

# ACTIVITY REPORT

(April to October 2018)



## Communication by the Secretary General of the Congress of Local and regional Authorities

At the 1327th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies  
17 October 2018

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## **Activity Report of the Congress**

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**Communication by the Secretary General of the Congress at the  
1327th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies**

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## Introduction by Andreas KIEFER, Secretary General of the Congress

This introduction to the current activity report of the Congress is based on the statement by the Secretary General of the Congress at the 1327<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Committee of Ministers' Deputies on 17 October 2018. It focuses on

- the *raison d'être*, the mission and the role of the Congress,
- how the Congress fulfils its mission and role through concrete activities of our members and the secretariat
- the challenges the Congress faces,
- how Congress members address these challenges

and contains an outlook to the upcoming Congress session.

### 30 years of the European Charter of Local Self-Government

On 1 September 2018, the Congress celebrated the entry into force of the European Charter of Local Self-Government 30 years ago. Together with the Congress, many cities celebrated this Convention, for example the city council of Lisbon, which organised a dedicated event at this occasion. The European Charter of local self-government is one of the key conventions of the Council of Europe which was ratified by all 47 member states. The Charter was instrumental in the time of transition after the fall of the Iron Curtain and it established and/or re-established the European model of society in the young democracies. Over the years, since 1988, the Charter also fostered common standards across Europe and established this model of European society which is characterised by local self-government as part of democratic government, as part of checks and balances, as part of citizen participation and ownership of the *res publica*. The Charter is as relevant today and so is its monitoring.

### The role of the Congress

1993 was the year when the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities as we know it today was established by the Council of Europe Summit of Heads of States and Governments in Vienna. In 2005 the Summit of Warsaw reinforced the role of the Congress. I would like to quote a sentence I heard last week: "people can make a change but institutions safeguard the achievements". The same holds true for local democracy: former French Prime Minister Jacques Chaban-Delmas gave the idea of a conference that later became the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities - which is the third political body in the Council of Europe. The Congress is entrusted with monitoring local and regional democracy and monitoring the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government by member states and to observe local and regional elections.

Since 1994, for almost 25 years, the Congress has taken this task very seriously.

In addition to being the monitoring body for the European Charter of local self-government, the Congress is a forum of politicians, an assembly of mayors and councillors to discuss issues of relevance for their citizens.

The Congress is also an operational body and implements the local and regional dimension of Council of Europe action plans. Congress members and staff work in Armenia, Ukraine, Georgia and more and more in the southern Mediterranean, in particular in Morocco and Tunisia. I would like to thank the donors and refer to the written report for more details about the activities the Congress has implemented. These co-operation activities complement the statutory work of the Congress and its committees. Concrete visible examples are, for instance, brochures on mayors who are leaders for change as well as brochures on citizen participation which we developed in close co-operation with mayors in the countries of the Eastern partnership of the European Union.

Furthermore the Congress is part of the distribution chain for the local and regional dimension of the Council of Europe: that is democracy, human rights, rule of law. The Congress can reach out beyond national capitals and make a change to the life of citizens. The code of conduct of local and regional politicians in the framework of our thematic focus on preventing corruption serves as a good example.

Not least, the Congress is an advisory body for the Committee of Ministers, when new policies or legal instruments are drafted which have an impact at the local level. In this respect the Congress also

contributes to the external relations and the neighbourhood policy of the Council of Europe, for example by organising high level political meetings and conferences – most recently on the European Charter of local self-government with all stakeholders in Belarus.

In order to implement its tasks and mandate, the political work is performed by the three committees of the Congress. Their remit is guided by the priorities identified by the Committee of Ministers in the areas of democracy, human rights and the rule of law with a local and regional dimension. All reports proposed by committees have to pass a checklist to prove compliance with the priorities of the Council of Europe and the scope and priorities of the Congress and they must define the political objective to be achieved, the proposed action and the requirements needed for the implementation.

If you look at the work programmes of the committees, which are reproduced in the appendix, you will see the coherence

- with the priorities of the Committee of ministers,
- with the priorities of the respective chairmanships, for example
  - o Czech Republic on migration and integration,
  - o Estonia on children's rights and migration,
  - o Denmark on gender equality or
  - o Croatia on fighting corruption.

The Congress also takes into account the priorities of the Secretary General from his annual reports on democracy, human rights and the rule of law, such as strengthening democratic institutions, work on Roma inclusion or addressing populism at local level through civil citizen participation and democracy education.

Much of the work of the Congress only surfaces at one of the two sessions per year and only so when the statutory work becomes visible for the Committee of Ministers. Often, as a matter of fact, replies of the Committee of Ministers to recommendations of the Congress are dealt with in the box and are thus under the radar of the attention of the meetings and discussions of this Committee. Much of the thematic work of the Congress happens in the committees.

### **The 35<sup>th</sup> Congress Session**

The themes of the 35th Congress session to be held from 6 to 8 November 2018 are

- integrity and ethical behaviour of local and regional elected representatives and,
- the celebration of the thirty years of entry into force of the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

The agenda foresees elections for the President of the Congress, the President and Vice President of the Chambers and of the Committees. We are happy to have an exchange of views with the chair of the Committee of Ministers, Marija Pejčinović Burić, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia and with the ministers responsible for local government from Armenia, Georgia and Lithuania.

Congress members will discuss reports about voting rights of IDPs, about ethical behaviour such as a code of conduct of local and regional politicians, conflicts of interest and transparency and open government.

Monitoring reports on the situation of local democracy in Georgia Lithuania and Slovenia are on the agenda as well as election observation reports about the Netherlands, Moldova and Tunisia. The Chamber of regions will discuss the challenges for border regions and migration and territorial solidarity - regional self or selfish government. The Chamber of local authorities will continue its debate and exchange on the topic of mayors under pressure.

### **Roma integration – request for support**

Concerning the challenges the Congress is currently facing, let me just mention the Roma activities.

Congress' work on the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion - set up in 2014 - is developing well. The Alliance counts 130 member cities from 29 countries and we are now setting up national networks for developing activities in member States: Ukraine and Greece networks are operational; an Albanian network is in the pipeline.

The Declaration against anti-gypsyism adopted in 2017 by the Congress has been signed by 114 mayors from 32 countries.



The Austrian government has supported the European Alliance of cities and regions for Roma inclusion since 2012. 9 Young persons were seconded to the Congress secretariat to support – actually to run - the work of the alliance under the authority of the Congress. All this work of the alliance has only been possible through the work of seconded staff from Austria. We understand that it will not be possible to second a person in 2019. The Alliance, however, relies on human resources input. Therefore the Congress asks member states to provide with voluntary contributions to fund a contract and possibly activities at least in the first half of 2019. This would enable the Congress to maintain the promising work of the Alliance until, as we hope, new secondment can be received.

### **Making the Congress fit for purpose**

The Congress leadership and secretariat work in a spirit of critical assessment and search for improvement and streamlining procedures and activities.

In 2010 the first chapter of a substantial Congress reform was written. The reform brought a focus on the perimeter of the responsibilities of the Congress that is the local and regional dimension of the Council of Europe. Recommendations to the Committee of Ministers are only presented on matters where the Council of Europe has legal instruments or policies in its toolbox.

In the course of this reform, the Congress made its monitoring and elections' observation more professional, regular, systematic, just and methodologically consistent.

The Congress added a post-monitoring dialogue to the traditional monitoring work, which led to roadmaps signed with national governments and the inclusion of Congress recommendations in the preparation of Council of Europe action plans. The logical next step was that the Congress implements concrete activities in the countries concerned as part of the Council of Europe action plans.

Through its systematic monitoring, the Congress can identify horizontally the compliance of member states on an article by article basis. It identifies drains threatening local democracy and it serves as an early warning system for the Committee of Ministers.

### **A substantial reform giving the Congress more autonomy**

The second chapter of the Congress reform is being written now. The Congress continues to maintain its spirit of improvement, innovation and reform aiming at delivering the results as it was tasked by the Heads of States and Governments at the Council of Europe Summits in 1993 and 2005. The Congress also wants to further strengthen the institutional role of this second political assembly of the Council of Europe.

Therefore the next step of a reform is being prepared, which has both qualitative and quantitative aspects. It will serve the needs of member states and national delegations and will take into account the experiences of 25 years of work of the Congress as a political assembly.

On 5 October 2018, the Congress Bureau discussed and approved a recommendation on the next chapter of the Congress reform. This recommendation is available on the Congress website and will be presented for discussion and adoption to the session in November. The recommendation contains requests to the Committee of Ministers for substantial changes. Some of them will have immediate effect, once the Committee of Ministers has given the green light, and some will be implemented by the Congress through the amendment of its rules and procedures.

In essence, the reform shall open the possibility for the Congress to propose to the Committee of Ministers the changes it deems necessary in order to be functioning under the given conditions.

Changes comprise a consolidation of provisions which currently are contained in the Statutory Resolution and the Charter. The Congress proposes to eliminate the duplication which exists and to consolidate the text.

The reform shall enhance the institutional autonomy of the Congress, which ends the fact that the Congress is a pure copy of the Parliamentary Assembly. This parallelism concerns the language regime, the composition of the Chambers, the system of representation based on population and should give the member states more flexibility in nominating members to the Chamber of local authorities and the Chamber of regions. The new Congress shall have full members in both Chambers, none with limited voting rights. In order to have more continuity and better ownership - given that members only participate in two sessions per year - the duration of the Congress mandate should be extended from 4 to 5 years.

The Congress also proposes to take into account the role of major contributors and proposes a seat for each major contributor on the Congress Bureau based on specific election procedures which shall guarantee a competitive election.

### **“Working conditions”**

The statutory and thematic work of the Congress is being performed under increasingly difficult conditions. Since 2010 the staff in the secretariat was reduced by 22%. In the same period the budget of the Congress was reduced from 2.97% to 2.53% of the Council of Europe budget. This is a reduction by 18%. This means in concrete terms, that the Congress receives not only fewer resources, but also a smaller share of a smaller cake.

In addition, the Congress had to adapt quickly, between December 2017 and January 2018, to the consequences of the change of status of Turkey. This meant for the Congress a reduction of the budget of 10.7%. It is evident that these cuts had an impact on the activities of the Congress. Our activities in the areas of monitoring local democracy, organising outreach activities as well as interaction with intergovernmental structures and steering committees within the Council of Europe were seriously affected (as an example, the Summit of Mayors against radicalisation planned in 2018 was postponed to 2019).

The Bureau already responded to the urgent need for cuts and took, in June 2018, the decision that only interpretation and translation into the official languages of the Council of Europe would be covered by the Council of Europe budget. This means that working languages have to be funded by extra budgetary means as of 2019.

### **The next steps**

Once the Committee of Ministers has amended the Congress Charter as proposed, the Congress can start reflecting on the methodology of its composition based on a fair distribution of seats among member States. This reflection can be undertaken during its Session in April 2019 and be completed in October 2019. October 2020 will be the start of a new mandate of the Congress.

This scenario will of course lead to lively discussions in the Congress sessions in November 2018 and in April and October 2019. The developments of the last months did not leave the Congress leadership much of a choice. It was necessary to reconsider the tasks of the Congress and to develop responses to the challenges. In case the financial situation becomes more and more difficult, the Congress would be ready to react with its own proposals to the crisis. The elements of the reform and the possible next steps which, if unavoidable, could transform the Congress of 1994 to a kind of Senate composed of representatives of different types of cities, municipalities and regions. This proposal would enable the Congress to deliver its tasks as a monitoring body and thematic contributor to the Council of Europe as a whole.

Strasbourg, October 2018



## I. POLITICAL AGENDA



*The President of the Congress met the President of the Republic of Belarus Alexander LUKASHENKO on 11 September 2018 in Minsk.*

### **Bilateral meeting of Congress President and United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)**

**Strasbourg, 25 April 2018**

During her bilateral meeting with Cecilia JIMENEZ-DAMARY, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, Congress President Gudrun MOSLER-TÖRNSTRÖM underlined the commitment of the Congress in addressing human rights issues of IDPs. She informed the Special Rapporteur that this question would be taken over into the first edition of the new Handbook on Human Rights at local and regional level to be presented at the Congress Session of November 2018.

The President also referred to a Congress report currently under preparation which is dedicated to voting rights, at the local level, of migrants and IDPs as an element of their successful long-term integration in Europe's municipalities. This report will also be adopted during the Plenary Session in November 2018. The President invited the Special Rapporteur to participate in the debate.

### **Council of the Republic of Belarus and Congress**

**Minsk, 25 April 2018**

During a meeting at the Palace of the Council of the Republic in Minsk, the Director of the Congress, Jean Philippe BOZOULS held an exchange of views with the President of the Council of the Republic, Mikhail MIASNIKOVICH. They discussed plans for a round table on the European Charter of Local Self-Government to be jointly organised by the Congress and the Council of the Republic of Belarus in the autumn of 2018 in Minsk. This round table would examine, in particular, the role and development of national associations of local authorities in Belarus in the light of the experiences of the 47-state Organisation.

## **Statement of the President on the election of the new Prime Minister of Armenia**

**Strasbourg, 11 May 2018**

On behalf of the Congress, the President expressed her congratulations to Nikol PASHINYAN on his election as Prime Minister of Armenia. She said she hoped that the process of reforms of the new government will be focused on ensuring sustainable democratic development in Armenia, with local authorities strengthened to effectively exercise their powers and responsibilities. She underlined that the Congress stands ready to provide further support to the Government of Armenia in strengthening local democracy in the framework of Armenia's co-operation with the Council of Europe."

## **128th Session of the Committee of Ministers**

**Helsingør (Denmark), 18 May 2018**

Addressing the Foreign Ministers of the 47 member states of the Council of Europe, the Congress President referred to the close dialogue that the Congress has with the governments through its various activities, in particular during its monitoring missions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, the observation of local and regional elections or the implementation of the Council of Europe Action Plans. She said the statutory role granted to the Congress in the Council of Europe was a strong signal that the member States believe that good democratic governance is not possible without local and regional authorities. She highlighted the contribution of the Congress in implementing the decisions of the Committee of Ministers with a local and regional dimension.

She also referred to the current financial situation of the Council of Europe and the Congress' determination to seize this opportunity to launch an in-depth reform of its functioning and its structures in order to preserve its institutional role and meet the expectations of citizens and their governments.

## **Congress concern after the invalidation of the elections in Chisinau**

**Strasbourg, 22 June 2018**

In reaction to the decision by the Chisinau Appeals Court, to uphold the non-validation of the mayoral elections recently held in the capital city of the Republic of Moldova, the President of the Congress expressed serious concern about the latest post-electoral developments in Chisinau. She underlined that transparency, impartiality and independency are integral parts of the European democratic heritage, which include all phases of the electoral process including post-electoral decisions. She said respect for the results of genuine elections is of primordial importance for democratic stability of a country and of Europe as a whole.

