

Monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Norway

Recommendation 504 (2024)¹

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe refers to:
 - a. Article 2, paragraph 1.b, of the Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities appended to Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2020)1 relating to the Congress, stipulating that one of the aims of the Congress is "to submit proposals to the Committee of Ministers in order to promote local and regional democracy";
 - b. Article 1, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities appended to Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2020)1, according to which "the Congress shall prepare regular reports - country by country - on the situation of local and regional democracy in all Member States and in states applying for membership of the Council of Europe and shall ensure the effective implementation of the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government";
 - c. Chapter XVIII of the Rules and Procedures of the Congress on the organisation of monitoring procedures;
 - d. the sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Goals 11 on sustainable cities and communities and 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions;
 - e. the guidelines for civil participation in political decision making, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 27 September 2017;
 - f. Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of citizens in local public life, adopted on 21 March 2018;
 - g. Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on supervision of local authorities' activities, adopted on 4 April 2019;
 - h. the previous Congress Recommendation on the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Norway [Recommendation 374 (2015)];
 - i. the explanatory memorandum on the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Norway;
 - j. the contemporary commentary by the Congress on the explanatory report to the European Charter of Local Self-Government adopted by the Statutory Forum on 7 December 2020.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress during the 46th Session on 26 March 2024, (see document [CG\(2024\)46-14](#), explanatory memorandum), co-rapporteurs: Thibaut GUIGNARD, France (L, EPP/CCE) and Carla DEJONGHE, Belgium (R, ILDG)

2. The Congress points out that:

a. Norway joined the Council of Europe on 5 May 1949, signed the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122, "the Charter") on 26 May 1989 and ratified it without reservations. The Charter entered into force in respect of Norway on 1 September 1989;

b. the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by member States of the European Charter of Local Self-Government ("the Monitoring Committee") decided to examine the situation of local and regional democracy in Norway in the light of the Charter. It entrusted Thibaut Guignard, France (L, PPE/CCE) and Carla Dejonghe, Belgium (R, ILDG), with the task of preparing and submitting to the Congress a report on local and regional democracy in Norway. The delegation was assisted by Prof. Tania Groppi, member of the Group of Independent Experts on the European Charter of Local Self-Government, and the Congress Secretariat;

c. the monitoring visit took place from 22 to 25 of May 2023. During the visit, the Congress delegation met representatives of various institutions at all levels of government. The detailed programme of the visit is appended to the explanatory memorandum;

d. the co-rapporteurs wish to thank the Permanent Representation of Norway to the Council of Europe and all those whom they met during the visit.

3. The Congress notes with satisfaction:

a. the incorporation of the principles of local democracy and self-government in the Constitution and specific legislation;

b. the introduction of judicial remedies for local authorities against decisions taken by the State administration;

c. the more thorough regulation of State supervision over local authorities;

d. the satisfactory level of local democracy, as demonstrated by the extensive powers and financial resources of counties and municipalities, that enables them to exercise these powers in a satisfactory manner;

e. the culture of consultation and loyal collaboration between central government and local authorities.

4. The Congress expresses its concerns on the following issues:

a. The unclear procedure of consultation of local communities regarding changes to the boundaries of local authorities;

b. The still pervasive degree of supervision by the government over local authorities, also as a consequence of a too dense and specific legislation.

5. In light of the foregoing, the Congress requests that the Committee of Ministers invite the authorities of Norway to:

a. further reinforce local self-government by avoiding legislation too dense and specific;

b. clarify the procedure of consultation of local communities regarding changes to the boundaries of local authorities;

c. continue clarifying the scope of the State supervision over local authorities to keep it in proportion to the interests it is intended to protect.

6. The Congress calls on the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to take account of this recommendation on the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Norway and the accompanying explanatory memorandum in their activities relating to this member State.