

2013

THE STATE OF THE

CONGRESS



25th Congress Session



Palais



Smartphone Application

COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES



Herwig van Staa (Austria, EPP/CCE), President of the Congress
 “Never before has there been so much recognition of the importance of local and regional democracy” 3

Andreas Kiefer, Secretary General of the Congress
 “Pushing forward the implementation of concrete activities at the grassroots” 5

	47 ratifications achieved: One single legal space for local democracy in Europe		The Congress Media Box & DVD on monitoring and observation of elections
	Europe in crisis: key theme of the Congress sessions in 2013		Extending co-operation with member states
	A thorough monitoring of local and regional democracy		Action plan to encourage transfrontier co-operation
	Observation of elections: A new code of conduct for greater effectiveness		European Local Democracy: Active citizenship – voting, sharing, participating
	Post-monitoring and post-observation of elections: Ensuring better implementation of Congress recommendations		Council of Europe ONE in FIVE Campaign: Towns and regions to fight sexual violence against children
	Sharing local and regional authorities' concerns with CoE member states		Inclusion of Roma: Launching of the European Alliance of Cities and Regions
	World Forum for Democracy: Towards local digital democracy		Fostering social cohesion through employment and cultural diversity
	The Congress Smartphone application		Congress partners and networks

Texts adopted by the Congress in 2013 / Monitoring visits and Election observations in 2013 38 / 39



Herwig van Staa

(Austria, EPP/CCE)
President of the Congress

“Never before has there been so much recognition of the importance of local and regional democracy”

In 2013, I put my efforts into reaffirming the role of the Congress as an indispensable actor which adds a local and regional dimension to the work of the Council of Europe.

With our monitoring, co-operation and thematic activities we have contributed to enhancing citizens' participation in democracy, and identifying new models of European democracy, which take into account the current crisis of public confidence in democratic politicians and institutions.

The Congress has been successful in convincing national governments that local and regional authorities today are much more than mere service providers, showing that they are fully involved in policy-making and policy implementation in their communities and make a crucial contribution to shaping national and European policies.

Together with the governments of the 47 member states the Congress has established a sound legal framework for the development of local and regional democracy and cross-border co-operation. But much is still to be done to implement this framework. Regular assessments by the Congress of the situation in member States have revealed such recurrent issues as a lack of local competences or of clarity in attributing responsibilities, insufficiency of financial resources and disproportional allocation of financial burdens to local governments, a lack of systematic and meaningful consultations with local authorities, excessive supervision by higher levels, ineffective co-ordination mechanisms in central/local government relations and a lack of citizen participation in public affairs at local level. These are just some of the problems faced today by local and regional governments.

Being the only pan European body to monitor local and regional democracy we can and we must bring concrete responses to these problems and produce tangible results, reaching all

levels of governance and our citizens at the grassroots. Our responses require being practical, operational, action-driven and result-oriented.

Thus in 2013, the Congress' work has continuously been re-oriented in compliance with its priorities 2013-2016 to rest on three pillars:

- firstly, to pursue our core activities and to improve procedures and effectiveness of our monitoring and election observation;
- secondly, to develop post-monitoring and post-election observation dialogue leading to concrete action in addressing the existing problems;
- when it is necessary, to develop co-operation activities based on the results of our monitoring and post-monitoring dialogue.

And finally the Congress implements the policies of the Council of Europe with a strong local and regional dimension, for example the establishment of the Alliance of cities and regions for Roma inclusion, the Campaign “ONE in FIVE” to stop sexual violence against children or activities to strengthen participation of young people in local and regional politics.

Our focus today is on creating a “virtuous cycle” of monitoring – post-monitoring – co-operation activities.

The past year saw some new developments in pursuing these objectives. We have continued to update our procedures for monitoring and for election observation. Taking them to the next level, the Congress adopted, in March and October, resolutions on post-monitoring and post-election observation dialogue, mainly aimed at being a basis for follow-up of the impact of the Congress' work.

During the October session, we held a ceremony to mark the ratification of the European Charter of Local Self-Government by San Marino. With this ratification, all 47 member states of the Council of Europe are now covered by the Charter's provisions. This is a historical moment which, 25 years on from the entry into force of the Charter, confirms the unanimous recognition by all European governments of local democracy as the cornerstone of the democratic system.

The Charter is a unique international treaty, which provides fundamental principles governing basic rights of local and regional authorities, and which now covers effectively a huge pan-European area. It also has influence beyond the frontiers of the member states in neighbouring regions such as the southern Mediterranean – Tunisia and Morocco – or Central Asia.

*“ Our focus today
is on creating a “virtuous cycle”
of monitoring – post-monitoring –
co-operation activities.”*

However, we still need to carry out the more in depth work, which means ensuring “100% Charter across 100% of European territory”. The Charter is by definition an “à la carte” instrument. Our task now will be to encourage national governments, through political dialogue with our member states, to accept all its provisions where they have not already done so. For some states, it will simply be a case of accepting those articles which have not been ratified at the time of deposit of the instrument of ratification. For others, the dialogue will centre on the changes under way in their local democracy and necessary adjustments.

This is the way forward which we have mapped out for the coming years and that we will be willing to achieve through our monitoring and post-monitoring activities and post-election observation recommendations. In short, through a meaningful political dialogue with our governments.

Our two sessions in 2013 were dedicated to “Europe in Crisis – Challenges to Local and Regional Democracy”, and among several texts adopted, a report on responses by local and regional authorities to the economic crisis called in particular for these authorities to be recognised as fully-fledged stakeholders in dealing with the consequences of the economic downturn. The establishment of regular consultations between them and the national authorities in order to ensure policy coherency, increased budgetary and fiscal autonomy for the local and regional level, as well as stability in intergovernmental transfers to communities’ budgets are indispensable tools to help fight the consequences of the crisis. In the Congress we believe that financial policy must focus on reviving investment in order to stimulate employment, innovation and economic growth, rather than relying solely on austerity measures.

I signed a declaration in this sense with the President of the Parliamentary Assembly Jean-Claude Mignon. Our declaration confirms the commitment of the Congress and the Assembly

to co-operate “so as to ensure that the voice of “Greater Europe” be heard when it comes to preserving the capacity of action of local and regional authorities, which are the democratic institutions closest to the citizens and thus represent the foundations of European democracy.”

In November 2013, at a conference on “1953–1988–2013: Decentralisation at a crossroads”, we celebrated the 25th anniversary of the entry into force of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, together with the 60th anniversary of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions’ (CEMR) Charter of Municipal Liberties. The conference took place at a particular moment in the history of local democracy, when some national governments are experiencing the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression as an excuse for re-centralisation of competences, or for devolving competences to the regional and local level without matching financial resources.

The conference provided the background for reflection on exactly how much decentralisation we need, how many levels of governance are optimal for an effective and efficient democracy, and how to strike the right balance between the power of central governments to redistribute resources within equalisation mechanisms and the right of local authorities to manage their resources independently.

The Congress has been promoting the emergence of multi-level governance, based on both exclusive and shared responsibilities as well as clearly defined competences and roles for each stakeholder, using as a reference the European Charter of Local Self-Government. In this regard, the Congress expressed its support for the proposal of the EU Committee of the Regions to draft a European “Charter of Multi-level Governance for the area of the European Union”.

I am optimistic about the future. Never before has there been so much recognition of the importance of local and regional democracy by national governments, which opens the door for engaging in concrete dialogue with them. New technologies provide great opportunities for new forms of citizen participation and delivery of public services and we learnt of some good examples of this during the second World Forum for Democracy in November in Strasbourg. European integration is leading to greater cross-border co-operation at local and regional level. Against this background, the Congress shall pursue its efforts for a more vibrant democracy at the grassroots, for stronger and more relevant local and regional self-government, and for better governance of our communities – together with our partners across the continent.



Herwig van Staa
(Austria, EPP/CCE)
President of the Congress



Andreas Kiefer

Secretary General of the Congress

"Pushing forward the implementation of concrete activities at the grassroots"

Our annual publication "The State of the Congress" presents an overview of the concrete implementation of the Congress priorities and core activities for 2013.

The Congress was keen to push forward the implementation of concrete, practical activities at the grassroots. More specifically, it continued its monitoring activities of local and regional democracy and carried out missions in eight countries, three post-monitoring missions and a fact-finding mission, as well as two election observation missions. At the 24th and 25th Sessions, held in March and October, Congress members adopted twelve reports based on its monitoring and election observation activities in European countries. It was with great satisfaction for the Congress to note that the last three member states ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government. This is thanks to the untiring work and political contacts of the Presidents of the Congress and the Presidents of the Chamber of Local Authorities over the past years.

The Congress also continued its co-operation activities aiming to strengthen local and regional institutions and the capacities of elected representatives, in particular in Albania, Armenia and Ukraine.

It continued its regular co-operation with the Committee of Ministers Chairmanships and its close co-operation with the European Union, in particular with the Committee of the Regions and its Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs (CIVEX).

The Congress chose for the 2013 edition of its European Local Democracy Week the general theme "Active Citizenship: vote, share, participate". Some 100 municipalities and associations organised activities and events all over Europe.

The Congress also played an active part in the World Forum for Democracy. Several of its members spoke in panel discussions

on themes as: "Alternatives to representative democracy", "Towards Democracy 2.0" and "Governing with citizens."

As part of its contribution to the Council of Europe ONE in FIVE Campaign, the Congress worked on the implementation of the Pact of Towns and Regions to stop sexual violence against children. Twenty cities and regions have committed to joining the Pact since its launch in March 2013.

The Congress has also consolidated its role as a partner for other Council of Europe entities such as the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Human Rights Commissioner, the Venice Commission, and the Directorates General.

All these activities were carried on thanks to the work and participation of our Congress members, and the commitment of the Congress Secretariat, despite reduced resources at our disposal. In 2014, we will pursue these efforts and continue to motivate our members to be even more active and committed. This involves increasing their participation in monitoring and election observation missions, in drafting reports, in contributing to the work of our committees and promoting the Congress in all their local, national and European activities.

This publication is aimed at contributing to making this work better known.

Andreas Kiefer
Secretary General of the Congress

47 ratifications achieved:

One single legal space for local democracy in Europe

Since 29 October 2013, the date on which the Republic of San Marino became the 47th member state to ratify the European Charter of Local Self-Government, this text, which is the international benchmark in local democracy and provides European local authorities with safeguards for exercising their rights and responsibilities in a democratic state, is applicable in all Council of Europe member states.

The ratification by San Marino of the European Charter of Local Self-Government means that 100% of the Council of Europe territory is now covered by the provisions of the Charter. This event therefore marks the end of the ratification cycle which began in October 1985, when the Charter was opened for signature by the member states, which at that time numbered 21.

The achievement of the "100% of the territory covered by the Charter" objective in 2013 is all the more symbolic, given that it also coincides with the 25th anniversary of the entry into force of the Charter on 1 September 1988. The Congress leaders and the Secretary



With the signature by the Republic of San Marino in 2013, all 47 member states of the Council of Europe are now covered by the European Charter of Local Self-Government. Photo: (in the foreground from left to right) Pasquale Valentini, Foreign Affairs Minister of the Republic of San Marino, and Thorbjørn Jagland, Council of Europe Secretary General - (in the background) Jean-Claude Frécon, President of the Chamber of Local Authorities of the Congress, and Andreas Kiefer, Congress Secretary General.

General of the Council of Europe looked back with satisfaction at the road travelled and welcomed the advent of a single legal space for local self-government in











Europe. The President of the Congress, Herwig van Staa, described the Charter as the first international instrument to have advocated application of the principle

European Charter of Local Self-Government

Countries and dates of ratification

 Albania	4/4/2000
 Andorra	23/3/2011
 Armenia	25/1/2002
 Austria	23/9/1987
 Azerbaijan	15/4/2002

 Belgium	25/8/2004
 Bosnia and Herzegovina	12/7/2002
 Bulgaria	10/5/1995
 Croatia	11/10/1997

 Cyprus	16/5/1988
 Czech Republic	7/5/1999
 Denmark	3/2/1988
 Estonia	16/12/1994
 Finland	3/6/1991
 France	17/1/2007
 Georgia	8/12/2004
 Germany	17/5/1988
 Greece	6/9/1989
 Hungary	21/3/1994

of subsidiarity, “which made way for the idea that public affairs should be handled as close as possible to the citizens and at the most effective level”.