She recalled that the Congress observed the early local elections held on 20 May 2018 in Chisinau, Balti and five other localities and found them in line with democratic standards, overall. The non-validation of the result of the mayoral run-off held on 3 June in Chisinau came as a surprise and raised questions with regard to transparency and proportionality. This situation and the draft Information Report on the early local elections held on 20 May 2018 in seven localities including Chisinau and Balti will be discussed at the Session of November 2018.

## **Bilateral meeting with the Prime Minister of Croatia**

**Strasbourg, 26 June 2018**

During her meeting with Andrej PLENKOVIĆ, Prime Minister of Croatia, the Congress President underlined the Congress' commitment to contribute to the implementation of the priorities of the Croatian chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. The President welcomed the fact that one of these priorities was decentralisation in the context of strengthening of local government and self-government.

She informed the Prime Minister that the Congress Session in November will mainly focus on fighting corruption. She also described current Congress activities in the Balkans and highlighted in particular the important role of Croatia -being both a Council of Europe and a European Union Member State - as bridge builder in the region. She informed about a recent mission to Mostar where a Congress delegation took part in the work of the Reflection Group with a view to contributing to a sustainable solution for the organisation of local elections in this city.

## **Ratification of the Additional Protocol to the Charter by Serbia,**

**Strasbourg, 29 June 2018**

The President welcomed Serbia's ratification of the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority, which enters into force in Serbia on 1 October 2018.

## **Official visit of the President of the Congress to Montenegro**

**Podgorica, 24-25 July 2018**

The President accompanied by the Secretary General of the Congress paid an official visit and met the Minister for Public Administration, the State Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Director General for Multilateral Affairs, the Speaker of the Parliament of Montenegro and the Head of the Montenegrin delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly. The President confirmed that the Congress remained committed to support the ambitious reform agenda of Montenegro, notably in the field of local democracy. She stressed that the progress made since the last Monitoring report of the Congress in 2015 was significant.

The Minister of Public Administration Suzana PRIBILOVIĆ underlined that the Congress Monitoring report from 2015 provided many elements for amending the existing and for drafting new legislation, underlining that the government program referred directly to the European Charter of Local Self-Government. In dialogue and consultation with the Union of Municipalities several draft laws were modified and improved. This consultation will also be practiced in the preparation of the law on local finances, which is due shortly.

At the meeting with the Speaker of the Parliament of Montenegro, Ivan BRAJOVIĆ, and the President of the Montenegrin delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly, the President of the Congress welcomed the ambitious reform program set by Montenegro and the progress made. It welcomed the fact that the Montenegrin Parliament has confirmed that it will discuss the ratification of additional articles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government after the summer break. National parliaments play a crucial role in decentralisation processes. A report of the Parliamentary Assembly on the subject is to be presented at the autumn part of PACE, in October, with the participation of the President of the Congress.

## **Thirty years of the entry into force of the European Charter of Local Self-Government**

**Strasbourg, 31 August 2018**

The President of the Congress published a statement upon the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the entry into force of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. She underlined that the entry into force of this treaty thirty years ago has profoundly transformed the democratic landscape in Europe and anchored local democracy throughout the continent. The Charter, opened for signature on 15 October 1985 by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, entered into force on 1 September 1988. It has now been ratified by all 47 Council of Europe member States. The Charter and the monitoring mechanism carried out by the Congress constitute a unique model in Europe. It remains the main binding international treaty guaranteeing the rights of communities and their elected representatives. The Congress President said that the principles of the Charter needed to be respected so that democracy becomes a reality as close as possible to the people.

## **High level meetings and round table on local self-government in Belarus**

**Minsk, 11 - 12 September 2018**

At the invitation of the Belarusian authorities, the Congress co-organised a round table and held several high-level meetings with the Belarusian authorities in Minsk. On 11 September 2018, the President of the Congress met the President of the Republic of Belarus Alexander LUKASHENKO. During their exchange, they highlighted the essential nature of the local level and agreed on the need to pursue fruitful cooperation between the Congress and the Republic of Belarus in the field of local self-government. President LUKASHENKO confirmed Belarus' interest in sharing the experience of the Congress.

The Congress President also met with the President of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly Mikhail MIASNIKOVICH who stated that the Belarusian authorities were interested in intensifying their co-operation with the Council of Europe, in particular in the field of local self-government. The President then participated in a seminar organised with students and professors

from the Minsk Academy of Public Administration with the view of having an exchange on the role and place of local communities in a new system of multi-level governance in Europe

On the same day, a seminar brought together Congress members and experts to discuss the situation of local self-government in Belarus, in the light of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. It was opened by the Vice-President of the Congress, Michalis ANGELOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CCE) and the Dean of the Academy of Public Administration.

On 12 September, a Round Table was devoted to these issues with a view to examining how the principles of the Charter are taken into account in Belarus' local government system, as well as their practical implementation and future prospects. The role of national associations of local authorities was presented by Leendert VERBEEK (Netherlands, SOC), Chairman of the Congress Monitoring Committee, and the cross-border co-operation by Robert Csongor GRUMAN (Romania, EPP/CCE), Vice-President of the Congress. Participants also discussed several local self-government issues such as the training of local government staff and twinning as a development tool.

### **30 years of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Portugal**

**Lisbon, 17- 18 September 2018**

The Secretary General of the Congress addressed the Lisbon City Council on the occasion of a commemorative ceremony marking the 30th anniversary of the entry into force of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. He also held discussions with the Minister of Home Affairs Eduardo CABRITA, the Mayor of Lisbon Fernando MEDINA, as well as representatives of the Portuguese association ANAFRE and members of the Portuguese delegation to the Congress. He participated in an exchange of views during the meeting of the Social Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly, as part of a debate on "the role of national parliaments in successful decentralisation processes" to be held during the October session of PACE.

The Secretary General underlined that, through the monitoring of the Charter, the Congress' recommendations serve as an early warning system for the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe with regard to developments in certain member states and possible risks to democracy. Among the recurring issues that emerged during the monitoring visits, he highlighted a broader trend towards recentralisation in Member States. However, the Secretary General insisted on the significant progress noted by the Congress in the application of the Charter in almost all its monitoring reports. The five-year rhythm of monitoring visits allows Member State governments and parliaments to initiate, implement and evaluate reform programmes and decentralisation strategies.

### **General Assembly of the Icelandic Association of Local Authorities**

**Akureyri (Finland), 26 September 2018,**

The President of the Congress spoke at the opening of the General Assembly (see VI. EXTERNAL COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIPS).

On this occasion she had bilateral meetings with the Minister of Transport Sigurður Ingi JOHANSSON and the Mayor of Reykjavík Dagur EGGERTSSON. They exchanged among others on the consequences of the 2008 financial crisis on the finances of local authorities and the status of Reykjavík as capital city.

### **70 years after the Hague Congress**

**The Hague (Netherlands), 28 September 2018**

Addressing a Conference to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Congress of Europe, the Secretary General of the Congress underlined that the Hague Congress of May 1948 had direct and indirect impact on the major changes that happened over the past seven decades in Europe and stands at the origins of the Council of Europe. Held on 7-10 May 1948, the Hague Congress called on the creation of a political Europe, united, progressive and social. Although much of the vision of the founding fathers has been achieved in the past 70 years, in particular through the work of the Council of Europe to ensure that all member States follow the principles of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, Andreas KIEFER warned of the concrete risk of losing these achievements. The Secretary General invited the participants to reaffirm yet again the values and will to pursue the story of building a fair, inclusive and peaceful Europe, started 70 years ago.

## II. ACTIVITIES OF THE CONGRESS BODIES



*Meeting of the Congress Bureau on 18 June 2018 in Strasbourg.*

### A. THE BUREAU

#### **Strasbourg, 18 June 2018**

The Congress Bureau considered, in particular, the agenda for the 35th session of the Congress, to be held from 6 to 8 November 2018 on the theme “The integrity and ethical behaviour of local and regional elected representatives”. In this context, the Bureau discussed revision of the Congress’s Rules and Procedures in order to incorporate a code of conduct for members. This revision is part of the work to promote ethical behaviour and prevent corruption at local and regional level. Several reports on these issues will be discussed at the 35th session, including the draft “European Code of Conduct for all Persons Involved in Local and Regional Governance”.

The Bureau also examined and accepted a request by the authorities of the Kingdom of Morocco to the Congress to be granted Partner for local democracy status. This status, established in 2014, enables elected representatives of local authorities of countries in the Council of Europe’s neighbourhood to participate, within the Congress, in the work to strengthen local and regional democracy.

Other items on the Bureau’s agenda included the situation of local and regional democracy in the Republic of Moldova, Turkey and Armenia, and the conclusions regarding observation of the local elections in Tunisia (6 May 2018) and the early local elections in the Republic of Moldova (20 May 2018). The Bureau members were also informed about the work of the “Reflection Group on Mostar” (see III. MONITORING OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEMOCRACY)

The Council of Europe’s current financial context was also discussed at the meeting, as well as the project for reforming the functioning and the structures of the Congress.

#### **Strasbourg, 5 October 2018**

The Bureau examined several items relating to the situation of local and regional democracy, including the progress of the work of the Reflection Group on Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the results of the seminar on the European Charter of Local Self-Government held in Minsk, on 11 and 12 September 2018. The Bureau members also discussed the programme of local and regional election observation missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina (7 October 2018) and Poland (21 October 2018).



In addition, the Bureau approved the agenda of the 35th Session (6-8 November 2018), as well as the draft reform of the functioning of the Congress which will be presented to all members at this session. The reform was launched by the Bureau early 2018, when the financial situation of the Council of Europe, and the one of the Congress, became particularly difficult. It intends to safeguard the Congress' future and ensure its sustainability by giving the Congress an enhanced capacity to react swiftly and autonomously to future challenges. The changes consolidate the existing statutory provisions in one text and include qualitative improvements, such as the enhancement of the Congress' institutional independence by developing Congress-specific rules of functioning and greater flexibility in the distribution of delegates between Chambers

The Bureau also discussed the draft resolution on the integration of the principles of the Code of Conduct for Local and Regional Representatives into the Congress' rules and procedures, as well as the draft resolution on the future of the European Local Democracy Week.

## **B. THE COMMITTEES**

### **Monitoring Committee**

The Committee met on 28 June 2018 in the municipality of Büyükçekmece in Turkey.

Three reports on the situation of local and regional democracy in Slovenia, Lithuania and Georgia were on the agenda for adoption and discussions were held on the on-going monitoring in Poland and the Republic of Moldova. The members of the Committee also examined information reports on local elections in 7 localities including Chisinau and Balti in the Republic of Moldova (20 May 2018), on local elections in the Netherlands (21 March 2018) and on municipal elections in Tunisia (6 May 2018), as well as a report on "Voting rights at local level as an element of successful long-term integration of migrants and IDPs in Europe's municipalities and regions".

In addition, several complaints concerning the compliance with the European Charter of Local Self-Government by member states, in particular in France and Serbia, have been addressed to the Congress and were discussed at this meeting.

In the margins of the meeting, the mayor of the municipality of Bakırköy, Bülent KERİMOĞLU, signed the *Pact of Cities and Regions against Sexual Violence against Children*, during an official ceremony in the presence of Anders KNAPE (Sweden, EPP/CCE), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities of Congress. The Pact is a tool, launched at the initiative of Congress that proposes practical actions and policies to put in place child-friendly services. The primary objective is to protect children and prevent sexual violence to which they may be exposed. The signatory cities undertake to develop initiatives in this direction.

The Committee will next meet in Strasbourg on 6 November 2018.

### **Governance Committee**

The Committee met on 30 May 2018 in Bălványos, Covasna County (Romania).

On the agenda were a number of reports for adoption at the November 2018 session. Several of these are part of the Roadmap for Preventing Corruption and Promoting Public Ethics at Local and Regional Level, adopted by the Congress in 2016, namely the draft European Code of Conduct for all persons involved in local and regional governance, a report on transparency and open government, and another on conflicts of interest at local and regional levels.

Members of the Committee also discussed and approved guidelines on the consultation of local authorities by higher levels of government and a report on the financial difficulties facing local and regional authorities in Europe, both of which will also be debated during the November 2018 session.

The President of the Congress and Attila KORODI, Member of the Romanian Parliament and member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, opened the meeting.

This meeting was followed on 31 May by a Conference on the use of languages by local and regional authorities (see IV. THEMATIC ACTIVITIES)

The Committee will next meet in Strasbourg on 6 November 2018.

## **Current Affairs Committee**

The Committee met in Strasbourg on 19 June 2018.

Items on the agenda included a report on "Border regions facing migration phenomena", prepared by Eirini DOUROU (Greece, SOC), which will be submitted for adoption by the Chamber of Regions at the 35<sup>th</sup> session of the Congress (6-8 November 2018). The Committee also examined terms of reference for a report on the role of local and regional authorities in safeguarding young people's social rights, presented by Piero FASSINO (Italy, SOC).

John WARMISHAM (United Kingdom, SOC), Thematic Rapporteur on Roma-related activities, and Michael GUET of the Council of Europe's Division for Roma and Travellers took stock of the present situation in Europe. In particular, they provided information on the results of Congress initiatives, including the Declaration of Mayors and Elected Local and Regional Representatives of Council of Europe Member States against anti-Gypsyism. The Rapporteur also gave information about a meeting held in Athens in April 2018 for the development of a Greek Roma Network of mayors (see THEMATIC ACTIVITIES

The participants took note of the Rapporteur's call to protest against discriminatory declarations made against Roma in some member States by representatives of public authorities and to condemn the violent attacks against Roma that cost lives (see IV. THEMATIC ACTIVITIES).

Lastly, the situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Europe was debated on the basis of a discussion paper submitted by Svitlana BOGATYRCHYK-KRYVKO (Ukraine, CRE).

The Committee will next meet in Strasbourg on 6 November 2018.



### III. MONITORING OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEMOCRACY

#### A. MONITORING ACTIVITIES



*A Congress delegation carried out a monitoring mission from 13 to 15 June 2018 to the Republic of Moldova.*

*The core mission of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is the effective monitoring of the situation of local and regional democracy in member States by assessing the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, adopted in 1985 and ratified by the 47 member States of the Council of Europe.*

#### **Monitoring visits**

*Since April 2018, the Congress undertook the following three monitoring visits*

##### **Georgia 17-18 April**

The Congress delegation examined the situation of local and regional democracy in the light of the provisions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, ratified by the country in 2004. Rapporteurs Michail ANGELOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CCE) and Stewart DICKSON (United-Kingdom, ILDG) focused on the developments in the field of local and regional democracy occurred since the adoption of the last Congress recommendation, on 19 March 2013. Meetings were scheduled, in particular, with the Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure, the Minister of Finance, the Speaker of the Parliament, the Deputy Auditor General, and the First Deputy Public Defender. The delegation also held discussions with the National Delegation of Georgia to the Congress and members of the executive board of the National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (NALAG). The Rapporteurs had an exchange of views with the Mayor of Tbilisi, members of Tbilisi City Hall and the Chairman of the City Council of the Mtskheta Municipality.

