

The Bureau of the Congress

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20 September 2022

New terms of reference for committee activities (2022)

Action required : for decision

¹ This document is classified confidential until it has been examined by the Bureau of the Congress

MANDAT No. (2) 2022

REPORT EVENT Current Affairs Committee

Rapporteurs: Cecilia DALMAN EEK, Sweden (R, SOC/G/PD) and Mélanie LEPOULTIER, France (L, ILDG)

Draft report to be submitted to the Current Affairs Committee for approval at its meeting in June 2023 and to the Congress at its 45th Session in October 2022

THEME: Local and regional media as watchdogs of democracy

Political objective (and specific local or regional dimension)	Relevance to the political priorities of the Council of Europe, the Congress and its committees	Proposed follow up	Timeline	Implementation requirements (expert, missions, interpretation, secretariat involvement, etc)
<p>A pluralistic media landscape, providing a variety of information and points of view is essential to democratic societies. In particular local and regional media play a crucial role in the functioning of grassroots democracy, by providing reliable and local information to citizens and by holding decision-makers and local and regional authorities accountable.</p> <p>Local and regional media can promote a sense of involvement and social cohesion in local and regional communities and fostering citizen participation while building trustworthy relationship between citizens and authorities. High quality local and regional journalism has a positive impact on</p>	<p>This report is in line with Congress 2021-2026 Priority b, <i>Democratic societies: quality of representative democracy and citizen participation</i>, stating that independent media and the provision of correct information to all citizens are crucial for the quality of representative democracy.</p> <p>Relevant Council of Europe documents and strategies, the implementation of which this report will contribute to, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)11 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on principles for media and communication governance with a special focus on the importance of 	<p>Dissemination of the materials to national, local and regional electoral authorities of the States concerned.</p> <p>Presentation to associations of local and regional authorities.</p> <p>Follow up and forward to the Congress Bureau the Committee of Ministers' reply to a possible Congress</p>	<p>Thematic debate on the issue in the Current Affairs Committee meeting on 10 June 2022.</p> <p>Draft Terms of Reference to be submitted for approval by the Current Affairs Committee 14 September 2022.</p> <p>Approval of the Terms of Reference by the Bureau in October 2022.</p>	<p>Secretariat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - assistance in drafting the explanatory memorandum, the resolution and the recommendation; - dissemination of the adopted texts. <p>Expert (to be selected):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - submission of a draft report - participation a the