Increasing the application of the Charter

The Charter protects and safeguards local democracy throughout Europe but not all states apply it uniformly. Although they have all ratified at least twenty of the thirty paragraphs of the Charter set out in a common core of 10 articles, Article 12 gives them the possibility of not ratifying certain paragraphs.

The Congress is therefore co-operating closely with the member states’ governments in setting the aim of achieving the greatest possible harmonisation in the application of the principles safeguarded by the Charter in all member states. When making monitoring visits to member states, the Congress rapporteurs regularly note that some provisions of the Charter were not ratified because of the institutional, political or legal situations prevailing when the member state in question ratified the treaty and which are now no longer applicable. The Congress therefore invites the countries which have not accepted articles to review the instrument of ratification to see if the declarations made upon ratification are still valid. It is interesting to note that in November 2013 Azerbaijan ratified articles that it had not accepted when ratifying the Charter but which it has in the meantime been able to ratify as reforms had been implemented. Serbia also embarked a similar process. The Congress intends to continue this harmonisation of the application of the Charter over 100% of Council of Europe territory.



For more information, flash the QR Code with your smartphone



Jean-Claude Frécon

(France, SOC)
President of the Chamber of Local Authorities



“It still remains for us to go about reinforcing our Charter”

Mr Frécon, the ratification of the European Charter of Local Self-Government by all Council of Europe members was a priority of your mandate. What is your feeling after the ratification of the Charter by the Republic of San Marino in October 2013?

J.C. Frécon: This ratification marks the gathering of the great family of European local democracy around the Charter with all 47 member states of the Council of Europe covered by this international treaty. This is a

crucial stage which, 25 years on from the entry into force of the Charter, confirms the unanimous recognition by governments of local democracy as the cornerstone of the democratic system. That includes small countries, where our instrument may sometimes seem somewhat oversized; well, now it is proven that local democracy is the business of all Council of Europe countries.

The signature of the Charter of Local Self-Government by the 47 is also an achievement for the Congress and an indication of its role in the organisation. However, that is not the whole story; after this phase of enlargement, a phase of reinforcing the Charter must begin.

What do you mean by “reinforcing the Charter”?

J.C. Frécon: While the entire area of the Council of Europe is now covered by the Charter, it still remains for us, and this is what I spoke of having a “100% Charter across 100% of European territory”, to go about giving “greater value” to our charter.

The Charter has been from the outset an “à la carte” instrument. Our task now is to encourage national governments to accept all its provisions wherever this is possible. For some states it will be simple because since they signed, their reservations have ceased to be applicable. For others, dialogue will centre on the changes under way in their local democracy and necessary adjustments.

This is the way forward which we have mapped out in the framework of our monitoring and post-monitoring activities and post-election observation recommendations, in short, through a healthy political dialogue with our governments.

	Iceland	25/3/1991
	Ireland	14/5/2002
	Italy	11/5/1990
	Latvia	5/12/1996
	Liechtenstein	11/5/1988
	Lithuania	22/6/1999
	Luxembourg	15/5/1987
	Malta	6/9/1993
	Moldova	2/10/1997
	Monaco	10/1/2013

	Montenegro	12/9/2008
	Netherlands	20/3/1991
	Norway	26/5/1989
	Poland	22/11/1993
	Portugal	18/12/1990
	Romania	28/1/1998
	Russia	5/5/1998
	San Marino	29/10/2013
	Serbia	6/9/2007
	Slovakia	1/2/2000

	Slovenia	15/11/1996
	Spain	8/11/1988
	Sweden	29/8/1989
	Switzerland	17/2/2005
	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	6/6/1997
	Turkey	9/12/1992
	Ukraine	11/9/1997
	United Kingdom	24/4/1998

Europe in crisis: key theme of the Congress sessions in 2013

All member states of the Greater Europe have ratified a legal instrument which demonstrates their commitment for local democracy – the European Charter of Local Self-Government. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the economic crisis has, at the same, time undermined the quality of local democracy as it has obliged a large number of countries to reduce local and regional authorities' resources.

A trend towards a certain degree of recentralisation has been noted in some member states, creating a threat to the application of the subsidiarity principle and the sustainability of some decentralisation processes. This phenomenon led local and regional authorities to sound the alarm and the Congress responded by choosing the challenges resulting from the economic crisis as the key theme of its sessions in 2013.

A round table on "Regionalisation and devolution in Europe in a context of economic crisis" held by the Chamber of Regions on 20 March discussed the consequences of the current crisis for social, economic and political cohesion in Europe. The economic crisis is not only affecting the financial health of Europe's regions but also threatening their political balance within their respective states: between attempts at recentralisation and separatist temptations, many regions are pondering the sustainability of their operational capacities. The regions are calling for greater flexibility in the management of European funds but there are obvious differences in the way stability pacts and policies to stimulate the economy and reduce debt are perceived.

Local and regional authorities responding to the economic crisis

During the two debates on "Responses by local and regional authorities to the economic crisis" and "Regionalisation and devolution in Europe in a context of

economic crisis: recent developments" held on 29 and 30 October, several economic and financial initiatives taken by the European regions were presented to members of the Congress.

For example, Clemens Lammerskitten (Germany, EPP/ECC), presented Bavaria's decision, adopted by referendum on 15 September 2013, to accept a maximum limit on its

indebtedness so as to put its finances in order by 2020. Conversely, many French, Spanish and Italian regions were calling for the easing of austerity policies.

Gudrun Mosler-Törnström (Austria, SOC) described various steps being taken by her region – Salzburg *Land* – to support small businesses. Finally, Natalia Komarova, Governor of the autonomous district of Khanty-Mansiysk

(Russian Federation), presented the measures introduced in her region to strengthen the network of small businesses, give fresh impetus to local investment and improve the life of the local inhabitants. Volodymyr Konstantinov, Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (Ukraine), for his part, stated that the Republic's wide ranging autonomous powers had enabled it to set up the necessary political structures and thus avoid the problems faced by other regions of the post-Soviet area.

Promoting and encouraging decentralisation

The debate that took place on 29 October was followed by the adoption of a

"The Congress is convinced that local and regional authorities are crucial stakeholders and actors in ensuring European economic revival, due to both their economic and social roles."

Recommendation 340 (2013).

resolution and a recommendation on local and regional authorities' response to the economic crisis, presented by Svetlana Orlova (Russian Federation, EPP/ECC) and Barbara Toce (Italy, Soc).

The two rapporteurs underlined the extent of the challenge which numerous local and regional authorities would have to meet, i.e. an increase in social assistance to citizens in economic distress, in a context

of steadily decreasing resources. The Congress firmly believes that crisis exit strategies must actively involve local and regional authorities and continue to encourage decentralisation in full compliance with the principle of subsidiarity.

anti-corruption measures and the use of new technologies, investment in the local and regional economy and partnerships with the private and non-governmental sectors are some of the levers that towns and regions can use to exit the crisis, while taking account of their social responsibilities.

tensions, particularly in regions with a strong cultural background. As a result several large European regions such as Flanders, Catalonia or Scotland are calling for more autonomy (the latter will be holding a referendum on independence in 2014).



Armen Gevorgyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Territorial Administration of Armenia, addressed the 25th Session of the Congress on behalf of the Armenian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

The adopted texts call for increased budgetary and fiscal autonomy for the local and regional level, and advocate stability in intergovernmental transfers to local and regional authorities.

The Congress sees the improvement of inter-municipal and inter-regional co-operation as a means of increasing the effectiveness of the local and regional levels. Transparency in public procurement,

Special regional autonomy status can be an effective counterbalance to secessionist tendencies

The economic crisis increases the risk of a divide between the richest regions and the others, particularly when the former have the impression that states expect them to bear too much of the burden. This situation stirs up nationalist

The Congress responded to this situation by holding a debate and preparing a report on "Regions and territories with special status in Europe", a subject which had not previously been debated in Europe's institutions. In the resolution it adopted on 30 October, it drew attention to the fact that granting special status to the regions can foster autonomy without altering national borders. The document prepared by

Bruno Marziano (Italy, SOC) studies the special status granted to a number of European regions such as Greenland (Denmark), the Åland Islands (Finland), South Tyrol (Italy) and Madeira (Portugal). Such status was granted either on account of the specific geographical situation of these regions, which are often islands or enclaves, or on account of the inhabitants' cultural, linguistic and ethno-religious differences from the majority population. Special status, which must be based in law, gives greater autonomy to these regions, which have a representative, democratic assembly and a number of core competences.

“The recession has a multiplicative effect on inequities. Social inclusion has to be promoted and weaker segments of society need to be supported.”

Furio Honsell, Mayor of Udine (Italy), 25th Session of the Congress, 29 October 2013.

History shows that granting such status has helped settle several conflicts between regions and their national governments without any need for secession. With autonomist tendencies emerging to a greater or lesser extent, the Congress underlines that granting such status, within a clearly defined legal and political framework, could help defuse crises and counter the separatist risk.

Engaging all levels of governance

Several other reports presented in 2013 addressed specific aspects of the crisis and its consequences, in particular for migrants or regional cohesion. But an effective response to the crisis also requires reinforced co-operation between all levels of government, as was stated in the joint declaration by the



Nataliya Romanova

(Ukraine, ILDG)
President of the Chamber of Regions



“Strengthening the role of the regions at the institutional level”

In your opinion, what are the main dangers of the economic crisis?

N. Romanova: During the recent months, we all saw the problems that regions are facing. I think in particular of their difficulties in guaranteeing social services and of the risks of divide between regions themselves. In addition, the increasing inequalities between urban and rural areas, as well as between the central and peripheral regions, remain an issue for the whole continent. In economic terms the situation is worrying. Small and medium-size businesses, which are the richness of Europe, are experiencing serious difficulties: local investments have decreased and in many European

countries the internal stability pacts barriers prevent the injection of additional funds. Last but not least, the economic crisis is triggering feelings of fear and anxiety and creating social instability. This weakens the fundamental principle of solidarity throughout Europe and, in some countries, exacerbates existing secession trends.

The Congress has held several debates on these issues. What initiatives do you suggest?

N. Romanova: Within the Congress, we think that our priorities should be to increase investments in particular in green economy, facilitate labour mobility, but also to increase citizens' participation, guarantee transparency, fight against corruption, simplify bureaucracy and sustain cross-border and interregional co-operation. We also propose to introduce moratoria to internal stability pacts, simplify the use of the EU funding and promote the use of “vertical subsidiarity pacts” to incentivise local investments. We suggest that small and medium-size businesses network among them more intensively at regional level. During its 26th session, the Congress held a debate on youth employment through education and training. But looking beyond economic aspects, the role of regions in Europe should be strengthened in institutional terms too. We have to seek the best way of distributing powers between European, national, regional and local levels, with due regard for the principle of subsidiarity.

Presidents of the Congress and the Parliamentary Assembly, adopted at the end of the debate on 29 October. In addition to the message it sends out, this declaration also illustrates the Congress' commitment to working more closely with the other bodies of the Council of Europe.

These debates made a further contribution to the draft report on regionalisation being prepared by Marie-Madeleine Mialot Muller (France, SOC) and underlined the need to respect regional autonomy and the principle of subsidiarity, the importance of the “special status” concept in

quelling regional conflicts, and the proposal from the Committee of the Regions to draw up a Charter on multi-tier governance.

In the face of the consequences of the economic crisis, the Congress pointed out on several occasions that its own budgetary restrictions did not allow it to realise its full potential and that it was concerned that any further budgetary restrictions would jeopardise its activities and compromise its unique capacity to foster local and regional democracy in Europe.

A thorough monitoring of local and regional democracy

One of the main activities of the Congress, the visits to monitor local and regional democracy in Europe, is now followed up by further political dialogue with the relevant national authorities. In 2013, the Congress carried out three post-monitoring visits to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Portugal and Azerbaijan, as well as a fact-finding mission to Georgia.

The Congress aims to visit each member state approximately once every five years. In an effort to make the monitoring process ever more effective, it has clarified its procedures regarding visits, including the chronological order in which they are to be carried out, and has drawn up a new code of conduct for its delegations. In addition to the political and administrative authorities in charge of local and regional policy and local and regional elected representatives, the delegations now also talk to national, regional and/or local ombudsmen.

