

MEMBERS' GUIDE TO THE CONGRESS

The Congress in brief...

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe is a pan-European political assembly composed of 612 elected politicians (306 representatives and 306 substitutes) representing more than 150,000 local and regional authorities from 46 European countries.

It is the representative body of local and regional authorities within the Council of Europe - a political organisation founded in 1949 to defend democracy, human rights and the rule of law - alongside the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly.

Mandate and objectives of the Congress

The main objective of the political and practical work of the Congress is to promote territorial democracy in Europe and to evaluate the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in the Council of Europe member States.

To this end, the Congress carries out regular monitoring missions to each member country, periodically observes local and regional elections in Europe at the invitation of member States, develops co-operation activities with local and regional authorities and works on the follow-up to its recommendations and resolutions. It also develops Human Rights awareness manuals for local elected officials and their administrations, through a collection of good practices implemented in local authorities across Europe.

The Congress is the only body with a mandate to assess the situation of local democracy in Europe, through regular monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, which has become the international reference treaty in this field since its entry into force on 1 September 1988, but also through activities and publications aimed at raising the awareness of local and regional elected representatives, and their citizens, of the need to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms in their towns and regions.

National delegations

The Congress is composed of elected representatives of local and regional authorities from the 46 Council of Europe member States. They are either holders of a specific mandate resulting from a direct election or are politically accountable to a directly elected local or regional assembly. Congress members are divided into representatives and substitutes.

In order to play a full part in the work of the Congress, the national delegations elect a head and deputy head and appoint one or more delegation secretaries who do not act under the authority of the government of a member State.

They are the key contact points for the Congress secretariat. In particular, they contribute to the allocation of members to Congress committees, they may propose that certain members present their specific expertise in the committees' fields of action or respond to requests for specific information on the situation of local and regional democracy in their country.

In addition, the heads and deputy heads of the national delegations are responsible for liaising with their respective national governments, but also with the members of the national delegation of their country to the Parliamentary Assembly. This helps to promote the implementation of the Congress' recommendations and resolutions in the various member countries. The political work of the Congress is therefore not limited to the adoption of texts in Strasbourg.

Delegation secretaries play a key role in the exchange of information between the Congress secretariat and the delegation. They facilitate the participation of members in the work of the Congress, particularly during the plenary sessions.

The political groups

The Congress pay particular attention to ensuring that each national delegation has a balanced representation of the political forces of the local and regional authorities of each member country. Within the Congress, members may affiliate themselves to one of the four existing political groups:

- the Group of the European People's Party of the Congress
- the Group of Socialists, Greens and Progressive Democrats
- the Independent Liberal and Democratic Group
- the European Conservatives and Reformists Group

The main bodies of the Congress

The Congress and chamber bureaux

The Bureau is the political and executive body of the Congress, elected by the Congress for a two-and-a-half-year term. It is composed of the President of the Congress, the Presidents of each of the two chambers and the seven Vice-Presidents of both chambers. The 17 members of the Bureau are responsible for conducting the policy of the Congress.

The Bureau is also responsible for the preparation of the Congress sessions, the co-ordination of the work of the two chambers and the committees, the preparation of the budget and the balanced distribution of budgetary resources between the Congress and the two chambers.

***The Monitoring Committee** is responsible for monitoring the European Charter of Local Self-Government, an international treaty ratified by the 46 member States of the Council of Europe. In particular, the committee undertakes to monitor the application of the Charter country by country in the 46 member States every five years, at the end of which it draws up a report with a recommendation.*

It may organise a fact-finding mission to examine a specific situation in a country in the light of one or more provisions of the Charter. In addition, the committee also undertakes post-monitoring activities in countries to which a recommendation has already been addressed. This post-monitoring procedure consists of accompanying the member States that so request in the implementation of this recommendation through a political dialogue with the national authorities. The committee is also responsible for raising the awareness of local and regional elected representatives about the protection and implementation of human rights and fundamental freedoms at local and regional level.

***The Governance Committee** deals with issues of local and regional democracy in their legal, political and institutional dimensions. It examines the development of territorial structures, the relations between the different levels of government and the competences affecting them. In addition, the committee examines issues related to multi-level governance and cross-border and interregional co-operation. It deals with specific aspects of the interpretation of certain provisions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government (such as the notion of adequate resources, procedures for consulting local authorities, financial equalisation systems, etc.), e-democracy and issues relating to the transparency and accountability of local and regional authorities, the prevention of corruption, working conditions or ethical standards for elected representatives.*

***The Current Affairs Committee** is responsible for examining the role of local and regional authorities in addressing major societal challenges and recommending concrete actions at national, regional and local levels. In particular, the committee has worked on major topical issues such as the reception of refugees and the integration of migrants, radicalisation, cultural heritage management, women's political participation and gender-based violence, social rights of young people, civic participation and the rights of LGBTI people.*

■ Your membership

Your active involvement in the work of the Congress is an essential contribution to the development of territorial democracy in Europe, ensuring that the experiences of other countries are shared and learnt from and establishing networks between like-minded politicians.

