



ELDW Annual Coordination Meeting 2021 - Online, 26 February 2021

Speech by Andreas KIEFER, Secretary General of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Council of Europe

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Dear Participants of the ELDW 2020 Edition,

Dear National Coordinators of the European Local Democracy Week,

Dear Thematic Spokespersons,

It is my pleasure to be with you today. Despite the situation which remains difficult, digital technologies allow us to meet online and to continue fulfilling our responsibilities without travelling or in-person meetings. As the Covid-19 pandemic continues to affect our lives, I am grateful for your valuable efforts at the local and regional level to promote local democracy and citizen participation, and for your contribution to the work of the Congress, which supports you and will always remain the voice of Europe's municipalities and regions, at European level.

The European Local Democracy Week is an occasion to remind us of the core values, standards and principles contained in the European Charter of Local Self-Government, and to illustrate its practical implications at local and regional levels. As you may know, there are only 17 Council of Europe Conventions out of more than 200 which have been ratified by all our member States, and the Charter is one of them, which makes it a key Council of Europe treaty.

Last year, we were planning to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the opening for signature of the European Charter of Local Self-Government with a special event, yet, we were not able to organise it due to the sanitary restrictions. However, I would like to take this opportunity to thank those of you who organised Flagship Events in the week of 15 October to mark the Charter's opening for signature on that date in 1985.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In 2020, 204 local and regional authorities and their associations from 19 countries participated in the initiative and reported on their activities, organised in the context of the pandemic. We are very pleased

with these results. The record-breaking number of activities is an inspiration for us to be looking to the future with hope, despite the difficulties we have had over the last year.

During the 2020 ELDW Edition, 264 citizen participation activities and 25 communication campaigns were organised by local and regional authorities. In addition, their associations organised 13 information meetings on the ELDW in order to motivate their members and coordinated 128 information dissemination activities.

These figures remind us of the significant importance of the ELDW initiative for promoting citizen participation. They also show that the ELDW is a tool for strengthening communication between elected representatives and their citizens at local and regional level. This gives us reason to be confident that the next Edition of the ELDW this year will be again a great success in building a resilient environment in our communities for the benefit of our citizens.

To conclude, allow me to stress that the Congress will continue supporting you in your efforts to organise the European Local Democracy Week and to raise awareness of local democracy in your communities, to increase citizen participation through innovative initiatives and practices, and to promote a more open, transparent and inclusive local governance.

I wish you a successful meeting and hope to see you in person next time in Strasbourg.