussions concerned the proposed draft law aiming to transfer the competences of the elected mayors of regional capitals in Russia to regional authorities. This matter was the subject of two press statements issued by President Skard, who expressed his doubt whether this proposal was in conformity with the European Charter of Local Self-Government ratified by Russia. During the debate, First Deputy Prime Minister **Medvedev** announced that the Russian government will not pursue the proposal – the statement which was welcomed by President Skard in a separate press release.

The Session then discussed preparations for the 15th session of the Conference of European Ministers responsible for local and regional government in Valencia, with the participation of **José M. Rodriguez Alvarez**, President of the Steering Committee for Local and Regional Democracy (**CDLR**) and Councillor of the Secretary of State for territorial cooperation. Another debate was dedicated to cooperation between the Congress and the **Parliamentary Assembly**, in particular with its Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs, with the participation of the Committee Chairman, **Walter Schmied**.

The Session also examined reports on decentralisation and strengthening of local and regional authorities worldwide, taking into account draft guidelines of **UN-HABITAT**, with the participation of **Alan-Clément Kanyinda** representing Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of UN-HABITAT **Anna Kajumulo Tibajuka**. The Session called on Council of Europe member governments to support the draft guidelines.

The Institutional Session then discussed reports and approved recommendations on **local and regional democracy** in **Albania** and in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**.

2.2.2. Summary of the work of the Autumn Institutional Session of the Chamber of Local Authorities

The Chamber began this session with a debate on how to reinforce its monitoring activities and procedures, introduced by Congress Vice-President Jean-Claude FRECON. It was decided to submit a number of proposals to the Bureau, such as ensuring greater involvement of the national associations in these activities.

A debate on New forms of control over local authorities stressed the concern of Congress members of a trend towards the multiplication of levels and types of control over local authorities in certain countries. A resolution was adopted on this issue.

The Chamber held a special debate on the Compliance of Norwegian legislation with Article 11 of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, concluding that elements of Norwegian legislation were clearly incompatible with Article 11 of the Charter. The Chamber adopted a recommendation on the subject and expressed its hope that there would be a prompt reaction to this recommendation from the Norwegian authorities.

The highlight of the session was a debate on "European cities - how to support the Middle East?". Speakers included Mr Said Akil, Governor of "Damascus Countryside" Region, representing the Arab Towns Organisation and Mr Zackaria Sabella of the Municipal Alliance for Peace (Coordinator for the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities) who presented the activities of the Alliance, which brings together Israeli and Palestinian local authorities to discuss common problems.

Mr Menachem Ariav, Mayor of Nazareth Illit, representing the Union of Local Authorities in Israel (ULAI), outlined his authority's cooperation with the city of the Hague, with which his municipality had recently signed its first agreement.

The Chamber also heard a presentation on Middle East cooperation from Mr Stepan Kirichuk (Russian Federation), President of the Russian National Congress of Municipalities.

Finally, the results of the Second South-Eastern Europe Regional Ministerial Conference on effective democratic governance at local and regional level (Skopje, the "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", 8 - 9 November 2006) were presented by Ms Elena Petkanovska, Head of Department at the Ministry of Local Self Government. She reported that the conference had confirmed the political will of the States concerned to consolidate the establishment of effective local democracy structures in

their territories and had concluded with the adoption of a final declaration setting out the Ministers' commitment to institutional reforms, capacity building at local level, increased dialogue and cross-border cooperation.

2.2.3. Summary of the work of the Institutional Session of the Chamber of Regions

On 14 November 2006, the Chamber held a path-breaking video conference in Moscow, initiated by Svetlana Orlova (EPP/CD, Russian Federation), Vice Chair of the Council of the Federation of the Federal Assembly, on the effectiveness of Russian regional authorities. Five representatives of republics of the Russian Federation (North Ossetia-Alania, Altai Krai, Mari El, Permsky Krai, Mordovia) took part in the discussions, as did Igor Shuvalov, aide to the President of the Russian Federation, and Mikhail Ponomarev, Deputy Minister for Regional Development of the Russian Federation, who described recent developments concerning regionalisation in the Russian Federation.

The Chamber then considered a report on regional democracy in Slovakia and adopted a recommendation.

Following recent meetings on inter-regional co-operation, Dubravka Suica (Croatia, L, EPP/CD) presented a communication on the Adriatic Euroregion and Ludmila Sfirloaga (Romania, SOC) presented the conclusions of the international conference on the Black Sea region (Samsun, 3 November 2006). Participants in the latter debate also included Asaf Gadjiyev, on behalf of the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Co-operation (PABSEC), and Miljenko Doric (Croatia), on behalf of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

At the end of the session the rapporteur, Jean-Claude Van Cauwenberghe (Belgium, R, SOC), presented the most recent developments concerning the draft Charter of Regional Democracy.

2.2.4 Meeting of the Standing Committee on 15 November 2006

On 15 November, the Standing Committee of the Congress adopted without debate the recommendations and opinion approved by the Session, held a debate on the Congress priorities for 2007-2008, and granted **observer status** to the **AMPHIKTYONIA Network** of twinned cities and regions and to the **Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA)** – the Association which has recently broadened its scope to South Caucasus, with the opening of the first Local Democracy Agency in Kutaisi, Georgia, on 8 September. The Congress wish to thank in particular the Government of Liechtenstein for contributing 30,000 Swiss francs to the Kutaisi Agency.

2.3 Spring Session (Strasbourg, 27-28 March 2007)

2.3.1 Summary of the work of the Spring Session in plenary

The Congress held its spring session in Strasbourg on 27 and 28 March 2007, bringing together the members of the Standing Committee and the Committee on Social Cohesion. The Bureaux of the Congress and of the two Chambers met on the eve of the session and the Standing Committee on 28 March.

The session was an opportunity for the Congress to highlight its contribution to the Council's projects and campaigns on combating domestic violence and building a Europe for and with children, with a number of reports and debates covering these issues.

On 27 March, the Congress held a debate on the evolution of extreme poverty in European towns, with the participation of Martin Hirsch, President of Emmaüs France. Congress members examined a report by Etienne Van Vaerenbergh (Belgium, L, ILDG), which referred to a fresh analysis of developments in the situation and action taken at local level. The recommendations in the report included framing integrated policies and national programmes in close consultation with local and regional authorities and setting up local partnership committees, which would bring together municipal officials and charitable organisations involved in this field. The report also recommended specific measures such as making free municipal travel widely available, in particular for the unemployed, to facilitate their search for jobs.

Another debate focused on the rights of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transsexuals (LGBT) to freedom of expression and assembly, based on the report by Chair of the Commission on Social Cohesion Valerio Prignachi (Italy, L, EPP/CD). The adopted resolution and recommendation were drafted following violations of LGBT rights in Council of Europe member states. Amongst other things they reminded authorities of their obligation to restrict freedom of peaceful assembly only as a last resort, and to take the necessary steps to make sure gatherings are allowed to proceed in peace.

The session also discussed the application of social cohesion indicators at local and regional level, on the basis of a pilot project conducted by the Congress in 2006-2007 with the city of Mulhouse. The objective was to experiment on the ground with the *Methodological Guide to the Concerted Development of Social Cohesion Indicators*, published by the Council of Europe. The adopted resolution and recommendation suggested applying the Methodological Guide at local and regional level by setting up co-ordination groups representing the various stakeholders concerned, with the focus on citizen involvement at every stage and the organisation of exchanges between towns and regions.

The Congress also adopted a recommendation on e-health and democracy in the regions, inviting the Committee of Ministers to ask member states to develop national e-health action plans, using the Committee of Ministers' recommendation on electronic governance as an overall guide. The recommendation pointed out that some of the key benefits for citizens will reside in the fact that the information and communication with health professionals and services will be provided through home-based technologies and with remote access to expertise. The recommendation suggested setting up joint consultative bodies representing civil society and national and regional healthcare providers, and ensuring that the devolution of health care to the regional and local level is accompanied by proper financial means.

Among the highlights of the session was a debate on domestic violence against women, opened by Secretary General Terry Davis and Mayor of Strasbourg Fabienne Keller. The debate was followed by the inauguration of a joint Congress/Parliamentary Assembly photo exhibition on domestic violence, where the Secretary General and Congress President Halvdan Skard spoke. The ceremony finished by the presentation of a vintage car on the forecourt of the Palais, which departed for a tour of European towns as part of the awareness-raising campaign against domestic violence. This was the initiative of Chair of the Committee on Social Cohesion Valerio Prignachi. The debate and the exhibition are a part of the Congress' contribution to the Council of Europe's campaign "Stop domestic violence against women" and followed a poster campaign and an awareness-raising week in Strasbourg universities, organised by the Congress and the City of Strasbourg. More such campaigns and other activities are currently being carried out across Europe, with more and more municipalities joining in.

Another important debate concerned the plight of street children, an area where there is a joint project between the Congress and the Council of Europe's **Building a Europe For and With Children** programme. Ms Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, made a statement during the debate.

Among other issues discussed at the session were access to public spaces and amenities for people with disabilities, intergenerational co-operation and participatory democracy, developments in transfrontier co-operation in Europe, regionalisation in Europe, and preparations for the forthcoming **Forum for the Future of Democracy**, which will be held in Stockholm/Sigtuna from 13 to 15 June 2007 and in which 50 representatives of territorial authorities will take part. Representatives of the Swedish government ministry responsible for preparing the Forum (Marcus Brixskiold and Katarina Sundberg, Director and Deputy Director, Ministry for Integration and Gender Equality), along with representatives of the Swedish association of local authorities and regions, participated in this latter discussion.

Various outside speakers took part in the debates, in particular:

- **Mireille Godefroy**, Deputy Mayor of Mulhouse, France,
- **Sylvie Guillaume**, Deputy Mayor of Lyon, France,
- **Giacomo Bontempi**, President of the Automobile Association of Brescia, Italy,
- **Alfred Muller**, Mayor of Schiltigheim, France,
- **Gabriele Müller-Trimbusch**, Deputy Mayor responsible for Social Affairs, Youth and Health, Stuttgart, Germany,
- **Maria Jesus Montero Cuadrado**, Regional Minister of Health for Andalusia, Spain,

- **Roberto Formigoni**, President of the Region of Lombardy, Italy.

