

## *The Bureau of the Congress*

## To all members of the Congress

**Meeting of the Bureau of the Congress**  
**Tuesday 9 June 2020**

### **Videoconference**

**Summary of decisions** CG-BUR(2020)33-DEC<sup>1</sup>  
7 July 2020

The Bureau of the Congress,

meeting via videoconference on 9 June 2020 with Anders KNAPE, President of the Congress, in the chair, considered the following items:

- **draft agenda:** adopted the draft agenda [CG-BUR(2020)33OJprov];
- **decisions taken by written procedure (e-mail) between 16 March and 9 June 2020 and the Bureau documents published in the same period:** took note of documents CG-BUR(2020)33-INF24 and CG-BUR(2020)33-INF25;
- **communication by the President and the Secretary General of the Congress:**
  - took note of the political activities of the President during the COVID-19 lockdown, including declarations on the consultation of the local level during emergency situations, on Latvia, on Turkey, and a remote meeting with the Mayor of Istanbul [CG-BUR(2020)33-INF26] [News-21.04.2020] [News-03.06.2020];
  - decided to contribute to the declaration which will be adopted by the Ministers of foreign affairs at the Athens ministerial session on 4 November 2020; asked the presidents of the chambers to prepare the Congress' contribution for the Bureau's approval;
  - took note of the appointment of Renate ZIKMUND as Head of the Department of Statutory Activities, External Relations and Co-operation (SAERC) as of 1 April 2020, of the appointment of Stéphanie POIREL as the Acting Head of the Statutory Activities Division as of 1 June 2020 and of information concerning the appointment procedure for the new director; entrusted the President of the Congress and the presidents of the chambers with holding an exchange with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe about her proposal for appointing the Director of the Congress – according to Article 15.4 of the Congress Charter – so that the Director may take office as of September 2020;
  - took note of the possible impact of sanitary regulations due to the COVID-19 pandemic on the preparation of meetings after the summer and agreed that the secretariat would take the necessary steps, e.g. meetings via videoconference, in close co-ordination with the three Presidents and the chairpersons of the committees;
  - took note of the activities undertaken by the secretariat since the last meeting, including the setting up of a dedicated website to exchange good practices of local and regional authorities on the COVID-19 pandemic: <https://covid-congress-hub.org/en/>;

<sup>1</sup> Adopted by the Bureau of the Congress on 30 June 2020 by written procedure (e-mail).

- ➔ **budget of the Congress:** was informed by the Secretary General of the Congress of the use of the 2020 budget appropriations [CG/BUR(2020)33-INF28] as at 25 May 2020, and of the outlook for the financial situation of the Congress for the rest of 2020 and 2021;
- ➔ **national delegations** (rapporteurs: Harald SONDEREGGER, Austria (R, EPP/CCE), and Barbara TOCE, Italy (L, SOC/G/PD):
  - approved the changes and took note of the current or future departures in the delegations of Denmark, Germany, Italy and Lithuania [CG-BUR(2020)33-16];
  - took note of the Committee of Ministers' decision [CM/Del/Dec(2020)1375/12.1] [News-07.05.2020] to extend the mandate of the current Congress members until the opening of the March 2021 renewal session; as a consequence, holders of elected functions in the Bureau and the committees will remain in office until then and the new mandate of 5 years will run from March 2021 to March 2026 and the following renewal of the Bureau and chairs/vice-chairs of the committees will take place in October 2023;
- ➔ **39th Session of the Congress** (Strasbourg, 27-29 October 2020):
  - considered the request by the Head of the Greek delegation to change the dates of the October 2020 session [CG-BUR(2020)33-18] due to the Greek National Day on 28 October, and deemed it not feasible;
  - approved the timetable of meetings [CG(2020)39-01prov] and the preliminary draft agenda of the 39th Session [CG(2020)39-OJprov] whose theme will be "COVID-19 – local and regional authorities at the frontline (working title)";
  - agreed that the report on the observation of local elections 2019 in the Republic of Moldova be presented for adoption via tacit procedure (Rule 25 of the Congress Rules and Procedures) in the framework of the October 2020 session;
  - concerning the exhibitions and side-events [CG-BUR(2020)33-19] to be organised during this session, agreed in principle to the two following options:
    - i. option 1 (if sanitary, travel and other conditions allow for the holding of a normal session with members participating without restrictions): approve all requests for exhibitions and the following side-events;
    - ii. option 2 (if there are sanitary or any other restrictions in place): accept neither the exhibitions nor the side-events;
  - instructed the secretariat to evaluate in good time, in liaison with the three Presidents, which option to implement, depending on the sanitary, travel and other conditions both in France and in Europe in general, and to inform the organisers by mid-September at the latest;
- ➔ **Congress priorities** (rapporteurs: Gunn Marit HELGESEN, Norway (R, EPP/CCE), and Xavier CADORET, France (L, SOC/G/PD):
  - agreed that the next priorities to be adopted by the Congress would cover the period 2021-2026 to take into account the extended mandate for Congress members;
  - took note of the revised timetable for the preparation of the Congress priorities [CG-BUR(2020)33-INF29] and of the compendium of contributions [CG-BUR(2020)33-INF30];
  - asked the rapporteurs to prepare for the December 2020 Bureau meeting a new document on draft priorities 2021-2026, taking into account the COVID-19 oriented contributions received in the meantime;
- ➔ **activities of the committees:**
  - took note of the activity reports by the chairpersons of the committees;
  - endorsed the reflection paper [CG-BUR(2020)33-22] on "local and regional elections in times of COVID-19 pandemic";
  - approved the following terms of reference for activities contained in Document [CG-BUR(2020)33-20]:
    - i. report by the Monitoring Committee on "local and regional elections in major crisis situations" – for adoption by the Congress in the plenary session of October 2020;
    - ii. report by the Governance Committee on "Regional identities: improving dialogue to reduce regional tensions" – for adoption in the Chamber of Regions in October 2021;
    - iii. report by the Current Affairs Committee on "the role and responsibilities of local government in protecting LGBTI+<sup>2</sup> persons in the context of rising extremism and homophobia" – for adoption by the Congress in the plenary session of March 2021;