In 2013, the Congress undertook nine monitoring visits, four of which were the subject of reports debated in 2013: Denmark, Hungary, Ireland and Ukraine. Reports on the visits to Armenia, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom will be presented in 2014. The Congress also debated and adopted recommendations on the monitoring of local and regional democracy in Albania, Spain, Georgia and Italy. In addition, there were post-monitoring visits to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Azerbaijan and Portugal.

Georgia: visit plus fact-finding mission

The report and recommendation on Georgia note the positive impact of the local government reform and regional development in this country. They welcome the progress made to enhance the financial capacity of local authorities,

“ I see the Congress report as providing additional underpinning to the reform agenda that we are implementing and I look forward to the continuing support of the Congress in this regard and that of the Council of Europe generally.”

Fergus O'Dowd, Irish Minister of State, 25th Congress Session.

while pointing out that further improvement is still required. They highlight the short comings of administrative supervision of local government finance and express concern, in particular, at the pressure exerted by the government on certain local elected officials, posing a threat to the independence of local democracy. This same pressure, indeed, prompted the Congress, following a

complaint from the Georgian local authorities' association, to organise a fact-finding mission to Tbilisi in February 2013. On 18 March, the Congress concluded that Georgia was in breach of Articles 3, 6 and 7, paragraph 1, of the Charter.

Developments in the field of local democracy across Europe

Spain generally complies with the provisions of the Charter and has incorporated it in its domestic law, a fact welcomed by the Congress in the recommendation it adopted following the monitoring visit to this country. The Congress also found, however, that there were a number of overlapping competences between the different levels of governance, resulting in a loss of resources for local and regional authorities. The Congress further concluded that the fiscal autonomy of municipalities needed improving, pointing out that certain powers had been transferred to municipalities without the appropriate financial compensation, making the authorities concerned even more dependent on state and regional transfers. The Congress also invited Spain to sign and ratify the Additional Protocol to the Charter on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority, as it always does after visits to countries which have not yet signed or ratified this Additional Protocol.



During a monitoring visit to Ukraine, from 22 to 23 April 2013, the Congress delegation met with Minister for Regional Development, Building and Housing, Hennady Temnyk (4th from left).

Practical guide for members



The Congress has produced a handy pocket guide for the use of its members during monitoring missions.

- It summarises the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the aims of the monitoring visits carried out by the Congress as well as explaining the practical organisation of monitoring missions.
- This guide also reminds Congress members participating in monitoring visits of what to do and what to avoid doing in the field.
- A similar guide has been developed for members carrying out election observation missions.
- Moreover, the pocket-size collection of the European Charter of Local Self-Government is expanding, with 13 different language versions now available.

Italy, for its part, has enshrined the principle of local self-government in its Constitution, but the right of local authorities to manage a substantial share of public affairs under their own responsibility is still not being observed. In the texts adopted, the Congress expresses concern about the financial consequences of austerity for local authorities, some of whose responsibilities have been transferred to independent consortia. It criticised the cuts in personnel and the arbitrary nature of the financial restrictions imposed, as well as the abolition of direct elections of officials at provincial level. It also encouraged Italy to complete its fiscal federalism reform.

Supported by a Congress co-operation programme to improve its local and regional democracy, Albania has adopted a decentralisation strategy and introduced a number of reforms along these lines. Local authorities suffer from a lack of resources, however, making them more dependent on the state. In particular, local authorities are deeply divided and tend to fight among themselves in the political arena rather than speaking with one voice in their



Pascal Mangin (France, EPP/CCE) and Marc Cools (Belgium, ILDG), Congress Rapporteurs for Ukraine (2nd and 3rd from right to left).

dealings with central government. The Congress expressed regret at this situation, while at the same time noting the weakness of the regional tier in the country's political structure.

With regard to Ireland, the Congress welcomed the substantial changes that had enabled this traditionally very centralised country to rectify the situation through an ambitious action programme. Local and regional self-government remains weak, however. It is tightly controlled by the central level and insufficiently protected by the Constitution. The political and financial powers of local authorities are still very limited, despite what is stated in the action programme, which has yet to be fully introduced.

Varied picture across countries

Denmark is among those countries that have a "genuine Charter culture" in the opinion of the Congress, which adopted a positive report on Danish local democracy. According to the Congress, the good practices which help to safeguard local democracy could serve as

examples for other countries, including when introducing reforms: for instance, numerous municipalities have recently been merged, but in accordance with consultation procedures involving all the parties concerned. The Congress had only one criticism: the lack of clarity with regard to certain responsibilities and the unequal distribution of financial burdens between the various levels of governance ought to be rectified to enable the various levels to operate more harmoniously.

The Congress welcomed the positive initiatives taken by the Ukrainian government with a view to large-scale territorial reform, in particular the process of consulting local authorities introduced in the context of this reform. It was disappointed, however, that despite strong statements of intent made at the highest state level for its implementation, the reform was not proceeding at the desired pace. The Congress recommended that the Ukrainian authorities review their legislation in order to remove the restrictions placed on the competences of local authorities and grant them more

financial autonomy. It further noted that the office of mayor had remained vacant in several cities, including the capital Kyiv, and encouraged Ukraine to hold elections in these cities as soon as possible.

Lastly, while the Congress welcomed Hungary's ratification of the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority in June 2010, it was disappointed that this positive step should have been overshadowed by the recent reforms, which had led to a deterioration in the legislative framework on local and regional issues in Hungary. It drew attention to the lack of consultation at local level by central government, and the lack of resources allocated to local authorities. There was also a need to provide local authorities with effective remedies so that they could protect their rights under the Charter.



For more information, flash the QR Code with your smartphone

Observation of elections:

A new code of conduct for greater effectiveness

In 2013 the Congress observed the municipal elections organised on 24 March in “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and those held on 5 May to vote for the members of the municipal council of Yerevan (Armenia). Moreover, the Congress refined its rules and procedures relating to local election observation, devised a practical guide for observers and appointed a thematic spokesperson on the subject.

Jos Wiene (Netherlands, EPP/CCE), Mayor of Katwijk, a municipality in the Netherlands, was elected spokesman of the Congress on local and regional election observation in September 2013. Pearl Pedernana, Municipal Councillor of Winterthur (Switzerland, SOC) is his substitute. In October, the Congress adopted new rules for the practical organisation of observation missions. These rules concern the composition of delegations and confines the observation not only to the polling day alone, but includes an examination of the country and its legal, political and media structures. These refined rules are supplemented by a code of conduct for observers. It indicates what their comportment should be during the mission and clearly defines their tasks and responsibilities, whether the Congress is the only international observer of the poll or not. A practical guide to election observation, summarising “what to do” and “what not to do” has been produced. Furthermore, at the close of the elections a post-monitoring procedure, relating to the observations, may be arranged at the joint request of the Congress and of the country concerned. As with the post-monitoring of local democracy, the aim is to establish a political dialogue with



Congress rapporteur Stewart Dickson (UK, ILDG), presents preliminary conclusions after the observation of the municipal elections in Yerevan (Armenia) on 5 May 2013.

the state concerned, in order to convey tangibly the recommendations made by the Congress following the elections, as well as to define priorities and a timetable.

Organising democratic ballots – progress and challenges

At its March 2013 session, the Congress debated and adopted the recommendations drawn-up after the local by-elections in Armenia on 9 and 23 September 2012 and after the local elections of 7 October 2012 in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

While the elections in Armenia proceeded more satisfactorily than during the previous polls, the observers commented upon the representation of women in electoral posts, and the training of presidents of electoral commissions, both judged to be

too weak, as well as the lack of control over the presence of party representatives in polling stations. They recommended greater vigilance regarding proxy voting and assistance rendered to elderly and sight-impaired persons. It should also be possible for persons with disabilities to gain access to polling stations.

The elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina went well on the whole, despite a certain lack of professionalism on the part of the electoral commissions and an excessive presence of the political parties in them. The Congress moreover wished for clarifications on the question of voter registration, for example the permission granted to registered voters to cast their ballot in a constituency other than their own, and for first-time voters as well as “new residents” to participate in the elections even if they had not registered before the

“The Congress is prepared to enter into a post-election observation dialogue with the national authorities and all stakeholders involved in the electoral process.”

Resolution 353 REV (2013).

deadline of registration on voters' lists. Furthermore, the introduction of a system of the "tender ballot" system or "unconfirmed" ballot papers, causing uncertainty over the number of voters (and an aggravation of ethnic tensions in some areas), created uncertainty among the staff at polling stations and raised questions as to the legitimacy of the election results.

Ensuring equal opportunities and combating electoral fraud

At its October session, the Congress adopted the recommendation on the election of the members of the Avagani (municipal council) of the city of Yerevan (Armenia). Organised in a climate less rife with party loyalties than the previous polls, the elections were well prepared in accordance with the rules of the new Armenian electoral code, but also with the Congress recommendations issued following earlier elections. However, the Congress delegation noted a very large number of national observers in the polling stations and systematic, even excessive, use of still and motion picture cameras by political parties and media in all polling stations. Besides, the universal presence of mobile telephones during voting and counting raises suspicion of practices contrary to the electoral processes; reliance on all such equipment should be limited, in the opinion of the Congress, which calls upon Armenia to combat electoral fraud more stringently and enforce the applicable provisions of the Penal Code, particularly with regard to financial incentives and exercise of voting rights.

Also adopted on 30 October, the recommendation on the municipal elections in "The former Yugoslav Republic of



Jos Wielen

(Netherlands, EPP/CCE)
Congress Thematic
Spokesperson on
"Election Observation"



“Election observation, a unique experience”

You have been appointed Thematic Spokesperson on Observation of Local and Regional Elections for the Congress. What are your duties and objectives?

J. Wielen: The overall objective is to increase the efficiency of the Congress's activities in the field of election observation. Over the last 25 years, the Congress has carried out more than 100 missions and gained a lot of experience which deserves to be shared with others. More particularly, I will foster

complementarity with other actors involved in electoral matters, such as the EU or OSCE/ODIHR, and I represent the Congress at specific events, for example at the meetings of the Council for Democratic Elections of the Venice Commission.

What is the specificity of the Congress's missions?

J. Wielen: Our observation missions concern only elections organised at the local and regional level in Council of Europe member states. There is no duplication with the work done by the Parliamentary Assembly. Congress delegations are composed of local and regional elected representatives from the 47 member states of the Council of Europe. Our work is not only a technical, but also a political assessment process which we call "peer-to-peer observation". We do not want to give lessons to member states; we understand election observation as a reciprocal exercise that would help countries to learn from each other.

How do you assess the image of international election observation?

J. Wielen: I am aware of the responsibility of international observers for ensuring genuinely democratic elections. Election observation has the potential to enhance the integrity of electoral processes, by exposing irregularities and fraud and by providing recommendations for improving procedures. To do this it needs observers who are well-informed, committed, and who demonstrate personal integrity and impartiality. The Congress pays a lot of attention to the regular training of its observers and has only recently adopted revised rules and a new practical guide for election observation.

Macedonia" emphasised their good organisation and the active and competitive character of the campaign preceding them. Nonetheless, the media coverage lacked impartiality and not all candidates benefited from equitable conditions in that respect, as the government supporters were clearly at an advantage. The electoral lists were sometimes deficient in exactitude, and some voters did not know the address of their polling station. In addition, the polling

station staff were not sufficiently alert to the observance of secrecy and to the prevention of family or group voting. Finally, the observers considered that the procedures for verification and complaint of irregularity would be worth perfecting.



For more information, flash the QR Code with your smartphone

Post-monitoring and post-observation of elections:

Ensuring better implementation of Congress recommendations

Post-monitoring visits, which were first launched by the Congress in 2012 to ensure the continuation of political dialogue with the national authorities of member states and the improved application of its recommendations, are now governed by a set of rules which establish a framework for dialogue with member states.

The post-monitoring procedure is implemented after the adoption of recommendations by the Congress and is established in the framework of meetings with the national authorities of interested countries in order to define with them a schedule for the implementation of the adopted recommendations. On 30 October, the Congress adopted a set of rules governing the conduct of post-monitoring visits, irrespective of whether such visits concern the monitoring of local democracy or the observation of elections, for which the procedures have also been updated.