2.3.2. Summary of the work of the Spring Session of the Chamber of Local Authorities

The Chamber began this session with a debate the evolution of extreme poverty in European towns, introduced by the rapporteur, Etienne Van Vaerenbergh, and including a presentation by Martin HIRSCH, Chair of Emmaüs France. The Chamber examined and adopted a resolution and recommendation on this issue. "The recommendations in the report", said Etienne VanVaerenbergh, "include framing integrated policies and national programmes in close consultation with local and regional authorities and setting up local partnership committees bringing together municipal officials and charitable organisations involved in this field". The report also recommends specific measures such as making free municipal travel widely available.

A debate on Freedom of assembly and expression for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered persons was then held, with presentations by Alessandro ZAN, Local Councillor, Padova, Italy and Jean-Luc ROMERO, Regional Councillor, Ile-de-France. "The rights of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transsexuals(LGBT) to freedom of expression and assembly are essential not only to their own individual development but also to the promotion and protection of the principles of equality and democracy", declared Valério Prignachi, when presenting the draft resolution and recommendation, which the Chamber subsequently adopted.

Finally, the Chamber held a debate on violence against women, which included presentations by Terry DAVIS, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Fabienne KELLER, Mayor of Strasbourg, Chris GREEN, NGO White Ribbon Campaign and by Valério PRIGNACHI, President of the Committee for Social Cohesion. The Chamber discussed "Best practice" as regards prevention and combating of this type of violence.

2.3.3 Summary of the work of the Spring Session of the Chamber of Regions

The Chamber considered a report on e-health and democracy in the regions and adopted a recommendation and a resolution. Antonella Maiolo, representative of the Lombardy region (Italy), and Dr José Luis Rocha, Deputy Regional Minister of Health (Malaga, Spain), presented a communication on the subject.

The Chamber discussed major developments in transfrontier co-operation, with contributions from Karl Heinz Lambertz, Congress general rapporteur on transfrontier co-operation (Belgium, R, SOC), Jean-Paul Heider, Vice-President of the Alsace region (France, R, PPE-DC), and Martin Guillermo Ramirez, Secretary General of the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR).

At the end of the session, Jean-Claude Van Cauwenberghe (Belgium, R, SOC), rapporteur, reported on progress on the draft Charter of Regional Democracy, which the Congress was preparing for debate at the 14th plenary session.

2.3.4 Meeting of the Standing Committee on 28 March 2007

On 28 March, the Standing Committee of the Congress adopted recommendations and resolutions resulting from the **observation of elections**, including the election of the Bashkan (Governor) of Gagauzia (Moldova) on 3 and 17 December 2006 and the local elections in Albania on 18 February 2007, and a resolution setting out the arrangements for representatives of national associations of local and regional authorities in the member states to take part in Congress local and regional election observer teams.

The Ambassador of San Marino Guido Bellatti Ceccoli presented the priorities of the Chaimanship of San Marino of the Committee of Ministers, and Mr Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, presented the **Council's priorities** to the members of the Standing Committee.

In addition, Mr José M Rodriguez Álvarez, President of the European Committee for Local and Regional Democracy (CDLR), Adviser to the Secretary of State for Territorial Co-operation, Spain, gave an update on the forthcoming **Conference of European Ministers** responsible for Local and Regional Government to be held in Valencia on 15 and 16 October 2007 and the launch of **European Local Democracy Week**, giving the Congress an opportunity to clarify its contribution here.

Lastly, the Standing Committee granted **observer status** to the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF), bringing the number of organisations holding observer status with the Congress to 26.

3. LOCAL AND/OR REGIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATIONS

Since the 13th Congress Plenary Session, the Congress observed local elections in Georgia (5 October 2006). As part of the cooperation agreement between the Congress and the Committee of the Regions, the Vice-President of the Committee of the Regions joined the Congress delegation during this observation mission.

The Congress also monitored the partial repeat local elections in Azerbaijan (on 6 October 2006) which were held after the results of the local elections held in December 2004 (which were observed by the Congress) had been invalidated in 135 municipalities.

In December 2006, the Congress also monitored two rounds of the election of the Bashkan (Governor) of Gagauzia – Moldova. Its recommendations aim at improving the conduct of the elections in Moldova, in particular in view of the forthcoming local elections.

In 2007, the Congress organised a pre-electoral mission on local elections in Albania and observed these elections on 18 February.

With a view to the enlargement of Congress election observation missions and to the improvement of its technical capabilities, the Standing Committee of the Congress adopted on 28 March a Resolution and provisions allowing elected representatives of National Associations of Local and Regional Authorities to participate in election observation mission organised by the Congress.

In 2006, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe has endorsed the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers, prepared by the National Democratic Institute under UN auspices.

4. WORK OF THE STATUTORY COMMITTEES

4.1 Institutional Committee

The Institutional Committee met on 13 November 2006 in Moscow and on 12 April 2007 in Strasbourg.

Throughout 2006 and into 2007, the IC has continued its monitoring activities on local and regional democracy with a view to finalising the first monitoring cycle by having examined each member state at least once. Furthermore, the Committee prepared an amending and an additional protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government, developed a strategy for revitalising the debate on a European legal instrument on regional democracy and pursued the joint CDLR-Congress initiative to launch a European Week of Local Democracy.

Monitoring of Local and Regional Democracy in member states

Country monitoring reports with corresponding Congress recommendations and resolutions have been prepared on local and regional democracy in Albania as well as in Bosnia and Herzegovina, regional democracy in the Slovak Republic and local democracy in “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. Reports on local and regional democracy in Croatia as well as regional democracy in Greece are under preparation.

A formal compliance procedure has been developed and adopted by the Congress in order to strengthen the implementation of Congress Recommendations by the authorities of the monitored countries.

General reports on the European Charter of Local Self-Government

As part of the general reporting of the implementation of the Charter in member states, the Institutional Committee prepared reports on “New forms of control over local authorities”, “Inter-municipal co-operation “ as well as on “The status of capital cities”.

Additional and Amending Protocols to the European Charter of Local Self-Government

A restricted expert Working Group developed a draft amending and a draft additional protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government in order to refine the legal references for monitoring local self-government in member states. The amending protocol concerns the accession of the European Community and non Council of Europe member states to the Charter. The additional protocol contains amongst others provisions on local finance, local property and administrative supervision.

Reflection Group on Regionalisation in Europe

A Reflection Group, consisting of Congress members and experts from the Group of Independent Experts to the European Charter of Local Self-Government was created with a view to re-launching the debate on a European legal instrument on regional democracy. The Group has developed a strategy and a proposal on possible future principles governing regional democracy in Europe which should serve as a base of discussion with all political levels concerned. In addition, a detailed report on the “Prospects of Regionalisation in Europe” has been issued and adopted by the Congress.

European Week of Local Democracy

The Institutional Committee in close co-operation with the European Committee on Local and Regional Democracy (CDLR) is furthermore preparing the launch of an annual European Week of Local Democracy, a European event aimed at making local democracy more visible to citizens.

4.2 Culture and Education Committee

The Committee on Culture and Education held its committee meetings on 27 September 2006 in Dubrovnik (Croatia) and 29 Mars 2007 in Strasbourg (France).

The Committee believes that the challenges faced by our societies with respect of the notion of the clash of civilizations imply major changes to be made in the behaviour of our societies and the processes of governance. Intercultural and Inter-religious dialogue are tools to be used to overcome the pattern of confrontation and build bridges between different cultures, beliefs and traditions. It is a challenge for the Congress to provide local and regional authorities with the expertise, tools and recommendations on how to address the issues in a practical and effective manner.

With this in mind, the Committee has set priorities based upon four main themes which structure its work in 2007 and 2008. Three of these themes concern identity issues where cultural traditions and practices are an essential link to foster identity on a regional scale and where regional representatives of the Congress have major role to play: "Regional cultural identity: myth or reality?" and the issues related to "The role of regions in regional and minority language teaching" as well as the attempt to evaluate the impact of "Universities and their contributions to regional cultural development". The White Paper process on Intercultural Dialogue, one of the main priorities identified by the 3rd Summit, has been taken up by the Committee to assess the role of local and regional authorities in promoting intercultural and inter-religious dialogue.

The Committee organized a conference on “Local Authorities and Religions: Strategies to consolidate inter-religious dialogue” in Montchanin, (France), on 23 and 24 November 2006, bringing together scholars and researchers involved in fostering intercultural and interfaith dialogue, representatives of international organizations and religious NGOs. The discussions and exchanges of views focused on the role of local and regional authorities in developing inter-religious dialogue and on the exchange of good practices, including reflections on the French model of laicity, training of clergy, teaching religious facts in school, and financing places of worship.

The Committee approved a report on the "Contribution of universities to regional cultural development", which highlighted the key role and initiatives regional authorities have taken to tackle this economic, social and educational challenge. The rapporteur stressed the need to set up transversal and inter-regional networks between business enterprises and universities to guarantee

the transfer of knowledge, skills and technologies to create employment in the regions. This report was examined by the Committee at its March meeting and will be presented for adoption at the 14th Plenary Session.

As part of its work on "Identities and modernity", the Committee started its work by raising the question of the compatibility of different forms of identity at regional and national level. The discussions concerned the specific nature and the advantages of a strong regional cultural identity, taking as an example the experience of the German-speaking community in Belgium.

The Committee's work on 'Reconciliation of heritage and modernity' will provide local authorities with new guidelines for sustainable urban development in the field of cultural development. This work involves consultation and interaction between local councillors, architects and the general public. Within this theme, the Committee co-organized a symposium on "Cultural Tourism: Economic Benefit or Loss of Identity?", (Dubrovnik, 27-29 September 2006), with the European Association of Historic Towns and Regions (EAHTR) and the city of Dubrovnik. The findings of the symposium form an important input to the report and draft texts which are being prepared on the theme of Cultural Tourism.

In the context of its work on Integration through sport, the Committee took part in a conference on "Sports for integration" organized by the City of Stuttgart on 22 and 23 January 2007. The conference emphasised the role of sport as a tool for integration and participation of immigrants in Europe and provided the opportunity to engage in a stimulating exchange of experiences and information on examples of good practice.

The Council of Europe and its Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is a founding member and a constant supporter of the Prix Europa. The Prix Europa was initiated in 1987 by the Council of Europe and the European Cultural Foundation. The Prix Europa is open to broadcasting and producing organisations alike and is therefore accessible to media professionals from all parts of Europe.

The Bureau of the Congress decided on 15 February 2007 continue its support for the Special Prix Europa in the category TV Fiction, as to highlight in frame of these TV productions the importance of the Council of Europe's commitment with respect to our core values: human rights, pluralist democracy and the Rule of Law.

The Prix Europa is awarded each year to the best European television, radio and internet productions with the aim of publicising them throughout the whole of Europe and supporting their distribution and use.

