

The Bureau of the Congress

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Revised proposals for the reform of the European Local Democracy Week

Summary

The European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) is an initiative launched in 2007 by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.

In order to improve its impact, dissemination and flexibility, as well as the level of participation, a reform of the initiative has been launched.

The proposed changes are described in this document and submitted to the Bureau for decision on:

- a. The change of name
- b. The two themes for activities to be chosen for 2025 and 2026 (from the list of proposals)
- c. The proposal to transform the award of certificates into a Prize
- d. The instruction to submit a resolution on this reform to the plenary session in October 2025.

Action required: for decision

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

Context

1. The European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) is a pan-European initiative to promote local democracy and citizen involvement, launched in 2007 by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. It has been updated in 2018 by Resolution 430 (2018) (see appendix).
2. In order to improve the impact, dissemination and flexibility of the ELDW, as well as the level of participation, a number of substantial and formal changes have become necessary.
3. The initiative's current name refers to the anniversary of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in October. This title implies a one-off, time-limited event, and does not reflect its annual character, which can give rise to misunderstandings. The name change is intended to promote action at the local level by multidisciplinary projects and initiatives involving citizens over the year to better involve them in the life and decision-making processes of their communities.
4. The biennial theme that used to be decided for the ELDW can also be perceived as restrictive, and municipalities don't always realise that they can report on any activities they are already organising for and with their citizens. To replace the biennial theme, it is proposed to add a permanent sub-theme to the new name of the ELDW.
5. The changes proposed in this document are designed to improve the current ELDW, broaden its scope and visibility, and increase participation.

A. Renaming the ELDW

6. The new name will reflect both its nature and its purpose.

Proposed new name:
European Local Democracy Action (ELDA)

B. Increase its outreach

7. To replace the biennial theme, it is proposed to choose a general theme for the revised ELDW.

Proposed general theme
Engaging citizens in local democracy

i.e. **European Local Democracy Action (ELDA): Engaging citizens in local democracy**

8. Two specific themes for activities will also be chosen every two years from a list (according to political priorities) by the Bureau in its February meeting.

Proposed themes for activities (2 to be chosen for 2025/2026):

Engaging youth
Sustainable and green governance
Inclusive communities and diversity
Transparency and accountability
Reshaping cities for and with their citizens
Digital local democracy
Supporting gender equality

9. The new ELDW will feature a Prize.

In the current ELDW, the participants are invited end of each year to submit their candidature to receive the certificate of European Partner of the Local Democracy Week. It is proposed that the new Prize be an upgrade of this procedure.

- a. The Prize will consist of a general prize, linked to the general theme, and two thematic prizes linked to the two thematic categories that will have been chosen for two years from a list.

- b. At the end of each year, a call for applications will be issued to participants who have registered and reported their activities on the Initiative's website.
- c. The projects of these candidates will be examined after a list of criteria. One outstanding project in the general category and two thematic projects will receive the Prize.
- d. The current list of selection criteria for the Certificates will be reviewed and adapted to the new Prize.
- e. A jury will be set up to select the overall prize-winning project and the thematic prize-winning projects in each category. It could be made up of (1) the Congress thematic spokesperson for the European Local Democracy Week, (2) one or two Congress thematic spokespersons on the themes of the two chosen thematic categories (they will change each time new thematic categories are decided), (3) a youth delegate (see also §20 below), and (4) an external partner (the first such external partner could be the International Observatory on Participative Democracy), for two years, under the coordination of the Congress secretariat.
- f. The Prize could consist of a work of art to be created.
- g. The former Certificates of Partner status will still be issued to the other projects that have responded to the call for applications, meet the criteria (as in the current ELDW) and are not the Prize winners
- h. Proposed Prize and Certificates Winners will be submitted to the Bureau at the beginning of the year - February Bureau meeting - for final approval.
- i. The award ceremony will be held in Spring, together with the annual coordination meeting.
- j. The website and visual identity of the current ELDW will be adapted accordingly.
- k. The Prize could also be named after a personality (like the Mayor Paweł Adamowicz Prize or the Vaclav Havel Prize) and the country of that personality could be associated with the award.

C. Ensure a follow-up

- 10. The winners will be invited to attend the award ceremony, to be held in Spring each year for the previous year's edition, together with the coordination/evaluation meeting.
- 11. During their visit to Strasbourg, the winners will also be proposed an information program on the Council of Europe and possibly a meeting with representatives of the City of Strasbourg.
- 12. They could also be invited to a plenary session of the Congress and/or the World Democracy Forum.
- 13. A network of prizewinners could be created and supported by the Congress.