The draft report and recommendation were examined and approved at the Monitoring Committee meeting in Büyükçekmece, Turkey on 28 June 2018 and will be submitted for adoption by the Congress Session in November 2018.

##### **Poland, 5 – 7 June 2018**

The Congress delegation examined the situation of local and regional democracy in the light of the provisions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, ratified by the country in 1993. Rapporteurs David BARO RIBA (Andorra, NI-NR) and Pascal MANGIN (France, EPP/CCE) focused on the developments in the field of local and regional democracy occurred since the adoption of the last Congress recommendation, on 26 March 2015. Meetings were scheduled, in particular, with the

Secretary of State of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration, the Undersecretary of State of the Ministry of Finance, the Undersecretary of State of the Ministry of Investment and Economic Development, the Deputy President of the Senate, the Vice-Speaker of the Sejm, the President of the Supreme Audit Office (NIK) and the Commissioner for Human Rights. The delegation held discussions with the delegation of Poland to the Congress and members of associations of local and regional authorities of Poland. The Rapporteurs also exchanged views with the Deputy Mayor of Warsaw, and the representatives of local and regional authorities of the region of Łódź, the city of Łódź, Łódź East County and municipality of Nowosolna.

The draft report and recommendation will be examined and submitted for approval at the Monitoring Committee at its next meeting scheduled for 6 November 2018 before its submission for adoption by the Congress Session in April 2019.

### **Republic of Moldova, 13 – 15 June**

The Congress delegation examined the situation of local and regional democracy in the light of the provisions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, ratified by the country in 1997. Rapporteurs Gunn Marit HELGESEN (Norway, EPP/CCE) and Marc COOLS (Belgium, ILDG) focused on the developments in the field of local and regional democracy occurred since the adoption of the last Congress recommendations: Rec 322(2012), on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2012, and Rec 411(2018), on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2018.

Meetings were scheduled with the Deputy Secretary General of the Government, the Minister of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment, the Minister of Finance, the Speaker of the Parliament, the President of the Court of Accounts, a Constitutional Judge and the Head of the Investigation and Monitoring Division in the Office of the People's Advocate. The delegation held discussions with the delegation of the Republic of Moldova to the Congress and the representatives of the Congress of Local Authorities of Moldova (CALM), with the newly elected Mayor of Chişinău, the Governor (Bashkan) of the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia, the President of the Union of the Rayon Councils (UCRM), the President of the Association of City Mayors and Mayor of Căţăreni and the Mayor of Drăslăeni.

The draft report and recommendation will be examined and submitted for approval at the Monitoring Committee at its next meeting scheduled for 6 November 2018 before its submission for adoption by the Congress Session in April 2019.

### **Group of Independent Experts on the European Charter of Local Self-Government (GIE)**

*The Group brings together experts with competence in the legal, political or financial fields, and specialised in local and regional democracy issues. The Group assists the three statutory committees of the Congress in the exercise of their statutory responsibilities, in particular to prepare reports on the situation of local and regional democracy in the States monitored in the application of the Charter, and general reports on the working themes of the three committees. In this sense, the main mission of the Group is to provide legal assistance to the Congress in its political mission.*

During its annual meeting in Strasbourg on 20 September 2018, the Group reviewed the Congress' experience in monitoring and discussed new tools that could be developed to contribute to a better integration of the Charter's principles into the domestic law of the 47 Council of Europe member states.

The members of the GIE discussed in particular recent developments in the Congress' monitoring activity, local and regional election observation missions, and the results of fact-finding missions. They also discussed constitutional issues in the context of the cooperation with the Venice Commission. In addition, the GIE has initiated a reflection on the application of the Charter in the context of the new problems faced by local authorities today.

Following the renewal of the composition of the GIE, at this annual meeting, Angel MORENO, Professor of Administrative Law at Carlos III University in Madrid, was re-elected to chair the Expert Group for a five-year term.

## B. OBSERVATION OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL ELECTIONS



*The Congress carried out a mission to observe the municipal elections in Tunisia from 4 to 6 May 2018.*

*Over the last 15 years, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities has observed more than 100 local and regional elections in Council of Europe member States and occasionally also beyond. Such missions are conducted further to the invitation of the national authorities or competent electoral bodies and they complement the political monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. Assistance in following-up to Congress' recommendations prepared further to observation missions can be provided through a post-electoral dialogue.*

### Observation missions

#### Tunisia, 4- 6 May 2018

For the first time since the Arab Spring in 2011, municipal elections were held in Tunisia to elect the members of the municipal councils in the 350 municipalities of the country. A delegation headed by Xavier CADORET (France, SOC), Congress Rapporteur and substitute thematic spokesperson on the South-Mediterranean Partnership, carried out an electoral assessment visit from 4 to 6 May 2018. The delegation also included Stewart DICKSON (United Kingdom, ILDG), Congress thematic spokesperson on observation of local and regional elections, and Luc MARTENS (Belgium, EPP/CCE), substitute Congress representative to the Venice Commission's Council for Democratic Elections. They were accompanied by Tania GROPPi, member of the Congress Group of Independent Experts on the European Charter of Local Self-Government and electoral expert.

The delegation met the Minister for Local Affairs and the Environment, and the President of the Independent High Authority for Elections (ISIE). A round table was also held with representatives of organisations of citizen electoral observers "ATIDE" and "Lam Echaml" and with the Director of the National Federation of Tunisian Towns and Cities. In addition, there were meetings with representatives of the European Union Election Observation Mission as well as with the Principal Technical Adviser for UNDP Tunisia and the Country Director for the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). The delegation also held an exchange of views with representatives of the political parties and the candidates standing in the local elections in Tunis.

On Election Day, 6 May, three Congress teams were deployed in some 50 polling stations randomly chosen in selected regions of the country including Tunis and its environs, Bizerte, Beja, Kairouan and Sousse to observe voting and counting. In the polling stations visited, the Congress delegation found that the elections were well-organised overall, the staff was in general aware of the procedures and counting was carried out in an efficient and transparent manner. It underlined that apart from individual organisational flaws and accusations regarding misuse of resources and other types of

fraud which need to be addressed by the authorities, the delegation has had the impression that these elections have been accomplished despite difficult framework conditions, both politically and socio-economically speaking but it regretted the low turnout.

The delegation stated that there is however still a long way to go to achieving the required standards in terms of a fully-fledged electoral campaign and the role of the media in a genuine democratic environment, to mention only two examples.

Further to this assessment mission, a written information report including further details and recommendations will be submitted to the 35<sup>th</sup> Session in November 2018

### **Republic of Moldova, 17-22 May 2018**

The Congress delegation carried out an Electoral Assessment Mission to the Republic of Moldova, in view of the 20 May 2018 new local elections scheduled in seven Municipalities, including the capital City of Chisinau and in Balti. Headed by Gunn Marit HELGESEN (Norway, EPP/CCE), President of the Congress Chamber of Regions and Country Rapporteur for the Republic of Moldova, the delegation included eight participants. Prior to Election Day, high-level meetings were scheduled in Chisinau, notably with the President of the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Moldova and with representatives of the international community. The delegation also exchanged views in Chisinau and Balti with representatives of candidates and political parties running in the local elections. On Election Day, three Congress' teams were deployed to different areas, including Chisinau, Balti and four other Municipalities.

The Head of delegation stated that from a technical point of view, these elections were well-prepared and administered by an overall experienced electoral staff at the level of the polling stations, the counting was efficient and, with the exception of tensions observed by the Congress in some localities outside Chisinau and isolated inconsistencies mainly regards the sealing of the ballot boxes, the Election Day could be described as orderly, calm and uneventful.

She stressed, however, that an Election Day needs to be assessed also in the broader context of the campaign environment, underlining that during the meetings prior to the E-Day, the Congress delegation was informed about cases of misuse of administrative resources, complaints concerning campaign financing violations and, overall, the lack of a level playing field and equal access to the media for all the competitors.

She said that the Congress had received already over many months prior to these elections, reports about pressure brought to bear on local elected representatives in the Republic of Moldova through court proceedings and threats, particularly to members of the opposition, determining them to change sides. She concluded that probably the most worrying issue was the lack of trust in the state institutions, notably the judiciary, in the parties and, in related to that, the growing political fatigue of the population.

Further to the assessment of the 20 May early local elections, a Congress information report including targeted recommendations will be adopted during the 35th Session in November 2018.

### **Sarajevo and Mostar (Bosnia and Herzegovina) 25 - 26 June 2018**

A delegation of the "Reflection Group on Mostar" composed of Anders KNAPE (Sweden, EPP/CCE), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities of the Congress, Stewart DICKSON (United Kingdom, ILDG), Thematic Spokesperson on observation of local and regional elections, Barbara TOCE, Congress Vice-President (Italy, SOC), as well as Franz SCHAUSBERGER, Member of the EU-Committee of the Regions and Chair of the CoR's Working Group on Western Balkans carried out a visit to Sarajevo and Mostar.. The delegation held exchanges of views with the Speaker of the House of Peoples of the FBiH, the President of the Central Election Commission of BiH, the First Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly, and the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina to discuss the situation of the country several months prior to the general elections to be held on 7 October and, more particularly, on the failure of holding local elections in the city of Mostar.

Briefings were also held with representatives of the diplomatic community in Sarajevo and with the Head of the Council of Europe Office. On 26 June, a round table discussion was organised in Mostar with representatives of major political parties represented in the City Council of Mostar and representatives of the coalition of NGOs which organised the "Elect Mostar" initiative (unofficial vote) on 2 October 2016.

Following the two-day visit the delegation from the "Reflection Group on Mostar" called for a compromise between all political stakeholders to hold local elections in Mostar as early as possible, but at the latest in 2020. Since 10 years now no local elections have been organised in this city, due to a political impasse. The Congress delegation encouraged the participants to continue working towards a solution at the local level which should find the support also of national political actors. NGO representatives welcomed the involvement of international institutions whose support was indispensable to achieve further progress. They also stressed the role of young people and the need to strengthen education for democracy and active citizenship.

The Congress is closely following the situation of local and regional democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It carried out a mission to observe the regional elections held on 7 October 2018 and will carry out a monitoring mission to assess the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government (November 2018).

### **Bosnia and Herzegovina, 19-20 September and 4-8 October 2018**

A Congress delegation, led by Stewart DICKSON (United Kingdom, ILDG), carried out a pre-electoral observation mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina to assess the campaign and preparations for the elections to the Cantonal Assemblies, to be held on 7 October. The delegation cooperated in the field with the observation missions of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the OSCE/ODIHR. The delegation met especially the Head of the OSCE/ODIHR Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the President of the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as representatives of the Sarajevo and Herzegovina-Neretva Cantonal Assemblies.

On 20 September, the Congress delegation visited Mostar and met representatives of citizens associations in the city of Mostar, grouped together to form the "Elect Mostar" initiative, and representatives of political parties. Exchanges took also place with the media and representatives of NGOs, as well as with the Bosnia and Herzegovina Delegation to the Congress.

Between 4 and 8 October, the Congress delegation carried out its election observation mission, to observe, specifically, the elections of the ten Cantonal Assemblies in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the vote in the Brčko District scheduled for 7 October 2018, as a part of the general elections organised on this day in the whole country. Prior to the Election Day, the Congress Delegation attended meetings with various interlocutors, including the Central Election Commission, representatives of political parties and candidates running in the elections, as well as representatives of the media and civil society. The Delegation participated in special briefings on the Cantonal elections with a member of the Central Election Commission, with the Congress Independent Expert on the European Charter of Local Self-Government, and also attended joint general preparatory briefings with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and with OSCE/ODIHR.

On the Election Day, nine Congress teams composed of 18 observers from 17 different countries who were deployed in some 150 polling stations in all 10 Cantons of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In his preliminary conclusions, the Head of the delegation, Stewart DICKSON, stated that the Election Day was generally orderly and well prepared and that the majority of the members of the Commissions were able to manage the process despite difficult conditions. However, he underlined inconsistencies on how to cast the four ballots in the ballot boxes, as well as the question of identifying the party affiliation of members of the Commissions. The Head of the delegation underlined that the general elections - involving important decisions for the entire country and being held on the same day - have clearly overshadowed the cantonal part of these elections; given the importance of competences of Cantons in the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and also the role of the Cantons in the complicated structure of institutions in Bosnia-Herzegovina. He said he believed that Cantonal Elections should be held together with the local elections - and not with general elections. "

### **Thematic Seminar on local democracy in Mostar**

Congress member Carla DEJONGHE (Belgium, ILDG) addressed the Working Group on the issue of local democracy in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) held during the meeting of the Western Balkans Working Group of the EU Committee of the Regions, in Brussels on 3 May. She recalled the particular situation of Mostar, where no local elections have been held for 10 years. She stressed that the city, whose population of more than 100 000 citizens is deprived of the right to choose their representatives at the local level, is not administered according to the fundamental principles of local democracy. Ms DEJONGHE reminded that the Congress created a Reflection Group on the specific

issue of local democracy in Mostar with the objective to act in favour of a legal and political solution for Mostar which would integrate all the local and European actors.



## IV. THEMATIC ACTIVITIES



*The Congress organised a Conference on the use of languages by local and regional authorities on 31 May 2018 in Romania.*

*The Congress supports local authorities in the performance of their duties in respect of their citizens and it supports them in their search for solutions to the challenges they face, in particular in terms of security, integration, dialogue and participation, respect for fundamental human and social rights, and the inclusion of vulnerable populations.*

*It initiates reflections and projects on these topics and contributes actively to the work being done in this connection within the Council of Europe and at European level.*

### A. MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

The Congress has been working for many years on the issue of migrants and refugees at local and regional level. It has adopted several recommendations and resolutions including the role and responsibilities of local and regional authorities in the reception and integration of migrants (2017) and regarding unaccompanied refugee children (2018).

The Congress participated in the **Conference on “Migration and Asylum: Towards a multi-level governance approach”**, organised by the Region of Attica and the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) in Brussels on 23 April 2018. During her opening speech the Regional Governor of Attica, Rena DOUROU (Greece, SOC), also speaking in her capacity as Congress Rapporteur stated that the refugee/migrant phenomenon represents for Regional Governors and Mayors, a twofold challenge: on the one hand, they are providing essential services while respecting the dignity of people who arrive in their cities and regions; on the other hand, they do so while addressing two shortcomings: lack of a clear institutional framework at European and national level and lack of funding.