4.3 Committee on Social Cohesion

The Committee on Social Cohesion met twice in Strasbourg - on 6 November 2006 and on 26 March 2007 on the eve of the Spring Session which this year was a joint Standing Committee/Committee on Social Cohesion Session.

Following the fixing of its priorities, the Committee now has four overarching themes which will structure its work for the next two years: two are of a general nature and represent major societal questions identified by the plenary committee, namely "Security policies against violence" and "Forging an ethical economy and new forms of solidarity". The other two axes reflect the concerns which the two chambers wish to reflect upon : the Chamber of Local Authorities will examine a number of issues under the topic: "The urban paradox; cities as areas of social integration and exclusion" and the Chamber of the Regions is seeking "Social Cohesion through balanced regional development".

The Committee on Social Cohesion believes that local and regional authorities need to be particularly vigilant with regard to the more vulnerable groups in society, in particular children; victims of violence (domestic, trafficking, urban insecurity); citizens in post-war situations or potential conflict zones and minorities (national, sexual, immigrants) and its priorities and work for the next two-year period reflect this.

Security policies against violence

The Committee's contribution to the different Council of Europe campaigns fall under this theme as they all seek, in one way or another, to address a different aspect of the issue of violence (domestic and racist violence, trafficking and violence against children).

Trafficking in human beings

The Congress launched its participation in the campaign on trafficking in human beings with its Declaration of towns against trafficking. The first 15 cities signed during a ceremony which took place during the 2006 Plenary Session and the declaration was subsequently made available for on-line signature with excellent results: we have over 140 signatures and messages of support from all around the world.

Committee members have continued to participate in the different regional seminars on trafficking organized by DG2 throughout the year.

Domestic violence

Many local-level activities have been organised this year as part of the Congress' participation in the Council of Europe Campaign against Domestic Violence. Awareness-raising weeks have been held in municipalities across Europe and are being organised throughout the year. The Council of Europe's host city, Strasbourg, for example put up campaign posters on bill-boards, in bus shelters and in socio-cultural centres around the city from 1-15 March. Initiatives by cities varied – from organizing the wearing of the white ribbon (one of the symbols of the campaign) by all schoolchildren and university students in the province (Brescia) to public debates (Odessa, Málaga).

The Congress organised a debate on domestic violence during its Spring Session with speakers including Fabienne Keller, the Mayor of Strasbourg, the Secretary General, Terry Davis and the Congress representative on the Campaign Task Force, Chris Green, Chairman of the White Ribbon Campaign – Men against violence against women. The debate was followed by the launch of a photo exhibition organised jointly by the Congress with the Parliamentary Assembly and consisting of portraits of actors in the fight against violence: NGOs in the field, parliamentarians, local and regional representatives as well as the victims themselves. Each photo in the exhibition is accompanied by a short phrase summarising what domestic violence means for that person. There are three copies of this exhibition as one copy to remain on show at the Council while the other two are shown in municipalities around Europe as part of the campaign's awareness-raising drive.

Street children

In March 2007 a joint project on street children was launched - a collaborative effort between the Council's programme "Building Europe for and with children" and the Congress. This project involves 5 field visits on the part of our expert to different innovative municipal initiatives across Europe, each of which will lead to a case study. These case studies will not only be stand-alone, but will also provide rich material for a report and recommendations presented for adoption by the Congress at our 2008 Plenary Session.

A debate on the plight of street children was held during the Spring Session in the presence of the Deputy Secretary General and with a statement by the Deputy Mayor of Stuttgart to launch the project.

Reports

In addition to its numerous activities, the Committee also has two reports in 2007 which fall under this theme, one for the Spring Session on the *Freedom of assembly and expression for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered persons (LGBT)* and another for the Plenary Session on *Police and urban insecurity: a community-based approach*.

Freedom of assembly and expression for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered persons (LGBT)
(Chamber of Local Authorities, Spring Session)

Following a motion for a resolution on freedom of assembly and expression for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered persons (LGBT), presented to the Congress' 13th Plenary Session in May 2006, which highlighted recent events where local authorities in a number of Council of Europe member states have banned, or attempted to ban, peaceful rallies or demonstrations by LGBT and their

supporters, the Committee on Social Cohesion was mandated to prepare a report responding to these events and giving an overview of the respect of these rights of the LGBT community in member states while drawing up a series of recommendations for implementation at local level.

This report and its recommendations, presented to the Spring Session 2007, outlines the Congress' belief not only that the role of local authorities in upholding their citizens' rights to freedom of assembly and expression is a central one but also that the protection of the rights to freedom of assembly and expression is essential for ensuring the accountability and responsiveness of governing authorities and thus also critical to the protection of all other basic human rights.

Local authorities and community policing – a partnership for urban security (Plenary Chamber, Plenary Session)

The Committee will be presenting a plenary report and two draft texts on *Local authorities and community policing – a partnership for urban security* to the Congress' 2007 Plenary Session for debate and adoption.

This report and its recommendations are intended to complement the work already done on local police forces and urban security by the committee in the past by concentrating on the specific role local and regional authorities can play in enhancing neighbourhood policing and police relations with the community. Their role as the key players in creating and maintaining a partnership for security with all relevant actors (police, judiciary, civil society) is emphasised.

The urban paradox; cities as areas of social integration and exclusion

CLIP – European Network of Cities for Local Integration Policy

The European Network of Cities for Local Integration Policy - CLIP - was launched in September 2006 in Dublin and has since held two working meetings bringing together over 25 cities from all over Europe. The network, founded by the Congress with co-founders, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Dublin Foundation) and the City of Stuttgart, pools experts on local integration policies from major European cities and experienced researchers from academic research institutions and is shortly to successfully finish its first module – on access of migrants to housing. The second module, currently being worked on by researchers and cities alike, deals with Diversity management. Two more meetings are scheduled in 2007 in Budapest and Barcelona with a third topic, on entrepreneurship of migrants due to be started later in the year.

The objective of the network is to support the exchange of experience between cities and develop guidelines for good practice. The relevant experiences and outputs of the network will be communicated to European organisations of cities and local and regional authorities, to the relevant bodies of the Council of Europe and to the various relevant institutions of the European Union and NGOs in the social field.

Reports

Under this theme the Committee presented two reports in 2007 both during the Spring Session on *Fighting severe poverty in towns* and *Access to public areas and infrastructures for people with disabilities*.

Fighting severe poverty in towns
(Chamber of Local Authorities, Spring Session)

The Congress is particularly aware of the need for urgent, effective and concerted action in the face of extreme poverty. Local authorities, particularly large and medium-sized towns, are directly affected by this problem and are often impelled to intervene in emergency situations without having all the necessary resources available.

Four years after its first report on "Combating severe poverty in towns and cities: the role of local authorities", adopted at its 2003 Plenary Session, the Committee on Social Cohesion, in accordance with Congress Resolution (Resolution 182) 2003, prepared an overview of developments in the situation of extreme poverty in Europe's towns and cities and of the action taken in this field at local level. This report and its recommendations, presented for debate and adoption at the 2007 Spring Session is the result of that consultation.

*Access to public areas and infrastructures for people with disabilities
(Plenary Chamber, Spring Session)*

The Committee presented to the Spring Session, for debate and adoption a report and two draft texts on *Access to public areas and infrastructures for people with disabilities* which was intended to complement the Council of Europe's 10-year Disability Action Plan designed to make decisive progress in ensuring equal rights for people with disabilities while reflecting both the local and regional dimension of the issue of accessibility (the possibility of moving from one place to another, enjoying public facilities and, by extension, using all public services independently).

The Committee considers that obstacle-free access to public buildings and infrastructures for all is a cornerstone of social inclusion, but that while in recent years, member states have adopted various measures and made a number of commitments to ensure accessibility to public spaces for people with disabilities, whether physical, cognitive or sensory, results have not met expectations. Those regulations and standards which do exist are not always applied.

This report points out that it is essential that the concept of accessibility and the principle of universal design (application of integrative standards and technology to public spaces and amenities to promote more independent living) are incorporated in spatial planning at all levels (local, regional, national).

Social cohesion through balanced regional development

Three complementary reports come under this theme. The Committee seeks to examine how balance can be restored between economically disparate regions and between regions and their more highly-serviced urban areas with a report during the Spring Session on *E-health and democracy in the regions* and two reports for the Plenary Session on *Ensuring continuity of social services in rural regions* and *The balanced distribution of healthcare in the regions*.

E-health and democracy in the regions (Chamber of the Regions, Spring Session)

The Congress felt that it would be of great interest to examine how e-health can be used as a tool for promoting democratic participation, social inclusion and a patient-oriented approach at regional level bearing in mind both the motion for a resolution presented to the 2006 Plenary Session on the creation of a South-East European telemedicine and virtual education network and the new opportunities that new technologies present as well as fresh responsibilities and challenges that must be met by government at all levels.

The report and its two draft texts, presented to the Spring Session for debate and adoption shows how new and emerging communication and information technologies can revolutionise access to health information and health-related services, enabling more equitable access and improved quality of service for all. When juxtaposed with concerns about inequalities in healthcare provision between regions and within regions themselves, e-health services can therefore provide exciting new possibilities for redressing this imbalance.

*Ensuring continuity of social services in the regions
(Chamber of the Regions, Plenary Session)*

The main goals of the report and adopted texts presented for debate and adoption during the Plenary Session are to outline the problems facing social services in Europe's rural regions and present several key measures that regional authorities can implement at their level to ensure equitable access to these services and address the growing inequalities experienced by rural communities.

Several case studies reflecting the diversity of situations across Europe are cited.

*The balanced distribution of healthcare in the regions
(Chamber of the Regions, Plenary Session)*

Populations living in outlying or poorer regions, at a certain remove from the larger urban conglomerations, are experiencing, and set to experience in the future, increasing difficulty and

inequality in access to medical services and healthcare, whether in terms of doctors, hospitals or the most advanced technical or medical resources.

This report examines how a balance can be restored between economically disparate regions and between regions and their more highly-serviced urban areas, in an attempt to redress a growing potential for social exclusion and discrimination. It is complemented by the report addressing the question of continuity of social services in rural regions.

Reports

Under this theme the Committee presented two reports in 2007, both during the Spring Session, on *Intergenerational co-operation and participative democracy* and on *Concerted social cohesion indicators*.

