
Forum on local democracy in Armenia Outlook for the future: a new agenda for decentralisation

10 November 2017

Armenia Marriott Hotel, Tigran Mets Hall, Yerevan, Armenia

Context

The Forum on Local Democracy will bring together all stakeholders of the local government system in Armenia – representatives of local governments, Associations, CSOs and international organisations, the Government and the National Assembly of Armenia, as well international and local experts – to foster an environment of constructive dialogue on development of local self-government in Armenia. A longer-term objective is for the Forum to become an annual event at which the actors and defenders of good local governance may join together to focus on significant and topical issues related to self-government, its development and challenges in Armenia.

The Forum will provide a platform for open discussion and free exchange by all participants through two themed sessions, the first on decentralising competences to transfer powers to the local level and the second session on financial decentralisation. The “Davos Format” for the organisation of the discussion allows for the expert panel of each session to outline their approach followed by interactive discussions with participants. The expert panels will comprise local and national elected representatives, international and local experts in local democracy and local elected representatives from Council of Europe member states.

Session I – Decentralisation of powers to the local level

Democratic trust begins at the local level – this is a firm belief of the Congress¹. This trust is encapsulated in the relationship between politicians and the electorate, and is nurtured by the proper implementation of the principle of subsidiarity. Decentralisation of competences to the local level entails transfer of powers and responsibilities to local and regional authorities enabling them to respond to the needs of their citizens and deliver good quality services. Decentralisation should enable local and regional elected representatives to implement efficient, transparent and accountable local governance. At the same time decentralisation should be accompanied by capacity building of local authorities empowering and enabling the latter with skills and knowledge to exercise the decentralised competences. The plans for the decentralisation of powers in the light of territorial administrative reforms in Armenia, the opportunities and challenges, will be discussed during Session I. Panel speakers will address questions such as:

- How to ensure the dialogue between national and local authorities in developing and implementing an action plan for decentralisation?
- What are the mechanisms and appropriate timetable for the transfer of competences to the local level?
- What are the challenges remaining on the path to decentralisation?

¹ [The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities](#) is an institution of the Council of Europe, responsible for strengthening local and regional democracy in its 47 member states. Composed of two chambers – the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions – and three committees, it brings together 648 elected officials representing more than 200 000 local and regional authorities.

- Which measures could be taken at national, regional and local level to strengthen the local responsibility for the transferred competences?

Session II – Financial Decentralisation

The transfer of powers must be accompanied by the transfer of corresponding financial resources to allow local authorities to fulfil their responsibilities, financial autonomy being one of the basic principles of the [European Charter of Local Self-Government](#). Plans for fiscal decentralisation, the opportunities and challenges, will be discussed during Session II. Panel speakers will address questions such as:

- How to ensure the dialogue between national and local authorities on issues of the transfer of financial resources?
- What are the mechanisms for ensuring financial autonomy at local level?
- What are the challenges of financial decentralisation?
- Which measures could be taken at national, regional and local level to strengthen the local capacity for financial autonomy?

Celebrating local democracy

Every year, on 10 November, Armenia celebrates Local Self-Government Day to honour the creation of the local self-government system in the country in 1996. At the end of the Forum there will be an opportunity to mark this occasion and the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Communities Association of Armenia. An award ceremony to announce the winners of the 'Best Community' competition is planned to conclude the Forum.

Organisers

The Forum is organised jointly by the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development, the Communities Association of Armenia under the auspices of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. It is undertaken within the framework of the project "Institutional Support to the Communities Association of Armenia" implemented by the Council of Europe office in Yerevan with the financial support of the Government of Switzerland.

The project aims to enhance the capacity of the Association to become an active stakeholder in the governance system of Armenia. The main objectives of the Association are, *inter alia*, to promote the development of a system of local governance in line with the European Charter of Local Self-Government, to implement and defend the rights of its member communities, to strengthen the capacities of local elected representatives and to support and promote cooperation among communities.

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