You can, for example, participate in monitoring or observation missions for local or regional elections or put forward your candidature as rapporteur on a specific topic. Programmes and activities are also implemented bilaterally in the framework of the Council of Europe's action plans for certain member States or in the framework of the Council of Europe's policy towards neighbouring regions on the one hand, and multilaterally in the framework of specific partnerships, such as the European Union's Eastern Partnership or the Partnership for South-Eastern Europe, on the other. Participation in the work of the Congress gives you the opportunity to defend the rights of local and regional authorities vis-à-vis your government and to influence territorial policy, including in your country.

Your active involvement in the process of reflection and debate within the Congress will enable you to establish co-operation links across the continent.

Code of Conduct: At the start of their mandate at the Congress and before any participation in an event, members are obliged to sign a Code of Conduct. The purpose of this Code is to provide a frame of reference for members in the performance of their duties. It sets out the general principles of behaviour that the Congress expects of its members and applies to members in all aspects of their public life in relation to their duties as Congress members. The full Code of Conduct can be found in Appendix I of the Congress Rules and Procedures and should be signed directly in Congress Connect.

Declaration of interests: Members of Congress must sign a Declaration of interests at the beginning of their mandate and whenever there is a change in their situation, indicating that they do not have any interest of an economic, commercial or financial nature which could pose a conflict of interest nor does any member of their family.

| | |
|--|---|
|  <p>The image shows a red 'Laissez-Passer' card from the Council of Europe. It includes the text 'Council of Europe - Conseil de l'Europe', 'Laissez-Passer', 'CORIÈSE', 'Giuseppe M.', 'Date of birth: 25/07/1987', 'Nationality: ITA', and 'ID No: 25001374723'. There is a small photo of a man on the right side.</p> | <p>Congress "Laissez-Passer"</p> <p>The Congress issues a "pass" indicating your official status as a member of the Congress and the duration of your mandate. This document can be obtained during the Congress sessions. Simply complete the form in CAPITAL letters and return it to congress.session@coe.int or during the session to Office 1081 (1st floor) of the Palais de l'Europe.</p> |
|  <p>The image shows a green and white badge. It features the text 'THE CONGRESS / LE CONGRÈS', a silhouette of a person, 'Prénom / NOM', 'BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA / BOSNIE-HERZEGOVINE', and 'Representative - Représentant'. It also includes the logos of 'The Congress / Council of Europe' and 'Le Congrès / Conseil de l'Europe'.</p> | <p>Congress badges</p> <p>All Congress members, delegation secretaries and political group secretaries have a badge with photo. This badge can be collected from the Council of Europe badge accreditation unit. The badge opens doors when placed on the reader.</p> |



Congress Connect

Your personal Congress Connect account

Congress Connect is an internet database containing information about the members and the composition of the Congress structures. You have a personal account and are responsible for updating your data (status, contact details, photo...). To connect, please follow these steps

To connect to Congress Connect

1. Use Chrome or Edge to log in
2. Type your login email address (when entering your email address, please check that there are no spaces before or after the email address - preferably type it letter by letter and do not copy and paste)
3. To access Congress Connect, you must first reset your password by clicking on the following link: <https://reset-password.coe.int>
4. Once you have changed your password, you can access Congress Connect by clicking on the following link [Congress Connect \(coe.int\)](https://congress-connect.coe.int)

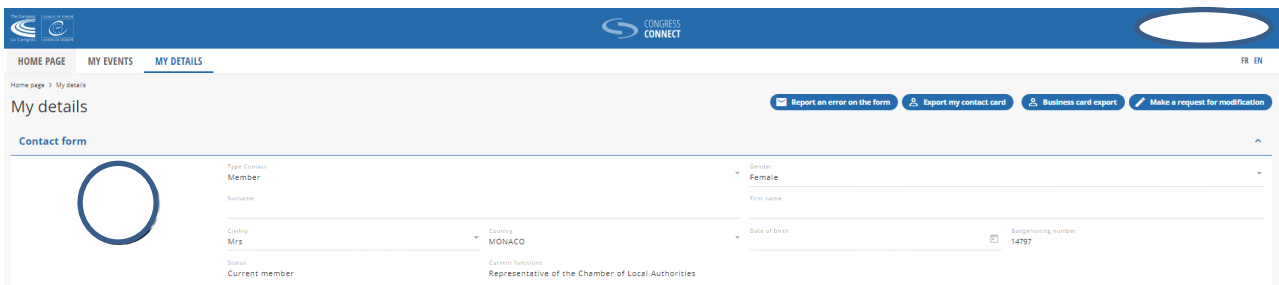
Request an affiliation to a political group