**At the Lanzarote Committee Meeting** in Strasbourg on 21 June 2018, Congress Spokesperson on Children, Johan van den HOUT (Netherlands, SOC) presented the report on “Unaccompanied Refugee Children – the role and responsibilities of local and regional authorities”, adopted by the Congress in March 2018. The report encourages member States to adopt a child-rights-based approach to maximise the respect of children’s best interests. It also underlines the special responsibility of local and regional authorities in giving unaccompanied refugee minors access to services, and in developing child-friendly procedures, for example in age-assessment.

The Vice-President of the Congress and alternate Spokesperson on the South-Med Partnership, Michalis ANGELOPOULOS (Greece, EPP) participated in the **Conference on Migrant, Refugee and**



**Asylum Seeking Women and Girls in the Euro-Mediterranean Region**, organised by the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity of the Council of Europe (North-South Centre), on 3-4 October 2018, in Athens. The feminist approach to asylum procedures, the integration of women through education, the mobility of refugee and asylum-seeking girls and women in Africa and the Middle East, were some of the themes addressed. In the light of different national and regional realities, participants discussed trends and key challenges regarding these specific groups. They debated solutions to strengthen their protection and integration based on concrete examples of good practice. Various institutions presented their activities, such as KAFA, a Lebanese women's rights organisation, which presented its measures to raise awareness of domestic violence. The conclusions were jointly presented by Michalis ANGELOPOULOS and Abdelkader EL KHISSASSI, civil and social affairs expert from the Union for the Mediterranean.

## **B. REGIONAL AND MINORITY LANGUAGES**

The Congress has a special interest in regional and minority languages since, in its work overseeing the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, language issues often appear at the heart of conflicts between communities and different levels of government.

Addressing the Parliamentary Assembly Hearing on **“Twenty years on Shortcomings and challenges in the use of regional or minority languages at local and regional level”** organised by the Sub-Committee on the Rights of Minorities of the Parliamentary Assembly's Committee in Strasbourg, on 25 April 2018, Andrew DAWSON (United Kingdom, ECR), Congress Rapporteur on the use of languages by local and regional authorities, underlined that if a local authority wishes to meet the needs of its citizens, it must communicate in a language which enables the citizen to participate fully and deeply in local democracy. Mr DAWSON introduced a new Congress report that will be presented at its October 2019 Session and which will focus on the issues addressed in Article 10 of the Language Charter: the use of languages in local and regional administrations and the provision of public services.

To mark the 20th anniversary of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, and as part of the preparation of a report on **“The use of languages by local and regional authorities”**, the Congress held a thematic conference on this subject in Covasna County, Romania on 31 May 2018. Opened by the President of the Congress, the Romanian member of parliament and former Minister of Culture and President of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania, the Chair of Covasna County Council and the Mayor of the City of Sfântu Gheorghe, the conference examined among others how linguistic diversity can be handled by local and regional authorities to the benefit of all concerned. The debates were divided into thematic sessions on language use in: 1) Local and regional assemblies; 2) Interaction with the administration and citizen participation; 3) place names; and 4) access to public services.

The **Working Group on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity of the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE)** met in Brussels on 26 September 2018 to celebrate the European Day of Languages and present its new Decalogue for Linguistic Diversity. Andrew DAWSON presented the Congress' work in this field. In the context of the report on "The use of languages by local and regional authorities" that he is currently preparing as Congress Rapporteur, Mr DAWSON stressed that language issues can be at the heart of conflicts between communities and the different levels of government. He underlined the importance of encouraging the preservation and learning of the minority languages, but above all the need to make them tools in the provision of public services. In a recent report, adopted in 2017, on "Regional and minority languages in Europe today", the Congress had argued that the protection of historical regional or minority languages makes it possible to protect diversity and had encouraged communities to take measures to develop their teaching in the regions. In his conclusion, Mr DAWSON asked local politicians to reaffirm the role that local and regional authorities can and should play in protecting, developing and promoting linguistic diversity.

## **C. GENDER EQUALITY**

The Congress presented its work on gender equality in several events, with particular emphasis on women's political participation, women and girls in migration and gender budgeting.

It was represented by Gunn-Marit HELGESEN (Norway, EPP / CCE), President of the Chamber of Regions at the **International conference on "Gender equality: paving the way", to launch the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023** in Copenhagen, on 3-4 May 2018. The

conference was organised in the framework of the Danish Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. Its aim was to address current and emerging challenges which prevent a faster pace of progress to achieve substantive and full gender equality, and to discuss the way forward in implementing the new Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 7 March 2018.

The Congress will contribute to those strategic objectives which are of relevance for local and regional politicians. These include, in particular, preventing gender stereotypes, the fight against domestic violence, equal access of women to justice, the participation of women and men in political and public decision-making, protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls, as well as gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures.

The Congress was represented by its President at the **2nd Eurasian Women's Forum in St Petersburg on 20 September 2018**. The President delivered a speech at the opening of the Forum and participated in the public debate on "Global Initiatives for Women" and to thematic sessions.

This Eurasian women's forum, organised by the Council of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of Russia and the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States (IPA-CIS), focused on women's involvement in global security and sustainable development.

The President stressed that the fair and equitable participation of women and men in public life is fundamental to democracy underlining the commitment of the Council of Europe, whose three assemblies - the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers - are now chaired by women. She underlined that the Congress, has enforced a 30 per cent minimum requirement for women's participation in national delegations. As a result, over the past five years alone, the representation of women in national delegations rose from 31% to 42%, and women constitute today 65% of the Congress executive leadership.

The President deplored however that, despite the progress made, women still remain largely under-represented at all levels of government and in all spheres of society. She stressed the importance of the local and regional levels in this regard. Solutions may be based on the establishment of quotas or balanced representation, and above all, must be the concern of the whole society. They also require the commitment of local, regional and central governments, political parties and the media, as well as the possibility of creating platforms for dialogue and networking between women - but also between women and men.

Congress Vice-President Liisa ANSALA (Finland, ILDG) spoke at **Helsinki Municipal Fair**. Organised by the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, the Fair is the largest annual event for the local authority sector in Finland, bringing together some 7,500 public sector decision-makers, municipal employees, companies and associations. The Vice-President underlined the importance of women's political participation and the need for a European policy to promote gender equality. Ms. ANSALA highlighted tools such as gender budgeting to facilitate women's participation in political decision-making. She encouraged local and regional authorities to be bolder in this regard, including in her own country Finland, and denounced the persistence of gender stereotypes and wage inequalities.

## **D. OPEN GOVERNMENT**

Transparency and open government is one of the priority areas that the Congress identified in its Roadmap of activities on the "prevention of corruption and the promotion of public ethics at local and regional levels" adopted in October 2016. Besides, a resolution and a recommendation on "Transparency and open government" are going to be debated for adoption in the upcoming 35th plenary session in November 2018.

Transparency, participation and accountability –the key principles of open government– require innovation on the part of local and regional authorities in their interaction with citizens and how they manage their administrations. For this reason, the Congress is supporting local authorities to promote and introduce a wide range of principles and practices of open government, which will lead to enhanced good governance, better decision making, higher transparency and reduction of corruption.

The Congress participated in the **Community of Practice on Transparency and Open Government** organised by the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) on 23 May 2018, in which it was invited to take part and introduce the tools and means it had developed to support local authorities and their associations in this regard.

Furthermore, the Congress was invited to the **5th Open Government Partnership (OGP) Global Summit** on 17-19 July 2018 in Tbilisi, Georgia. The Summit provided an excellent opportunity to foster the contribution of local authorities to the OGP national commitments and to strengthen their commitment to open government principles.

Hosted by the Government of Georgia, the Summit was attended by heads of state and ministers, public officials, members of parliament, local authorities, civil society representatives, international organisations, researchers, and journalists from more than 70 countries. The Congress was represented by Anthony BUCHANAN (UK, PAP-NPA), Leader of East Renfrewshire Council, and Vladimir PREBILIČ (Slovenia, SOC), Mayor of Kočevje.

On 17 July 2018, as a side event to the Summit, the Congress organised together with the National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (NALAG) the workshop “**Open Governance at Local Level: Cities Take Action**” in Rustavi, Georgia (see V. COOPERATION ACTIVITIES).

## **E. CITIZENS PARTICIPATION**

The Congress – and its Governance Committee in particular - is pursuing its work on citizen participation, open data, smart cities, urban policies...

Congress member Martin FODOR (United Kingdom, ILDG) addressed the **CEE e|Dem and e|Gov Days 2018**, organised by the Austrian Computer Society in Budapest, Hungary on 3 May 2018. He underlined that local and elected representatives should reflect on how to create “smart citizens”, that is, engaged and empowered citizens who can positively contribute to the development of the city and the community.

He also took part in a panel discussion on “Open Data Requirements for Smart Cities - What do we need from the Legislators?” organised by the Congress at the Andrassy University of Budapest. He took this opportunity to present the report on “Open data for better public services” adopted at the 32nd Congress session and recalled that open data offers greater transparency and not only provides citizens with the information to understand what their local governments do but also empowers them to contribute to the decisions-making process. He highlighted the citizen participation in the making of smart cities.

Mr FODOR also participated in a conference on “**Good governance and effective civil participation at local level**”, in Erevan, Armenia on 4 September 2018. He stressed that citizen participation is a requirement of effective modern democracy (see V. COOPERATION ACTIVITIES)

## **F. INCLUSION OF ROMA AND TRAVELLERS / EUROPEAN ALLIANCE OF CITIES AND REGIONS FOR THE INCLUSION OF ROMA AND TRAVELLERS**

Following the setting up of the Ukrainian “Alliance of cities and regions on development of Roma initiatives” in Kiev in November 2017, the Alliance task force began preparations for a similar exercise in Greece. The Alliance was the focus of the conference “**Strengthening Roma networks at the local and regional level**” took place on 12 April 2018 in Athens with the participation of 35 Greek mayors and the associations of local and regional authorities as well as government officials. The Congress was represented by John WARMISHAM (United Kingdom, SOC), Congress Thematic Spokesperson for Roma and Travellers and Michail ANGELOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CCE), Vice President of the Congress.

The network is expected to become a central partner for the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion (which brings together 130 local and regional authorities from 29 member States) in their fight to combat anti-Gypsyism at local and regional level. The Congress adopted a “Declaration of mayors and elected local and regional representatives of Council of Europe member states against anti-Gypsyism” in 2017. Signed by 83 entities from 32 member States, it is a landmark text that helps local and regional authorities to position themselves explicitly against anti-Gypsyism and work for Roma Inclusion.

## **G. EUROPEAN LOCAL DEMOCRACY WEEK (ELDW)**

The 11<sup>th</sup> edition of the ELDW is taking place in the week of 15 to 21 October 2018. Around 50 participating cities have already reported about their activities under the theme “Citizen participation, consultation and commitment: for a thriving local democracy”, with a special emphasis put on children and youth participation and commitment.

The Reflection Group on the ELDW, created by the Bureau in February 2018 and tasked with taking the initiative forward to a new dimension (in accordance with Resolution 423 (2017) adopted during the 33rd Congress session), met again on 19 June and 10 September 2018 and proposed changes for further development of the Week. In between those two meetings, consultations on the proposed changes were held with the ELDW national coordinators.

On 5 October 2018, the Bureau approved the preliminary draft resolution presenting the new modalities of organisation of the European Local Democracy Week which concern the timeline of the ELDW, the modalities for identifying, rewarding and enhancing visibility of the most impressive initiatives, the ways of developing the outreach of the ELDW, and the creation of a network of exchange of good practices.

The draft resolution will be submitted for adoption during the next Congress session, on the occasion of the debate “European Local Democracy Week: a new momentum”, to be held on 7 November.

## **H. OTHERS**

### **International Muslim Communities Congress: “Local authorities hold the key to successful integration”**

**Abu Dhabi (Emirats arabes Unis), 9 May 2018**

The Secretary General of the Congress stated that political leaders – national and local governments – and religious leaders as well as civil society and academia need to encourage and practice mutual understanding, dialogue and participation of citizens of all religious backgrounds.

Speaking on the “role of local authorities in integrating religious minorities and in promoting inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue and activities”, Mr Kiefer stressed the important part of the cities, towns and municipalities where different religious communities can experience and adapt their perceptions of each other. He reiterated the Congress commitment to develop and share good practice and presented the Toolkit for organising inter-cultural and inter-religious activities, developed by the Congress in 2015, to inform local and regional authorities more effectively about inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue at local level. This Toolkit is available in 37 languages.

### **The Economist conference on “Governance and regional arteries for growth: Europe’s momentum – Greece’s impetus”**

**Loutraki (Greece), 11 May 2018**

The Conference provided the opportunity for the Congress President Gudrun MOSLER-TÖRNSTRÖM to address the issues of the relations between national governments and regions.. Drawing attention to changing role of regions, she referred to the recent Congress report charting the trends and prospects of inter-regional cooperation in Europe. This report proposes some initiatives for deepening bilateral and multilateral cooperation between regions.

At the same time, she recalled that the Congress promotes the principle of subsidiarity, to give the local population a say in how they manage their public affairs. She said the challenge was to ensure that the core principles of democracy are respected, according to the will of the people and with the maximum of political dialogue, adding that a certain degree of regional autonomy was an effective way to bring power and the citizen closer together.

### **Conference on “Safeguarding Democratic Institutions within a Europe in crisis: Challenges and Responses”,**

**Nafplion (Greece), 11 May 2018**

The Congress President stated that safeguarding democratic institutions meant making them more accessible to citizens and involving citizens in decision making. She insisted on the specific role of local and regional authorities as the other dimension of democracy and a stabilising factor, underlining that what was needed is not less but more democracy. She explained Local and Regional authorities are the embodiment of the other dimension of democracy in the member states, underlining that strong local and regional authorities with clear powers, appropriate resources and a proper political and legal framework can make a significant contribution to addressing challenges ahead.

Mrs MOSLER-TÖRNSTRÖM also highlighted the need for greater coordination between all levels of government, and, in particular, with local and regional authorities which should be made full partners and closely involved in decision-making processes at national and at European levels.

Congress President presented the Congress work and tools, in particular the monitoring of the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the post-monitoring dialogue with national authorities. She also detailed its cooperation programs which support this dialogue and contribute to strengthening consultations frameworks and mechanisms. The fight against violent extremism, human rights at local and regional levels, transparency and ethics, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, citizen participation are some of the key issues the Congress is working on to help local and regional elected representatives improve their governance, better explain their action to citizens and involve them more closely in the lives of their communities.