---

<sup>2</sup> LGBTI+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex is an acronym intended to encompass anyone who is diverse in their sex, sexuality and/or gender.

- **local and regional elections:** was informed of the exchange of letters with the Chair of the Electoral Commission of the Republic of Serbia [CG-BUR(2020)33-INF37] about the local elections of 21 June 2020 which cannot be observed by the Congress as Council of Europe official journeys are not yet authorised;
- **local and regional democracy:**
  - Turkey: took note of the exchange of correspondence with Fayik YAGIZAY, Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), Representative for the European Institutions in Strasbourg [CG-BUR(2020)33-INF33] about the detention of mayors of HDP-run Turkish municipalities; was informed that the situation of Nurhayat ALTUN, currently in detention, remained unchanged;
  - Latvia: took note of the letter from the national delegation on progress of the administrative reform in Latvia [CG-BUR(2020)33-INF38] and of the statement by Xavier CADORET, President of the Chamber of Local Authorities and rapporteur on Latvia, published on 28 May 2020, calling the Latvian authorities to suspend the territorial reform to allow for proper consultation;
  - approved a Bureau declaration [CG-BUR(2020)33-25]<sup>3</sup> on the impact of central government COVID-measures on local and regional authorities and agreed to its publication;
- **Congress Administrative Rules:** considered the proposed revisions to Administrative Rules 1 to 9 [CG-BUR(2020)33-21], and tasked the secretariat with submitting these modifications to all Congress members for consultation and comment by 12 September 2020, with a view to their final adoption on 22 September and immediate entry into force;
- **North-South Centre (NSC):** considered the list of proposed candidates for the North-South Prize 2020 [CG-BUR(2020)33-23] and selected Carlo SOMMARUGA, State Councillor for the Canton of Geneva, Switzerland, for the North and Yvonne AKI-SAWYERR, Mayor of Freetown, Sierra Leone, for the South as the Congress's candidates; their names will be sent to the organisers of the Prize;
- **Committee of Ministers (CM):** took note of the reply to Congress Recommendation 435 (2019): "The protection of whistle-blowers – Challenges and opportunities for local and regional government" [CM/Cong(2020)Rec435-final] and agreed to forward it to the Governance Committee for its decision on follow-up to be given;
- **European Committee of the Regions (CoR):** heard an oral information by the Secretary General on recent exchanges with the CoR concerning: a political assessment of the COVID impact on local and regional democracy in Europe requested by September 2020 for a CoR report; two high-level group meetings (in early July and December 2020); the CoR President would be invited to speak in a 2021 session of the Congress;
- **bureaux meetings and sessions in 2020 and 2021:**
  - approved the updated calendar of bureaux meetings and session in 2020 [CG-BUR(2020)33-24];
  - approved the dates of the two sessions in 2021 (23-25 March and 26-28 October), as well as 12 February and 22 March for the two first Bureau meetings in 2021; agreed that the rest of the 2021 dates would be approved at the September 2020 meeting, subject to final approval by the new Bureau to be elected at the March 2021 Session [CG-BUR(2020)33-25];
- **COVID-19 challenges for and responses in member States and the role of local and regional authorities:** held an exchange of views;
- **exchange of views with Marija PEJČINOVIĆ BURIĆ, Secretary General of the Council of Europe:** discussed the role and prospects of the Council of Europe and the Congress in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The next meeting of the Bureau of the Congress will be held in Strasbourg on 22 September 2020.