Post-monitoring visits are decided jointly by the Congress and the authorities of the country being visited or observed. The procedure is divided into five stages. It begins with an exchange of views with the Permanent Representative of the member state, followed by a political exchange with the national authorities and other stakeholders to identify the priorities



The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities carried out a post-monitoring visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina on 10 and 11 December 2013.

set out in the adopted recommendation. In co-operation with the national authorities, the Congress draws up a roadmap, which can also serve as a basis, where appropriate, for establishing an action plan or a programme of assistance, in co-operation with the other relevant departments of the Council of Europe.

A post-monitoring visit was made to Portugal on 6 September 2013, during which the Congress rapporteurs met the Portuguese Secretary of State for Local Administration and representatives of the Association of Portuguese Municipalities to prepare the implementation of the measures proposed by the Congress to strengthen local and regional democracy. Likewise, on 10 and 11 December 2013, the Congress Rapporteurs on Bosnia and Herzegovina met representatives of the three constituent entities of this country in Sarajevo, to draw up the roadmap which would allow them to implement the Congress' recommendations.

The Congress also set in motion a post-monitoring procedure following the adoption of the recommendation on local and regional democracy in Ukraine in October 2013. The rapporteurs presented the recommendations to the Ukrainian authorities at a high-level meeting in December 2013. Further developments in this matter will depend upon the political changes currently under way.

Most recently, during the first meeting of the Monitoring Committee in 2014, the Georgian authorities expressed their willingness to continue the political dialogue with the Congress in the context of the post-monitoring procedure.



Lars O. Molin

(Sweden, EPP/CCE)
Chair of the Monitoring
Committee



“The Congress now has a sounder procedural basis for monitoring local and regional democracy and observing elections”

In October 2013 the Congress adopted new rules concerning its procedures for monitoring. What are the main changes?

L.O. Molin: The three revised texts comprise a new package of Resolutions on monitoring, election observation and post-monitoring/post-election observation. The aim is to pool our strengths to

further increase the impact and effectiveness of the Congress' activities in these fields. The resolution on the observation of local and regional elections already contained a code of conduct, which was not the case for the resolution on monitoring. A code of good conduct was duly developed following a training seminar on monitoring activities organised in 2012. This code of conduct now forms part of the revised Resolution 307, and also contains a chart which gives a clear overview of the overall procedure.

We want to obtain a better synchronisation between the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the observation of local and regional elections in Council of Europe member states, since both activities result in concrete recommendations made to a specific country.

How will the post-monitoring and post-observation be organised?

L.O. Molin: These texts are the foundation of our political dialogue with the authorities and other stakeholders in a given country which we call “post-monitoring”. The Congress' post-monitoring is not about drafting yet another report – it is about concrete issues resulting from monitoring and election-observation missions which are openly discussed with our partners during working meetings held in several stages. Through this process we are aiming at a genuine partnership to achieve tangible progress in democracy and human rights at the grassroots level. It is in this spirit that we regard the current political dialogue with countries like Ukraine, Georgia or Bosnia and Herzegovina and Portugal, which is a very positive example for fruitful co-operation with the authorities.

“ The Congress political dialogue with national authorities should be pursued after the adoption of a recommendation, in the form of a post-monitoring dialogue, in order to discuss – together with the authorities – a roadmap to improve local and regional democracy in line with the recommendations addressed to national authorities by the Committee of Ministers.”

Sharing local and regional authorities' concerns with CoE member states

Ongoing dialogue between the Congress and Council of Europe member states gives the Congress the opportunity to share the concerns of local and regional authorities with governments and to foster good governance at all levels.

Several times a year the Congress presents its most important recent activities to the Committee of Ministers. In addition, the Congress President and Secretary General hold regular exchanges of views with the representatives of governments of the 47 member states. The Congress also organises joint events on subjects relating to local and regional democracy in the states holding the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. The ministers of the member states holding the six-month chairmanship are also invited to hold exchanges of views with members of the Congress at its plenary sessions. The Andorran and Armenian ministers therefore addressed the March and October 2013 sessions of the Congress. The quality of democracy and governance at local level were among the priorities of both the Andorran chairmanship (November 2012 - May 2013) and the Armenian chairmanship (May – November 2013). Austria, which took over from Armenia on 14 November, also included this objective among its priorities.

Close co-operation with the Armenian chairmanship

The Congress contributed to several events held in Yerevan in the context of the Armenian chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, for example a conference on promoting participatory democracy at local level, one of the current priorities of the Congress, which was held on 19 June.



Several times a year, the President and the Secretary General of the Congress provide the representatives of the member states in the Committee of Ministers with information on its activities.

The Congress and the Armenian authorities consider it essential to increase the level of citizen participation in local and regional decision-making processes.

On 2 September, at a meeting on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue,

John Warmisham (United Kingdom, SOC), Vice-President of the Congress, underlined the role of local authorities in safeguarding religious freedoms. Towns and cities play a vital role in the dialogue between the different faiths and between believers and non-believers.

Lastly, on 11 October, the Congress and the Armenian Chairmanship held an international conference of capital cities of the Council of Europe member states to consider ways of “making the metropolis citizen-friendly”. John Warmisham, who represented the Congress, thought the problems were both political and practical. It was necessary both to encourage innovation and the quality of public services, from crime prevention to the promotion of ‘green’ technologies, and to improve governance and citizen participation. Capital cities, which are often the biggest

“ The Congress is pleased to see that the quality of democracy and governance at the grassroots level figures on the agenda of the priorities of the Austrian Chairmanship, after those of Andorra and Armenia.”

Jean- Claude Frécon (France, SOC), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities – 14 November 2013.



pressure on local elected representatives, which had led the Congress to make a post-monitoring visit to Georgia. The Secretary General of the Congress, Andreas Kiefer, also made an official visit to Tirana on 3 and 4 October to establish new contacts with representatives of the Albanian government and parliament and to promote the programme of co-operation which the Congress is conducting in this country.

The Congress sessions also give all its members the opportunity to dialogue with governments. For example, on 21 March, Valentina Matvienko, Chairperson of the Federal Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, described the state of local and regional democracy in her country and congratulated the Congress on the professional manner in which it monitored implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. In October, José Herrera, Parliamentary Secretary for Culture and Local Government in Malta, Liviu Nicolae Dagnea, Minister of Administration and Regional Development of Romania, and Fergus O’Dowd, Irish Secretary of State, described their countries’ local democracy projects to the Congress in session.

The Congress relies on these regular exchanges to keep governments informed of the concerns of European local and regional authorities and to contribute to the implementation of a form of governance that takes account of all levels - local, regional and national.



For more information, flash the QR Code with your smartphone

cities in the country, are faced with unprecedented urban growth and with particular responsibilities. They must therefore have the necessary resources and the institutional capacity to perform their tasks, he said, pointing out that improved governance also meant a better quality of life in big cities. The City of Sarajevo has proposed to host the next Conference of Capital Cities in the framework of the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers by Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2015.

Presidential and ministerial visits

The leaders of the Congress regularly meet with member states’ governments, particularly those with whom they have special links through specific programmes or action plans. For example, President Van Staa met Mikheil Saakashvili, the Georgian President, on 22 January at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. Among other things they discussed the allegations of

World Forum for Democracy:

Towards local digital democracy

The Second World Forum for Democracy on ways of “connecting institutions and citizens in the digital age” took place at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg on 28 and 29 November 2013. The Congress took an active part by directly sponsoring 4 of its 21 “laboratories” and by speaking at several of the workshops corresponding to its fields of action.

The Congress made contributions to the following themes: - Alternatives to representative democracy – “Towards democracy 2.0” and “Governing with the citizens”. On 28 November, Tracey Simpson-Laing (United Kingdom, SOC), Councillor of the City of York and member of the Congress, spoke in LAB 2 “Online petitions and campaigning” and Andreas Kiefer, Secretary General of the Congress, moderated LAB 8 “Virtual Agora”. On 29 November, Andris Jaunsleinis (Latvia, ILDG), municipal councillor of Ventspils and head of the Latvian delegation to the Congress, spoke in the LAB “Participatory budgeting”, aimed at examining how successful participatory budgeting is in fostering dialogue and trust between citizens and authorities. In addition, the rapporteurs of the LAB “Put your money where your heart is, the LAB on “Digital local democracy” and the LAB “Acting against Online Hate Speech” were, respectively, Andrée Buchmann (France, SOC), Regional Councillor of Alsace and member of the Congress and Clemens Lammerskitten (Germany, EPP/CCE), Member of the Niedersachsen Parliament and Vice-President of the Congress, and Nawel Rafik-Elmrini (France, SOC), Deputy Mayor of Strasbourg and member of the Congress.



The Congress contributions to the World Forum for Democracy hinged on the themes: **Alternatives to representative democracy – Towards democracy 2.0 – Governing with the citizens.**

The Internet, a tool for enhancing citizen participation

The laboratories on participatory budgets and “crowdfunding” presented several initiatives taking place in Europe and the world as a whole, in which the citizens decide on the public projects in which investments

should be made. Andrée Buchmann (France, SOC), member of the Congress, pointed out that although this type of budget and funding was an expression of democracy, it could not replace taxation but could be a useful adjunct to investments determined by traditional methods. Online petitions, particularly those initiated by citizens or independent bodies, are another form of

direct democracy made possible by digital technology but it is important to consider whether they are truly legitimate and independent, said some speakers.

Possibilities and limits of democratic debate online

An increasing number of European cities and regions are developing online platforms to dialogue with citizens on specific or more general topics. Independent



associations are doing likewise and the number of official or private sites offering the possibility to exchange views on political and local life is growing every day, as could be seen from the many British, Spanish, Icelandic, and Irish initiatives presented during the workshops. Small IT companies even offer local authorities IT tools for conducting polls or voting online. Nowadays, the citizens of many towns and cities can give their opinion on the functioning of their buses or the prevention of noise at night by simply using their computer or smartphone.

“ In the Arab world, as in Europe, the new means of communication and exchange hold out real promise. It is important to devise ways of enabling citizens who use the Internet to play a true part in political leaders’ discussions and in the decision-making process.”

Amin Maalouf, author and member of the Académie française – World Forum for Democracy, 27 November 2013.

E-democracy and active participation

“Citizens’ creativity can stimulate the creativity of those who govern them” was the enthusiastic comment made by the founder of a Spanish virtual democracy platform. However, although the Internet has “given citizens the right to make proposals in addition to the right to vote”, the debates that followed the presentations showed that “local e-democracy” still suffers from many shortcomings. Although young people make regular use of the Internet, they have less to say about local policies than the older generation and this may skew the results of “electronic consultations”, which should attract all citizens. Moreover “e-democracy” is still accessible only to people with computers, which is a real problem in poor countries, even if the widespread availability of smartphones is gradually remedying this state of affairs. It is also important to ensure that sites addressing local policy issues are unbiased as they may one day be used for purely partisan or undemocratic

purposes. Finally, some purely local issues are not suitable for general consultation on the Internet, and it may be necessary for users to identify themselves.

Clemens Lammerskitten (Germany, EPP/ECC), member of the Congress and rapporteur of the laboratory on local digital democracy, expressed concern at the uncontrolled growth in the number of Internet sites for citizen dialogue and participation, which risked splitting the debate too much and, in the long term, preventing any wide-ranging consultation. He believed that “local digital democracy was a useful adjunct to traditional local democracy but would never replace it. Several participants at the Forum also proposed that the Council of Europe should draw up “e-democracy” guidelines and methods to foster its harmonious and useful development.



For more information, flash the QR Code with your smartphone

Local democracy online: the Icelandic example

In Iceland, the website “Better Reykjavik” is a private initiative launched in 2008. Its founders, Gunnar Grimsson and Robert Bjarnason, explained to the participants of LAB “VIRTUAL AGORA” how the site, which came into being at the height of the economic recession, has succeeded in reopening political dialogue and today enables residents of the capital to express themselves on all topics relating to local life and their surroundings. The Reykjavik local authority and the promoters of the site are furthermore preparing to replicate its principle in several cities in the Balkans, in order to stimulate political dialogue at local level and take into account the real needs and priorities of citizens.