### **International Conference “Cross-Border in Europe: Decentralisation, legal frameworks, and practice”**

**Dubrovnik (Croatia), 25 May 2018**

In this conference, Vladimir PREBILIČ (Slovenia, SOC), Mayor of Kočevje, Congress member, participated in the panel on “Cross-Border Cooperation in the Context of Decentralisation: The added value of Council of Europe legal instruments.”

He presented as a case study the annual sports competition “Pioneer Sports Games”, launched in 1961, between the municipality of Kočevje and the municipality of Delnice, in Slovenia. The aim is to involve primary school children living on either bank of the Kolpa river which divides both countries. He explained that these Sports Games represent a platform for closer mutual cooperation on three levels: municipal level, between public institutions and for promoting youth children exchanges.



## V. INSTITUTIONAL CO-OPERATION WITHIN THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE



*The Presidents of the Committee of Ministers, of the Parliamentary Assembly and of the Congress at the October 2018 Session of the Parliamentary Assembly: Three Women leaders of three political bodies of the Council of Europe – The first time ever in the history of the Organisation.*

### A. THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL SECTOR

#### The Committee of Ministers

*The Congress President and Secretary General hold regular exchanges of views and communications with the Ministers' Deputies. The Congress also contributes actively to the activities of the chairmanships of the Committee of Ministers.*

The Congress President addressed the Foreign Ministers of the 47 member states in Elsinore (Denmark) on 18 May 2018, on the occasion of the 128th Session of the Committee of Ministers. She referred to the close dialogue that the Congress has with the governments through its various activities, in particular during its monitoring missions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, the observation of local and regional elections or the implementation of the Council of Europe Action Plans (see I. POLITICAL AGENDA)

### B. THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

*The Congress holds regular exchanges with the Parliamentary Assembly, in order to increase co-operation at the level of rapporteurs and the respective secretariats as well as in areas of common interest, in particular in the framework of the implementation of Council of Europe Campaigns.*

In September 2018, the Congress Secretary General participated in a debate on "the role of national parliaments in successful decentralisation processes" in the framework of a meeting of the PACE Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development in Lisbon. At this event, which was part of the celebrations of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the entry into force of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, Mr KIEFER paid tribute to the PACE for taking a robust role to secure decentralisation and democratic security in Europe (see I. POLITICAL AGENDA).

The President of the Congress participated in the debate based on the report by Mr LEITE RAMOS in the Autumn session of the PACE, expressing her conviction that successful decentralisation is directly linked to strong interaction and cooperation among all stakeholders involved parliamentary commissions and local government representatives. On the sidelines of this debate, the President

also met the PACE President. The two Presidents stressed their willingness to contribute to further strengthening the co-operation between the two political assemblies of the Council of Europe.



*The President of the Congress took part in a debate of the Parliamentary Assembly, on 11 October 2018 in Strasbourg.*

### **C. THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR DEMOCRACY THROUGH LAW**

*The Congress is working in close co-operation with the Venice Commission, particularly in the field of election observation and the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. The Council for Democratic Elections (CED) is a platform for electoral cooperation between the Venice Commission, in its capacity as legal body, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress, as political organs responsible for election observation in their respective areas.*

*Members of the Congress on the Council for Democratic Elections are currently the thematic Spokespersons on the Observation of Local and Regional Elections, Jos WIENEN (Netherlands, EPP/CCE) and Stewart DICKSON (United Kingdom, ILDG).*

### **D. THE NORTH-SOUTH CENTRE**

*The Congress pursued its participation in the quadrilogue governance of the North-South Centre and its commitment to contribute to the Centre's activities.*

Thomas ANDERSSON (Sweden, ILDG) participated in the Seminar on "Strengthening the quadrilogue approach in Euro-Mediterranean youth co-operation ", which was organised in the framework of the North-South Centre 6th Mediterranean University on Youth and Global Citizenship held on 10-11 May 2018 in Tunis. He emphasized in particular the commitment of the Congress in the implementation of initiatives to actively promote youth participation and young people's empowerment in civic and public life.

Michail ANGELOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CCE), substitute Spokesperson on the South-Med Partnership of the Congress took part in the Conference on "Migrant, Refugee and Asylum Seeking Women and Girls in the Euromed" which was held in Athens on 3-4 October 2018. He highlighted the close links and quality of co-operation between the Congress and the North-South Centre, the Congress being a component of the North-South Centre's quadrilogue, which brings together representatives of national, parliamentary, local and regional levels and civil society. (see III. THEMATIC ACTIVITIES)

The Congress will also participate in the meeting of the Bureau and the Jury of the North-South Prize to be held in Tunis on 19 October 2018.



## **E. THE CONFERENCE OF INGOs**

The Congress and the Conference of INGOs have a close cooperation particularly on thematic issues such as equality, youth participation, citizen participation and religion related issues.

On 24 April 2018, the President of the Congress met with Anne NÈGRE, Vice President of the Conference of INGOs in charge of Equality. They agreed to increase synergies and exchange information between the Congress and the Conference. Cooperation can take the form of exchanging annual work programmes, a meeting at presidents' level once a year, or participating in each other's events.

Following up on its Resolution 385 (2015) on "Fostering active citizenship by building partnerships with civil society" in which Congress supported the idea of a revision of the "Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-Making Process" (adopted by the Conference of INGOs in October 2009), the Congress indicated its readiness to cooperate with the Conference in the revision of the Code. The first meeting to set up a joint working group will be held on 6 November 2018.

## VI. EXTERNAL COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIPS



*On 25 September 2018, a Congress delegation attended the 5th meeting of the CoR's working group on Ukraine in Kiev.*

### A. THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

*Co-operation between the Congress and the Committee of the Regions of the European Union is ongoing between the Plenary Sessions of the two institutions both at political and at secretarial level.*

**On 3 May 2018**, Carla DEJONGHE (Belgium, ILDG), Supplementary Member of the Reflection Group of the Congress on Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, contributed to the meeting of the Western Balkans Working Group of the EU Committee of the Regions, held in Brussels. Addressing the Working Group on the issue of local democracy in Mostar, she recalled the particular situation of the city, where no local elections had been held for 10 years (see III. MONITORING OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEMOCRACY)

**On 29 May 2018**, Marc COOLS (Belgium, GILD), Congress Rapporteur on Local and Regional Democracy in Ukraine, participated in the Bureau of the Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP) of the European Committee of the Regions held in Brussels. Speaking in the debate on how to bridge the democratic gap engendered by the lack of citizens' trust in politicians and their feeling of exclusion from political decision-making, he recalled the key role of local and regional authorities in defining and implementing public policies which are more transparent and accountable to citizens. He gave examples of participation initiatives, including those carried out as part of the Congress co-operation activities in Eastern Partnership countries.

**On 24-27 June 2018**, Franz SCHAUSBERGER (EU), Member of the Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs (CIVEX) and Chair of the CoR's Working Group on Western Balkans, participated in the visit of the Reflection Group on Mostar in Sarajevo and Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as part of the cooperation on Western Balkans.

**On 10 July 2018**, the Congress Secretary General intervened in a meeting of the CIVEX, where he highlighted the good cooperation between both institutions. He stressed the concern of the Congress regarding the situation in Mostar. He also announced that the situation in Paraćin, Serbia, will be addressed during a debate on "mayors under pressure", to be held in the Chamber of Local Authorities at the Congress session in November 2018. This meeting was also an occasion for the Secretary Generals of the two institutions to discuss future cooperation, in particular the meeting of the High Level Group in January 2019 and a joint event to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of both institutions in June 2019.

**On 24 September 2018**, Gunn Marit HELGESEN (Norway, EPP/CCE), Congress Vice-President and President of the Chamber of Regions, addressed the 8th Annual Meeting of the Conference of the Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP) held in Kyiv. She stressed the need to advocate for good governance and local democracy throughout Europe, promote ethics and transparency at local and regional levels, and work towards building safe and inclusive societies that respect diversity. She also highlighted that participatory approaches in local decision-making processes are a pillar of our democracies which will increase trust on local authorities.

Moreover, the Congress Vice President pointed to the need to advance and deepen decentralisation so as to bolster the local self-government system and pave the way for sustainable municipal development.

**On 25 September 2018**, Gunn Marit HELGESEN and the Secretary General of the Congress took part in the 5th meeting of the CoR Task Force on Ukraine in Kyiv. This meeting, which brought together Ukrainian and international stakeholders to discuss achievements and challenges of the decentralisation reform in Ukraine, was chaired by Deputy Minister of Regional Development, Construction, Housing and Communal Services of Ukraine Vyacheslav NEHODA and Markku MARKKULA, First Vice-President President of the European Committee of the Regions.

**On 11 October 2018**, Manuela BORA (Italy, SOC), Rapporteur on the Revised Congress Code of Conduct and Xavier CADORET (France, SOC), Congress Vice-President and alternate Spokesperson on the South-Med Partnership, participated in the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Commission for Sustainable Territorial Development of the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM). Ms BORA presented the draft revised European Code of Conduct for all Persons Involved in Local and Regional Governance.

## **B. EUROPEAN ASSOCIATIONS**

### **ALDA**

In Brussels on 4 May 2018, Carla DEJONGHE (Belgium, ILDG), Congress member and Deputy of the Brussels-Capital Regional Parliament, participated in the introductory session of the ALDA General Assembly on the subject of “How to contribute to local governance and civic initiatives in the upcoming challenges of the EU and its Neighbourhood”. She emphasised that the Congress has identified recurrent problems at local level – such as the lack of competences, finances, consultations and citizen participation which makes people feel excluded from democratic processes. She added that democratic institutions, including local governance, have to involve citizens in decision making, recalling the need to foster co-operation in order to ensure a coherent and complementary action to face current challenges.

### **Assembly of European Regions (AER)**

Gunn Marit HELGESEN, President of the Chamber of Regions, addressed the General Assembly of the AER in Lillehammer, Norway on 23 May 2018 and welcomed the renewed momentum in the long-standing partnership between the two bodies, recalling that many AER members were represented in the Congress and actively participated in its work. She supported AER’s position that inter-regional cooperation and best practice exchange were paramount to strengthening a democratic Europe where citizens are meaningfully engaged in decision making and problem solving, against the challenges of rising populism and radicalisation, the increased migration and the need for greater integration and territorial solidarity.

### **Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)**

At the opening session of the CEMR conference on equality, diversity and inclusion, in Bilbao, Spain on 11 June 2018, the Congress President Gudrun MOSLER-TÖRNSTRÖM underlined that the serious challenges facing Europe - including war at its borders, migration, radicalisation, and political discord - required action not only at international and national levels, but also at the grassroots. She presented the work of the Congress to strengthen inclusion, in particular through its recommendations proposing guidelines for refugee reception, integration of migrants and promotion of diversity and intercultural and interreligious dialogue. The President also gave examples of concrete initiatives implemented by the Congress regarding gender equality, Roma inclusion and human rights, and underlined the need for greater participation of women in decision making by raising the number of women through appropriate actions at all levels, including recruitment programs, mentoring systems, candidate trainings, public speaking trainings.

## Conference of Regional Legislative Assemblies of Europe (CALRE)

Speaking at the CALRE Standing Committee in Brussels on 28 June 2018, the Congress President reiterated the Congress commitment to building synergies between the two assemblies, and pointed out many areas of common interest for the two institutions, among which the challenges of migration and integration of migrants and refugees. She informed the participants that the Congress will adopt a manual of good local and regional practices in protecting the human rights of migrants, and a recommendation for border regions facing migration phenomena, during the 35th Session in November.

Noting that citizen participation in local and regional decision making was another area of common concern, the President underlined that the Congress organises annually the European Local Democracy Week (ELDW), an event that brings together citizens and local and regional authorities to boost joint decision making. To meet the current and future challenges, she strongly encouraged other institutions to join the Congress' initiative.

## C. NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Congress Secretary General participated in a Workshop organised by the **National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (NALAG)** in Tbilisi on 29 June. (see VII. COOPERATION PROGRAMMES AND ACTION PLANS)

The Congress President addressed the **General Assembly of the Icelandic Association of Local Authorities** in Akureyri, Finland on 26 September 2018, underlining the importance of national associations of local authorities as key partners of the Congress, contributing to the process of devising its priorities, participating in the selection of the members of the national delegations and acting as "whistle-blowers" with regard to specific issues in their countries.

She pointed out that consultation of local authorities on all matters affecting them is a key principle of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, adding that such consultations must take place through formal mechanisms and emphasising the role played by national associations in this respect.

## D. THE UNITED NATIONS

*The Congress participates regularly in United Nations activities with a local and regional dimension such as its work on the status of women or territorial planning.*

The Congress President participated in the **"High-Level Dialogue: Linking Global Goals with the New Urban Agenda implementation"** organised by the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), in Strasbourg, on 25 May 2018. She explained that the city has become the major fact of the organisation of territories in Europe and that this urban development must be accompanied by the improvement of the quality of the environment as well as of the collective life based on social cohesion, diversity and inclusion. She underlined that Local and regional elected representatives, as political leaders, have a central role to play in shaping how the society will react to these challenges. The conclusions of this meeting were intended to feed the debates of the **High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development** in New-York on 16 July 2018.

The President attended the Local and Regional Governments Forum held in New York on 16 July 2018 on this occasion. Speaking at a Panel on the importance of integrated territorial planning to achieving SDGs, the President underlined the need for consultations between national and local authorities on SDGs implementation and for local and regional authorities to have proper autonomy of action and decision making, including proper competences, financial and budget autonomy, and freedom to make decisions on the use of local resources. She pointed out that in Europe, this autonomy was ensured through the European Charter of Local Self-Government, whose principles inspired in particular the International Guidelines on Decentralisation and Access to Basic Services for all, adopted by UN-Habitat.



## VII. COOPERATION PROGRAMMES AND ACTION PLANS



*The Congress participated in a workshop on "Consultation mechanisms between local and national authorities", in Yerevan on 12 September 2018.*

*The Congress' co-operation activities support member States in implementing the recommendations adopted by the Congress to address the problems identified during the monitoring and post-monitoring of the Charter and the observation of local and regional elections.*

*These activities are carried out by the Congress secretariat within the framework of the action plans of the Council of Europe, in close co-operation and synergy with the other entities within the Organisation.*

Since October 2012, more than 1000 local authorities (mayors, councillors and young local leaders) benefited from the Congress activities in Albania, Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. Those activities amount to more than 6 000 000 EUR, funded by voluntary contributions from member States and the European Union.