---

<sup>3</sup> See text in appendix 1.

**Items and documents for information on the meeting agenda:**

- |       |                                |   |
|-------|--------------------------------|---|
| 3.2   | [CG-BUR(2020)33-INF27]         | Missions and meetings of the Secretary General of the Congress (25.03.2020-02.06.2020)  |
| 3.3   | [CG-BUR(2020)33-INF34]         | Congress' co-operation activities as at 29 May 2020   |
| 8.1   | [News-06.03.2020]              | Congress monitoring visit to Ukraine  |
| 9.1   | [Calendar]                     | Calendar of local and regional elections 2020;  |
| 9.2   | [CG-BUR(2020)33-INF36]         | Exchange of letters with Vitaly KLITSCHKO, President of the Association of Ukrainian Cities   |
| 9.4   | [Press-release-OHR-23.05.2020] | Bosnia and Herzegovina  |
| 12.2  | [News-29.04.2020]              | North South Centre Bureau meeting (29 April 2020)   |
|       | [News-14.04.2020]              | Appeal "One Humanity – our Humanity"  |
|       | [News-30.04.2020]              | Campaign North South Centre   |
| 13.   | [Concept note]                 | World Forum for Democracy (Strasbourg, 16-18 November 2020) – theme "Can democracy save the environment?"   |
| 14.1  | [CM/Del/Dec(2020)1366/1.7]     | Complementary procedure in response to a serious violation by a member State of its statutory obligations prepared by the Parliamentary Assembly and agreed by the Committee of Ministers |
| 14.1  | [CM/Del/Dec(2020)1366/1.7-app] | Practical modalities of the complementary procedure   |
| 14.3- | [CM/Inf(2020)9]                | Stocktaking of the outgoing Georgian presidency (27 November 2019 – 15 May 2020)  |
| 14.4  | [CM/Inf(2020)10]               | Priorities of the Greek Presidency (15 May – 4 November 2020)   |
|       | [News-15.05.2020]              | "Congress supports the priorities of the Greek Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers to respond to the COVID-19 crisis"  |
| 15.2  | [CG-BUR(2020)33-INF31]         | List of Congress members in the European Committee of the Regions   |
| 15.2  | [CG-BUR(2020)33-INF35]         | CoR Bureau and chairs and vice-chairs of the committees and political groups  |
| 17.   | [CG-BUR(2020)33-INF32]         | Updated timetable of events   |

Copy for information:

Secretariat: Director of the Private Office, Miroslav PAPA; Markus ADELSBACH

Secretariat of the Committee of Ministers: Geneviève MAYER; Katherine ANDERSON

Parliamentary Assembly: Secretary General; Private Office of the President; AS/Soc Committee

Directors General

Secretaries of the national delegations and political groups of the Congress

Congress Secretariat

Brussels Office

Permanent Representations to the Council of Europe

- Appendices:
1. Bureau declaration
  2. list of participants

## **Declaration on the impact of central government COVID-measures on local and regional authorities**

(adopted by the Bureau of the Congress on 9 June 2020)

The Congress Bureau expresses its concern about the democratic self-governance and financial autonomy of local and regional authorities in Council of Europe member States, in particular in view of recovery plans in the aftermath of the crisis.

It highlights the fact that some governments have imposed, within or outside the context of states of emergency, measures with far-reaching consequences for fundamental rights and freedoms and the democratic functioning which have also impacted the sub-national level - be it through relocation of powers, increase of central states' surveillance or postponement of local and regional elections.

Stressing the crucial role of municipalities and regions in the management of health care, service delivery and awareness of citizens, particularly in major crisis situations, the Bureau underlines the fact that local and regional authorities have been among those most affected by the decline in economic output.

While recognising the special tasks and responsibilities of central governments in crisis situations, the Bureau makes specific reference to the basic principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Governance such as consultation and financial autonomy and urges the national authorities concerned to remove restrictions and restore democratic functioning at the local level, in full compliance with the Charter. Extraordinary measures must always be temporary only and under democratic control.

The Bureau further calls on national authorities to ensure, in the frame of recovery plans, that cities and regions will receive the necessary support to overcome the unprecedented economic downturn stemming from COVID-19 and to become resilient in the face of possible future major crisis situations.

In conclusion, the Bureau emphasises the role of European cities and regions as key partners of national governments for the restoration of the economy, social life and normal democratic functioning at the local and regional level. They must be involved in setting-up mechanisms and procedures for future emergency situations in their role as actors of multi-level governance.

