

**35th Session – Strasbourg, France, 6-8 November 2018**

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*Check against delivery - Seul le prononcé fait foi*

**Debate on “European Local Democracy Week (ELDW): a new momentum”**

**Strasbourg, France, 6 November 2018**

Thank you Chair,

Dear colleagues,

As you know, the European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) is a pan-European initiative proposed by the Congress and launched in October 2007 by the European Ministers of local and regional self-government, at their conference in Valencia. We are proud to say that over the last 12 editions, more than one thousand local authorities organised in their communities activities aimed at fostering dialogue with community residents. After all, ELDW is all about by bringing local authorities and citizens together in joint activities to hear each other's concerns, to decide on priorities for the community, and to improve the functioning of local government.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Congress members who have been involved in the ELDW for their commitment and to encourage everyone to take part in this initiative and promote it in their respective countries.

Dear colleagues, let me remind you the context of this draft resolution.

As you remember, we celebrated last year the 10th anniversary of the initiative. It was an excellent opportunity to take stock of its results and needs for its future development. Thus, one year ago, during its October session, the Congress renewed its commitment to advancing the ELDW and further developing it for the benefit of local and regional authorities and the citizens across Europe.

The Congress decided then to establish a Reflection Group tasked with examining all questions related to taking the Week forward to a new dimension. The Group was set up in March and met 4 times this year, to examine various aspects of the ELDW, always keeping in mind the will to give the initiative a new impetus. We also consulted the ELDW National Coordinators to reach an agreement on the draft resolution which is before you today.

We asked ourselves: how can we give the Week a new impulse?

To outline the draft resolution, let me take you through the 4 main guidelines that the Reflection Group identified:

- Allowing for more flexibility and for a greater number of events to be organised
- Establishing new modalities for rewarding the most remarkable initiatives
- Creating a network of exchange of good practices
- Developing the outreach of the ELDW

- First, our proposal contained in the draft resolution allows for more flexibility and for a greater number of events to be organised.

The Reflection Group proposes to address the special need of the participants, who complained about the restricted time of the Week. Thus, the municipalities should be encouraged to officially organise events and activities during the whole year. These activities will be culminating in a flagship event during the traditional week of 15 October, which remains the symbolic date.

- Secondly, the resolution proposes to establish new modalities for rewarding the most remarkable initiatives.

A special title is intended to highlight the commitment with which a municipality raises its citizens' awareness of local democracy and encourages them to make use of all the opportunities provided through participatory democracy processes.

The Reflection Group proposes that a status intended to highlight such a commitment should be granted *a posteriori*, namely upon the actual participation and activities, in order to guarantee that the municipalities respect the criteria imposed by the status. Thus, the most actively participating local authorities taking part in the ELDW can request the title of "Partner of the European Local Democracy Week" for the year during which they have already organised their activities, after it took place. Furthermore, the resolution proposes to establish some additional criteria for application to the status such as sustainability, inclusiveness, youth engagement and innovation.

- Thirdly, the resolution also proposes the creation of a network of exchange of good practices. To achieve better and direct interaction between the partners, the website would provide for a new platform in order to allow the ELDW participants to exchange with each other. They will be able to directly share their best practices, difficulties, means and tips for activities implementation as well as questions they might have.

- Finally, and this is one of the main priorities, the resolution seeks to develop the outreach of the ELDW. In fact, to tackle the disinterest of younger generations in local politics, the resolution encourages local authorities to promote the engagement of young people and the creation of youth councils, or the youth councils' involvement in the ELDW where they already exist.

Moreover, the resolution strongly encourages the Congress Youth Delegates to participate in the ELDW activities of their municipality or even to lead an ELDW event.

The municipalities are also invited to nominate a personality with a standing in the local community as "Voice of the ELDW", whose role would be to promote the initiative. This person should be active in the community, especially with young people and committed to expanding the ELDW outreach and inclusiveness.

The resolution encourages, and I also encourage, not only the ELDW participants, but also the Congress members and youth delegates, to actively promote exchanges of information and good practice between them, especially by using social media and the upcoming online platform of the ELDW website.

Dear members, I have been the Thematic Spokesperson on the ELDW since 2014, and I am convinced that this initiative means a lot for the citizens and their elected representatives. It truly contributes to democratic education and it is a real tool for strengthening local democracy. I am sure that the initiative and its participants would reap the benefits of this resolution soon.

I strongly encourage you to take part in this debate and I therefore invite you to adopt the draft resolution entitled "European Local Democracy Week: a new momentum".

I wish you all a fruitful session and I thank you for your attention.

*957 words*