



**ELDW Annual Coordination Meeting 2021 - Online, 26 February 2021**

## Speech by Bryony RUDKIN, Congress Thematic Spokesperson on the ELDW

*Check against delivery - Seul le prononcé fait foi*

**Dear Participants of the ELDW 2020 Edition,**

**Dear National Coordinators of the European Local Democracy Week,**

First of all, thank you very much for joining us online, and for your tireless efforts to promote the ELDW initiative and organise citizen participation activities even despite the Covid-19 pandemic.

We would have loved to be able to welcome you in Strasbourg, but the pandemic prevented us from meeting in person this year. I certainly hope that this crisis will be overcome soon and that we will be able to meet in Strasbourg in good health next year, in order to discuss local and regional democracy in Europe.

**Dear participants,**

In 2020, the European Local Democracy Week took place in difficult circumstances indeed. But despite the obstacles, local and regional authorities and their associations worked hard to ensure their active participation in the ELDW. Seeing local authorities working to enhance democratic participation and sharing their best practices on the ELDW website even under these difficult conditions gave us great hope for the future.

Therefore, let me congratulate the 196 local and regional authorities and their 8 associations for organising more than 500 activities throughout last year. I would like to also thank especially the participants who organised Flagship Events and celebrated the 35th anniversary of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. Your devoted work in 19 countries made the European Local Democracy Week a truly pan-European event. I hope that you will pursue your efforts during the 2021 Edition to involve even more citizens, from all groups of the population, as the local level remains the bedrock of a resilient and vibrant participatory democracy.

For the last year's edition, 20 municipalities and associations have been awarded the "Partner of the ELDW 2020" title by the Bureau of the Congress. As usual, the award ceremony will be held at the end of the meeting, however this time, it will be online, and the secretariat will mail your Certificates to your postal address. I would encourage you to take a photo with your certificate and share it with the secretariat and on your social media channels as well. This way we can put together our family photo while respecting social distancing rules.

In the meeting file, you can find the Assessment report of the ELDW 2020 Edition. In this report, you will see the analysis of the initiative over the past decade, since 2010, the figures of the participation and a breakdown by countries, comparative charts, as well as the best practices of the past year. This report can be always used as a guide for your future activities. For further details and to see previous reports, I invite you to visit the website and its "ELDW edition" section.

The year 2020 was also the last year under the theme "Local Democracy: building trust". Today, after the presentations, we will discuss the future activities of the ELDW and its new biennial theme. In 2020, we already had preliminary exchanges on this subject. In the meeting file, you will see a concept paper based on these exchanges. After the lunch break, I will invite you to take an active part in discussions on the possible new theme.

**Dear participants,**

The Covid-19 pandemic showed us, as local and regional elected representatives, that we should be prepared to protect our communities and citizens from the crisis. Protecting the environment and strengthening resilience of our communities are of paramount importance for achieving this objective. Not only the pandemic but also environmental disasters have hit our societies over the past year. On this occasion, I also wish to express solidarity with colleagues, whose citizens suffered from natural disasters in their cities in 2020. As the past year showed us, we must stay prepared, both as local and regional elected representatives of our citizens and as service providers, and we must make our communities sustainable and resilient.

I would like to thank you, dear Participants and National Coordinators, for your commitment and for making the ELDW a thriving and even more promising initiative.