D. Increase participation

- 14. As with the current ELDW, the revised ELDW is open to participation by municipalities, regions and national associations of local and regional authorities which are encouraged to associate the civil society actors in their projects (including NGOs, foundations, universities).
- 15. The network of national coordinators should be reactivated
- 16. The revised ELDW is to be promoted through an active campaign aimed at:
 - (1) Congress members and partners;
 - (2) Stakeholders, participants and national coordinators;
 - (3) The different entities of the Council of Europe;
 - (4) European associations of local and regional authorities.

17. Partnerships could be created with other initiatives (within the Council Europe) and outside (such as IODP and CEMR), including academia and civil society.

E. Ensuring greater youth participation

18. Congress youth delegates could be more involved in the revised ELDW.

19. Where they fall within one of the specific themes selected each year, the grassroots projects implemented by youth delegates between March and October could be submitted to the annual Prize application procedure.

20. Consideration could be given to appointing one youth delegate each year as a member of the Prize jury (jury members and prize candidates cannot be the same delegates).

21. Greater involvement of young people in the projects implemented by participants should be added to the list of criteria for the award and "partner status" certificates.

22. Partnerships with universities, youth networks and NGOs could be developed.

F. Supporting participants

23. The revised ELDW will support its participants by providing training materials on its website and access to training sessions.

24. An annual training webinar could be organised in connection the first year with one of the two themes for activities chosen and the next year with the other theme chosen.

25. Selected participants could be invited to events organised by other participants/partners to present their projects.

26. A concept for a round table or workshop on a local democracy theme could be developed and offered to two or three communities a year (which could be part of the existing program of these municipalities. This Round Table would be co-organised and co-financed by the Congress and the municipalities concerned, under the umbrella of the revised ELDW.

27. The annual coordination meeting and award ceremony could be organised outside Strasbourg with a participating municipality to ensure a wider audience (other municipalities in the country concerned would be invited).

G. Improving communication and visibility

28. The revision of the ELDW involves updating and revising all existing visibility and communication material.

29. Adopting a new name for SEDL will require a complete rebranding, including a new logo, new graphic design elements and a new visual identity.

30. These new visibility elements will also be applied to the ELDW stand, banners, posters, brochures and promotional material, as well as toolkits and video content.

31. The changes will also require a restructuring of the website.

Appendix I – Resolution 430 (2018)

Resolution 430 (2018)²

1. In their declaration adopted during the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Local and Regional Government held on 16 October 2007 in Valencia, Spain, the ministers supported the initiative of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe to launch the European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) in recognition of the importance of increasing citizen participation in decision making at the grass-roots level and introducing participatory mechanisms into our democratic systems.
2. The ELDW serves to foster dialogue between residents and public authorities, by bringing them together in joint activities to hear each other's concerns, decide on priorities for the community and improve the functioning of local government.
3. Over the years, the European Local Democracy Week has become a truly pan-European initiative. More than 1 000 local and regional authorities and their associations have organised public activities aimed at promoting and fostering citizens' democratic participation at grass-roots level, especially by raising their awareness of the functioning of local authorities, as well as to inform them of the opportunities for taking part in local decision-making processes.
4. In 2017, the European Local Democracy Week marked its 10th anniversary. On this occasion, the Congress, in its Resolution 423 (2017),³ renewed its commitment to advancing this initiative further and established a Reflection Group to take the ELDW forward to a new dimension. The Reflection Group held three meetings in March, June and September 2018, during which it considered various aspects relating to the ELDW. The group's proposals were submitted to the national co-ordinators of the initiative.
5. In the light of the above, the Congress:
 - a. thanks the Reflection Group for its commitment and its work to give the ELDW fresh impetus and to further develop it for the benefit of local and regional authorities and citizens across Europe;
 - b. adopts the Reflection Group's proposals for new organisational rules regarding the duration of the ELDW, the means of rewarding the most outstanding activities and the strategy for developing the initiative's outreach and network, as appended to this resolution;
 - c. decides that these changes will enter into effect as from 2019.

² Debated and adopted by the Congress on 6 November 2018, 1st sitting (see Document [CG35\(2018\)11](#), explanatory memorandum), Congress Spokesperson on the European Local Democracy Week: Gaye DOGANOGLU, Turkey (L, EPP/CCE).

³ Debated and adopted by the Congress on 20 October 2017, 3rd sitting (see [Document CG33\(2017\)12](#)), Congress Spokesperson on the European Local Democracy Week: Gaye DOGANOGLU, Turkey (L, EPP/CCE).