Intergenerational co-operation and participative democracy (Plenary Chamber, Spring Session)

The Committee on Social Cohesion prepared a report and texts for debate and adoption during the Congress' Spring Session 2007 presenting the intergenerational approach as an effective means of promoting participatory democracy, solidarity, social welfare and quality of life.

The Committee on Social Cohesion felt that it was important to re-establish intergenerational dialogue and to examine ways to counteract the growing generation gap between senior citizens and young people and the way that both, for differing reasons, can become alienated from society.

To this end a reflection group met several times in 2006 to work towards recommendations at local and regional level as well as the European Manifesto on Intergenerational Co-operation which is appended to the recommendation and resolution and whose seven paragraphs outline the principles and activities to which towns, cities and regions committed to action in this area have been invited to subscribe.

Concerted social cohesion indicators (Plenary Chamber, Spring Session)

Local and regional authorities have a crucial role to play in the process of democratic dialogue for social cohesion; the Congress therefore recognized the benefit of giving the *Methodological guide to the concerted development of social cohesion indicators*, drawn up by the Council of Europe's intergovernmental social cohesion sector, practical effect at local and regional authority level and decided, in partnership with the City of Mulhouse, to conduct a local trial throughout 2006-2007.

The plenary report and two draft texts on *Concerted social cohesion indicators* which were presented at the 2007 Spring Session for debate and adoption refer to the practical implementation by the pilot project of the approach to social cohesion advocated by the *Methodological guide*. This approach reflects acceptance of the shared responsibility for the well-being of all members of society and its implementation requires a process of consultation and dialogue involving all stakeholders in society and the subsequent identification of social cohesion indicators which can be used to assess whether the social policies conducted have satisfied the relevant expectations.

This concrete application of the methodology confirmed the usefulness of the approach, in particular in terms of social dialogue, citizen participation and local democracy and the report and draft texts therefore provide guidelines to the concrete implementation of a the methodology as well as the transferability of this approach to other towns and regions.

Other issues

The Congress Bureau gave the Committee on Social Cohesion the mandate of forming a joint drafting committee with members of the Liaison Committee of International Non-Governmental Organisations enjoying participatory status with the Council of Europe in order to revise the **draft memorandum on a partnership between local and regional authorities and NGO's** in Council of Europe member states. This drafting committee has met twice in 2006-2007 and further drafting meetings are scheduled in order to have a final draft for adoption by both parties by the Congress'.

4.4 Committee on Sustainable Development

The Committee on Sustainable Development held its committee meetings on 20 October 2006 in Yerevan (Armenia) and 20 April 2007 in Strasbourg (France).

The Committee believes that the challenges faced by our societies and irreversible ecological imbalances imply major changes to be made in the behaviour, production methods and consumption patterns of our societies as well as in the processes of governance. It is keen to provide local and regional authorities with tools and recommendations on how to address the issues in a practical and effective manner.

With this in mind, the Committee has set priorities based upon four main themes which structure its work in 2007 and 2008. Two of these themes concern equally the local and regional representatives of the Congress: 'Climate change and its consequences' and the issues related to 'Sustainable development: between micro and macro decisions'. The Chamber of Local Authorities has asked the Committee to look at 'Creative initiatives and policies for the city' and the Chamber of Regions, at topics to create a 'Sustainable and balanced regional development'.

The Committee on Sustainable Development is aware that sustainable development underlies numerous public policies intended to reconcile economic and social development with protection of the environment, for which efficient action by territorial authorities is decisive.

Climate change and its consequences

Reflecting the awesome challenge that climate change poses for our societies, this issue is at the heart of the Committee's work. A hearing on 'Climate change: Innovative approaches at local and regional level' was held on 19 October 2007 in Yerevan. The subsequent report and draft texts highlighted the key role and initiatives territorial authorities have taken, in many cases, to tackle this economic, social and environmental challenge. These texts were examined by the Committee at its April meeting, and will be presented for debate and adoption during the 14th Plenary Session.

The next steps in the Committee's work on this theme are to develop strategies to help local and regional authorities reduce vulnerability through the implementation of innovative and effective mitigation and adaptation strategies and to promote a new energy culture which will fulfil the future energy needs of our cities and regions in a sustainable manner within the 21st century context of global warming.

Sustainable and balanced regional development

As part of its work on 'Sustainable and balanced regional development', the Committee prepared a report and draft texts on 'Peripheral regions: a challenge to the balanced and sustainable development of the European territory'. These texts advance the need for a new concept of peripheral and sparsely populated regions and call for innovative policies such as polycentric spatial development and increased self-governance to address their particular challenges.

The Committee also represented the Congress at the European Conference of Ministers Responsible for Regional/Spatial Planning (CEMAT) in Lisbon (Portugal) on "Networks for sustainable spatial development of the European continent: Bridges over Europe" from 26-27 October 2007.

Creative initiatives and policies for the city

A key pillar of the Committee's work on 'Creative initiatives and policies for the city' is the elaboration of the 'European Urban Charter II: Manifesto for a new approach to urbanity' which will provide local authorities with new guidelines for sustainable and equitable urban development and management. The importance of this work is underlined by its transversal nature involving broad consultation with the other committees of the Congress and with local, national and international associations. Discussions on this process took place during Spring 2007.

Also within this theme, the Committee co-organized a symposium on 'E-democracy: new opportunities for enhancing civic participation' (Strasbourg, 23-24 April 2007). A specific session examined the ways in which electronic democracy and deliberative consultations on urban projects could prove a crucial asset and offer new potential for consultation. The findings of the symposium form the backbone of the report and draft texts which are being prepared on this theme.

At the Fifth European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns (21-24 March, Seville Spain), the Committee emphasized that the concept of sustainable development not only refers to issues of the environment and of natural resources, but also covers social, cultural and economic dimensions, being an integral part of local democracy and citizens' rights.

Sustainable development: between micro and macro decisions

Landscape

'Landscape, a new dimension to public territorial action' explores innovative projects undertaken in this field by many local and regional authorities. With this in mind, the Committee has been actively supporting the creation of the European Network of Local and Regional Authorities for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention (ENELC) which offers a platform to implement the latter and foster exchange of experiences to enable territorial authorities to protect, manage and plan their landscapes.

The Committee represented the Congress in the first General Assembly of ENELC (Strasbourg, 20 March 2007) and the European Landscape Conference on, 22-23 March 2007, highlighting the ways in which the Convention offers all levels of governance a crucial tool in developing sustainable development policies.

Environmental accounting

The Committee perceives an urgent need for territorial authorities to improve their environmental actions and develop structured policies which respond to the increasing challenges and democratic demands for a more sustainable environment. In this context, environmental accounting is a tool to measure, monitor and assess their strategies and to demonstrate that their policies are having tangible results and their activities sustainable. It is with this in mind that the Committee prepared a report and draft texts on 'Environmental accounting: a tool for responsible local action'.

Other major events

The Committee is pleased to pursue its joint work with the EUR-OPA Partial Agreement on Major Hazards. It participated in its 11th Ministerial Session (31 October 2007, Marrakech, Morocco) where it underlined the crucial role of local and regional authorities when facing disasters and presented the 'Slavutych Appeal' which had been launched at a Conference it organised in March 2006 (Slavutych, Ukraine) to mark the 20th anniversary of Chernobyl.

5. ACTIVITIES IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE

5.1 NALAS

NALAS is the abbreviation for "Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe" which started as an informal network, but is now a formal association, with its official seat in Strasbourg.

The two main events for NALAS in the autumn of 2006 were the participation at the second South-Eastern Europe Regional Ministerial Conference on "*Effective Democratic Governance at Local and Regional Level*" in Skopje ("the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia") on 8-9 November, and the organization of the second NALAS General Assembly in Podgorica (Montenegro) on 15 December. NALAS started as well a first 'pilot' task force on solid waste management, with the support of the German authorities (GTZ). But perhaps the most important issue for NALAS during this period was its further general development.

With the support of the Congress and FEDRE, the NALAS network obtained the necessary funds from the Swiss authorities to build up a full-time Secretariat and to implement the NALAS Action Plan which includes the establishment of a "knowledge centre" and the creation of task forces on several topics. This should benefit to the association members and to all municipalities in South-East Europe. An extensive selection process for an Executive Director for NALAS had been initiated, and in March 2007 the new Director, Mr Kelmend Zajazi could take up his function. Ever since, he has been very active in setting up the NALAS Secretariat in Skopje and in the implementation of the NALAS Action Plan with the different stakeholders. A part this action plan will be carried out in co-operation with the

German authorities (GTZ) in the framework of their “*Open Regional Fund*”, for which an intensive common workshop has been organised in Budva (Montenegro) in March 2007.

5.2 Activities under the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe

The Council of Europe organised in co-operation with the Stability Pact, a second South-Eastern Europe Regional Ministerial Conference on “*Effective Democratic Governance at Local and Regional Level*” in Skopje (“the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”) on 8-9 November, as a follow-up of the first Regional Conference in Zagreb in 2004. The Congress contributed to this event through the presence of its Vice-President and by assisting the representatives of NALAS, who enriched the discussions and proposed to add an additional part to the final declaration, emphasising the commitment and concerns of the associations of local authorities.

6 ACTIVITIES IN SOUTH CAUCASUS

6.1 Congress joint activity for the creation of a National Association of Local Authorities of Azerbaijan

The joint project launched in 2005 by the Congress and the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) to favour the creation of a National Association of Local Authorities of Azerbaijan, has continued in 2006-2007 with the support of the Norwegian government.

A working group was set up in Azerbaijan to stimulate discussions and exchanges of experience between local elected representatives, governmental representatives and foreign experts on the objectives and functioning of associations of local and regional authorities in Europe. Taking account of the Azerbaijani municipalities' decision to create three Associations of Municipalities, the Congress experts provided detailed written comments on the draft statutes, in which they notably recommended the creation of a coordination council between them.

The study visit organised to Norway and Latvia enabled Azerbaijani local and governmental representatives to exchange views, especially with the President of the Congress, on the functioning of local authorities and associations of local authorities in the host countries.

Three Associations of Municipalities were established in Azerbaijan (Association of City-Municipalities on 30 November 2006; Association of Settlements on 15 December 2006; Association of Villages 27 December 2006). They have adopted statutes and were officially registered by the Ministry of Justice. The joint project now includes training sessions to assist the Associations in becoming effective, sustainable and autonomous structures. The Congress and KS also support the three Associations' participation in the European Local Democracy Week (October 2007).

