

International Town Twinning Summit – 12 – 13 November 2020

Video message by Anders Knappe, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

Video message at the opening session of the International Town Twinning Summit, 12 November 2020, 10.30 – 11.30

Dear participants,

Dear colleagues,

I would have liked to participate personally in this International Town Twinning Summit, but unfortunately previous commitments are preventing me from joining you.

When looking for new ways to contribute to the sustainability of cities, one can identify different ways of achieving it: town twinning is one of them. For me and for the Congress of local and regional authorities I represent, town twinning means exchange, dialogue, cooperation and solidarity.

Cooperation and exchange are at the heart of the work of the Congress. We are a political assembly made up of local and regional elected representatives from 47 European member states. We provide within the Council of Europe local and regional communities from all European countries, including Turkey, a political platform to reflect on the role of local and regional authorities and to exchange and compare experience, practice and action with regard to the major challenges of modern society.

Cooperation, exchange and solidarity have shown particularly important in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic when local and regional authorities were – and still are - at the frontline to overcome the sanitary, social, economic et political challenges related. In this context, since March, the Congress has been in regular contact with its members, with its national delegations, with the national associations and with the European partners and networks. We are pooling the experience of the various players on the ground and the concrete responses implemented by them. We have started to showcase these experiences in a dedicated hub on our website. I invite you to consult this hub and even to publish your own experience and solutions on it.

The sustainability of cities, and their ability to carry out governance functions effectively, in situation of crisis but also in the daily life, is dependent upon a range of factors. These include their resources as well as their capacity to act independently, to elect their local bodies and representatives and to have their own structures and financial resources. They include also the extent to which there is consultation and coordination between the local, subnational, and national levels of government.

These principles are contained in the European Charter of local Self-government of the Council of Europe, which has been ratified by all Council of Europe member States, including Turkey.

In the Congress we are convinced that resilient, sustainable and effective local communities, managed by democratically elected representatives which have the ability to deal with daily life and challenges effectively, can play a key role in building more inclusive, sustainable and peaceful societies.

The first step for successful twinning is understanding that we all have common problems and common interests, stemming from our responsibilities towards citizens. We can only be stronger in carrying out our duties if we exchange and cooperate with our peers facing the same difficulties and challenges. Twinning and networking between cities provide the opportunity for finding solutions to shared problems and challenges and we, in the Congress fully support such cooperation between cities and regions all over Europe.

I wish great success to your Summit and look forward to the outcome of your discussions today

Thank you