The Congress Smartphone application



This application allows you to monitor the work of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe in promoting the development of local and regional democracy in Europe.

Available in English and French versions, it presents the Congress news thread, data on the 636 members of the Congress, the reference texts in the field of local and regional democracy, the texts adopted by the Congress and a series of thematic videos.

The mobile ANDROID and iPHONE versions can be downloaded below; Tablet versions will soon be available.



The Congress Media Box

The Media Box is a mobile multimedia resource studio set up during Sessions and important conferences, close to the meeting rooms.

It can be used by Congress members, key speakers and journalists to conduct live radio interviews and record web interviews, for the specific attention of local and regional media. Recordings made on the MediaBox are also posted on the Congress website and the Council of Europe's YouTube channel.



DVD on monitoring and observation of elections



Monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and observation of local and regional elections in Europe are core activities of the Congress.

In order to make them better known to Congress members and other target audiences, the Congress has produced two videos which are used, in particular, for training sessions and conferences.

In addition a clip presenting briefly the Congress and its activities has been elaborated to be presented in the context of Congress events and targeted to a larger audience.

Videos can be downloaded on the Congress website www.coe.int/congress and are available on DVD upon request.

Extending co-operation with member states

The Congress conducts co-operation programmes with several member states to strengthen local and regional democracy in these countries. Partnerships provide it with the opportunity to share its expertise while benefiting from appropriate funding: Switzerland and Denmark support programmes being carried out in Albania, Armenia and Ukraine.

The Council of Europe project being undertaken in Albania to “strengthen local and regional authorities and co-operation between local and regional elected representatives” was officially launched in Tirana on 27 February 2013. The Congress is responsible for facilitating the setting up of a platform of dialogue and co-operation between local and regional elected representatives, as divisions between them is preventing political dialogue and the preparation of concrete projects.

Fostering exchanges between elected representatives in Albania

Mayors and local and regional elected representatives were invited to three regional seminars at which their attention was drawn to the importance of strengthening their co-operation on issues of common interest. In September 2013, in the framework of the International Municipal Fair, NEXPO, in Rijeka (Croatia), 50 Albanian mayors and local and regional elected representatives took part in a workshop on “co-operation between Albanian mayors as a tool for developing local self-government”. The first meeting of the joint platform was held on 18 December. Despite political divisions, the Congress continues to propose activities to encourage political dialogue at local and regional level, and



The Council of Europe project being undertaken in Albania to “strengthen local and regional authorities and co-operation between local and regional elected representatives” was officially launched in Tirana on 27 February 2013. Photo: City Hall of Tirana, Albania.

to offer its expert assistance in local and regional reforms in Albania.

Training Armenian local elected representatives

The Council of Europe Action Plan for Armenia includes three courses of

action to help local authorities. The Congress is conducting a project in Armenia to strengthen the leadership skills of Armenian local elected representatives. The aim is, by means of exchanges between peers from the Congress, to develop the capacities of Armenian local elected representatives

with regard to self-government and its implementation. The project, which was launched on 1 October 2013, addresses issues such as the role and responsibilities of local elected representatives, citizen participation, political ethics and public communication, funding and management skills. Representatives of



the Congress also took part in exchanges between ministry officials from different countries which have undertaken local and regional reforms and their Armenian counterparts in Yerevan in November. They shared their practical experience, in particular of consulting local authorities. An exchange between peers, based on the same principle, took place in Albania a few days later.

Targeted co-operation programmes



ALBANIA

The Congress is implementing part of the Council of Europe project being undertaken in Albania in view to set up a platform of dialogue and co-operation between local and regional elected representatives.



ARMENIA

The Congress contributes to the Council of Europe Action Plan for Armenia through a project to strengthen the leadership skills of Armenian local elected representatives.



UKRAINE

The Congress is associated with the Council of Europe revised Action Plan for Ukraine, through a programme aimed at strengthening the capacities of local and regional authorities.

Action Plan for Ukraine

The Congress is associated in the Council of Europe revised Action Plan for Ukraine, through a programme aimed at strengthening the capacities of local and regional authorities. The programme includes “post-monitoring” activities for the practical implementation of Recommendation 348 of the Congress in Ukraine. An initial meeting was held in Kyiv on 11 November 2013 and the results were presented in Brussels a few days later. Further developments will depend on the resolution of the current political crisis in Ukraine and the Council of Europe Action Plan will be updated accordingly.

New co-operation programmes

In November 2013, the Council of Europe adopted action plans for Georgia and the Republic of Moldova. Two new plans for Azerbaijan and Bosnia and Herzegovina are currently being discussed with the countries concerned. These plans include contributions by the Congress to enhancing the quality of local governance and democracy.

Lastly, the Congress has suggested activities for fostering local democracy in Belarus, in particular by drawing attention to the European Charter of Local Self-Government. It has also prepared a project aimed at local elected representatives in Kosovo. The Congress is also continuing its co-operation with the Moroccan and Tunisian authorities to promote decentralisation and local democracy in these countries.

“ Continued dialogue, and positive climate of co-operation among all local government authorities is essential for the promotion of local democracy in Albania.”

Erwin Mohr (Austria EPP/CCE) - Meetings in Fieri, Elbasan and Lezha (Albania), April 2013.

Action plan to encourage transfrontier co-operation

Almost one European region in three adjoins a region in another country and many European texts and treaties encourage transfrontier co-operation. However, these efforts are still hindered by numerous administrative obstacles and by the sometimes inadequate co-ordination between the bodies responsible for implementing practical projects on either side of a given border.

Transfrontier co-operation is crucial for European construction and has many advantages for citizens – 40% of Europeans live in a frontier region – so it is essential for it to transcend the divisions of the past and realise its full potential. All of these reasons have prompted the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe to look into the way in which new concepts of European governance, particularly multilevel governance, can facilitate this co-operation.

Powers for transfrontier bodies

A report prepared by Breda Pecan (Slovenia, SOC) sets out the challenges of transfrontier co-operation. Among the main ones are developing equivalences between political and administrative systems, transferring powers and information, optimising interaction between the various players and, of course, identifying those transfrontier activities which are most relevant, profitable and sustainable. Ms Pecan's report recommends the preparation of integrated transfrontier development plans, relating for example to regional planning, tourism, transport or hospital planning. In the resolution accompanying the report, the Congress considered that in keeping with the subsidiarity principle, transfrontier bodies should be able to deal directly with matters which concern



The Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict is an example of transfrontier co-operation bringing together municipalities on both sides of the Rhine, in France and Germany. Photo: Passerelle des deux rives.

them without having to involve national authorities. Addressing the participants to the conference on “Borders and governance” on 3 December 2013, in Strasbourg, Ms Pecan underlined “the important and positive trend in European transfrontier co-operation in recent years – which is moving from a focus on informal exchanges to a preference for practical projects, which could be described as ‘co-operation platforms’”.

The timetable for 2014-2017

The resolution, which is based in particular on the results of a conference held by the Congress in Innsbruck (Austria) in 2012, is the first stage in a future action plan for transfrontier co-operation, which should be published in 2017. In the meantime the Congress has decided to invite the main partners

involved in these issues to gather for a European conference in 2014. The aim will be to pool knowledge, co-ordinate research, collect data, prepare indicators and devise training and capacity-building programmes.

The Congress also welcomed the entry into force of Protocol No. 3 to the



“The financial crisis is focusing attention on the potential of cross-border co-operation for local and regional authorities.”

Stewart Dickson (United Kingdom, ILDG) - General Assembly of the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), 7 November 2013.



Karl-Heinz Lambertz

(Belgium, SOC)
Chair of the
Governance Committee



“The Congress deepens its work on transfrontier and inter-regional co-operation”

Can you tell us the difference between inter-regional and transfrontier co-operation?

K.H. Lambertz: Transfrontier co-operation usually refers to co-operation between two, or more, territories that have a common border. Inter-regional co-operation is a much wider concept. We use it to refer to co-operation between regions which are not adjacent and which are usually, but not always, in different countries. In 2014, the Congress will adopt a recommendation and resolution on inter-regional

co-operation. The accompanying report explains how this co-operation has increased enormously in the past few years, but there is still a lack of visibility and co-ordination in this area.

Inter-regional co-operation is an important motor for European integration and territorial cohesion and covers a broad variety of subjects, such as research and technology investment, exchanges and training programmes amongst others. The Congress has studied both transfrontier and inter-regional co-operation in the past, we are now developing this work to take into account changes in society as well as advances in technology, while continuing to ensure there is no duplication of efforts between the various European organisations which work in this area, but rather a pooling of resources.

At its October session, the Congress adopted a resolution on prospects for effective transfrontier co-operation. What follow-up is planned?

K.H. Lambertz: The resolution notes an important and positive trend in European transfrontier co-operation in recent years – it is moving from a focus on informal exchanges to more practical projects. We have found a new spirit of pragmatism, where the various actors concerned by transfrontier issues are actively searching for practical solutions to a variety of local problems which are arising from the increasing mobility of our citizens.

There is also an important change of perception. National boundaries are coming to be seen more and more as reservoirs of untapped potential, rather than as obstacles to co-operation. The financial crisis is also focusing attention on the potential benefits of transfrontier co-operation, as local and regional authorities are looking to pool their resources and avoid duplication in neighbouring states.

We plan on holding a conference of the main European actors in September 2014 as a first step to devising an action plan to co-ordinate research and work in this area.

Framework Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities and Authorities, also known as the Madrid Convention, which enabled Euroregional Co-operation Groupings (ECGs) to be set up. The

Congress calls on all states to sign and ratify this protocol, which facilitates co-operation between local and regional authorities and simplifies procedures to set up effective transfrontier co-operation bodies.

European Local Democracy:

Active citizenship – voting, sharing, participating

European Local Democracy Week (ELDW), which was launched by the Congress in 2007 and is now a well-established item on the local government agenda, was held this year from 14 to 20 October 2013 and focused on the general theme "Active citizenship: voting, sharing, participating".

ELDW 2013 was held in some 110 European towns and local and regional authorities, including nineteen "12-Star Cities", which obtained this status by giving a particularly high profile to the event. Participating towns can choose their areas of action freely during the week but those that are involved as 12-Star Cities must devote at least one activity to the general theme.

As a result, many towns and local authorities held meetings and debates relating to participation. For example, Portsmouth (United Kingdom) chose to raise awareness among its inhabitants about the importance of voting in local elections and look with them into the cause of public disaffection with politics. The region of Andalusia (Spain) held debates on European politics in the upper secondary schools of its main towns and cities. The Polish city of Katowice organised role playing games and simulations in its schools on the theme of parliamentary life. Other cities ran poster or video competitions and many town halls held open days for the public. Metz (France) and Trier (Germany) arranged joint activities and meetings, which were also designed to promote citizen participation in public life, for example through citizens' "cafés".

Citizens' rights schemes

The municipality of Dionysos, which is one of Greece's three 12-Star Cities, launched



The Municipality of Büyükçekmece, as a "12 Star City", organized a Festival of active citizenship "Kites" during the 2013 edition of the ELDW.

debates and meetings in its seven districts, inviting its inhabitants to help to build a more human city and to think about cultural identity, opening up to Europe and citizen participation in political life. The activities in Sundyberg in Sweden were focused in particular on children's rights and the participation of young people in local life, while the city of Falun in the same country launched a "passport for democracy" to raise awareness among its citizens. Lastly, Kairouan (Tunisia) and Arbaoua (Morocco) also took part in ELDW 2013, giving the week an extra-European dimension for the second year running.

This year's ELDW was partnered with the Council of Europe's No Hate Speech movement, which also held an Action Week to highlight the threat of hate speech to local democracy. Dubravka Suica (Croatia, EPP/CEE), Vice-President of the Congress and municipal councillor in Dubrovnik, was in charge of the political co-ordination of ELDW and at the launch event she spoke of her satisfaction at the variety of activities bringing citizens of all ages closer to their local elected representatives.

