

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 299 (2011)¹

The reform of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities within the Council of Europe reform

1. In agreement with the other bodies of the Council of Europe, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe regards the existence of solid, effective local and regional democracy as one of the foundations of a true democratic society.

2. It emphasises the essential role of local and regional authorities in European integration, and recalls that the Council of Europe has always fully endorsed the principle of subsidiarity.

3. As the political assembly of the local and regional elected representatives of the 47 member states, the Congress considers itself vested with a special responsibility in the development and proper functioning of local and regional government in Europe.

4. It also recalls that the Warsaw Summit in 2005 instructed “the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe [to] continue to promote local democracy and decentralisation, taking into account the internal organisation of the countries concerned, so as to reach all levels of European society”.

5. It welcomes the decision of the Committee of Ministers to adopt the revised Charter and Statutory Resolution of the Congress (CM/Res(2011)2), and notes the undertaking of the Ministers’ Deputies “to enhance and develop the role of local and regional authorities within the institutional structure of the Council of Europe”.

6. In that respect, beginning in 2008, then continued in depth in 2009 and 2010, the Congress began an examination of its working structures and methods in order to improve the effectiveness of its action, its impact and its transparency, and to refocus its activities on the promotion and protection of local and regional democracy in Europe.

7. It placed this reflection in the more general context of the Council of Europe reform process undertaken in 2010 by the Secretary General, Thorbjørn Jagland, with the backing of the Committee of Ministers.

8. It thereby signalled its resolve to base its action on the essential values championed by the Council of Europe and on the priority fields of activity identified in the context of the reform, so as to build up the best possible synergy within the Organisation.

9. It is convinced that by improving its transparency, responsiveness and effectiveness, as well as the targeting of its activities, the Congress will be able to guarantee real consistency of its action with that of the Organisation and will represent an asset in the Council of Europe reform apparatus.

10. The Congress therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

a. continue giving the Congress support in its current reform process and encouragement in its new political and institutional orientations;

b. reaffirm the specific role of the Congress and its place in the work programme and priority actions of the Organisation;

c. consult the Congress on all questions with a local or regional dimension and avail itself more extensively and systematically of the resources, information, expertise and networks available to the Congress;

d. carry on the dialogue established when preparing its monitoring visits and its recommendations on the situation of local and regional democracy in the member states, including, where appropriate, holding exchanges of views on the outcomes of these visits when circumstances require; this type of exchange of views could also be held on the reports on the observation missions of local and regional elections led by the Congress;

e. invite the member states to consider the validity of their reservations to the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122) and the expediency of lifting them;

f. invite states which have not yet done so to ratify the European Charter of Local Self-Government;

g. invite states to sign the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No. 207);

h. invite states to sign and ratify the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities (ETS No. 106) and the protocols thereto;

i. continue ensuring that the Congress has appropriate means to perform its tasks and its specific role in accordance with Recommendation 289 (2010) on the resources of the Congress and its 2011 budget, adopted by the Congress under the present budgetary policy of the Council of Europe.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 22 March 2011, 1st Sitting (see Document [CG\(20\)12](#), explanatory memorandum), rapporteurs: K.-H. Lambertz, Belgium (R, SOC) and Anders Knape, Sweden (L, EPP/CD).