

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 305 (2010)¹ The reform of the Congress

1. Local and regional democracy and the application of the subsidiarity principle at all levels are the fundamental prerequisites for building a Europe close to citizens on the basis of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

2. The Congress is aware of the indispensable role of local and regional authorities at both national and European levels for implementing these values and for monitoring, defending and developing local and regional democracy. As the political assembly of local and regional elected representatives and with its activities in the 47 member states of the Council of Europe it contributes real added value to the Organisation's work.

3. The Congress therefore welcomes the initiative taken by its Bureau in reviewing the Congress' mission and political role, its place within the Council of Europe and on the European stage, its structures and its working methods with a view to making it as efficient and as relevant as possible. The respective amendments to the Statutory Resolution, the Congress' Charter, its Rules of Procedures and the internal processes and structures of the Secretariat must aim at a higher impact, more relevance and visibility and more effectiveness and efficiency of the Congress.

4. The Congress is aware that some elements of its reform can be decided within its own sphere while some will require amendments to the Charter, which is subject to the approval of the Committee of Ministers and consultation of the Parliamentary Assembly.

5. It particularly welcomes this initiative given that Thorbjørn Jagland, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, has, with the backing of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, launched a thorough reform of the inter-governmental sector of the Organisation with a view to re-focusing the Council of Europe's activities on its fundamental values and at revitalising it as a political body and innovative organisation.

6. As these two reforms are taking place at the same time, the Congress can take into account the Secretary General's proposals to ensure that the renewed Congress and the Council of Europe remain perfectly in step while respecting the specific role and identity of the Congress.

7. The Congress thanks Mr Skard and Mr Krug for their report, for the approach they have chosen to involve the national delegations at several stages of the reform process and for the openness of their draft proposals.

8. It therefore believes that this report is a constructive and promising step in a reform which will help to give the

Congress a stronger institutional profile and more impact, confirming the importance of its role both within the Council of Europe and on the European stage.

9. In view of the above, the Congress:

a. endorses the Congress Bureau's general approach to the reform and agrees with the Bureau that the aim of the reform is to give the Congress a clearer and stronger political profile by focusing resources on the activities which constitute the Congress' political and institutional mission and are at the heart of the Council of Europe's mission;

b. is convinced, that the Congress would have greater impact by producing fewer texts which are shorter and more political in content. Recommendations should be more concrete and not just a collection of good intentions but a basis for a political debate with the Committee of Ministers. All adopted Congress documents should be subject to clear follow-up procedures focusing on the evaluation of the impact achieved;

c. believes that it is essential that a higher priority be given to the Congress' statutory activities such as the monitoring of local and regional democracy and the observation of elections, and that this sector should be strengthened accordingly;

d. believes that it is necessary that thematic issues dealing with responsibilities of local and regional authorities are clearly based on the Council of Europe's fundamental values and the political priorities adopted by the Congress;

e. will emphasise its activities – within the structures of the Council of Europe, with its members, the national and European associations of local and regional authorities as well as with the Committee of the Regions of the European Union and other partners – in contributing to developing democratic standards, good governance, the evolution of our societies and all matters of the future of democracy, human rights and the rule of law with a local and/or regional dimension;

f. proposes that it continue to hold two sessions per year;

g. considers that the Standing Committee should be maintained as the body acting on behalf of the Congress between the two sessions and that it should consist of the head of delegation for each member state in addition to 2 full members in the case of states with regions (1 + 2), or, for the other states, 1 full member (1 + 1);

h. recommends that it maintain its bicameral nature but keep the unitary structure of its statutory committees which would therefore only meet in plenary;

i. proposes that, since priority should be given to local and regional democracy issues, the number of statutory committees be reduced from four to two or three committees, while continuing to ensure a seat on a committee for each Congress member;

j. recommends that the mandate of the members of the Congress be either 2 years or 4 years;

k. decides to consult the national delegations and national and European associations on these proposals prior to the next Session;

l. invites the Bureau to continue and finalise their discussions in the light of the debate on the report and on the basis of the delegations' reactions, to submit its final proposals at the 2010 October Session and to review the Statutory Resolution and Rules of Procedure where applicable. For

issues that need additional discussion, proposals should be presented at the Session in March 2011.

1. Debated and adopted by the Standing Committee on behalf of the Congress on 18 June 2010 (see Document CG(18)16, explanatory memorandum presented by H. Skard, Norway (L, SOC) and G. Krug, Germany (R, SOC), rapporteurs).