If you do not request an affiliation, you are indicated as Non-Registered under the acronym NI-NR (Non-Inscrit/Non-Registered). Applying to join a political group is an individual process that you can do directly in Congress Connect as follows:

1. When you are on your home page, click on MY DETAILS



2. Click on "Make a request for modification"



3. Click on the “Political affiliation” tab and tick the box “I wish to apply for another affiliation” and select the desired political group

Political affiliation

POLITICAL AFFILIATION WITHIN THE CONGRESS

groupe-politique-actuel Not Registered (NI-NR)

I wish to apply for another affiliation.

Desired political group *

Not Registered (NI-NR)

4. Then validate your affiliation request by clicking on “Submit the request for modification”

Rapporteur ▼

Languages ▼

[Submit the request for modification](#)

[Close](#)

This modification request will be automatically transferred to the Secretary of the political group who will examine the request. Once your request has been validated, your profile will be automatically updated in Congress Connect and on the Congress website.

Register for an event

For any event you wish to attend, you will need to register via Congress Connect. This registration is essential in order to:

- update your badge to include your voting rights
- automatically enter your name on the attendance lists
- request, if necessary, a prepaid travel ticket and/or a visa

Here is how to proceed:

1. When you are on your homepage, click on the event for which you wish to register

The screenshot shows the Congress Connect homepage. At the top, there are logos for 'The Congress' and 'CONGRESS CONNECT'. Below the logos are navigation tabs: 'HOME PAGE', 'MY EVENTS', and 'MY DETAILS'. A notification banner states: 'The personal data are processed in accordance with the Secretary General's Regulation instituting a system of data protection for personal data files at the Council of Europe'. Below this, there are two main sections: 'Tools' and 'Events'. The 'Tools' section includes links for 'Code of conduct', 'Make a new declaration of Interests', 'My declarations', and 'My details'. The 'Events' section features a card for the '43rd Congress Session' in Strasbourg, France, with dates '25 Oct 2022' and '27 Oct 2022'. A red bell icon indicates a notification.

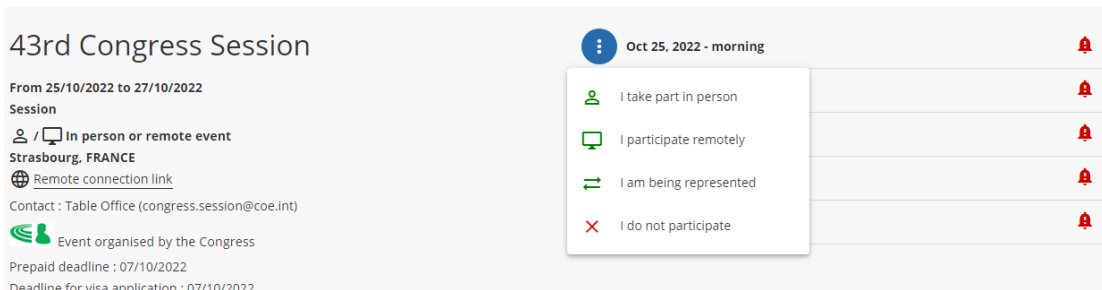
2. Click on the sittings for which you wish to register

The screenshot shows the '43rd Congress Session' page. The breadcrumb trail is 'Home page > My events > 43rd Congress Session'. The main heading is '43rd Congress Session'. Below it, the dates 'From 25/10/2022 at 27/10/2022' and 'Session' are displayed. The event is described as an 'In person event' in 'Strasbourg, FRANCE'. Contact information is provided: 'Table Office (congress.session@coe.int)'. It notes that the event is organized by the Congress, with a 'Prepaid deadline : 07/10/2022' and a 'Deadline for visa application : 07/10/2022'. An 'Export in calendar' button is also visible. On the right side, a list of sittings is shown with a red bell icon for notifications:

- Oct 25, 2022 - morning
- Oct 25, 2022 - afternoon
- Oct 26, 2022 - morning
- Oct 26, 2022 - afternoon
- Oct 27, 2022 - morning

3. There are several options available to you:

- participate in person or remotely (depending on the format of the event)
- be represented: i.e. you can choose which substitute will replace you for the whole event or for each sitting
- indicate that you are not participating, which will allow your delegation secretary to make a possible replacement.