Assessment and preparation for 2014

In Paris, France on 14 February 2014, representatives of the "12 Star Cities", national associations of local and regional authorities, as well as European and international organisations were invited to assess the 2013 edition, discuss the leading theme for 2014 and share their first-hand experience about the implementation of ELDW in their communities. The meeting was chaired by Dubravka Suica (Croatia, EPP/CCE) and Gaye Doganoglu (Turkey,



EPP/CCE), political co-ordinators of the ELDW, who also presented the certificates of recognition to the "12 Star Cities" of 2013 as an expression of gratitude for their participation and strong commitment. The theme for the 2014 edition will be launched on the occasion of the 26th Session of the Congress, in March 2014.

Promoting participatory democracy

The promotion of citizen participation is currently one of the Congress's priorities and, as well as organising ELDW, the Congress helped with the preparations for several events on this theme in 2013. A Council of Europe seminar on

“ Functioning democracy at the grassroots level implies active citizenship and this is a common responsibility of citizens and their elected representatives. Interaction between citizens and local politicians is key in this respect - each part has to contribute.”

Dubravka Suica (Croatia, EPP/CCE), ELDW Political Co-ordinator, Congress Vice-President and member of the Municipal Council of Dubrovnik.

the participation of young people in local life was held in Strasbourg in November as part of the Enter! Project, which is intended to promote access for all young people to social rights. The Congress was also involved in the organisation of the conference on participatory democracy at local level held in Yerevan in June in the framework of the Armenian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. Several of its members also made statements on these

issues at national or European conferences related directly or indirectly to the subject, including meetings in Ludwigsburg (Germany), Krems (Austria), Barcelona (Spain), Saint Petersburg (Russia), Rabat (Morocco) and Hammamet (Tunisia).



For more information, flash the QR Code with your smartphone

Three profiles to register with the ELDW

Partner cities

Local and regional authorities which implement activities within the framework of the European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) without fulfilling all the criteria of the "12-STAR CITY" status should apply as a PARTNER.



12 Star Cities

Each municipality can apply as "12 STAR CITY" if it undertakes to comply with the 5 specific criteria in the implementation of the European Local Democracy Week (ELDW):

- devote a specific budget to the ELDW activities
- launch a ELDW promotion campaign
- organise a number of specific activities linked to the leading theme "Active citizenship at the grassroots level – voting, sharing, participating"
- involve different groups of citizens in the initiatives, in particular young people.
- organise an event with a European dimension

Associations

The ASSOCIATIONS of local and regional authorities, as well as NGOs and other European and international associations are invited to take part in the ELDW and encourage initiatives to be held in the communities.

Contact: democracy.week@coe.int – www.coe.int/demoweeek

Council of Europe ONE in FIVE Campaign:

Towns and regions to fight sexual violence against children

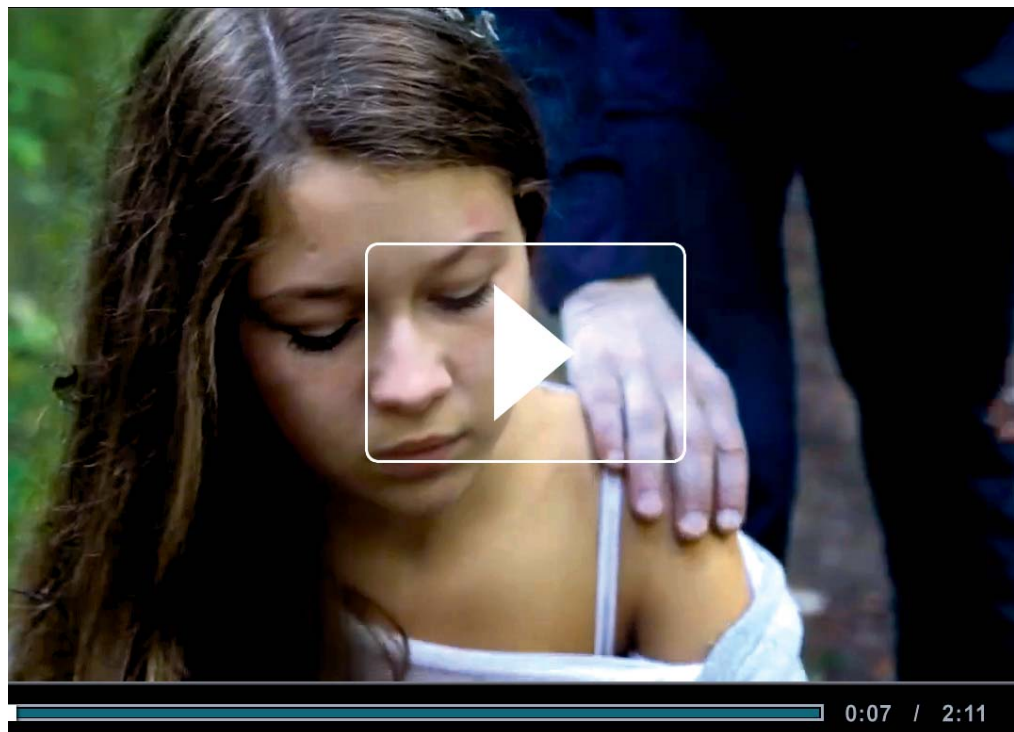
Several European towns and regions signed up in 2013 to the "Pact of towns and regions to stop sexual violence against children", set up by the Congress to implement at local and regional levels the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

The services providing assistance to victims of sexual violence and abuse operate mainly at local and regional levels, and it is at these levels that prevention and awareness-raising measures prove most effective.

With this in mind, the Congress devised the "Pact of towns and regions to stop sexual violence against children" to guide local and regional authorities, providing a list of policy measures for implementation at local and regional level. This initiative is a contribution to the Council of Europe's ONE in FIVE campaign, aimed at promoting implementation of the Convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (Lanzarote Convention) and providing children, families and people caring for children with the necessary knowledge and tools to prevent and report sexual violence against children.

A Pact hinging on concrete initiatives

The Pact, launched in 2012, asks towns and regions to mobilise their efforts



"The Lake" - Children facing sexual abuse are being encouraged to "break the silence" in a video from the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), launched on 14 November 2013.

around "the four Ps" of prevention, protection, prosecution and participation. It suggests that they set up multi-disciplinary reception structures for example, facilitate access to assistance services, raise awareness among children in schools and care facilities, train local and regional staff, organise debates and information meetings and co-operate with NGOs and the private sector.

To facilitate exchanges of good practices at European level, the Congress has also developed an on-line platform

enabling local and regional authorities to participate in the Campaign and share their experiences and initiatives in this field.

Promoting the Pact throughout Europe

The Congress thematic spokesperson on children, Johan van den Hout (Netherlands, SOC), presented the Pact during several conferences and visits, particularly in the Netherlands,

“ All sectors working with or welcoming children must set up a reporting system to ensure a swift intervention in suspected cases of child abuse.”

Johan van de HOUT (Netherlands, SOC), Congress's Thematic Spokesperson on Children, meeting of the Network of Contact Parliamentarians on the ONE in FIVE Campaign to stop sexual violence against children, 13 November 2013.

the United Kingdom and Cyprus. These visits were intended to raise awareness of the Pact among local and regional elected representatives and encourage towns to sign up to it; the City of Liverpool (United Kingdom) was one such signatory. The visits also provided an opportunity to learn more about initiatives geared to reporting sexual abuse and breaking the taboo around it, such as those taken by the City of Rotterdam (Netherlands).

Clemens Lammerskitten (Germany, EPP/CCE) presented the Pact and the ONE in FIVE campaign to the president of the Berlin Land and also at the Parliamentary Assembly conference on the well-being of children and implementation of the ONE in FIVE campaign on 11 June in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The Congress called on other bodies and networks, as important partners for local and regional authorities in this action, to join the Campaign and sign up to the Pact. The Council of Europe stressed the need to apply the measures recommended in the Pact within more specific frameworks, including efforts to combat violence in sport and to prevent this kind of abuse against children and young people with disabilities.



For more information, flash the QR Code with your smartphone

Building awareness of human rights at local level



Michael O'Brien (Ireland, SOC) presented the Congress's approach on combating racism, intolerance and xenophobia, during a conference organised in Yerevan (Armenia) on 21 October. He underlined that "the fight against this scourge must also begin in our towns, cities and regions, where the introduction of concrete measures, including intercultural dialogue, intercultural education and intercultural communication, is at its most tangible".

During the European Coalition of cities against racism, meeting on 17 October in Nancy (France), Jon Hermans-Vloedveld (Netherlands, ILDG), Congress Thematic Spokesperson on Citizen Participation stressed that the fight against discrimination was mainstreamed into the Congress action which pursued a strategy of intercultural dialogue, education and communication.

The Congress organised a session debate on 29 October on political extremism at local and regional level. Congress members underlined in particular the efforts of the Mayor of Athens (Greece), Yorgos Kaminis, to respond "through law and solidarity" to the racist provocations of the Golden Dawn extreme right-wing party. Unlike some of his Greek colleagues who are banking on the disappearance of Golden Dawn as soon as the economic recovery starts improving the country's situation, Yorgos Kaminis fears that this party will put down roots, particularly in the deprived neighbourhoods. Despite the climate of violence engendered by this situation, the mayor of Athens did not believe that banning a political party was an effective remedy but thought it indispensable to update legislation on racist statements and to teach history to young people so that they do not repeat the errors of the past.

When representing the Congress at the conference on "human rights at local level" organised on 3 December 2013, in the framework of the Austrian Chairmanship, in Graz (Austria), the Secretary General of the Congress, Andreas Kiefer, underlined the paramount role of local and regional authorities in creating conditions for the exercise of human rights in their communities and in ensuring their full implementation. It is at the local and regional levels where these rights are exercised in day-to-day practice. Knowledge and natural, effective application of human rights at this level of governance is an absolute prerequisite for good-quality local democracy. The Congress is also preparing new activities for 2014 aimed at raising human rights awareness at local level, including through promoting exchanges of the good practices of local and regional authorities in Europe.

Inclusion of Roma:

Launching of the European Alliance of Cities and Regions

The European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion, whose origins lie in the Summit of Mayors on Roma held in Strasbourg in 2011, was officially launched on 20 March 2013 during the 24th session of the Congress.

By the end of 2013, the Alliance had over 120 member cities and regions from 27 countries, all of whom are committed to improving Roma inclusion, and continues to attract new members, such as the City of Paris, which joined on 18 December 2013.

Its first tangible achievement, the ROMACT project, is intended to enhance the capacity of local authorities to implement policies and action plans for the benefit of Roma, whilst helping them to take better account of their special needs, acting in a spirit of understanding and dialogue. Some forty pilot municipalities, located in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Italy, will carry out activities in the area of education, employment, housing, urbanisation and culture.

Their goal will be to optimise their policies and to make better use of the available support and resources, particularly the structural funds of the European Union, and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their methods and actions. Launch conferences were held in October and November in the participating countries and the programme will run throughout 2014 in parallel with other Council of Europe projects focusing on the local level, such as the ROMED programme for the training of Roma mediators.

Although Alliance activities are implemented by the Congress, they are part of a broader framework at Council



The city of Paris joined the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma inclusion, on 19 December 2013 – (from left to right) Claudine Bouygues and Pierre Schapira, Deputy Mayors of Paris, and Jean-Claude Frécon (France, SOC), President of the Congress Chamber of Local Authorities.

“ Policy measures at local and regional level are decisive for bringing about real improvement in the social inclusion of Roma, across the key areas of education, housing, employment and health. ”

John Warmisham (United Kingdom, SOC), Congress Rapporteur on Roma issue, Launching Conference of the ROMACT/ROMED 2 Programmes, 18 January 2014.

of Europe and European Commission level. ROMACT, in particular, is the result of a partnership between these two institutions, supported by the Open Society Foundations. This co-operation reflects the willingness of the Congress to share its expertise and create synergies to achieve better operational results.

Stepping up the fight against prejudice

The Alliance held two international conferences in 2013. The first, held in



Murska Sobota (Slovenia) on 20 September, focused on the housing conditions of Roma in Europe and enabled the participating cities to pool their experience. The second, in Marseille (France) on 30 and 31 October, was intended to raise awareness of Roma culture and promote it as a means of fostering dialogue and combating discrimination and prejudice. At the Marseille Conference, the idea was launched of a European cultural route focusing on Roma culture. In addition, a seminar on the participation of young Roma in local policies was held at the European Youth Centre in Budapest from 19 to 21 November, and the Congress took part in a conference on young Roma held in Prague from 31 May to 2 June. A

Focus on ROMACT

ROMACT is a joint initiative

of the Council of Europe and the European Commission, implemented in the framework

of the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion.