7 INTERREGIONAL COOPERATION

7.1 Euro-regions of a new type: Contribution to European Integration

The Congress decided to create Euroregions of a new type as a contribution to European integration. The idea consisted in helping tackling the semi-closed seas challenges by promoting an increase in co-operation between local and regional authorities located in proximity to these seas. The ecosystems of the European semi-closed seas are becoming increasingly fragile and the Congress wished to reinforce local and regional co-operation within the social, economic, cultural and environmental fields. The creation of Euro-regions around the European seas was considered as a tool to achieve greater economic and social cohesion at the level closest to the citizen and to establish better economic and cultural links.

The first step taken by the Congress was the creation of the Adriatic Euro-region established in Pula (Croatia) in June 2006. This Euroregion brings together national, regional and local authorities of both EU and non-EU member states of the Adriatic. With the aim of bringing together the authorities concerned by the protection and evolution of the Adriatic region, the Adriatic Euroregion is becoming a permanent structure for the conception of co-operation projects in policy areas of great importance for the development of the basin. The Euro-region's activities are linked to those of institutions and organisations coordinating and supporting co-operation initiatives, which also serve sustainable development, economic and political integration and cultural rapprochement objectives.

After the Adriatic one, the Congress launched the Black Sea Euro-region initiative. This important initiative was launched during the Conference, organised in cooperation with the Romanian Authorities, in March 2006, in Constanta (Romania) and the following step forward was taken, in November 2006, in Samsun (Turkey) within a second international Conference. The Congress took into consideration the demands of local and regional administrations of the Black Sea Basin who wish to tackle a number of problems in the region and establish a fruitful exchange of information and ideas among them.

Several problems to which local and regional authorities are confronted in the Black Sea Basin have been analysed: the protection of environment; the investment for renewable energy production; the protection of the sea and of the rivers of the Black Sea through preventing oil-spills and of the discharge of waste water; the management of maritime transport risks; the integrated management of coastal areas; the promotion of sustainable tourism; the development of inter-cultural and social cohesion co-operation initiatives; the migration management; the establishment of good governance practices for consolidating democratic stability; the efficient use of regional resources for helping local authorities to discharge their management duties; the need for effective exchange of information in order to find financial resources for co-operation projects.

The "Black Sea Euroregion" which the Congress aims to create should bring together the administrations of the regions surrounding the Black Sea, with a view to meeting the needs of their inhabitants. It will encourage a more aware and careful use of the Black Sea resources and the sustainable management of the area. This co-operation platform will also promote and encourage regionalisation processes and play an important role in developing the management skills of local and regional authorities. The creation of a Black Sea Euroregion structure can give local and regional self-government authorities a co-operation framework to work closely together and pioneer initiatives of interregional co-operation based on EU financial instruments.

7.2 Inter-regional cooperation: Towards a Centre in St Petersburg

The Russian Federation and the Congress jointly proposed the setting up of a Council of Europe Centre for inter-regional and cross-border co-operation, which could take the form of an Enlarged Partial Agreement of the Council of Europe and be located in St.Petersburg. The Congress has provided a great support to the project since that time. The President of the Congress undertook a fact-finding visit to St Petersburg on 26-28 January 2006 and made an official visit to St Petersburg on 27-28 April 2006, during which he took stock of the progress of the work on the creation of the Centre with the relevant Russian authorities. The President of the Congress made a report on his visit in May 2006 at the 963rd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies.

On 26 September 2006, the relevant ad hoc Working Party of the Committee of Ministers (GT-TRANSREG) adopted the revised preliminary draft resolution on the creation of the Centre and put forward some proposals. At present, all the relevant documents are under examination of the competent authorities of the Russian Federation for their comments on the future Charter, mandate and the resources for the Centre.

8 RELATIONS WITH THE EU COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

The Congress did not fail to act in synergy with other international institutions. The Committee of the Regions of the European Union and the Congress, in the framework of their joint **Contact Group**, supported reciprocally for making local and regional democracy advance and for guaranteeing the respect of local and regional competences by national and European authorities. The two institutions also cooperated for promoting the adoption of efficient rules applicable to local and regional authorities and develop good governance practices. The Congress and the Committee of the Regions cooperated for the preparation of their respective reports and activities on waste management; natural disasters; local and regional democracy and for the adoption of legal instruments facilitating interregional cooperation. In addition the Congress and Committee of the Regions organised jointly several election observation missions. The Congress and the Committee of the Regions also organised an information day on "election monitoring" on 26 January 2007 in Brussels. These activities contributed to reinforce cooperation between the Council of Europe and the European Union, in line with the suggestions of the "*Juncker Report*".

The Cooperation Agreement signed by the Committee of the Regions and the Congress served as a contribution to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Council of Europe and the European Union, which was signed by the two institutions on 11 May 2007.

9 OTHER ACTIVITIES

9.1 Local Democracy Agencies

It was the Congress that created of the Local Democracy Agencies (LDA) programme in the early 1990s, in order to provide concrete assistance to municipalities in the former Yugoslavia through partnerships with their counterparts in Western Europe. Since 1999, these LDAs are united under their umbrella organisation, the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA), which has contributed significantly to the consolidation and the enlargement of the network, and to the development and growth of their activities, ranging from trans-border co-operation, capacity building for local authorities and civil society, youth and women empowerment, to local economic development.

As the methodology of the LDA programme proved to be very successful in South-East Europe with currently 11 operational LDAs in the field, ALDA decided to extend its geographical coverage to other regions, in particular the Southern Caucasus. In September 2006 a 12th LDA was opened in Kutaisi, Georgia, the first Agency outside the Western Balkans. In April 2007 the City of Strasbourg joined the City of Nantes (France), the City of Newport (United Kingdom) and the Municipality of Monfalcone (Italy) as a new European partner of the Local Democracy Agency in Kutaisi. In 2006-2007, ALDA was equally active in setting up pilot projects in Belarus in co-operation with local partners.

ALDA has also been progressively involved in the area of active European citizenship: in 2006 two programmes, funded by the European Commission, were implemented. In February 2007 a new pilot project "*EURaction – Citizens acting for Europe*" was launched at the Council of Europe with the aim of testing the new methodology of citizens' panels to enhance communication between the European institutions and the general public. This keen interest of ALDA in active European citizenship is reflected in the programmes of their last General Assemblies in Budapest (Hungary) in June 2006 and in Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina) in May 2007, which included an additional international conference on the topic.

In the spring of 2007, new programmes for the coming years have been launched, such as the EU funded "*Youth in the Right Direction Programme*" and a comprehensive micro-credit programme funded by the Norwegian authorities.

9.2 ENTO

The Congress also pursued its activities for supporting the training of public administration's civil servants within the European Network of Training organisations for Local and Regional Authorities (**ENTO**). In this respect, beyond the statutory meetings of the network, the Congress organized a Forum on the best practices in e-learning in Mons (Belgium) in June 2006 and a Seminar on "Promoting Intermunicipal Co-operation through Training" in Osijek (Croatia) in October 2006.

In January- March 2007 ENTO implemented the project on Supporting Democracy and Local Community Development through Training in Moldova, sponsored by the voluntary contribution of the Japanese Government. In the frame of the National Training Strategy adopted by Moldova in December 2006, ENTO organised 3 training seminars for about 200 mayors and developed recommendations on further development of the training sector in Moldova.

In April 2007 ENTO completed the two-years Transcaucasian co-operation project with the participation of trainers from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russia and Turkey. The final seminar "Training of Trainers for Local and Regional Authorities in Caucasian countries" took place in Gaziantep (Turkey) in April 2007. ENTO also organised the Round table on the discussion of future possible cooperation in Caucasian countries where two new projects were discussed. These are "Training of Trainers" and "Creation of the Resource Centre".

In May 2007 ENTO has launched a new website where there is a detailed information on all ongoing projects and events and the possibility to share best practice in training for local and regional authorities. Also in May ENTO has published a new Directory 2007 with the description of the activities of its members.

9.3 Ad hoc Working Group "Regions with legislative powers"

The Congress participated in the "7th Annual Conference of Presidents of European Union Regions with Legislative Powers" which took place in Cardiff Wales on 16-17 November 2006. On this occasion, the Ad hoc Working Group "regions with legislative powers" of the Congress held a meeting

in Cardiff on 17 November 2006 with Jean-Claude VAN CAUWENBERGHE (Belgium, R, SOC) in the Chair.

A second meeting of this Group was organised in Paris on 9 March 2007. The Group followed closely the latest developments of the project of Charter on Regional Democracy, which constitutes a good platform for discussions on the evolution of federalism in Europe.

This Working Group has also been preparing a conference on the role of second chambers (senates) in the representation of regions in Europe.

10 APPENDICES

10.1 Texts adopted by the Congress in 2006/2007

Recommendations

- Recommendation 185* on the proposal to set up a centre of the Council of Europe for inter-regional and cross-border co-operation
- Recommendation 186* on the follow-up to the Referendum on the state-status of Montenegro (Serbia and Montenegro) observed on 21 May 2006
- Recommendation 187* on the Adriatic Euroregion
- Recommendation 188* on Good governance in European metropolitan areas
- Recommendation 189* on local and regional waste management and the siting of landfills
- Recommendation 190* on water management: a European contribution to the 4th World Water Forum
- Recommendation 191* on Chernobyl, 20 years on: local and regional authorities dealing with disasters
- Recommendation 192* on local and regional elections in Ukraine observed on 26th March 2006
- Recommendation 193* on South-East Europe: 6th Forum of Cities and Regions (Sinaia, Romania 8-9 December 2005)
- Recommendation 194* on effective access to social rights for immigrants: the role of local and regional authorities
- Recommendation 195* on reconciling heritage and modernity
- Recommendation 196* on local democracy in Liechtenstein
- Recommendation 197* on urban security in Europe
- Recommendation 198* on promoting an entrepreneurial spirit among young people in Europe's regions
- Recommendation 199* on inter-regional co-operation in the Black Sea Basin
- Recommendation 200* on the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) draft guidelines on decentralisation and the strengthening of local authorities
- Recommendation 201* on local and regional democracy in Albania
- Recommendation 202* on local and regional democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Recommendation 203* on the compliance of Norwegian legislation with Article 11 of the European Charter of Local Self-Government
- Recommendation 204* on regional democracy in the Slovak Republic
- Recommendation 205* on the local elections in Georgia (observed on 5 October 2006)
- Recommendation 206* on the rerun of local by-elections in Azerbaijan (observed on 6 October 2006)
- Recommendation 207* on the development of social cohesion indicators – The concerted local and regional approach
- Recommendation 208* on access to public spaces and amenities for people with disabilities