The activities implemented are diverse and adapted to the needs of the beneficiaries: workshops, regional seminars, platforms for exchanges and networking, direct support, political mediation, and legal advice. Thanks to an approach based on peer exchanges, Congress members and beneficiaries on the ground are enabled to debate on principles and standards of local democracy, and to share innovative practices of governance. Such peer exchanges are the Congress added-value; and as of today, more than 50 Congress members representing 23 member States have taken part in peer exchanges, in addition to the members from the respective national delegations of in Albania, Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

The Congress does not promote a "one-size fits all" local self-government model. Its activities are designed to inspire mayors and councillors to further commit for change in their municipalities, so as to strengthen transparency and citizen participation in their decision-making. In addition, the Congress supports them to commonly defend their interests' vis-à-vis the national authorities, in close coordination with their associations.

The Congress secretariat is developing proposals for new bilateral projects in Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Belarus, as well as a project for Bosnia and Herzegovina with a specific focus on the situation in the City of Mostar, and projects on cross-cutting themes of interest for local authorities.

The prevention of corruption will be a central theme of future political and operational activities. It will be based on a set of handbooks on transparency and citizen participation for local authorities in

Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine and the guide on the misuse of administrative resources. In addition, our activities will build around the revised European Code of Conduct for all Persons Involved in Local and Regional Governance, and the resolutions and recommendations on conflicts of interest at local and regional levels, and transparency and open government, which will be debated and voted for adoption in the next Congress plenary session on 6-8 November 2018. The right of local authorities to be consulted will also be a core feature of new projects, with regards to the new guidelines to be adopted by the Congress in 2018. In addition, the Congress will introduce a stronger gender perspective in project activities, as well as a focus on human rights at local level, including the rights of minority groups and the fight against radicalisation.

In addition, the Congress co-operation activities directly contribute to the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, elaborating on the wider Council of Europe contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – in particular to the implementation of the SDGs 5, 11, 16 and 17. Moreover, they contribute to the EU Eastern Partnership 20 deliverables for 2020, chiefly in the enhancement of the skills of local public administrations and in the prevention of corruption.

## **A. ARMENIA**

The Congress continued implementing its project “Institutional support to the Communities Association of Armenia (CAA)”, funded by the Government of Switzerland, which aims to enhance the capacities of the CAA and enable it to become an active stakeholder in the governance system of the country. This project was extended beyond its original deadline of 1 May 2017 until 31 December 2018, based on the overall progress achieved and the positive mid-term review.

In the current phase, the Congress supported the work of thematic committees of the Association, in particular in strengthening their advocacy role, to represent and defend the interests of their members, local communities of Armenia. A number of documents such as an opinion paper on the decentralisation and new Government priorities, a policy brief on introducing the hotel tax and a call for a new Government Programme in the field of local self-government, were developed and submitted to the Government in the course of last several months.

In September 2018, a workshop on good governance and citizen participation was organised by the Council of Europe Congress and the Centre of Expertise, jointly with the Ministry of Territorial Development and Administration and other international partners to discuss and address an increasing demand for effective participation mechanisms at local level in Armenia. A number of good practices were presented, including local initiatives supported by the Congress in Tashir and Urtsadzor.

Furthermore, a ‘Workshop on consultation mechanisms between local and national authorities’ was organised also in September 2018 to launch a dialogue on creating a framework for institutionalisation of a functional consultation mechanism in Armenia in line with the Congress Recommendation 351 (2014). Representatives of the Armenian Government and the National Assembly, local authorities and their associations, as well as national associations of local authorities in other European countries had the opportunity to discuss modalities of such consultations between different levels of government and share examples of consultative mechanisms which could be adapted to the Armenian context.

The assessment of the existing organisational capacities of the CAA vis-à-vis the baseline study three years earlier was finalised in June 2018 with the aim of documenting the progress achieved by the Association and the areas which require further improvement. It is used as an analytical and conceptual resource for planning and design of future activities with the CAA.

## **B. GEORGIA**

On 29 June 2018, the National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (NALAG) organised a joint workshop for members of the Georgian Delegation to the Congress, the Georgian Delegation to the CORLEAP and the Delegation of NALAG to the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR). The event was attended by the Congress Secretary General, and Cristian URSE, Head of the CoE Office in Tbilisi. The Congress Secretary General highlighted the fruitful partnership relations with NALAG, with which the Congress has been discussing proposals for new co-operation activities. He also recalled the Congress commitment to the decentralisation process in Georgia and the implementation of the Congress recommendations on the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

This activity was a follow-up to the Congress co-operation activities in Georgia, in particular within the regional project "Strengthening institutional frameworks for local governance" (2015-2017) under the EU-CoE Partnership for Good Governance.

On 17 July 2018, building upon the achievements of the above mentioned project and the work on transparency, citizen participation and accountability, the Congress and NALAG co-organised the workshop "Open Governance at Local Level: Cities Take Action" in Rustavi, Georgia, as a side event to the 5th Open Government Partnership (OGP) Global Summit on 17-19 July 2018 in Tbilisi, Georgia. During this event, Anthony BUCHANAN (UK, PAP-NPA), Leader of East Renfrewshire Council, and Vladimir PREBILIČ (Slovenia, SOC), Mayor of Kočevje, shared examples from their respective local authorities with Georgian and Ukrainian mayors.

On the whole, the workshop was an opportunity for interaction and fruitful exchanges of ideas and good practices between Ukrainian and Georgian peers on topics such as citizen participation in local decision-making, transparency and openness in municipal governments, and open governance and local development.

## C. UKRAINE

The project "Strengthening democracy and building trust at local level in Ukraine"<sup>1</sup> was launched in July 2018, based on the needs and feedback expressed by beneficiaries throughout the Congress activities in that country from 2014 to 2017 and as part of the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine 2018-2021. This project builds upon the results of the project "Promoting local democracy in Ukraine" (2015-2017), which aimed to improve the implementation of democratic principles by enhancing the institutional and leadership capacities of local elected representatives (mayors and local councillors).<sup>2</sup>

The new project aims to improve the quality of local democracy by strengthening institutional frameworks and by supporting local authorities and their national associations in their efforts to promote ethical decision-making and more citizen-oriented, inclusive, responsive and transparent local governance. The co-operation with the Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC) will be strengthened in this framework.

On 25 September 2018, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Andreas KIEFER, Congress Secretary General, and Vitali KLITSCHKO, Mayor of Kyiv and President of the AUC, for the implementation of the project. The Congress and the AUC will work together to strengthen the capacities of the Association to better advocate for the interests of its members, to ensure a constructive dialogue, and promote a partnership culture and synergies between central and local authorities in the spirit of multilevel governance.

With this project, decentralisation and the implementation of good practices on local democracy will be supported through local and international expertise and capacity-building activities, including trainings, workshops, study visits, and peer-to-peer exchanges with the participation of members of the Congress, both from Ukraine and other member states of the Council of Europe. The project will also promote gender mainstreaming in the work of local authorities.

One of the first activities included the participation of Ukrainian mayors representing large cities, jointly with members of the Congress, in the 5th Open Government Partnership (OGP) Global Summit on 17-19 July 2018 in Tbilisi, Georgia, which was used as an opportunity for Ukrainian mayors to get acquainted with global processes for transparency, citizen participation, accountability and public ethics.

On 16 July 2018, on the eve of the 5th OGP Global Summit, Ukrainian and Slovenian examples of good practice were chosen to be presented during the 'Local Open Government Innovation Exchange', a pitch competition organised within the OGP Local Programme. The Municipality of

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<sup>1</sup> "Strengthening democracy and building trust at local level in Ukraine" – Project Brief: <https://rm.coe.int/project-brief-pmm1336-eng-ukr/16808d9983>

<sup>2</sup> Finalised in December 2017, the project provided over 150 mayors and 200 local councillors, as well as 150 young local leaders, with an opportunity to acquire new skills and competences in applying principles and standards of local democracy to make their governance more open, inclusive, transparent and accountable to citizens. Furthermore, a strategic dialogue to support the process of reform was established through peer exchanges, with the contribution of high level representatives of the Congress, including the President.



Chernivtsi, Ukraine, presented innovative approaches to the open government principles, focusing on e-tools and open data as a means to enhance the dialogue with citizens. The replicability and the impact of this initiative was praised and it was selected as the best example of good practice.

On 17 July 2018, the workshop “Open Governance at Local Level: Cities Take Action” jointly organised between the Congress and NALAG in Rustavi, Georgia as a side event to the 5th OGP Global Summit, allowed Ukrainian and Georgian local authorities and their associations to exchange experiences and knowledge on open government principles and practices.

Following their participation in the 5th OGP Global Summit, Ukrainian local authorities and the AUC have taken the initiative to contribute to the implementation at the local level of the Open Government 3rd National Action Plan 2016-2018 for Ukraine, and to foster dialogue with national authorities on its implementation.

On 12 October 2018, the Congress supported this initiative through a focus group meeting to discuss and develop a draft Roadmap for the introduction of tools and instruments of e-governance at local level in Ukraine. It will be followed in November 2018 by a round table on “Open Government and e-Governance: a Shared Responsibility”, both to be organised jointly with the AUC. These activities will pave the way for the preparation of the 4th National Action Plan.

## **D. SOUTH MED PARTNERSHIP**

Morocco's request for the status of Partner for Local Democracy with the Congress was approved by the Bureau on 18 June 2018, for adoption during the 35<sup>th</sup> Session in November 2018. A debate on co-operation with the Kingdom of Morocco, introduced by Thematic Spokesperson on the South-Mediterranean Partnership Piero FASSINO, Italy (L, SOC), will be held on this occasion

A delegation headed by Xavier CADORET (France, SOC), Congress Rapporteur and substitute Thematic Spokesperson on the South- Mediterranean Partnership, carried out an electoral assessment visit to Tunisia from 4 to 6 May 2018, on the occasion of the municipal elections held on 6 May. The information report will be presented during the 35<sup>th</sup> Session in November 2018 (see III. MONITORING OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEMOCRACY).

### **APPENDIX 1: EXEMPLE OF A COMMITTEE'S REPORT TERMS OF REFERENCE**

#### **Safeguarding young people's social rights: the role of local and regional authorities**

##### **Current Affairs Committee**

CG/CUR09(2018)04

31 May 2018

Co-Rapporteurs: Piero FASSINO, Italy (L, SOC) and Liisa ANSALA, Finland (L, ILDG)

L: Chamber of Local Authorities / R: Chamber of Regions  
EPP/CCE: European People's Party Group in the Congress  
SOC: Socialist Group  
ILDG: Independent and Liberal Democrat Group  
ECR: European Conservatives and Reformists Group  
NR: Members not belonging to a political group of the Congress

## TERMS OF REFERENCE No. (..)2018

**REPORT** ☒ **EVENT** ☐ **Current Affairs Committee**

**Co-rapporteurs:** Piero FASSINO, Italy (L, SOC) and Liisa ANSALA, Finland (L, ILDG)

**THEME:** **Safeguarding young people's social rights: the role of local and regional authorities**

Political objective (and specific local or regional dimension)	Relevance to the political priorities of the Council of Europe, the Congress and its committees	Proposed action	Timeline	Implementation requirements (expert, missions, interpretation, secretariat involvement, etc)
<p>Local and regional authorities have important responsibilities in protecting and ensuring respect for the rights of citizens, as guaranteed by the European Social Charter, the most prominent legal instrument of the Council of Europe in the field of social rights.</p> <p>In Europe, regional and local authorities have competences in areas such as education, labour market integration, access to housing, and health, which affect young people. They therefore have an essential role in the implementation of the Charter.</p> <p>The Congress is in a key position to contribute to the action taken by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to reinforce the implementation of the Social Charter at local and regional levels (the "Turin Process").</p>	<p>The forthcoming report will be a follow-up to the debate in the Chamber of Regions held in October 2016 (31st session) on "Social rights in Europe: the implementation of the European Social Charter at the regional level", where examples of good practice as well as difficulties that regional authorities faced in implementing the principles of the Charter were presented.</p> <p>The report will also address the concerns of the Congress Youth Delegates, who had asked the Bureau in October 2016 to "prepare a toolkit for local authorities to empower young people to access their rights" on the basis of Recommendation CM / Rec (2016) of the Committee of Ministers to member states.</p> <p>The future report is in line with the Congress Priorities for 2017-2020, and in particular with the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Enhancing the quality of local and regional democracy" by "raising awareness of human rights at local and regional levels", which includes "the social dimension of human rights</li> </ul>	<p>Involvement of youth delegates in the preparation of the report and in the committee and plenary debates.</p> <p>Seeking synergies and co-operation with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the intergovernmental sector (Social Cohesion Platform, Social Rights Committee),</li> <li>- youth bodies,</li> <li>- INGO Conference.</li> </ul> <p>Dissemination of the resolution and the recommendation by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- members of the Congress,</li> <li>- national and European associations and local and regional authorities,</li> <li>- Social Cohesion Platform</li> </ul>	<p>Decision by the Committee to prepare a report on this subject, 18 October 2017.</p> <p>Co-rapporteurs confirmed by the Committee, 27 March 2018.</p> <p>Presentation and discussion of a report outline, and of the draft terms of reference for approval by the Committee, 19 June 2018.</p> <p>Submission of</p>	<p>Secretariat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- assistance in drafting the explanatory memorandum, the resolution and the recommendation;</li> <li>- dissemination of the adopted texts.</li> </ul> <p>Expert:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- service contract (intellectual services)</li> <li>- travelling and subsistence expenses for attending meetings of the committee in June and November 2018.</li> </ul> <p>Translation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- draft explanatory</li> </ul>

	<p>enshrined in the European Social Charter " (§72);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "building inclusive societies", "in ensuring quality and accessibility of public and municipal services, searching for solutions to a range of challenges, particularly in terms of respect for fundamental human and social rights " (§85);</li> <li>- "involving young delegates in its work" (§107).</li> </ul> <p>Thus, by focusing on the rights set out in the Charter that affect young people in particular, the report will contribute to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- make local and regional authorities aware of their role and responsibility in applying the principles of the Social Charter and other relevant instruments, at the levels closest to the citizens;</li> <li>- build on existing good practices and propose approaches that help these authorities to ensure or improve the effective enjoyment of young people's social rights;</li> </ul> <p>to encourage synergies between local, regional and national authorities for the implementation of the rights enshrined in the Charter.</p>	<p>of the Council of Europe,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- specific networks of the youth sector and civil society.</li> </ul> <p>- Following up and forwarding to the Congress Bureau the Committee of Ministers' reply to the Congress recommendation.</p>	<p>the draft terms of reference to the Congress Bureau for adoption, 5 October 2018</p> <p>Examination and approval of a preliminary draft resolution and recommendation by the Committee, 6 November 2018.</p> <p>Presentation of the draft resolution and recommendation at the 36<sup>th</sup> session (plenary), March 2019.</p>	<p>memorandum, resolution and recommendation;</p> <p>- other related documents for the preparation of the report.</p>
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## **APPENDIX 2: WORK PLAN 2018-2019 - COMMITTEES OF THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES**

Current Affairs Committee

Governance Committee

Monitoring Committee



## CURRENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

### I. REPORT IN PROGRESS

#### 1. Border Regions facing migration phenomena (Chamber of Regions)

Rapporteur: Rena DOUROU, Greece (R, SOC)

Session : November 2018

This proposal was forwarded to the Committee by the President of the Chamber of Regions, which prepared a report based on a Study report on the debate held at the 32nd Session of the Chamber of Regions (29 March 2017) on "Border Regions facing migration flows". Further to its decision in Belgrade on 14 June 2017, the Committee approved by correspondence the terms of reference for this report. The Bureau adopted them on 15 September 2017.