The ROMACT project intends to improve accountability, inclusiveness and responsiveness of local authorities towards Roma citizens and thereby on the delivery of services. It is implemented in its initial phase, in five countries: Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Romania and Slovakia.

In particular, ROMACT is set out to:

- Build the capacity of local authorities to perform their roles and responsibilities in an effective and efficient manner when it comes to implementation of policies and practices that improve Roma inclusion, particularly to become more citizen-oriented, responsive and accountable;
- Support the establishment and enforcement of mechanisms and processes promoting and ensuring good governance standards and effective integrated development efforts covering the dimensions of education, employment, health, housing, urban development and culture;
- Improve the efficiency, effectiveness, ownership and sustainability of local policies, measures and delivery of services.

report on the theme “Empowering Roma youth through participation: effective policy design at local and regional levels” will be on the agenda of the 26th Congress session in March 2014.

The Alliance and representatives of the Congress were also present at various events directly involving the Roma communities, particularly the International Day of Roma on 8 April and the commemoration of the Roma genocide during World War II on 2 August.

Dosta! prize awarded to three European municipalities

On 30 October, as it has done every two years since 2007, the Congress awarded the Dosta! prize - named after the Romani word for “enough” – to three

municipalities conducting ground-breaking projects to integrate Roma and combat discrimination. The first prize was awarded to the municipality of Obrnice (Czech Republic) for its community life project, which was singled out as an example of peaceful coexistence ruling out all segregation. The second prize went to the Cretan city of Heraklion (Greece) for its vocational education and training programme. Lastly, the municipality of Kocaeli (Turkey) was rewarded for its cultural and education activities fostering dialogue between Roma and non-Roma.



For more information, flash the QR Code with your smartphone

Fostering social cohesion through employment and cultural diversity



EU micro-businesses and SMEs are creating 4 million jobs per year – Photo: A Turkish woman working at a juice stand in the Mauerpark sunday flea market in Berlin, Germany.

The towns and regions of Europe have everything to gain from promoting migrant entrepreneurship and from giving migrants access to regional labour markets, said the Congress, on adopting two recommendations on this subject on 30 October 2013. Social cohesion also requires that full account be taken of cultural diversity at local and regional level.

The number of migrants setting up their own business enterprises is steadily growing but they face too many obstacles because of their situation, particularly when it comes to contact with the authorities and in matters of financing and information. However, migrant entrepreneurship is a major factor for employment and social cohesion.

Concrete measures at local and regional level

The Congress invites the local authorities of member states, in co-operation with economic development agencies to provide better support for migrants who wish to set up their own business enterprise. The report

and recommendation prepared by Henrik Hammar (Sweden, EPP/ECC) proposes a number of concrete measures to help them do so: setting up associations of migrant entrepreneurs, encouraging their participation in local affairs, providing specific assistance to migrant entrepreneurs, in particular access to funding, and their improving business and entrepreneurial skills.

Moreover, the Congress regrets that the human capital represented by foreign residents remains largely untapped, often for reasons of non-recognition of diplomas but also because of the complexity of obtaining work permits and discriminatory attitudes against migrants. The recommendation prepared by Deirdre McGowan (Ireland, ILDG) points out that, in many countries,

regions have significant powers allowing them to directly influence employment and the labour market. The texts adopted propose that strategies for the employment of immigrants should be incorporated into regional economic development plans, that the evaluation of qualifications should be made easier and that procedures for work authorisation should be simplified. The recommendation in particular calls on governments to enforce non-discrimination measures with regard to employment and to consider abolishing or shortening the duration of work restrictions for certain categories of migrants.

Fostering cultural diversity

According to the Congress, which held a conference aimed at “changing the perception of diversity through effective communication strategies” in Ankara (Turkey) on 27 June, successful dialogue between communities means that cultural diversity is not a cause of conflict but a way of bringing people together. Indeed, towns and regions can bring about balanced public perceptions of ethno-cultural diversity by highlighting its advantages and overcoming prejudice and adverse opinions. They can also foster the intercultural skills of their local authorities and teachers.

On 20 March, the Congress held a debate on fighting social exclusion, with the presentation of several initiatives taken by European towns in this field, in particularly in favour of migrants, women and young people. It went further into these subjects at a meeting of the “Network of Intercultural Cities” in Dublin (Ireland) on 6 February and at a conference held on 15 April in Andorra-la-Vella on the role of young people in conflict transformation and intercultural dialogue. On 27 November, as a forerunner to the World Forum for Democracy, the Congress held a conference on residence-based participation in Strasbourg, based on the idea that active participation in public affairs should not be restricted only to nationals or those with the right to vote.

On 9 and 10 December the Congress held a seminar, in the French Senate in Paris, on regional or minority languages in Europe today. Jean-Claude Frécon, (France, SOC), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities of the Congress pointed out that language policies fostered reconciliation among communities, as several examples in central Europe and the former Yugoslavia had shown. He also welcomed France and Italy’s intention to ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages shortly.



Farid Mukhametshin

(Russian Federation, ILDG)
Chair of the Current
Affairs Committee



“Diversity is a source of innovation, not a threat”

In 2013, your Committee laid stress on the issues of integration of vulnerable population groups, in particular migrants. What is the role of local and regional authorities in this regard?

F. Mukhametshin: The Current Affairs Committee is indeed paying special attention to the issues of integration and participation at the grassroots, which have become crucial in the light of the growing cultural diversity of European societies.

Local and regional authorities play a key role in responding to these challenges because the process of fostering intercultural dialogue and social cohesion begins in our communities.

To be successful, we must address the persistent prejudice and change negative attitudes towards diversity, to present it as a source of innovation, creativity and growth, not as a threat. This is why in 2013 we organised a conference on changing perceptions of cultural diversity through intercultural education and communication, in June in Ankara (Turkey), and launched a report on promoting diversity advantage among local residents. The need to fight discriminatory practices against migrants and to support their creative spirit was also addressed in Committee reports on migrants’ access to regional labour markets and on promoting migrant entrepreneurship, as well as during another conference, on residence-based participation as a new reality of modern democracy, held in November in Strasbourg. Local and regional authorities are best placed to engage with local residents in building a truly intercultural community – and they must assume full responsibility in this process.

Following current affairs and developments of the local and regional situation requires a strong and rapid reaction capacity but also transversal co-operation with other institutions. How is this co-operation carried out concretely?

F. Mukhametshin: Ever since its inception at the end of 2010, the Current Affairs Committee has been building synergies with partners both within and outside the Congress on issues of common concern. This co-operation has translated, for example, into the establishment of the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion, launched in 2013, and the Congress contribution to the Council of Europe’s “One in Five” Campaign with our Pact of Towns and Regions to stop sexual violence against children, with its online platform also launched last year. Our rapporteurs have been participating in the work of steering committees on specific topics – such as social cohesion, violence against children, fight against racism and discrimination, or rights of people with disabilities. We are also responding to specific proposals from our partners – for instance, we set up a joint reflection group on partnership with civil society, at the request of the INGO Conference, and are currently preparing a Committee position on local action in preserving Jewish burial sites, on the recommendation of the Parliamentary Assembly. I could also add ongoing co-operation with the Youth Department and the Advisory Council on Youth on issues of young people’s participation and access to social rights, among others. This work will of course be pursued in the future, because networking and co-operation with partners are essential in making our responses to today’s challenges more effective.

Congress partners and networks

The partnerships and co-operation activities developed by the Congress with the other European institutions and local and regional authority associations enable it to broaden the sphere of its influence and share its expertise in all sectors of local and regional democracy.

At their annual bipartite meetings, the President of the Congress and the President of the European Union's Committee of the Regions (CoR) discuss action to be taken and promote synergies between the two institutions. Herwig van Staa and Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso met on 30 May 2013 and decided, among other things, to pursue co-operation in the fight against corruption at local and regional level.

On 14 May 2013, the Congress and the CoR jointly organised a conference in Brussels on fiscal decentralisation in the Eastern Partnership countries. The Congress participated in several events organised by the CoR, including a seminar on multi-level governance at local and regional level held on 8 and 9 July in Bolzano (Italy) and the annual conference of local and regional authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP) in Vilnius (Lithuania) on 3 September. In addition, the Congress and the CoR organised a hearing on local and regional democracy in Ukraine on 18 November in Brussels.

On 9 December 2013, the Congress and the Committee of the Regions met in Paris, within the framework of the "Contact Group" set up under their co-operation agreement, with a view to implementing the potential synergies identified by the presidents of the Congress and the CoR and preparing joint initiatives to be carried out in 2014.

Shared concerns

Furthermore, the Congress co-organised a seminar on decentralisation together with



A meeting between Herwig van Staa, President of the Congress of the Council of Europe, and Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso, President of the Committee of the Regions of the European Union (CoR) took place on 30 May 2013 in Brussels (Belgium).

the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) on 25 and 26 November in Strasbourg (France). The meeting was held in connection with the 60th anniversary of the CEMR, which is the oldest local authority organisation in Europe. Herwig van Staa and the president of the CEMR, Wolfgang Schuster, concluded the seminar with a joint declaration calling for the reinforcement of multi-level partnerships and introduction of participatory models involving citizens in local self-government processes.

The Congress also contributed to the Summit on "regions and the economic crisis" organised in Paris on 18 and 19 May by the Assembly of European Regions (AER), as

well as to the AER conferences on the theme of youth in Warsaw (Poland) and on the Black Sea regions in Rize (Turkey), where the president of the Chamber of Regions, Nataliya Romanova (Ukraine, ILDG), argued in favour of relaunching the Black Sea Euroregion project, which she described as an excellent tool for resolving the region's environmental and economic problems.

Dialogue with national and European local authority associations

Clemens Lammerskitten (Germany, EPP) represented the Congress at the annual plenary assembly of the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE) on 21 and 22 October in Brussels.

He underlined the increased monitoring activities of the Congress which provide positive results for local and regional democracy within member states of the Council of Europe and for the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. He also highlighted the reform process within the Congress and the actual topics of the Congress's work,

“ The European Charter of Local Self-Government and the Reference Framework on Regional Democracy can be an important basis for the drafting of the Charter on Multilevel Governance planned by the Committee of the Regions. ”

Herwig van Staa (Austria, EPP/CCE), President of the Congress, Meeting of the Contact Group Congress/Committee of the Regions, 9 December 2013.



co-operation. Local and regional authorities are trying to avoid duplication with expensive infrastructure projects and pool their resources. However, the differences in legal systems, administrative culture and practices are compounded by a fragmentation of our knowledge about how to make co-operation projects successful. Therefore we need to bring together the main actors working on cross-border co-operation, with a view to establishing a pool of expertise, co-ordinate research and develop capacity-building programmes".

Speaking before the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR)

on 10 September on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of local democracy in Sweden, the President of the Congress, Herwig van Staa, reiterated that these associations were "the main interlocutors of the Congress in member states when we need to reach grassroots authorities in our towns, cities and regions".

The Congress also continues to support the activities of the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA), of which it is a founder, as well as the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS), created under its auspices in 2001.

especially all activities analysing the effects of the economic and financial crisis and their consequences for regional self-government bodies throughout Europe. The Conference held a broad discussion about methods and instruments to back the role of regional legislative assemblies in the context of the future integration process in the European Union. Clemens Lammerskitten also contributed to the Conference on lessons in regionalism from Europe and the Americas organised by the regional centres of Innsbruck University and the French Institute in Innsbruck, Austria, from 19 to 21 November.

Addressing the General Assembly and Annual Conference of the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) in Liege (Belgium), on 7 November 2013, Stewart Dickson (United Kingdom, ILDG) stated that "the financial crisis is also focusing attention on the potential benefits of cross-border

Co-operation agreements

13 April 2005

Co-operation agreement with the EU Committee of the Regions
Revised on 12 November 2009

18 March 2010

Co-operation agreement with the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)

17 September 2010

Co-operation agreement with the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE)

18 October 2011

Co-operation agreement with the Conference of European Regions with Legislative Power (REGLEG)

20 November 2013

The Congress Bureau approved a co-operation agreement with the Assembly of European Regions (AER) to be signed during the 26th Congress Session in March 2014.