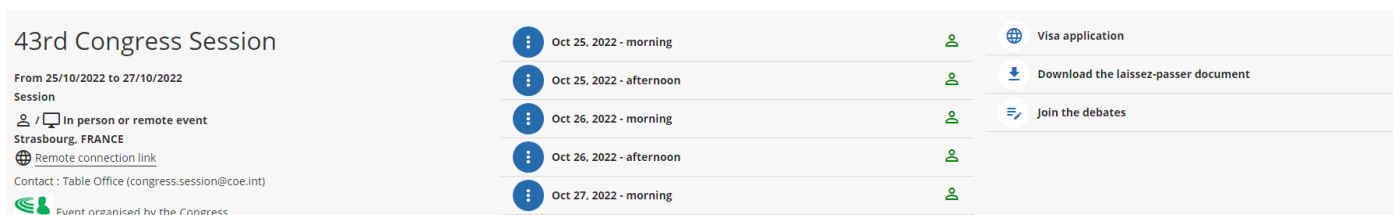



ATTENTION: If you are a substitute you can participate without replacing a representative but in this case your travel and subsistence expenses will not be covered by the Council of Europe. Contact your delegation secretary to check whether a replacement is possible.

Register for a debate

Once you have registered, you can sign up to speak during the debates.

1. Click on « Join the debates »



2. Select the debate in which you wish to speak by clicking on the  symbol

| Debate registration | | | | |
|---|--|------------------|---------------|---------|
| Plenary sittings | | | | |
| 25 October 2022 - Morning | | | | |
| Wording FR | Wording EN | Rapporteurs | Guest speaker | Actions |
| Vérification des pouvoirs des nouveaux membres | Verification of new members' credentials | | | |
| 25 October 2022 - Afternoon | | | | |
| Wording FR | Wording EN | Rapporteurs | Guest speaker | Actions |
| Communication du Président | Communication by the President | Leendert VERBEEK | | |
| Allocution de Peter BURKE, Ministre d'État du logement et des collectivités, au nom de la Présidence irlandaise du Comité des Ministres | Statement by Peter BURKE, Minister of State for Planning and Local Government, on behalf of the Irish Presidency of the Committee of Ministers | | Peter BURKE | |

3. Complete the information requested in the “Right to speak box”

Right to speak

Representatives (or duly mandated substitutes) and representatives of bodies holding partnership status wishing to speak may register by means of this form before the opening or in the course of the sitting. The Chair may, in the interest of the debate, depart from the order in which delegates are registered or, at any time it thinks fit, suspend a debate or move the closure of the list of speakers

Intervention for * Speak on behalf of *

Topic of the question (if applicable)

Cancel Save

■ Participating in the work of the Congress

Registration for Congress sessions and meetings

Registration for the Congress session must be done online via Congress Connect. It is this registration that VALIDATES your VOTING RIGHTS. Once you have registered, you will be able to request a visa or a prepaid travel ticket.

E-voting

The electronic voting of texts (only during the Congress sessions) takes place in the hemicycle, in the meeting rooms or remotely. Please note that only members who have registered online via Congress Connect will be entitled to vote.

CongressApp

The CongressApp allows you to follow the Congress' activities in support of the development of European territorial democracy. The application (available in English and French) presents the Congress news feed, data on the 612 Congress members, reference texts on local and regional democracy, and texts adopted by the Congress.

You can consult Congress news and information and:

- access members' fact sheets, even offline.
- access the composition of the Congress structures: bureaux, committees, political groups...
- follow Congress news and events, with notifications.
- share content with your contacts via email and social networks.

Reimbursement of Congress members' travel and subsistence expenses

The Council of Europe covers the travel and subsistence expenses of Congress representatives attending the session in accordance with the [revised rules](#) concerning the reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses to members of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe travelling at the expense of Council of Europe budgets. Subsistence expenses are covered by a daily allowance of €175 (50% for hotel expenses including breakfast; 30% for 2 meals and 20% for miscellaneous expenses).

Only Congress representatives are entitled to reimbursement of their travel expenses and a daily allowance. Congress Substitutes are only eligible for travel and daily allowance reimbursement in the case of replacement of a Representative for the whole session. However, Congress Substitutes may receive a daily allowance in the event of partial replacement of a Representative, without reimbursement of travel expenses. Travel should be organised according to the most economical itinerary using as far as possible economy tickets, except in the case of rail travel where reimbursement of a first class ticket is authorised (see the [revised rules](#) concerning the reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses to members of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe travelling at the expense of Council of Europe budgets).

Congress publications

You will find on the Congress website all publications, activity reports and leaflets issued by the Congress via this link: <https://www.coe.int/fr/web/congress/publications>

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
congress.session@coe.int