A reflection group met on 28 March 2018 during the 34th session with the participation of the expert.

### II. FUTURE REPORTS

#### 1. Safeguarding young people's social rights: the role of local and regional authorities (plenary) (working title)

Co-Rapporteurs: Piero FASSINO, Italy (L, SOC), Liisa ANSALA, Finland (L, ILDG)

Session: March 2019

This report will be a follow-up to the debate in the Chamber of Regions held on 21 October 2016 (31st session) on "Social rights in Europe: the implementation of the European Social Charter at the regional level", which produced a conclusion document.

At the same session, youth delegates submitted a proposal to the Bureau for the preparation of a toolkit for local authorities to empower young people to access their rights, based on the Committee of Ministers' *Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)7 to ensure young people's full access to rights*.

Given the key role of local and regional authorities in the implementation of social rights, the future report will propose actions showcased by examples of good practice that make the enjoyment of social rights effective with a special focus on young people's rights.

### III. FUTURE EVENTS

#### 1. 4<sup>th</sup> Summit of mayors for the "Alliance of European cities against violent extremism"

(event co-organised by the Congress, the European Forum for Urban Security (EFUS) and the hosting city (date and venue to be determined))

After Aarhus in 2015, Rotterdam in 2016 and Barcelona in 2017, mayors and experts will meet again to exchange information and good practice examples in the framework of the Alliance.

[Alliance web page](#)

#### 2. Setting up of a competition of projects for youth and integration (title to be specified)

(in cooperation with the Intercultural Cities network of the Council of Europe) - *project suspended pending improvement of the budgetary situation*.

This competition is intended for young people who are involved in projects contributing to change mentalities in their cities and rural areas as regards refugees and migrants. This activity around the theme of integration of refugees will involve both the Congress youth delegates, local youth NGOs, and voluntary groups in member States.

## IV. THEMATIC ACTIVITIES AND LIAISING WITH OTHER COUNCIL OF EUROPE DEPARTMENTS

### 1. The situation of Roma and Travellers

- i. Follow-up to the Declaration of mayors and elected local and regional representatives of Council of Europe member states against anti-Gypsyism open for signature by mayors.
- ii. As of 1 January 2018, the Congress took over the operational management of the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers from DGII.

The Alliance is promoting national networks for Roma inclusion among mayors and regional representatives. These networks should function as national discussion platforms for the sharing of best practice, strengthening local and regional capacities for action, identifying specific problems, proposing solutions and helping to ensure funding for Roma activities at the grassroots level. The networks are meant to function by themselves. The Alliance has set up such networks in Ukraine (November 2017) and Greece (April 2018) in cooperation with its national partners. A preparatory meeting for setting up a network was held in Albania on 11 October 2018. A follow-up meeting to the Ukrainian network's launch is planned for February 2019. The launching of further networks is planned in other member States in 2019.

[www.roma-alliance.org](http://www.roma-alliance.org)

### 2. Congress Strategy against radicalisation at grassroots' level (joint implementation with the Governance Committee)

- i. The presentation of the Congress Toolkit for the use of local authorities when organising intercultural and inter-faith activities, by Youth Delegates to their local councils will continue this year with the new Youth Delegates. The Toolkit exists in 36 languages and is available through a [dedicated website](#) in the six working languages of the Congress (EN, FR, GER, ITA, RUS, TUR).
- ii. Project involving an awareness raising campaign around an event (conference bringing together local and regional elected representatives, civil society initiatives and practitioners) that will involve, initially, six pilot cities in different member States that have good practice examples that the Congress is promoting as role models - *project dependent on the availability of voluntary contributions*

### 3. Children's rights

- i. Congress participation in the events around the European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse on 18 November each year.
- ii. Congress Pact of Towns and Regions to stop sexual abuse of children website will be updated regularly.

### 4. Participation in task forces and meetings of Council of Europe steering committees (members or secretariat, as appropriate):

- Inter-secretariat Task Force on Children on the implementation of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2016-2021
- Gender Equality Commission (GEC)
- Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Committee)
- Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)
- Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
- Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape (CDCPP)
- Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes (EPA)
- Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI)

- Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS)
- Council of Europe Exchange on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue
- European Platform on Social Cohesion (PECS)

## **V. COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

- 6 November 2018 (35th Congress Session)
- 28 June 2019 (Stuttgart, Germany)
- 2 April 2019 (36th Congress Session)

## **CURRENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE: TERMS OF REFERENCE<sup>3</sup>**

### **A. GENERAL TERMS OF REFERENCE**

1. The Current Affairs Committee may examine any matter within its specific terms of reference (and the relevant provisions of the Rules of Procedure) and Resolution 309 (2010) on the reform of the Congress: structure and working methods.
2. The Committee shall prepare reports, including a resolution and/or recommendation, for debate in the Congress or its chambers
  - when stipulated in the Congress's Rules of Procedure, in particular Rule 36 and in the present terms of reference;
  - when stipulated in texts adopted by the Congress;
  - when instructed by the Congress Bureau or the Bureaux of the Chambers.
3. The Committee shall examine the action taken on texts adopted by the Congress or its chambers on the basis of their reports.
4. The Committee may propose activities to the Bureau for advancing local and regional democracy, in accordance with the priorities set by the Congress.
5. The Committee may organise conferences, hearings and other events on matters within its specific terms of reference and which are linked to its work programme, subject to availability of funds.
6. The Committee shall prepare the Congress contribution to other Council of Europe activities that come within its competence.
7. The Committee is entitled to establish and is responsible for developing working relations with the relevant Council of Europe structures and bodies, observers to the Congress and the relevant European and international organisations.
8. The Committee shall maintain close working relations with national associations of local and/or regional authorities in Council of Europe member states, with a view to:
  - collecting information on existing and emerging problems;
  - relaying the committee's recommendations for action at territorial level;
  - contributing to the follow-up to these recommendations.

### **B. SPECIFIC TERMS OF REFERENCE**

1. The Committee shall be responsible for:
  - 1.1. studying the role of local and regional authorities with regard to the major challenges of modern society;

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<sup>3</sup> Approved by the Congress Bureau on 3 December 2010, extract of CG/BUR(19)8.

- 1.2. ensuring a swift response to these challenges by recommending concrete action at national, regional and local level;
  - 1.3. preparing work on thematic issues such as social cohesion, intercultural dialogue, education, culture and sustainable development, from the point of view of the Council of Europe's core values and taking into account the priorities established by the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers and the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Local and Regional Government.
2. The Committee shall in particular:
    - 2.1. identify immediate and potential problems and situations encountered or emerging in member states of the Council of Europe that have an impact on local and regional democracy;
    - 2.2. prepare reports and organise debates during Congress sessions on current affairs and urgent situations and crises affecting local and regional authorities of the Council of Europe member states, and recommend concrete responses.
  3. The Committee shall follow the activities of and maintain working relations with the relevant Council of Europe bodies, in particular the subsidiary bodies of the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly, according to the issues that it treats.

## GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

### I. REPORTS IN PROGRESS

#### 1. Guidelines on the right of local authorities to be consulted by higher levels of government

*Rapporteur: Anders KNAPE, Sweden (L, EPP/CCE)*

*Session: November 2018*

In 2014, the Congress has adopted the Resolution 368 on “The Strategy on the right of local authorities to be consulted by other levels of government”, to strengthen the consultation processes between the different levels of government in the member States. In accordance with the Strategy, the Governance Committee will provide guidelines on the application of the relevant articles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government for national associations and/or delegations of the Congress to use as a tool and inspiration in their dialogue with their regional and national governments about improving consultation processes.

#### 2. Transparency and open governments

*Rapporteur: Andreas GALSTER, Germany (L, EPP/CCE)*

*Session: November 2018*

By giving citizens access to information about the decision-making process, transparency raises the level of accountability and acts as an effective deterrent to abuses of the political process. Developments in ICT enable local and regional authorities to ensure access to public information and to reach a wider public. They also have to make sure that the documents and information that they make available are accurate and of a high quality. This report will examine the measures and mechanisms that territorial authorities are taking to increase transparency at the grassroots level and establish guidelines for good practice.

#### 3. Conflicts of interests at local and regional levels

*Rapporteur: Peter JOHN, United Kingdom (L, SOC)*

*Session: November 2018*

Elected and appointed officials are required and expected to put the public service interest ahead of their personal interests. Yet conflicts of interests and clientelism may occur in many forms. The risk of this form of corruption can be particularly high at the local and regional levels. The report will survey codes of conduct and regulations, such as registers of financial and non-financial interests of elected and appointed representatives and their close family members, as well as rules on incompatibilities and on the acceptance of gifts and money that have been developed at the local and regional levels to regulate and combat conflict of interests and clientelism.

#### 4. European Code of Conduct for all persons involved in local and regional governance

*Rapporteur: Manuela BORA, Italy (R, SOC)*

*Session: November 2018*

Since its adoption by the Congress in 1999, the European Code of Conduct for the political integrity of local and regional elected representatives has served as a reference text for ethical behaviour of local and regional elected representatives in Europe. Recent developments in local and regional governance and the fight against corruption make it appropriate to revise this text. The Code will be updated to address new challenges such as the growing influence of internet. It will also be revised to apply to elected representatives as well as all those working in or for local and regional government.

#### 5. Coping with the debt burden: local authorities in financial difficulty

*Rapporteur: Heather MCVEY, United Kingdom (L, SOC)*

*Session: November 2018*

In its Resolution 372 (2014) “Adequate financial resources for local authorities”, the Congress agreed to prepare a report on countries facing particular problems meeting their undertakings under Article 9 paras. 1-4 of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. The results of this report will be used as the basis of discussions with the Committee of Ministers, in order to raise awareness of the need in



Council of Europe member states to improve the consultation processes between the different levels of government to ensure a better match between competences and resources.

## **6. Protecting whistleblowers**

*Rapporteur: Josan MEIJERS, Netherlands (R, SOC)*

*Session: March 2019*

Whistleblowing is a key tool in combatting corruption and enhancing transparency and accountability. However, whistleblowers will only expose corruption, misconduct, as well as violation of ethical rules if their right to speak is protected. Most whistleblower protection programmes focus on the national governmental level, which makes it relevant and necessary for the Congress to deal with this issue at the grassroots level. This report will build on the 2014 Committee of Ministers "Protection of whistleblowers" recommendation and examine its application in the local and regional context.

## **7. Nepotism (recruitment of staff)**

*Rapporteur: Harald BERGMANN, Netherlands (L, ILDG)*

*Session: March 2019*

Nepotism is a widely recognised problem in government, which can be highly damaging both in terms of the quality of government and of public trust. Local and regional governments, on account of their size and proximity, can be particularly vulnerable to this form of corruption.

This report will focus on the risks of nepotism in the recruitment and management of local and regional government staff, identifying good practice in preventing such behaviour, with a view to raising standards in human resource management in local and regional government.

## **8. Financial compensation of local and regional elected representatives and public officials in the exercise of their office**

*Co-Rapporteurs: Marta CAMPANARI-TALABER, Hungary (L, EPP/CCE) and Robert GRUMAN, Romania (R, EPP/CCE)*

*Session: March 2019*

The European Charter of Local Self-Government (Article 7) asserts that no citizen who is eligible should be prevented from seeking local and regional political office due to financial and material considerations or the conditions under which they would serve. The report will assess how local elected representatives (local councillors and mayors as well as their staff) are financially compensated for expenses incurred in the exercise of the office as well as compensation for loss or earnings or remuneration for work done and corresponding social welfare protection.

## **9. Fair distribution of taxes in transfrontier areas**

*Rapporteur: Karl-Heinz LAMBERTZ, Belgium (R, SOC)*

*Session: October 2019*

A substantial proportion of Europe's population live in cross-border areas. The lack of harmonisation of taxation of cross-border workers can lead to an unequal share of local revenues generated by cross-border flows, creating a winner-loser situation in which local and regional authorities from only one side of the border benefit from this exchange. The report will examine the situation in several transfrontier areas with a view to making recommendations to ensure a fairer distribution of the tax revenues generated by cross-border work in these areas.

## **10. Status of capital cities**

*Rapporteur: to be appointed*

*Session: October 2019*

Capital cities play a distinguished role in the life of their respective countries, of which they are often the economic, cultural, intellectual and political centres. They are also usually the largest municipalities, being the seat of the national government and main institutions. Care must therefore be taken to ensure that their status respects the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. The report will provide guidelines to local, regional and national governments to guarantee that capital cities' authorities' right to self-government is legally protected and that public responsibilities are managed by democratically elected representatives.

## **11. The use of languages by local and regional authorities**

*Rapporteur: Andrew DAWSON, United Kingdom (R, ECR)*

*Session: March 2020*

Many member states have important linguistic minorities. Language issues have featured in several recent complaints received by the Congress with regard to the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. Language barriers can prevent citizens from exercising their right to participate in the conduct of public affairs, and hinder citizens from using public services, in particular in social services. The report will examine the use of languages by local and regional authorities, as regards both to the access to public services and to the functioning of the organs of local democracy and draw on the experience of the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages to examine how language diversity challenges can be addressed by local and regional authorities to the benefit of all concerned.

## **II. EVENTS IN PREPARATION**

## **III. CO-OPERATION WITH OTHER COUNCIL OF EUROPE BODIES**

### **1. European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG)**

The Congress will deepen its working relations with the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG) on several topics. It shall contribute to the work of the Working groups on public ethics, on e-democracy and on the revision of Committee of Ministers' Recommendation CM/Rec(98)12 on supervision of local authorities. The Congress will invite CDDG members to its events and meetings, in particular in the field of prevention of corruption and promotion of public ethics.

### **2. European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ)**

The Congress will also develop working relations with the European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ), in particular through its participation in the work on whistleblowing and on lobbying activities.