Texts adopted by the Congress in 2013

All texts are available on the Congress website:
www.coe.int/congress

15 resolutions

Resolution 306 (2010) REV:

Observation of local and regional elections – strategy and rules of the Congress Lars O. MOLIN, Sweden (L, EPP/CCE), Chairman of the city council of Örebro.

Resolution 307 (2010) REV2:

Procedures for monitoring the obligations and commitments entered into by the Council of Europe member states in respect of their ratification of the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122) Lars O. Molin, Sweden (L, EPP/CCE), Chairman of the city council of Örebro.

Resolution 352 (2013):

Verification of new members' credentials - Rapporteurs : Anders KNAPE, Councillor of Karlstad, Sweden (L, EPP/CCE), Ludmila SFIRLOAGA, Councillor of Prahova County Council, Romania (R, SOC)

Resolution 353 (2013) REV:

Congress post-monitoring and post-observation of elections: developing political dialogue Lars O. MOLIN, Sweden (L, EPP/CCE), Chairman of the city council of Örebro.

Resolution 354 (2013):

Local by-elections in Armenia (9 and 23 September 2012) - Rapporteur : Henry FERAL, Mayor of Puycelci, France (L, EPP/CCE)

Resolution 355 (2013):

Local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina (7 October 2012) - Rapporteur : Amy KOOPMANSCHAP, Mayor of Diemen, Netherlands, (L, SOC)

Resolution 356 (2013):

Verification of new members' credentials - Rapporteurs : Anders KNAPE, Councillor of Karlstad, Sweden (L, EPP/CCE), Ludmila SFIRLOAGA, Councillor of Prahova County Council, Romania (R, SOC)

Resolution 357 (2013):

Local and regional authorities responding to the economic crisis - Rapporteurs : Svetlana ORLOVA, Governor of Vladimir Region, Russian Federation (R, EPP/CCE), Barbara TOCE, Mayor of Pedaso, Italy (L, SOC)

Resolution 358 (2013):

Integration through self-employment: promoting migrant entrepreneurship in European municipalities - Rapporteur : Henrik HAMMAR, Chairman of Örkelljunga Municipal Council, Sweden (L, PPE/CCE)

Resolution 359 (2013):

Election of the members of the Avagani (Assembly of Aldermen) of the City of Yerevan, Armenia (5 May 2013) - Rapporteur : Stewart DICKSON, Member of the Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly, United Kingdom (L, ILDG)

Resolution 360 (2013):

Municipal elections in "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (24 March 2013) - Rapporteur : Jüri LANDBERG, Member of Rägavere Local Council, Estonia (L, ILDG)

Resolution 361 (2013):

Regions and territories with special status in Europe - Rapporteur : Bruno MARZIANO, Councillor of the Regional Council of Sicilia, Italy (R, SOC)

Resolution 362 (2013):

Migrants' access to regional labour markets - Rapporteur : Deirdre McGOWAN, , Councillor of Sligo County Council, Ireland (R, ILDG)

Resolution 363 (2013):

Prospects for effective transfrontier co-operation in Europe - Rapporteur : Breda PEČAN, Vice-Mayor of the Municipality of Izola, Slovenia (R, SOC)

17 recommendations

Recommendation 334 (2013):

Local and regional democracy in Georgia - Rapporteurs : Nigel MERMAGEN, Councillor of South Somerset District Council, United Kingdom (L, ILDG), Helena PIHLAJAAR, Councillor of Central Finland Regional Council, Finland (R, SOC)

Recommendation 335 (2013):

The budget and resources of the Congress in 2014-2015 - Rapporteurs : Jean-Claude FRECON, Councillor of Pouilly-lès-Feurs Municipality, France (L, SOC), Svetlana ORLOVA, Governor of Vladimir Region, Russian Federation (R, EPP/CCE)

Recommendation 336 (2013):

Local and regional democracy in Spain - Rapporteurs : Marc COOLS, President of Association of the City and the Municipalities of the Brussels-Capital Region, Belgium (L, ILDG), Leen VERBEEK, Queen's Commissioner for the Province of Flevoland, The Netherlands (R, SOC)

Recommendation 337 (2013):

Local and regional democracy in Italy - Rapporteurs : Marina BESPALOVA, Head of Ulyanovsk City, Chairperson of Ulyanovsk Deputy City Council, Russian Federation (L, EPP/CCE), Knud ANDERSEN, Regional Councillor of the Capital Region of Denmark, Denmark (R, ILDG)

Recommendation 338 (2013):

Local by-elections in Armenia (9 and 23 September 2012) - Rapporteur : Henry FERAL, Mayor of Puycelci, France (L, EPP/CCE)

Recommendation 339 (2013):

Local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina (7 October 2012) - Rapporteur : Amy KOOPMANSCHAP, Mayor of Diemen, Netherlands, (L, SOC)

Recommendation 340 (2013):

Local and regional authorities responding to the economic crisis - Rapporteurs : Svetlana ORLOVA, Governor of Vladimir Region, Russian Federation (R, EPP/CCE), Barbara TOCE, Mayor of Pedaso, Italy (L, SOC)

Recommendation 341 (2013):

Local and regional democracy in Hungary - Rapporteurs : Artur TORRES PEREIRA, President of the Municipal Assembly of Sousel, (Portugal, L, EPP/CCE), Devrim ÇUKUR, Member of the Provincial Council of Izmir, (Turkey, R, SOC)

Recommendation 342 (2013):

Local democracy in Ireland - Rapporteurs : Andris JAUNSLEINIS, Councillor of Ventspils Municipality, Latvia (L, ILDG), Merita JEGENI YILDIZ, Member of the Provincial Council of Ankara/Yenimahalle, Turkey (R, EPP/CCE)

Recommendation 343 (2013):

Integration through self-employment: promoting migrant entrepreneurship in European municipalities - Rapporteur : Henrik HAMMAR, Chairman of Örkelljunga Municipal Council, Sweden (L, EPP/CCE)

Recommendation 344 (2013):

Election of the members of the Avagani (Assembly of Aldermen) of the City of Yerevan, Armenia (5 May 2013) - Rapporteur : Stewart DICKSON, Member of Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly, United Kingdom (L, ILDG)

Recommendation 345 (2013):

Municipal elections in "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (24 March 2013) - Rapporteur : Jüri LANDBERG, Member of Rägavere Local Council, Estonia (L, ILDG)

Recommendation 346 (2013):

Regions and territories with special status in Europe - Rapporteur : Bruno MARZIANO, Councillor of the Regional Council of Sicilia, Italy (R, SOC)

Recommendation 347 (2013):

Migrants' access to regional labour markets - Rapporteur : Deirdre McGOWAN, Councillor of Sligo County Council, Ireland (R, ILDG)

Recommendation 348 (2013):

Local and regional democracy in Ukraine - Rapporteur : Mr Marc COOLS, President of Association of the City and the Municipalities of the Brussels-Capital Region, Belgium (L, ILDG), Mr Pascal MANGIN, Councillor of the Alsace Region, France (R, EPP/CCE)

Recommendation 349 (2013):

Local and regional democracy in Albania - Rapporteurs : Ždenek BROŽ, Mayor of Sumperk, Czech Republic (L, ECR), Åke SVENSSON, Chairman of the Regional Executive Board of Gotland, Sweden (R, SOC)

Recommendation 350 (2013):

Local and regional democracy in Denmark - Rapporteurs : Julia COSTA, Mayor of Caminha, (Portugal, L, EPP/CCE), Jean-Pierre LIOUVILLE, Vice-President of the Regional Council of Lorraine, (France, R, SOC)

Ukraine

22 to 23 April - Rapporteurs: M. COOLS, Deputy Mayor of Uccle (L, Belgium, ILDG) / P. MANGIN, Regional Councillor of Alsace, France (R, EPP/CCE)

Ireland

3 May - Rapporteurs: M. COHEN, Mayor of Kalkara (L, Malta, SOC) / M. J. YILDIZ, Member of the Provincial Council of Ankara/Yenimahalle, Turkey (R, EPP/CCE)

Netherlands

14 to 16 May - Rapporteurs: A. Torres PEREIRA, President of the Municipal Assembly of Sousel, Portugal (L, EPP/CCE) / J-P. LIOUVILLE, Vice-President of the Regional Council of Lorraine, France (R, SOC)

United Kingdom

29 to 31 May and 5 to 7 November - Rapporteurs: A. KORDFELDER, Maire de la ville de Rheine, Germany (L, SOC) / A. USS, Président de l'Assemblée législative régionale de Krasnoyarsk, Russian Federation (R, EPP/CCE)

Portugal

6 September - Post monitoring - Rapporteurs: J. WIENEN, Mayor of Katwijk, Netherlands (L, EPP/CCE) / D. CUKUR, Member of the Provincial Council of Izmir, Turkey (R, SOC)

Sweden

23 to 25 September - Rapporteurs : L. WAGENAAR-KROON, Mayor of Waterland, Netherlands (L, EPP/CCE) / G.MOSLER TÖRNSTRÖM, Member and Vice-President of the State Parliament of Salzburg, Austria (R, SOC)

Belgium

8 to 10 October - Rapporteurs: H. HAMMAR, Chairman, Örkelljunga Municipal Council, Sweden (L, EPP/CCE) / U. WÜTHRICH-PELLOLI, State Councillor, Canton de Bâle-Campagne, Switzerland (R, SOC)

Armenia

26 to 28 November - Rapporteurs: N. MERMAGEN, Councillor, South Somerset District Council, United Kingdom (L, ILDG) / L. Sfirloaga, L. SFIRLOAGA, Councillor of Prahova County Council, Romania (R, SOC)

Bosnia and Herzegovina

10 to 11 December - Post monitoring - Rapporteurs: J.-M. BELLiard, Regional Councillor of the Region Alsace (R, France EPP/CCE) / B. HIRS, Mayor of Rorschacherberg (L, Switzerland, ILDG)

Monitoring visits and observation of local and regional elections

Monitoring visits

Spain

14 January - Rapporteurs: M. COOLS, Deputy Mayor of Uccle, Belgium (L, ILDG) / L. VERBEEK, Queen's Commissioner for the Province of Flevoland, Netherlands (R, SOC)

Georgia

27 to 28 February - Fact-finding mission - Rapporteurs: N. MERMAGEN, Councillor, South Somerset District Council, United Kingdom (L, ILDG) / H. PIHLAJASAARI, Councillor, Central Finland Regional Council, Finland (R, SOC)

Azerbaijan

14 to 15 March - Post monitoring - Rapporteurs: J. WIENEN, Mayor of Katwijk, Netherlands (L, EPP/CCE) / G. MOSLER-TÖRNSTRÖM, Member and Vice-President of the State Parliament of Salzburg, Austria (R, SOC)

Observation of local and regional elections

"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"

Head of delegation and Rapporteur : Jüri LANDBERG, Member of Rägavere Local Council, Estonia (L, ILDG)
pre-electoral mission: 25 to 26 February 2013
electoral mission: 21 to 25 March 2013

Armenia

Head of delegation and Rapporteur : Stewart DICKSON, Stewart DICKSON, Member of Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly, United Kingdom (R, ILDG)
electoral mission: 30 April to 6 May 2013, Agavani (Assembly) of the city of Yerevan,

All information concerning the Congress members (national delegation and political group) is available online:

www.coe.int/congress-whoswho

THE STATE OF THE CONGRESS 2013

The voice of cities and regions in Europe

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe is a pan-European political assembly, the 636 members of which hold elective office – regional or municipal councillors, mayors or presidents of regional authorities – representing some **200,000 authorities in 47 European states**. Its role is, in particular, to promote local

and regional democracy and self-government, as well as human rights and the rule of law at local and regional levels.

The Congress of the Council of Europe pays special attention to the application of the principles laid down in the **European Charter of Local Self-Government**. It encourages the decentralisation and regionalisation processes, citizen and youth participation, social inclusion, respect of diversity and interculturalism, as well as transfrontier and inter-regional co-operation between cities and regions.



COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex . Tel. +33 (0)3 88 41 21 10 . congress.web@coe.int . www.coe.int/congress