

## ***Motivation Letter***

# **Candidacy of Gunn Marit Helgesen for President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities**

Oslo, 19 March 2026

Dear colleagues,

Having served for many years in local and regional governance, I know the importance of strong democratic institutions at every level. It is with great commitment and a deep sense of responsibility that I present my candidacy for the Presidency of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

The relevance of the Council of Europe is greater today than at any time in recent decades. With war once again on European soil, and with democracy under mounting pressure in many parts of our continent, we are reminded of the fundamental importance of our shared European values: human rights, democracy, and good governance. These principles are the very foundation of peaceful, resilient, and prosperous societies — and they are at the core of the Congress' mission.

Not only must we safeguard these values; we must both strengthen and renew them to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. Europe is undergoing profound transformations. The green transition, the digital transformation, and the imperative of building sustainable communities require strong, effective, and accountable local and regional governance. These are areas where the Congress can and must play a leading role.

We also know that our work remains unfinished when it comes to equality, inclusion, and equal opportunities across Europe. A vibrant democracy is one where all people — regardless of gender, background, or circumstance — have an equal voice and a real chance to participate. Advancing equality and inclusion is not just a policy choice; it is a democratic necessity.

Europe cannot succeed in strengthening its democracies without ensuring that young people are actively engaged, represented, and empowered at all levels of governance. In this regard, the Congress' Youth Delegate programme is of vital importance. It provides young people with a meaningful platform to contribute to our work, bring fresh perspectives, and help shape policies for the future.

These are the issues I am passionate about, and they are the priorities I wish to champion as President of the Congress. I will work tirelessly to ensure that the Congress contributes as much as possible to progress and improvement across our member states. I am particularly committed to helping turn the Council of Europe's new Democratic Pact into a living reality — one that supports local and regional authorities in defending and renewing democracy at the level closest to citizens.

The challenges are great, but so are the opportunities. With strong cooperation, mutual trust, and a shared commitment to our values, I am confident that the Congress can continue to be a powerful force for democratic resilience, human rights protection, and good governance throughout Europe.

I would be honoured to receive your support.

Sincerely,

  
Gunn Marit Helgesen