## **IV. COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

- 6 November 2018 (35th Congress Session)
- 2 April 2019 (36th Congress Session)

## **GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE<sup>4</sup>**

### **A. GENERAL TERMS OF REFERENCE**

1. The Governance Committee may examine any matter within its specific terms of reference (see relevant provisions of the Rules of Procedure) and Resolution 309 (2010) on the reform of the Congress: structure and working methods.
2. The Committee shall prepare reports, including a resolution and/or recommendation, for debate in the Congress or its chambers:
  - when stipulated in the Congress's Rules of Procedure, in particular Rule 36 and in the present terms of reference;
  - when stipulated in texts adopted by the Congress;
  - when instructed by the Congress Bureau or the Bureaux of the Chambers.
3. The Committee shall examine the action taken on texts adopted by the Congress or its chambers on the basis of their reports.

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<sup>4</sup> Approved by the Bureau of the Congress on 3 December 2010, extract of CG/BUR(19)8

4. The Committee may propose activities to the Bureau for advancing local and regional democracy, in accordance with the priorities set by the Congress.
5. The Committee may organise conferences, hearings and other events on matters within its specific terms of reference and which are linked to its work programme, subject to availability of funds.
6. The Committee shall prepare the Congress contribution to other Council of Europe activities that come within its competence.
7. The Committee is entitled to establish and is responsible for developing working relations with the relevant Council of Europe structures and bodies, observers to the Congress and the relevant European and international organisations.
8. The Committee shall maintain close working relations with national associations of local and/or regional authorities in Council of Europe member states, with a view to:
  - collecting information on existing and emerging problems;
  - relaying the committee's recommendations for action at territorial level;
  - contributing to the follow-up to these recommendations.

## **B. SPECIFIC TERMS OF REFERENCE**

9. The Committee shall consider legal and political issues relating to the effective development of good governance and democracy at local and regional levels.
10. The Committee shall in particular consider:
  - 10.1. extending and developing the Council of Europe's legal instruments and recommendations in the field of local and regional democracy;
  - 10.2. issues relating to governance and the functioning of local and regional authorities, such as citizen participation at local and regional level, as well as, in accordance with Resolution 309 (2010), public finance, cross-border and interregional co-operation and e-democracy.
11. The Committee shall follow the activities of and prepare the Congress contribution to the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Local and Regional Government and its follow-up.
12. The Committee shall establish and develop working relations with the relevant Council of Europe structures and bodies, in particular with the Parliamentary Assembly's Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development (AS/Soc) and the relevant subsidiary bodies of the Committee of Ministers, such as the European Committee of Democracy and Governance (CDDG) and its subcommittees.

## MONITORING COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

### I. REPORTS TO BE ADOPTED IN 2018

#### 1. Local democracy in Andorra

*Rapporteurs: Gaye DOGANOGLU, Turkey, L, EPP/CCE / Zdenek BROZ, Czech Republic, L, ECR*  
*Session: March 2018*

#### 2. Local democracy in Monaco

*Rapporteurs: Michalis ANGELOPOULOS, Greece, L, EPP/CCE / Marianne HOLLINGER, Switzerland, L, ILDG*  
*Session: March 2018*

#### 3. Local democracy in Liechtenstein

*Rapporteurs: Artur TORRES PEREIRA, Portugal L, EPP/CCE / Marie KAUFMANN, Czech Republic, R, ILDG*  
*Session: March 2018*

#### 4. Local democracy in San Marino

*Rapporteurs: Harald BERGMANN, Netherlands, L, ILDG / Gunnar Axel AXELSSON, Iceland, L, SOC*  
*Session: March 2018*

#### 5. Local and regional democracy in Latvia

*Rapporteurs: Xavier CADORET, France, L, SOC / Marc COOLS, Belgium, L, ILDG*  
*Session: March 2018*

#### 6. Congress Human Rights Handbook for Local and Regional Authorities

*Rapporteur: Harald BERGMANN, Netherlands, L, ILDG*  
*Session: March 2018*

#### 7. Local democracy in the Republic of Moldova: situation of local elected representatives

*Rapporteurs: Marc COOLS, Belgium, L, ILDG / Gunn Marit HELGESEN, Norway, R, EPP/CCE*  
*Session: March 2018*

#### 8. High-level visit in Ukraine

*Rapporteurs: Marc COOLS, Belgium, L, ILDG / Gunn Marit HELGESEN, Norway, R, EPP/CCE*  
*Session: March 2018*

#### 9. Local democracy in Lithuania

*Rapporteurs: Artur TORRES PEREIRA, Portugal (L, EPP/CCE) / Sigurdur Bjorn BLONDAL, Iceland, R, ILDG*  
*Session: November 2018*

#### 10. Local democracy in Slovenia

*Rapporteurs: Henrik Brade JOHANSEN, Denmark, L, ILDG / Gaye DOGANOGLU, Turkey, L, EPP/CCE*  
*Session: November 2018*

#### 11. Local and regional democracy in Georgia

*Rapporteurs: Michalis ANGELOPOULOS, Greece, L, EPP/CCE / Stewart DICKSON, United Kingdom, R, ILDG*  
*Session: November 2018*

## II. 2018 ACTIVITIES

### Monitoring visits:

- **Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2018 (20-22 November)** (1<sup>st</sup> visit)

*Rapporteurs: Lelia HUNZIKER, Switzerland, L, SOC / Carla DEJONGHE, Belgium, R, ILDG*

- **Lithuania (23-24 January 2018)**

*Rapporteurs: Artur TORRES PEREIRA, Portugal (L, EPP/CCE) / Sigurdur Bjorn BLONDAL, Iceland, R, ILDG*

- **Slovenia, 2018 (20-22 February)**

*Rapporteurs: Henrik Brade JOHANSEN, Denmark, L, ILDG / Gaye DOGANOGLU, Turkey, L, EPP/CCE*

- **Georgia 2018 (17-19 April)**

*Rapporteurs: Michalis ANGELOPOULOS, Greece, L, EPP/CCE / Stewart DICKSON, United Kingdom, R, ILDG*

- **Poland, 2018 (5-7 June 2018)**

*Rapporteurs: David BARO RIBA, Andorra, L, NI-NR / Pascal MANGIN, France, R, EPP/CCE*

- **Republic of Moldova, 2018 (13-15 June 2018)**

*Rapporteurs: Marc COOLS, Belgium, L, ILDG / Gunn Marit HELGESEN, Norway, R, EPP/CCE*

- **Russian Federation, 2018 (23-25 Octobre)** (1<sup>st</sup> visit)

*Rapporteurs: Jakob WIENEN, Netherlands, L, EPP/CCE / Stewart DICKSON, United Kingdom, R, ILDG*

### Seminars:

- **Round table on the European Charter on Local Self-Government**

*Minsk, Belarus (11-12 September 2018)*

## III. 2019 ACTIVITIES (DEPENDING ON THE BUDGETARY SITUATION)

### Monitoring visits:

- **Albania**
- **Armenia**
- **Azerbaijan**
- **Austria**
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina** (2<sup>nd</sup> visit)
- **Germany**
- **Hungary**
- **Ireland**
- **Portugal**
- **Romania**
- **Russian Federation** (2<sup>nd</sup> visit)
- **Spain**
- **Turkey** (dates to be confirmed)
- **Ukraine**



#### **IV. 2020 ACTIVITIES (DEPENDING ON THE BUDGETARY SITUATION)**

##### **Monitoring visits:**

- **Belgium**
- **Bulgaria**
- **Czech Republic**
- **Denmark**
- **Netherlands**
- **Sweden**
- **The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**
- **United Kingdom**

#### **V. ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSIONS<sup>5</sup>:**

##### **Election Assessment Mission, municipal elections in Tunisia, 6 May 2018**

Invitation sent by the authorities on 17 July 2017; decision taken by the Congress Bureau on 25 April 2018 to deploy an assessment mission, according to Congress rules.

*Head of Delegation / Rapporteur: Xavier CADORET, France, L, SOC*

##### **Election Assessment Mission, municipal elections in The Republic of Moldova, 20 May 2018**

Invitation sent by the authorities on 13 April 2018; decision taken by the Congress Bureau on 16 April 2018 to deploy an assessment mission, according to Congress rules.

*Head of Delegation / Rapporteur: Gunn Marit HELGESEN, Norway, R, PPE/CCE*

##### **Targeted electoral activities**

##### **Visit of the Congress Reflection Group on Mostar to Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajevo and Mostar) from 24 to 27 June 2018**

*Members of the Group: Anders KNAPE, Sweden, L (PPE/CCE), Piero FASSINO, Italy, L (SOC), Stewart DICKSON, United Kingdom, R, ILDG; Franz SCHAUSBERGER (EU Committee of the Regions)*

##### **Election observation country reports**

##### **Regional elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Election date: 7 October 2018

Head of Delegation, Rapporteur: tbd

Session: March 2019

##### **Municipal elections in The Netherlands**

*Head of Delegation / Rapporteur: Stewart DICKSON, United Kingdom, R, ILDG*

Session: November 2018

##### **Municipal elections in Tunisia**

*Head of Delegation / Rapporteur: Xavier CADORET, France, L, SOC*

Session: November 2018

##### **Local elections in Chisinau, Balti and five other municipalities (Republic of Moldova)**

*Head of Delegation / Rapporteur: Gunn Marit HELGESEN, Norway, R, PPE/CCE*

Session: November 2018

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<sup>5</sup> The Congress observes local / regional elections only upon the invitation by the respective (member) State.

## VI. OTHERS

### **Voting rights at local level as an element of successful long-term integration of migrants and IDPs in Europe's municipalities and regions**

*Rapporteur: Jakob (Jos) WIENEN, the Netherlands, L, EPP/CCE*

Session: November 2018

## **MONITORING COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### **A. GENERAL TERMS OF REFERENCE**

1. The Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by member states of the European Charter of Local Self-Government (hereafter referred to as the "Monitoring Committee"), may examine any matter within its respective mandate, in line with the relevant provisions of the Congress' Rules of Procedure.
2. The Monitoring Committee shall prepare Reports, including a Resolution and/or Recommendation, for debate in the Congress or its Chambers:
  - when stipulated in the relevant Congress's Rules of Procedure and in the present terms of reference;
  - when stipulated in texts adopted by the Congress;
  - when instructed by the Congress' Bureau or the Bureaux of the Chambers.
3. The Monitoring Committee shall examine the action taken on texts adopted by the Congress or its Chambers on the basis of their Reports.
4. The Monitoring Committee may propose activities to the Congress' Bureau for advancing local and regional democracy, in accordance with the political priorities set by the Congress.
5. The Monitoring Committee may organise conferences, hearings and other events on matters within its specific terms of reference and which are linked to its work programme, subject to availability of funds.
6. The Monitoring Committee shall prepare the Congress' contribution to other Council of Europe activities that come within its competence.
7. The Monitoring Committee is entitled to establish and is responsible for developing working relations with the relevant Council of Europe structures and bodies, observers to the Congress and with the relevant European and international organisations.
8. The Monitoring Committee shall maintain close working relations with national associations of local and/or regional authorities in Council of Europe member states, with a view to:
  - collecting information on existing and emerging problems;
  - relaying the Committee's recommendations for action at territorial level;
  - contributing to the follow-up to these recommendations.

### **B. SPECIFIC TERMS OF REFERENCE**

9. In accordance with the provisions of the relevant Congress' Rules of Procedure, the Monitoring Committee is responsible for ensuring that member states develop and maintain local and regional democracy, in full compliance with their obligations under the European Charter on Local Self-Government and possibly its Additional Protocol once entered into force. This also applies to states preparing to ratify the Charter.
10. The Monitoring Committee is responsible, in particular, for:
  - 10.1. monitoring the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government;
  - 10.2. preparing Reports/Resolutions/Recommendations on the situation of local and regional democracy in Europe;

- 10.3. monitoring specific questions related to local and regional democracy in member states;
  - 10.4. discussing and adopting Reports/Resolutions/Recommendations following the observation of local/regional elections and discussing electoral assessments;
  - 10.5. organising post-monitoring/post-observation activities at the request of national authorities;
  - 10.6. ensuring that its recommendations to member states are followed up.
11. The Monitoring Committee shall, in particular, ensure:
- 11.1. a regular general country-by-country monitoring mission in each member state approximately every five years;
  - 11.2. the examination of a particular aspect of the Charter, upon decision of the Congress' Bureau or the Committee;
  - 11.3. fact-finding missions to look into specific cases of concern upon decision of the Bureau of the Committee;
  - 11.4. post-monitoring missions to pursue the political dialogue with national authorities in the framework of a post-monitoring programme (PMP) which includes post-monitoring units (PMU) set up on the basis of the main recommendations; such mission give rise to a roadmap which contains concrete steps for the implementation of the recommendations adopted by the Congress.
12. In its monitoring work, the Monitoring Committee shall particularly take into consideration:
- 12.1. the conclusions/Resolutions/Recommendations of Congress' election observation missions;
  - 12.2. the situation of Human Rights at local and regional level in Europe and shall, on a regular basis, elaborate a Report on this specific issue.
13. The Monitoring Committee shall devise a strategy to strengthen the capacity of domestic monitoring bodies to exercise their oversight function in an efficient way.
14. On the basis of these activities, the Monitoring Committee shall contribute to clarifying the interpretation of the Council of Europe's legal instruments, and other texts in the field of local and regional democracy, notably the European Charter of Local Self-Government, the relevant Resolutions and Recommendations adopted by the Congress and the Reference Framework for Regional Democracy.
15. The Monitoring Committee shall make proposals to the Bureau of the Congress to improve the application of the European Charter on Local Self-Government.
16. The Monitoring Committee shall initiate a post-monitoring or a post-observation dialogue and elaborate, when necessary, targeted programmes of assistance on common issues identified during monitoring visits, in order to provide concrete assistance to local and regional authorities and an efficient follow-up to its recommendations.
17. The Monitoring Committee shall establish and develop working relations with the relevant Council of Europe structures and bodies, in particular with the relevant subsidiary bodies of the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly's Committee on **the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by member states of the Council of Europe, the Commissioner on Human Rights** and the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission).

**A**s part of its monitoring of local and regional democracy in Europe, the Congress maintains a regular dialogue with member states of the Council of Europe. The Committee of Ministers, which includes the 47 Foreign Ministers of these states, the Conference of Ministers responsible for local and regional authorities, as well as its Steering Committees are partners in this regard.

Several times a year, the President and the Secretary General of the Congress provide the representatives of the 47 member states in the Committee of Ministers with a record of its activities and hold an exchange of views.



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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, including all members of the European Union. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is an institution of the Council of Europe, responsible for strengthening local and regional democracy in its 47 member states. Composed of two chambers – the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions – and three committees, it brings together 648 elected officials representing more than 200 000 local and regional authorities.

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