- Recommendation 209* on intergenerational co-operation and participatory democracy
- Recommendation 210* on the evolution of extreme poverty in European towns
- Recommendation 211* on freedom of assembly and expression for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered persons
- Recommendation 212* on e-health and democracy in the regions
- Recommendation 213* on the election of the Bashkan (Governor) of Gagauzia (Moldova) (observed on 3 and 17 December 2006)
- Recommendation 214* on the local elections in Albania (observed on 18 February 2007)

Opinion

- Opinion 26* on the preliminary draft consolidated recommendation on local and regional public services prepared by the CDLR (CDLR (2006) 14)

Resolutions

- Resolution 209* on the verification of new members' credentials and new appointment procedures
- Resolution 210* on the Council of Europe campaign to combat trafficking in human beings
- Resolution 211* on the follow-up to the Referendum on the state-status of Montenegro (Serbia and Montenegro) observed on 21 May 2006
- Resolution 212* on the Adriatic Euroregion
- Resolution 213* on local and regional waste management and the siting of landfills
- Resolution 214* on water management: a European contribution to the 4th World Water Forum
- Resolution 215* on Chernobyl, 20 years on: local and regional authorities dealing with disasters
- Resolution 216* on local and regional elections in Ukraine observed on 26th March 2006
- Resolution 217* on South-East Europe: 6th Forum of Cities and Regions (Sinaia, Romania 8-9 December 2005)
- Resolution 218* on effective access to social rights for immigrants the role of local and regional authorities
- Resolution 219* on reconciling heritage and modernity
- Resolution 220* on urban security in Europe
- Resolution 221* on promoting an entrepreneurial spirit among young people in Europe's regions
- Resolution 222* on the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) draft guidelines on decentralisation and the strengthening of local authorities
- Resolution 223* on the new forms of control over local authorities
- Resolution 224* on the local elections in Georgia (observed on 5 October 2006)
- Resolution 225* on the rerun of local by-elections in Azerbaijan (observed on 6 October 2006)

<i>Resolution 226</i>	on the development of social cohesion indicators – The concerted local and regional approach
<i>Resolution 227</i>	on access to public spaces and amenities for people with disabilities
<i>Resolution 228</i>	on intergenerational co-operation and participatory democracy
<i>Resolution 229</i>	on the evolution of extreme poverty in European towns
<i>Resolution 230</i>	on freedom of assembly and expression for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered persons
<i>Resolution 231</i>	on e-health and democracy in the regions
<i>Resolution 232</i>	on the election of the Bashkan Governor of Gagauzia (Moldova) (observed on 3 and 17 December 2006)
<i>Resolution 226</i>	on the development of social cohesion indicators – The concerted local and regional approach
<i>Resolution 227</i>	on access to public spaces and amenities for people with disabilities
<i>Resolution 228</i>	on intergenerational co-operation and participatory democracy
<i>Resolution 229</i>	on the evolution of extreme poverty in European towns
<i>Resolution 230</i>	on freedom of assembly and expression for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered persons
<i>Resolution 231</i>	on e-health and democracy in the regions
<i>Resolution 232</i>	on the election of the Bashkan Governor of Gagauzia (Moldova) (observed on 3 and 17 December 2006)
<i>Resolution 233</i>	on the observation of elections - co-operation between the Congress and National Associations of Local and Regional Authorities
<i>Resolution 233</i>	on the observation of elections - co-operation between the Congress and National Associations of Local and Regional Authorities

10.2 List of Texts Adopted during the Autumn Session 2006 and Spring Session 2007

(Autumn Session, Moscow, 14 – 15 November 2006)

Recommendations

- Recommendation 200* on the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) draft guidelines on decentralisation and the strengthening of local authorities
- Recommendation 201* on local and regional democracy in Albania
- Recommendation 202* on local and regional democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Recommendation 203* on the compliance of Norwegian legislation with Article 11 of the European Charter of Local Self-Government
- Recommendation 204* on regional democracy in the Slovak Republic
- Recommendation 205* on the local elections in Georgia (observed on 5 October 2006)
- Recommendation 206* on the rerun of local by-elections in Azerbaijan (observed on 6 October 2006)

Opinion

- Opinion 26* on the preliminary draft consolidated recommendation on local and regional public services prepared by the CDLR (CDLR (2006) 14)

Resolutions

- Resolution 222* on the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) draft guidelines on decentralisation and the strengthening of local authorities
- Resolution 223* on the new forms of control over local authorities
- Resolution 224* on the local elections in Georgia (observed on 5 October 2006)
- Resolution 225* on the rerun of local by-elections in Azerbaijan (observed on 6 October 2006)

(Spring Session, Strasbourg, 27 – 28 March 2007)

Recommendations

- Recommendation 207* on the development of social cohesion indicators – The concerted local and regional approach
- Recommendation 208* on access to public spaces and amenities for people with disabilities
- Recommendation 209* on intergenerational co-operation and participatory democracy
- Recommendation 210* on the evolution of extreme poverty in European towns
- Recommendation 211* on freedom of assembly and expression for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered persons
- Recommendation 212* on e-health and democracy in the regions

Recommendation 213 on the election of the Bashkan (Governor) of Gagauzia (Moldova) (observed on 3 and 17 December 2006)

Recommendation 214 on the local elections in Albania (observed on 18 February 2007)

Resolutions

Resolution 226 on the development of social cohesion indicators – The concerted local and regional approach

Resolution 227 on access to public spaces and amenities for people with disabilities

Resolution 228 on intergenerational co-operation and participatory democracy

Resolution 229 on the evolution of extreme poverty in European towns

Resolution 230 on freedom of assembly and expression for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered persons

Resolution 231 on e-health and democracy in the regions

Resolution 232 on the election of the Bashkan Governor of Gagauzia (Moldova) (observed on 3 and 17 December 2006)

Resolution 233 on the observation of elections - co-operation between the Congress and National Associations of Local and Regional Authorities

10.3 List of Conferences and Meetings organised by the Congress since the 13th Plenary Session

2006

June

2 June, Strasbourg, France
Meeting of the pilot group on "Social Cohesion Indicators"

8-9 June, Budapest, Hungary
Bureau, Governing Board and General Assembly of the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA)

15 June, Mons, Belgium
Bureau of ENTO

15-17 June, Mons, Belgium
ENTO seminar on the theme "Long-distance training for local and regional elected representatives"

16 June, Paris, France
Meeting of the restricted working group on additional protocols to the European Charter of Self-Government"

22-25 June, Monaco
17th Annual Session of the Crans Montana Forum

28-29 June, Baku, Azerbaijan
Roundtable for the project to create a national association of local self-government in Azerbaijan

27-28 June
President Halvdan Skard's official visit to Azerbaijan

30 June, Pula, Croatia
First meeting of the Council of the Adriatic Euroregion

July

3 July
Contact Group Congress / Committee of the Regions
Paris, France

4 July
BUREAU OF THE CONGRESS
Paris, France

5 July
Monitoring visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina
Bosnia-Herzegovina

12 July
Summer University for Democracy
Strasbourg, France

24-26 July
Congress Mission to the United Nations on the World Charter of local government
New-York, USA

August

27 August - 2 September
Assembly of the Regions of Europe (ARE) - Summer University
Maramures, Romania

September

7-8 September
Meeting of the Co-ordination Group for the creation of associations of local self-governments in
Azerbaijan
Baku, Azerbaijan

7-9 September
International Conference on the "Dialogue of Cultures and Inter-Faith Cooperation" (Volga Forum)
Nizhniy Novgorod, Russia

8 September
Official opening of a new Local Democracy Agency
Kutaisi, Georgia

11-12 September
Launch of the Network of European Cities for Local Integration Policy of Migrants (CLIP)
Dublin, Ireland

15 September
Meeting of the Congress Bureau
Strasbourg, France

15 September
Meeting of the Presidents of European Regional Assemblies
Strasbourg, France

20 September
Exchange of views / meeting to prepare the election observation mission to Georgia in November
2006
Tbilisi, Georgia

21-24 September
8th UDITE Congress on "Efficiency in Local Government"
Malta

21-24 September
General Assembly of the European Forum for the management of catastrophes at local and regional
level
Valetta, Malta

27 September
Culture and Education Committee
Dubrovnik, Croatia

28 September
Joint meeting with the Steering Committee on Local and Regional Democracy (CDLR) on the "Local
democracy week"
Strasbourg, France

28-29 September
International Symposium on "Cultural Tourism: Economic benefit or loss of identity?"
Dubrovnik, Croatia

28-29 September
2nd Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Agriculture "Building a Euro-Mediterranean agricultural and
rural policy in a global context"
Strasbourg, France

28-29 September - 1 October
VIIIth Plenary session of the Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities and Towns
Koper, Slovenia

29 September
Meeting of the National Associations
Paris, France

October

5 October
Observation of local elections Georgia

5 October, Perugia, Italy
Meeting of group of independent experts on the European Charter of Local Self-Government

6 October, Perugia, Italy
Seminar on "European guarantees concerning subsidiarity and local and regional self-government"
(group of independent experts on the European Charter the with the region of Perugia)

6 October
Observation of municipal elections Azerbaijan

6-7 October Meeting of the Committee on City Diplomacy Perugia, Italy

12 October, Venice, Italy
Meeting of the Council for Democratic Elections

12-13 October, Strasbourg, France
Conference on Administrative Cultures in Europe organised by the Fachhochschule of Kehl

12-13 October European Conference "8 Ways to Change the World! The Contribution of Local and Regional Governments to the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals" Lisbon, Portugal

13-14 October Plenary Session of the Venice Commission Venice, Italy Contact : Jean-Philippe Bozouls, Spyros Tsovilis 16 October Institutional Committee Strasbourg, France

17-19 October
Bureau of ENTO
19th ENTO Annual Seminar and General Assembly of ENTO
Osijek, Croatia

18-19 October
Forum on the Future of Democracy
Moscow, Russian Federation

19 October
Hearing "Tackling climate change: local and regional initiatives"
Yerevan, Armenia

19-20 October
Meeting of the Committee on Sustainable Development
Yerevan, Armenia

19-20 October
Meeting of Sisak LDA partners – 10th anniversary of LDAs
Sisak, Croatia

20-21 October
Informal meeting of European sports ministers
Moscow, Russia

25-27 October
General Assembly of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR)
Murcia, Spain

26-27 October
14th Session of the European Conference of the Ministers responsible for Regional/Spatial Planning (CEMAT)
Lisbon, Portugal

