

Congress Monitoring Committee alarmed by the shrinking space of the opposition in some member States

On 3 July 2025, the Monitoring Committee of the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities met in Strasbourg, France and adopted the following declaration:

"The Monitoring Committee is deeply alarmed by the increasing obstacles faced by opposition leaders and elected representatives at local and regional levels in certain Council of Europe member States. The situations in Türkiye and Georgia were specifically addressed by the Committee. These developments constitute clear signs of democratic backsliding, as well as shrinking space for the opposition and dissenting voices.

"The ability of opposition members to freely express their views, operate, stand for election and campaign, is one of the foundations of a healthy democracy at all levels of governance. The growing numbers of dismissals, arrests, intimidation and prosecutions of opposition representatives has a chilling effect on elections and local self-governance in these member States. Such measures threaten their right to actively exercise their democratic mandates, in contradiction to the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

"Recalling the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy, the Committee reaffirms its strong commitment to genuine political pluralism at grassroot level, recognising it as essential for fostering an environment upholding democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Only then can citizens, regardless of their political views, be able to actively, freely, and equally participate in local and regional public life, without fear of retribution."

In light of these highly worrying developments, members of the Monitoring Committee propose to the Bureau that a debate on the situation of opposition representatives should be held at the next Congress session, in October 2025, in Strasbourg.