**List of participants****Members of the Bureau:**

Anders KNAPE, Sweden (L, EPP/CCE), President of the Congress  
 Gunn Marit HELGESEN, Norway (R, EPP/CCE), President of the Chamber of Regions  
 Xavier CADORET, France (L, SOC/G/PD), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities  
 Karl-Heinz LAMBERTZ, Belgium (R, SOC/G/PD)  
 Barbara TOCE, Italy (L, SOC/G/PD)  
 Harald SONDEREGGER, Austria (R, EPP/CCE)  
 Liisa ANSALA, Finland (L, ILDG)  
 Tamar TALIAHVILI, Georgia (R, SOC/G/PD)  
 John WARMISHAM, United Kingdom (L, SOC/G/PD)  
 Yuliya SVITLYCHINA, Ukraine (R, ILDG)  
 Clemens LAMMERSKITTEN, Germany (L, EPP/CCE)  
 Anna MAGYAR, Hungary (R, EPP/CCE) ..... apologised for absence  
 Emin YERITSYAN, Armenia (L, EPP/CCE) ..... apologised for absence  
 Alexander DROZDENKO, Russian Federation (R, EPP/CCE)  
 Tunç SOYER, Turkey (R, SOC/G/PD)

**Past President:**

Gudrun MOSLER-TÖRNSTRÖM, Austria (L, SOC/G/PD)

**Chairs of Congress political groups:**

Bernd VOEHRINGER, Germany (L, EPP/CCE)  
 Yoomi RENSTRÖM, Sweden (L, SOC/G/PD), Chair *ad interim*  
 Marc COOLS, Belgium (L, ILDG)  
 Svitlana BOHATYRCHUK KRYVKO, Ukraine (R, ECR) [*replaced by Andrew BOFF, United Kingdom*]

**Chairs of committees:**

Leendert VERBEEK, Netherlands (R, SOC/G/PD), Monitoring Committee  
 Robert-Csongor GRÜMAN, Romania (R, EPP/CCE), Governance Committee  
 Gabriele NEFF, Germany (L, ILDG), Current Affairs Committee

**Private Office of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe:**

Marija PEJČINOVIĆ BURIĆ, Secretary General  
 Miroslav PAPA, Director of the Private Office  
 Markus ADELSBACH, Adviser

**Statutory partners:**

Assembly of European Regions (AER): ---  
 Council of European Municipalities and Regions: ---

**Advisors:**

Maria BIGDAY (Secretary of the ILDG)  
 Tatiana BOKUCHAVA (advisor to Tamar TALIAHVILI)  
 Sabine DREES (advisor to Clemens LAMMERSKITTEN)  
 Onur ERYÜCE (advisor to Tunç SOYER)  
 Andreas GREITER (advisor to Harald SONDEREGGER)  
 Knut HJORTH-JOHANSEN (advisor to Gunn Marit HELGESEN)  
 Marcus HOLMBERG (advisor to Anders KNAPE)  
 Alain HUBERS (advisor to Leendert VERBEEK)  
 Nikolai KARTSEV (advisor to Alexander DROZDENKO)  
 Richard KITT (advisor to John WARMISHAM)  
 Alla KRYTYNSKAIA (Secretary of the SOC/G/PD Group)  
 Laura PARSAMA (advisor to Liisa Ansala)  
 Eleonore PARK-EDSTRÖM (advisor to Anders KNAPE)

**Congress secretariat:**

Andreas KIEFER, Secretary General of the Congress  
Ermioni KEFALLONITOU, Assistant to the Secretary General of the Congress  
Renate ZIKMUND, Acting Executive Secretary of the Chamber of Local Authorities  
Dmitri MARCHENKOV, Acting Executive Secretary of the Chamber of Regions  
Dolores RÍOS TURÓN, Head of the Table Office and Secretary of the Bureau  
Sabine ZIMMER, Head of the Private Office of the President and the Secretary General of the Congress  
Clara CONTI-TEIXEIRA, Private Office of the President and the Secretary General of the Congress  
Giampaolo CORDIALE, Deputy-Executive Secretary of the Chamber of Regions  
Linette TAESCH, co-Secretary of the Bureau  
Anne-Marie KLEIN, Assistant to the Bureau  
Cécile CHEVALIER-LAIGNEL, Assistant to the Bureau  
Michaël LARSEN, Financial officer  
Delphine WEISSHAUPT, National delegations Officer  
Marité MORAS, Head of the Co-operation activities Unit  
Stéphanie POIREL, Secretary of the Monitoring Committee  
Svitlana PEREVERTEN, Co-Secretary of the Monitoring Committee  
Sedef CANKOCAK, Secretary of the Current Affairs Committee  
Saïda THEOPHILE, Head of the Congress Communication Unit  
Berk MEYDANLI, Congress Communication Unit