26-28 October
International Conference "Ravello-Lab"
Ravello, Italy

30-31 October
World Council of United Cities and Local Governements (UCLG)
Marrakech, Morocco

30-31 October
Plenary Session of the CALRE (Conference of European Legislative Regional Assemblies)
Venice, Italy

31 October
11th Ministerial Session of the European and Mediterranean (EUR-OPA) Major Hazards Agreement
Marrakech, Morocco

November

2-4 November
Conference on Security, Democracy and Cities
Zaragoza, Spain

3 November
Conference on "Interregional Co-operation for the Black Sea – Challenges for a Black Sea Euroregion"
Samsun, Turkey

6 November
Social Cohesion Committee
Strasbourg, France

7-8 November
17th meeting of the European Committee for Social Cohesion (CDCS)
Strasbourg, France

9-10 November
Forum "Achieving social cohesion in a multicultural Europe"
Strasbourg, France

8-9 November
2nd Conference of Local Authority Ministers of South-Eastern Europe
Skopje, " former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"

9-10 November
General Assembly of ARE (Assembly of European Regions)
Palma de Mallorca, Spain

10-11 November
20th Anniversary of the Association of Municipalities of Siberia and the Far East
Novosibirsk , Russian Federation

13 November
Meeting of the Congress Bureau

Moscow, Russian Federation

13 November
Institutional Committee
Moscow, Russian Federation

14-15 November
AUTUMN SESSION OF THE CONGRESS
Moscow, Russian Federation

15 November
Standing Committee
Moscow, Russian Federation

16-17 November
7th Conference of Presidents of Regions with Legislative Power
Cardiff, United Kingdom

20-21 November
International seminar on cross-border cooperation in the northern regions of Europe and the Relex
Commission of the Committee of the Regions
Saariselkä, Finland

20-22 November
Meeting of the Steering Committee on Local and Regional Democracy (CDLR)
Strasbourg, France

21 November
General Assembly of the Adriatic Euroregion
Ancône, Italy

23-24 November
Colloquy on "Inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue"
Montchanin, France

23-24 November
General Assembly and Annual Conference of AEBR (Association of European Border Regions)
Pamplona, Spain

24-25 November
10th General Assembly of COPPEM
Palermo, Italy

27 November
Launching conference of the Council of Europe campaign to combat violence against women
Madrid, Spain

28 November
Meeting of the ALDA Bureau
Brussels, Belgium

December

3 December
Observation of elections for the Bashkan (Governor) of Gagauzia
Gagauzia, Moldova

4-5 December, Strasbourg, France

Conference of international non-governmental organisations - Seminar on the Participatory Element of
Democracy

4-5 December, Tbilisi, Georgia

International conference on effective democratic governance at local and regional level

7 December

Advisory Board of the Centre of expertise on the reform of local administration
Strasbourg, France

8 December

Meeting of the Congress Bureau
Paris, France

11 December

Seminar of Directors of Institutes on regionalisation and federalism
Strasbourg, France

14 December

Meeting of the Council for democratic elections
Venice, Italy

15-16 December

Plenary Session of the Venice Commission
Venice, Italy

17 December

Observation of the second round of the election of the Bashkan (Governor) of Gagauzia Moldova

2007

January

12 January

Reflection group on a new legal instrument for regionalisation
Strasbourg, France

23-25 January

International Forum « Climate change – time to act »
Geneva, Switzerland

22-23 January

Congress on Sport and Integration
Stuttgart, Germany

23 January Meeting on transfrontier cooperation

Gronau, Germany

24-25 January

Bureau and Governing Board of ALDA
Trieste, Italy

26 January

Information seminar on election observation
Brussels, Belgium

30 January – 1 February

International conference “Tourism, International Relations and Peace Initiatives”
Eilat, Israel

February

15 February

Meeting of the Congress Bureau
Strasbourg, France

16 February

Joint meeting of the Congress Bureau and the Bureau of the Steering Committee on Local and Regional Democracy (CDLR)
Strasbourg, France

15-16 February

International Conference on the parliamentary dimension of election observation
Strasbourg, France

18 February

Observation of local elections in Albania

20-22 February

2nd Congress monitoring visit
Skopje, Former, Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

27 February

Launching Conference "EURaction: Citizens acting for Europe"
Strasbourg, France

March

2 March

Meeting of the group of independent experts on the CEAL
Strasbourg, (France)

5-6 March Seminar on the regionalisation of the Ukraine

Kiev, Ukraine

5-6 March

Official visit of the Congress President to Ukraine
Kyiv, Ukraine

5-6 March

DEVE Commission "Committee of the Regions"
Majorca, Spain

8 March

Reflection group on the European Charter of Regional Democracy
Paris, (France)

9 March

Meeting of GT-REGLEG
Paris, (France)

14-16 March

Training Seminars for local and regional governments
Moldova

20 March, Strasbourg, France

General Assembly of European Network for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention

21-25 March, Sevilla, Italy

5th European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns

22-23 March
Celebration of 50th Anniversary of the Treaty of Rome : adoption of the "Declaration of the cities and regions for Europe"
Rome, Italy

26 March
Meeting of the Congress Bureau
Strasbourg, France

27 March
Spring session of the Congress
Strasbourg, France

28 March Meeting of the Standing Committee
Strasbourg, France

29 March
Culture and Education Committee
Strasbourg, France

April

12 April
Congress Institutional Committee
Strasbourg, France

16-18 April
EISCO 2007 - European Information Society Conference
Hämeelinda, Finland

16-20 April
21st Session of the Governing Council of UN-HABITAT
Nairobi, Kenya

18-20 April Congress monitoring visit in Croatia
Croatia

18 April
Debate on human rights and democracy in Europe - Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly

19-21 April
ENTO Seminar on "Training the trainers"
Gaziantep, Turkey

20 April
Congress Sustainable Development Committee
Strasbourg, France

23-24 April
Symposium on "eDemocracy: new opportunities for enhancing civic participation"
Strasbourg, France

May

4 May
Meeting of the Congress Bureau
Paris, France

4-5 May
Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education
Istanbul, Turkey

9-11 May
Conference on twinning - Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)
Rhodes, Greece

14-16 May
Congress monitoring visit to Greece
Greece

10.4 Timetable of Sessions, meetings of the statutory committees and ad-hoc working groups since the 13th Plenary Session

2006

Autumn Session of the Congress
13-15 November

Bureau of The Congress
4 July, 15 September, 13 November, 8 December

Committee on Culture and Education
27 September

Committee on Sustainable Development
19-20 October

Institutional Committee
13 November

Committee on Social Cohesion
6 November

Standing Committee
15 November

Ad-hoc Working Group of Local and Regional Representatives of South-East Europe
2 December

Contact Group Committee of the Regions/Congress
3 July

Working Group of Regions with Legislative Power
16-17 November

ENTO Bureau
15 June, 17-19 October

2007

Spring Session (Social Cohesion)
27 March

Bureaux of the Congress
15-16 February
26 March
4 May

Standing Committee
28 March

Institutional Committee
12 April

Committee on Culture and Education
29 March

Committee on Sustainable Development
20 April

Committee on Social Cohesion
26-28 March

Ad-hoc Working Group of Local and Regional Representatives of South-East Europe

ENTO Bureau
20 April

10.5 Observation of local and/or regional elections since the 13th Plenary Session

GEORGIA

5 October 2006 Local elections

AZERBAIJAN

6 October 2006 Repeat partial local elections

GAGAUZIA - MOLDOVA

3 -17 December 2006 Election of the Bashkan (Governor)

ALBANIA

14-18 January 2007 Pre-electoral mission on local elections

18 February 2007 Local elections

10.6 List of Congress press releases since the 13th Plenary Session

- Press release - 304(2007) / 11 May 2007
The President of the Congress, Halvdan Skard, welcomes Montenegro's accession to the Council of Europe
- Press release - 248(2007) / 20 April 2007
Empowerment of local government at world level
- Press release - 239(2007) / 17 April 2007
Congress monitoring visit to Croatia
- Press release 184 (2007) / 20 March 2007
Congress President saddened over the mining disaster in Kemerovo
- Press release - 177(2007) / 19 March 2007
Spring session of the Congress: highlights include the campaign against domestic violence and a debate on street children
- Press release - 175(2007) / 16 March 2007
Action against domestic violence: the Congress involves the universities of Strasbourg
- Press release - 160(2007) / 09 March 2007
Halvdan Skard: "The vote in Northern Ireland was a vote for peace"
- Press release - 155(2007) / 08 March 2007
Local and regional authorities are the first line of defence of women's rights Statement by the Congress President
- Press release - 142(2007) / 01 March 2007
The Council of Europe Congress and the City of Strasbourg launch a poster campaign against domestic violence
- Press release - 143(2007) / 01 March 2007
Congress President to visit Ukraine
- Press release - 118(2007) / 21 February 2007
Congress monitoring visit to "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"
- Press release - 112(2007) / 19 February 2007
Albanian elections represent a missed opportunity
- Press release - 110(2007) / 16 February 2007
Congress statement on the situation in Kosovo
- Press release - 092(2007) / 12 February 2007
Halvdan Skard: "The Congress did not observe the local elections in Abkhazia as they violated the principle of the territorial integrity of Georgia"
- Press release - 091(2007) / 09 February 2007
Council of Europe Congress to observe local elections in Albania
- Press release - 073(2007) / 30 January 2007
Ian Micallef: "The attack in Eilat reminded us that we must not let peace be held hostage by extremists"
- Press release - 042(2007) / 17 January 2007
"Ratification by France of the European Local Self-Government Charter is an important development for local democracy in this country", says Ian Micallef
- Press release - 031(2007) / 15 January 2007
Pre-electoral mission of the Congress welcomes the agreement on local elections in Albania
- Press release - 027(2007) / 11 January 2007
Ian Micallef: "Over the past fifty years, local democracy has taken solid root across Europe"
- Press release - 007(2007) / 08 January 2007
Council of Europe Congress to send pre-electoral mission to Albania
- Press release - 797(2006) / 18 December 2006
Second round of the election of the Governor of Gagauzia: better organised but significant shortcomings urgently to be addressed
- Press release - 779(2006) / 12 December 2006
Council of Europe Congress to observe the second round of the election of the Bashkan (Governor) of Gagauzia, Moldova
- Press release - 748(2006) / 04 December 2006
First round of the election of the Bashkan (Governor) of Gagauzia: not completely in accordance with international electoral standards
- Press release - 730(2006) / 28 November 2006
Council of Europe Congress to observe the election of the Bashkan (Governor) of Gagauzia, Moldova

Press release - 722(2006) / 23 November 2006
 Council of Europe launches European campaign to stop violence against women in the home

Press release - 718(2006) / 21 November 2006
 Interreligious dialogue: what can local authorities do to promote it?

