

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 368 (2015)¹ The budget and resources of the Congress for the next biennium (2016-2017)

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe,

1. reaffirming its unique role and institutional position within the Council of Europe which confers on the Congress, as the voice of local and regional authorities from all 47 member States and the guardian of the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122), the responsibility of promoting and fostering the implementation of Council of Europe common standards for local autonomy and regional democracy in Europe and its neighbourhood;

2. bearing in mind that in many member States, in particular due to the need to strengthen efficiency and effectiveness at all levels of government as a consequence of the financial and economic crisis from 2008 on, intense national reform processes are addressing the structure, finance and functioning of local and regional entities and that the role of the Congress to monitor and evaluate these developments on the basis of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and to give legal and practical advice or to examine and reply to numerous petitions has substantially increased over the last three years;

3. recalling its regular exchanges of views with the Committee of Ministers, and the President and Secretary General of the Congress informing it of the Congress' priorities and activities in implementing them;

4. recalling the appreciation expressed on these occasions for the work achieved by the Congress as well as the acknowledgement and understanding of the risks that further budget cuts would incur not only for its statutory activities but also for its post-monitoring and co-operation activities, which are tailored to member States' specific needs and interests;

5. underlining the fact that thanks to a substantial reform of its structures and working methods and despite its constant pursuit of efficiency savings, the Congress has been able to deliver quality work and achieve tangible results but regrettably has already been obliged to reduce some of its statutory activities and notably the number of its monitoring visits planned in 2013 and 2014 and those scheduled for 2015;

6. drawing attention, in particular to:

a. the decisions it has taken since 2010, in the framework of the reform of the Council of Europe, to refocus its priorities and activities on the core values of the Organisation;

b. the resulting amendments to the Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

and Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2011)2 relating to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and the revised Charter appended thereto, approved by the Committee of Ministers on 19 January 2011, and the subsequent changes undertaken by the Congress, notably to improve its efficiency in its structures and working methods, as well as the additional work undertaken in this respect, in particular Congress Recommendation 367 (2014) on the revision of the Congress Charter, adopted on 16 October 2014;

c. its contribution to the Organisation's efficiency savings and cuts in its operational budget as well as in its human resources since 2010 in a context of zero real growth followed by a zero nominal growth for the whole Organisation;

d. its Recommendation 335 (2013) on the budget and resources of the Congress in 2014-2015 stressing that, whereas its operational budget has been readjusted from 2010 onwards in a way which is comparable to other major administrative entities of the Organisation, the Congress has been affected, as regards staff resources, to an extent which is disproportional to its size as indicated in its position paper on the preparation of the budget 2014-2015 adopted by the Congress Bureau on 18 June 2013 (CG/BUR(24)16) addressed to the Committee of Ministers;

e. the priorities adopted for 2013-2016, which are fully in line with those proposed by Council of Europe Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland and with the priorities and work programme adopted by the Committee of Ministers for the biennium 2014-2015;

7. strongly committed to contributing to the identification and implementation of the priorities and the programme for the 2016-2017 biennium to be adopted by the Committee of Ministers for the whole Organisation;

8. determined to pursue its reform and tighten its activities around its core priorities for the next biennium and to continue implementing activities which contribute at local and regional levels to the Council of Europe's ongoing and new campaigns and specific programmes launched to address highly topical issues such as the promotion of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, integration and social cohesion, the fight against hate and discrimination speech, the prevention of and the fight against corruption and the promotion of Council of Europe core values in particular among young Europeans;

9. reaffirming however that, in order to successfully carry out its statutory mission and implement its core priorities in respect of the promotion and development of local and regional democracy, the Congress needs to be able to count on a sustainable basis for action, which includes an appropriate level of resources;

10. highlighting in particular the situation of the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion, which networks 124 participants from Council of Europe member States, and whose sustainability is at stake due to lack of resources,

11. consequently asks the Committee of Ministers to:

a. fully examine the risks and evaluate the consequences for the Council of Europe as a whole, and for the Congress in particular, of prolonging for the next biennium 2016-2017 and beyond, a budget based upon a zero nominal growth principle as compared to at least a zero real growth principle;

b. acknowledge the results achieved and the efforts made, in increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the Congress in recent years despite a reduced budgetary allocation and restrictions in the human resources made available to it;

c. ensure, through its regular political dialogue with the Congress, consistency between the priorities identified by the Congress and its budgetary allocations in order to achieve critical mass and impact;

d. in light of the unique role and institutional position of the Congress within the Council of Europe, and taking due account of its past efforts, decide to maintain the Congress operational budget and its human resources for the next biennium 2016-2017;

e. encourage member States to consider funding for 2015 and the next biennium by means of voluntary contributions and/or seconded officials, targeted co-operation activities

based on the monitoring by the Congress of the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and on the other Congress statutory activities;

f. examine how the Congress could rightfully benefit from budgetary resources or extra budgetary resources in order to continue its action for Roma inclusion at local and regional levels, taking due account of its concrete experience and investment in such activities over the last years and of the prime importance of this issue in Europe;

g. invite the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to include in the draft programme and budget for the next biennium (2016-2017) a budget envelope for the Congress which will fully recognise its contribution to the Council of Europe priorities, as the unique pan-European promoter of territorial democracy, encouraging devolution and promoting citizen's participation as well as debates and exchanges of good practices among local and regional elected peers on main topical issues in our European societies.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 24 March 2015, 1st Sitting (see Document CG/2015(28)13FINAL explanatory memorandum), rapporteurs: Clemens Lammerskitten, Germany (R, EPP/CCE) and Barbara Toce, Italy (L, SOC).