

## Multilevel Governance for Ensuring Democracy and Strengthening Resilience at all Levels of Governance

25 September 2024, Vilnius

### Takeaways

The Reykjavik Summit pledged to strengthen democracy and good governance at all levels throughout Europe, which led to the adoption of the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy. Lithuania's Presidency of the CM (May-November 2024) has consistently made implementation of the Reykjavik Summit decisions one of its priorities, leading to the holding of the Vilnius conference to advance the work on multilevel governance and its possible applications. This conference, organised by the Ministry of Interior with the support of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, is a key step in furthering these efforts.

Multilevel governance (MLG) was defined as a co-operative model of governance between different levels of authority - including supranational - delivered with the participation of multiple actors - including civil society - based on CM/Rec(2023)5 on the principles of good democratic governance.

The Conference recalled the basic conditions for a well-functioning MLG and recommended:

- Ensuring *legislation* provides for a *clear distribution of competences* across the different levels of governance, whilst a *soft law culture* enables enough flexibility to fill-in legislative voids;
- *building knowledge/expertise* by actors involved (youth in particular) to enable a meaningful contribution to policymaking and implementation;
- for MLG to succeed, the actors should have *comprehensive views* on the goals to be reached in order to be able to find compromise solutions when needed and not limit themselves to advocacy of their own interests;
- a dynamic dialogue with citizens requires *feedback both on successes as well as on failures*;
- guaranteeing *commensurate resources* at the lower levels of governance;
- acknowledging the increasingly important role of *social media and new technologies*, including in communication with the citizens;
- recognising the crucial role of *national associations* of local authorities as an intermediary between central and local level authorities;
- *cross-border MLG* can help identify threats beyond local/national borders and ensure meaningful co-ordination and follow-up;
- the *private sector's voice* should be taken on board in MLG formats;
- the impact of MLG actions needs to be *monitored and evaluated*.

The conference acknowledged that MLG can be an excellent way to counter populism and polarisation of societies because of its inclusive and participatory nature. Furthermore, it called for national models for multilevel governance and resilience to be tested and updated. The Centre of Expertise for Multilevel Governance at the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe has access to and experience in mobilising peers and experts from across Europe to share different regulatory models and practices for delivering multilevel governance reforms.