Press release - 694(2006) / 14 November 2006
 Congress President welcomes the decision of Russian authorities to halt draft law on regional capitals

Press release - 691(2006) / 14 November 2006
 Congress : Russian local democracy in danger ?

Press release - 683(2006) / 10 November 2006
 Congress autumn session: Round table on the Middle East, worldwide decentralisation process and territorial democracy in Albania, Slovakia and Bosnia and Herzegovina

Press release – 662(2006) / 03 November 2006
 Samsun Conference backs the Black Sea Euroregion initiative

Press release - 631(2006) / 25 October 2006
 Congress President concerned about the draft law on regional capitals in Russia

Press release - 603(2006) / 17 October 2006
 Facing climate change: action at local and regional level

Press release - 592(2006) / 13 October 2006
 President of the Council of Europe Congress welcomes the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Grameen Bank

Press release – 584(2006) / 12 October 2006
 European Ministers of Sport to meet in Moscow to settle on a new form of co-operation

Press release – 572(2006) / 09 October 2006
 Elections in Azerbaijan: some improvement, but much still to do to raise the level of trust and respect between central and local administration

Press release – 563(2006) / 06 October 2006
 Elections in Georgia : Fundamental freedoms generally respected but insufficient distinction between State and governing party

Press release – 547(2006) / 29 September 2006
 Dubrovnik Declaration: A call for a four-prong approach to managing cultural tourism

Press release – 546(2006) / 29 September 2006
 Council of Europe Congress to observe repeat partial municipal elections in Azerbaijan

Press release - 545(2006) / 29 September 2006
 Council of Europe Congress to observe local elections in Georgia

Press release - 535(2006) / 27 September 2006
 Cultural tourism: Is it threatening national heritage?

Press release - 512(2006) / 13 September 2006
 Congress assumes further commitments on election monitoring

Press release - 498(2006) / 08 September 2006
 The Congress launches a network of European cities for the integration of migrants

Press release - 469(2006) / 16 August 2006
 Halvdan Skard encourages international organisations to utilise the peace-building potential of local government in the Middle East

Press release 441(2006) / 20 July 2006
 Official visit of a Congress delegation to the United Nations

Press release - 396(2006) / 03 July 2006
 Launch of the Adriatic Euroregion

Press release - 372(2006) / 26 June 2006
 Council of Europe Congress President visits Azerbaijan

Press release - 357(2006) / 20 June 2006
 Yavuz Mildon: "Catalonia's new autonomous status is a positive solution"

Press release - 325(2006) / 02 June 2006
 Presidents of Congress Statutory Committees newly elected

THE CONGRESS
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10.7 Congress priorities

BUREAU OF THE CONGRESS

CG/BUR(13)86

Strasbourg, 19 February 2007

**PRIORITIES AND WORK PROGRAMME
OF THE CONGRESS
OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

2007 - 2008

*Document approved by the Bureau of the Congress
on 15 February 2007*



Like the Council of Europe, the Congress is today confronted with the need to strengthen and clearly define its role on the European stage. Financial constraints make this exercise all the more useful.

With this in mind, the Congress Bureau requested the statutory committees and the other bodies of the Congress to define their priorities for 2007-2008. Now that this exercise has been completed, the Bureau is invited to set the priorities of the Congress as a whole for 2007-2008 with a view to improving its efficiency, consolidating its position within the Council of Europe and strengthening its cooperation with its main partners.

It should be noted that the definition of Congress priorities and the adoption of a strategy to implement those priorities for 2007-2008 does not prevent Congress committees and other bodies to deal with topical issues and a certain leeway to tackle topical items should therefore be permitted.

By adopting these priority working subjects, the Bureau of the Congress also keeps in mind the priorities set for the whole Organisation during the Warsaw Summit (16-17 May 2005), and mainly strengthening of democracy, good governance and the rule of law in member States, as well as the proposals of the Juncker report "A sole ambition for the European continent" (11 April 2006).

I. REINFORCING LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE

Monitoring the implementation and updating of the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ECLSG)

- Preparation of monitoring reports and thematic reports;
- Preparation of "compliance reports" on the measures taken by countries following Congress recommendations;
- Completion of a "monitoring cycle" (e.g. monitoring of all member states having signed the ECLSG) should be completed by the end of 2008;
- Preparation and adoption of additional protocols to the ECLSG;
- Governments' involvement in follow-up to recommendations;
- Participating in the Council of Europe Forum for the future of democracy and the organisation of "Local Democracy Week" in co-operation with the Committee of Ministers.

Regional democracy

- Preparation of monitoring reports and thematic reports;
- Preparation of "compliance reports"
- Continuing work on the preparation and adoption of a European Charter of regional democracy;
- Promoting the regionalisation process (decentralisation where appropriate).

Promoting interregional and trans-border co-operation

- Adoption of the Partial Agreement on interregional and trans-border co-operation and setting-up of the Centre in Saint-Petersburg (COPIT);
- Promoting the creation of and supporting interregional co-operation structures (Adriatic and Black Sea Euro-regions) and the adoption of the European legal frameworks on territorial cooperation groupings.

Monitoring local and regional elections

- Reinforcing the Congress unique role in monitoring these elections (it should be noted that the other international observer organizations have a mandate to observe parliamentary elections and that only OSCE/ODHIR observes elections at sub-national level under special circumstances)- which makes the Congress role unique in this regard;
- Strengthening the Congress presence in the field (by further involving the Committee of the Regions as well as by involving national associations of local and regional authorities in election observation under the conditions which will be defined by the Congress);
- Improving the follow-up given to Congress recommendations through a closer link with the Institutional committee activities and strengthened interaction with other sectors of the Organisation (Parliamentary Assembly, etc.)

Promoting participation in local public life

- Promoting different forms of citizen participation and representation, including foreigners, in public life at the local and regional level (elections, referendums, "district committees", civil society, ombudsmen);
- Promoting the participation of young people in public local life (+ means to associate young people with decision-making in districts and cities);
- E-democracy as a tool for improving political communication between citizens and for increasing their participation in political life.
- Protecting human rights at local and regional levels by implementing and promoting the role of regional mediators (in cooperation with the Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner).

II. PROMOTING REGIONAL IDENTITY AND SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Promoting a sustainable and balanced regional development, an integrated approach

- Promoting a sustainable development of the regional space (intra-regional transport, spatial planning, landscape policies) - including the specific problems of rural and peripheral regions;
- Promoting social cohesion through regional sustainable development and equitable distribution of services including health;
- Promoting good governance at the regional level;

Promoting and strengthening of regional identity

Organise debates and prepare reports on:

- Cultural regional identity: myth or reality?
- Universities and their contribution to regional cultural development;
- The role of regions in teaching and promoting regional and minority languages.

III. DEVELOPING INTEGRATED APPROACHES FOR THE CITY AND ITS CITIZENS

Cities for citizens

- Promoting the European Urban Charter through a new “Manifesto for the City”;
- The effects of urbanisation on biodiversity;
- Developing policies for the child in the city;
- Reconciling cultural heritage and modernity in towns and cities by involving the citizen in the decision making process.

Integrated management of services

- Effective management of public services and social services:
 - Management of and access to public services (transport, energy, water management, waste treatment);
 - Management of, and access to, social services;
- Integration policies: integration of migrants (CLIP – Cities for Local Integration Policy network) and integration of young people through sport;
- Encouraging transparency and evaluation of public action for sustainable development by implementing environmental accounting.

IV. LOCAL ACTIONS FOR FIGHTING VIOLENCE IN ALL ITS FORMS

Developing the role of local authorities in combating violence

- Fighting trafficking of human beings
- Follow-up to the Declaration against Trafficking;
- Develop the platform of Towns against Trafficking;
- Towns for peace: the role of local authorities in promoting peace and reconciliation.

Implementation of Council of Europe’s relevant activities and campaigns

- Fighting domestic violence: local and regional authorities’ tools in fighting domestic violence;
- Fighting racism and intolerance at local and regional level;
- Fighting violence against children.

V. TERRITORIAL ACTION IN TACKLING GLOBAL CHALLENGES

Climate change and its consequences

- Tackling climate change: innovative approaches at local and regional level;
- Adopting a strategy to reduce vulnerability and to adapt to climate change: a new challenge for local and regional authorities;
- Public local and regional action: for a new energy culture

Local and regional authorities and new forms of solidarity - new approaches to sustainable development and social cohesion

- Consumer's civic responsibility for sustainable development;
- Continued participation in the Pan-European Platform for Dialogue on Ethical and Solidarity-based Initiatives;
- Fight against poverty;
- Socially responsible consumption and finance.

Promoting good practices favouring intercultural and inter-religious dialogue at the local and regional level

- contribute to the implementation of the Council of Europe's project on inter-cultural dialogue and the preparation of the "White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue" of the Council of Europe.
- work in partnership with inter-religious structures in order to offer citizens ways and means of building a constructive dialogue between all partners concerned, as local authorities are faced with the challenges presented by an increasingly multi-cultural and multi-religious society and are confronted with the expectations of citizens.

VI PARTNERSHIPS AND PROMOTION OF THE CONGRESS

Improving cooperation

- with the National associations of local and regional authorities and their secretariats;
- with Organisations holding observer status with the Congress;
- with countries which border on the Council of Europe member states.

Improving the communication and visibility of Congress activities

- pursuing the development of the Congress website as a central element in our communication;
- reinforcing the editorial and graphic line of the Congress, as part of the Council of Europe;
- developing a database of local and regional journalists.

Strengthening interaction with other institutions

Fostering relations with:

- the Committee of the Regions, in the framework of the existing Co-operation agreement of 13 April 2005, namely for the implementation of the Juncker Report;
- the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe;
- the Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner;
- the European Committee on Local and Regional Democracy (CDLR);
- the Enlarged Agreement on Democracy through Law ("Venice Commission");
- the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity ("North-South Centre");
- the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations of the Council of Europe.

Enhancing local democracy and human rights

- Supporting Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs), notably in South-East Europe and Georgia;
- Supporting training of local/regional officers, including ENTO and the Centre of expertise on local government reform of the Directorate General on Legal Affairs (DGI);
- Supporting associations of local and regional authorities and their networks:
- Supporting the network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS), and other associations in Georgia and Azerbaijan.

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