<p>participatory democracy.</p> <p>Well informed citizens play an active role in decision making and in holding their political leaders accountable. There is a link between the development of local and regional media and the turnout of voters at elections, as well as the overall participation of citizens in electoral campaigns and the day-to-day life of their respective municipalities.</p> <p>Local and regional media fosters the creation of strong and healthy alliance between duty-bearers and citizens thereby promoting effective and transparent elections, culture of trust between officials and communities and uphold of democratic values of inclusion and diversity.</p> <p>The Congress has outlined the role regional media plays in promoting citizens' participation in its 2014 Report "The role of regional media as a tool for building participatory democracy".</p> <p>However, since then, and despite their important role in strengthening local and regional democracy, social cohesion and trust, local and regional media have been in decline in several member States. Due to constantly changing political, economic and media landscape as well as changing consumer behaviours, among other factors, local and regional</p>	<p>promoting media pluralism, highlighting the need for supporting measures to rebuild trust and healthy relationships with a local audience through innovative and multi-stakeholder approaches, emphasising adequate public funding of media, direct and indirect subsidies and support for not-for-profit community media.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CM/Rec(2018)1[1] of the Committee of Ministers to member States on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership calling on States to ensure the diversity of content such as local content, protecting the diversity of viewpoints represented by political, ideological, cultural and social groups, the diversity of interests and viewpoints relevant to local and regional communities, and role of media in facilitating inclusive and participatory processes of dialogue within and across communities and at regional and local levels. - CM/Rec(2022)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on promoting a favourable environment for quality journalism in the digital age; and in particular 1.1.5. on community and local 	<p>recommendation.</p>	<p>Draft explanatory memorandum and preliminary draft resolution and recommendation to be submitted for approval by the Committee in 2023.</p> <p>Presentation of the draft resolution and recommendation for adoption at the 45th Congress Session in October 2023.</p> <p>The possibility of stakeholder consultations and/or the organisation of an event with relevant stakeholders could be envisaged either during the drafting process or following adoption of the report, subject to availability of human and financial resources.</p>	<p>Committee meeting in 2023</p> <p>Translation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - of the draft explanatory memorandum ; - of the draft resolution and recommendation; - of other documents relating to the preparation of the report.
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<p>media have struggled to continue their operations.</p> <p>Local and regional media do not possess the resources they would a decade ago which in turn leads to the rise of media deserts and marginalization of small, independent media news outlets. In addition, sometimes local and regional media are facing political pressure that threatens their independence.</p> <p>The decline of local and regional media and the emergence of so-called media deserts have already been linked to lower turn-out at local elections and greater polarization.</p> <p>Taking this into account, local and regional authorities have a sound interest in combatting media desertification and in ensuring the existence of strong, independent local and regional media with a view of strengthening democracy and social cohesion in their communities.</p> <p>Therefore, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, building on its previous work on the role of media at local and regional level, should consider a report on the growing issue of media deserts in European towns and regions, their impact on democracy, and the role of local and regional authorities in combatting this issue.</p> <p>A forthcoming report should be envisaged not as a replication of the work outlined above, but as an additional resource, providing concrete guidance on the role of local and regional authorities in protecting media pluralism and fighting against news deserts on the local and regional level:</p> <p>Aimed at providing guidance to local and regional</p>	<p>media, calling on States to develop and promote a range of funding schemes and instruments, including at the local level to uphold media diversity as a basis for quality journalism; 1.3.2 on the promotion of media pluralism and diversity; 2.4.3 on local and hyperlocal media; 2.5.1 the complementary nature of different media types; and 2.5.5. on political non-interference of local authorities in media</p> <p>This report will also contribute to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 16 <i>Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions</i>, and its Target 16.10: <i>“Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements”</i></p> <p>Furthermore, this report may contribute to the thematic cohesion of the work of the Congress and the European Union, and in particular its Committee of the Regions, that stressed the need for measures to strengthen the role of local and regional media its Opinion of May 2021. The European Commission has foreseen to start a project on <i>“Supporting local and regional news media in face of emerging news deserts”</i> in March 2023.</p>			
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<p>authorities, this report will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- outline the crucial role of local and regional media in upholding democracy and in particular promoting citizen participation and trustworthy relationship building between officials and citizens and the impact of desertification thereon- examine the challenges encountered by local and regional media in member states where they are in decline, including lack of resource and political freedom- provide guidance and best practices for local and regional authorities and recommendations for member States on how to adapt their media governance to support the continued existence and establishment of strong and independent local and regional media- assess, in particular, the role local and regional authorities can play in protecting media's independence at local and regional level				
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TERMS OF REFERENCE 2/2022/MON REPORT <input type="checkbox"/> EVENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Monitoring Committee Potsdam, Germany, 29 June 2023 (date to be confirmed)		
TOPIC: Monitoring Committee meeting in Potsdam (Germany), 29 June 2023 (date to be confirmed)				
Political objective (and specific local or regional dimension)	Relevance to the political priorities of the Council of Europe, the Congress and its committees	Proposed follow up	Timeline (appointment rapporteur, debate in committee, possible hearing, approval by committee, etc)	Implementation requirements (expert, missions, interpretation, secretariat involvement, etc)
Approval of the texts produced by the Monitoring Committee that are to be submitted for adoption during the 45 th Plenary session of the Congress (October 2023)	Statutory activity	Abridged report	Draft terms of reference to be submitted to the Congress Bureau on 23 September 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel and subsistence (80 members + 3 experts) • Missions 3 A + 4 B <i>(to be covered by the Congress/ Monitoring Committee)</i>
				Translation of documents <i>(to be covered by the Congress / Monitoring Committee)</i>
				Interpretation in 4 languages (ENG, FRA, GER, ITA) <i>(to be covered by the Congress/ Monitoring Committee at the amount equivalent for the meeting in Strasbourg)</i>
				Meeting room, technical equipment for interpretation for 4 languages, logistical and technical facilities <i>(to be covered by the host authorities, the Brandenburg State Parliament)</i> Lunch/dinner/coffee breaks <i>(to be covered by the host authorities Brandenburg State Parliament)</i>

TERMS OF REFERENCE 5/2022/GOV		Governance Committee		
REPORT <input type="checkbox"/> EVENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Arnhem, Netherlands, 1 June 2023 (date to be confirmed)		
TOPIC: Governance Committee meeting in Arnhem, Netherlands, 1 June 2023 (date to be confirmed)				
Political objective (and specific local or regional dimension)	Relevance to the political priorities of the Council of Europe, the Congress and its committees	Proposed follow up	Timeline (appointment rapporteur, debate in committee, possible hearing, approval by committee, etc)	Implementation requirements (expert, missions, interpretation, secretariat involvement, etc)
Approval of the texts produced by the Governance Committee that are to be submitted for adoption during the 45 th Plenary session of the Congress (October 2023)	Statutory activity	Abridged report	Draft terms of reference to be submitted to the Congress Bureau on 23 September 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel and subsistence (70 members + 2 experts) • Missions 2 A + 2 B <i>(to be covered by the Congress/ Governance Committee)</i>
				Translation of documents <i>(to be covered by the Congress / Governance Committee)</i>
				Interpretation in 4 languages (ENG, FRA, GER, ITA) <i>(to be covered by the Congress/ Governance Committee at the amount equivalent for the meeting in Strasbourg)</i>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting room, technical equipment for interpretation for 4 languages, logistical and technical facilities <i>(to be covered by the authorities of the Province of Gelderland, Netherlands)</i>• Reception/dinner, lunch, coffee breaks <i>(to be covered by the authorities of the Province of Gelderland, Netherlands)</i>
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