

Submission to the Call for Contributions
High-Level Conference on the European Social Charter – Chişinău 2026

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Title:

Institutionalising the Role of Local and Regional Authorities in Monitoring Social Rights Implementation

1. Introduction And Context

The Council of Europe's efforts to protect and promote social rights through the European Social Charter are increasingly dependent on effective multi-level governance. While local and regional authorities are at the heart of ensuring essential social rights, such as access to housing, education, social assistance and healthcare, they are underrepresented in the Charter's monitoring and follow-up mechanisms.

This contribution highlights the important role of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities as an internal Council of Europe body in bridging the gap between the Charter's provisions and their practical realisation at a local and regional level. It proposes a concrete, structured mechanism to reinforce intra-institutional coordination on social rights, in line with the objectives of the Charter's reform.

2. Problem: Fragmentation Between Local Practice and Treaty Monitoring.

Despite subnational governments playing an essential role in delivering social rights, the current monitoring mechanisms for the Charter primarily rely on national-level data and reporting. This leads to the following issues:

- underrepresentation of local and regional challenges, especially in marginalised, post-conflict or rural regions;
- missed opportunities to showcase local and regional innovation and good practices in social rights delivery;
- weak links between the Congress's political mandate and the technical assessments of the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR).

A more structured and formalised approach to local and regional participation in Charter monitoring would enhance the quality and legitimacy of the process.

3. Proposal: A Congress–Charter Dialogue Mechanism

I propose establishing a Charter Dialogue Mechanism within the Council of Europe to enable regular and meaningful cooperation between the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the treaty bodies of the Charter.

This mechanism would include:

- annual thematic dialogues between the Congress and the ECSR, focusing on selected rights (e.g. housing, youth access to employment and the integration of displaced persons);
- pilot consultations with municipalities and regional councils during state reporting cycles or thematic reviews;
- inclusion of local-level (regional level) data and case studies gathered by Congress rapporteurs in Charter compliance reports and General Observations;
- opportunities for local and regional authorities to present charter-related practices at the High-Level Conference and future Council of Europe events.

4. Added value and impact

This proposal would:

- increase data quality and implementation accuracy by reflecting real-world delivery and gaps;
 - improve ownership and visibility of the Charter at subnational levels;
 - strengthen the Congress's role as a key player in governance of social rights, in line with the Council's broader objectives of democratic resilience and local and regional empowerment.
- It would also support the implementation of the 2022–2023 Charter reform by facilitating cooperation between Council bodies.

5. Suggested Conference Topics (Three Priorities)

The following topics are proposed for inclusion as priorities for the plenary sessions or side events at the 2026 Conference:

1. 'The role of local and regional authorities in delivering and monitoring social rights'.
2. 'Bringing the Charter closer to citizens: subnational innovation in social rights protection' and 'intra-institutional coordination for social rights'.
3. 'Intra-institutional coordination for social rights: strengthening the Council of Europe's internal partnerships'.

6. Conclusion

Institutionalising cooperation between the Congress and the treaty bodies of the Charter is not just a procedural improvement; it is a step towards ensuring the effective and equitable realisation of social rights across Europe. Local and regional authorities are innovators and guardians, as well as enforcers. Structured involvement of local and regional authorities will enhance the relevance, legitimacy and impact of the Charter on the ground.