

12 October 2020

## Statement by Bryony RUDKIN (United Kingdom, SOC/G/PD), Congress Thematic Spokesperson on the European Local Democracy Week

*Check against delivery - Seul le prononcé fait foi*

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Dear National Coordinators of European Local Democracy Week,  
Dear Colleagues,

This year the European Local Democracy Week is taking place in the conditions that the world has never seen before.

As Spokesperson on the European Local Democracy Week, I congratulate those of you who have managed, despite the difficult circumstances, to organise successful events this year and continued to engage citizens at local level, even as the pandemic COVID-19 has affected our countries in an unprecedented way and had a deep impact on the lives of our communities.

In the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, we attach great importance to promoting and fostering democratic participation in local and regional communities and building trust between citizens and grassroots authorities all over Europe. "Local democracy: building trust" is indeed the theme of the European Local Democracy Week this year.

The COVID crisis has brought to the forefront the crucial importance of trust and citizens' confidence in public authorities and institutions of governance, especially in their communities, at the level closest to them. The pandemic compels us to work even harder on communicating with citizens and engaging them in public debate and decision making in response to the crisis. We must find new, innovative ways of doing so.

COVID has not stopped us from adapting our activities to continue the pursuit of our objectives. Meanwhile, the crisis has highlighted yet again

How valuable space for public participation is,  
The importance of the mission local and regional authorities,  
How effectively digital tools can be used for communicating with our citizens and  
How important it is to pay special attention to vulnerable groups.

Therefore, I invite you all to be a voice of the European Local Democracy Week and organise your events in the week of 15 October and until the end of the year, using online tools. Because the importance of co-designing local democracy together with citizens, and practicing open government, remains crucial during the pandemic.

We stand ready to assist you and encourage you to reach out to our ELDW to coordinate your action.