

Press Release

Council of Europe Press Division

Ref: 320a06

Tel: +33 (0)3 88 41 25 60

Fax: +33 (0)3 88 41 39 11

pressunit@coe.int

internet: www.coe.int/press



46 members

Albania
Andorra
Armenia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Belgium
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Bulgaria
Croatia
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Georgia
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Italy
Latvia
Liechtenstein
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Malta
Moldova
Monaco
Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Russia
San Marino
Serbia and Montenegro
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"
Turkey
Ukraine
United Kingdom

Is the reform of local taxation in the Netherlands in violation of the Charter of Local Self-Government?

Strasbourg, 01.06.2006 – The Chamber of Local Authorities of the Congress of the Council of Europe expressed anxiety on Wednesday morning over the effects of the local tax reform on the financial independence of the Dutch local authorities. The rapporteur on the issue, Kathryn Smith, (United Kingdom, SOC) finds that the Netherlands may be a model where local self-government is concerned, but one of the measures in the reform, abolishing a large part of the property tax levied by municipalities, is a step backward in this respect, especially as the abolition has not been offset by any new financial autonomy measure.

According to Kathryn Smith, since this law was introduced on 1 January 2006 the Netherlands have been in clear breach of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. She further recalled the position of the Congress which has always laid stress on the right of local government to local taxation.

The Interior Minister not being able to come to the session, it was Paul van Kalmthout, Deputy Director General for Kingdom Relations and Governance, who presented the various aspects of the reform to the Chamber, including the points contested by the Congress. He argued that the reform, including the reform of the property tax, did not clash in any way with the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

Several speakers belonging to the Congress voiced their disagreement with this contention, including Senator Jean-Claude Frécon who thought it had curtailed certain local powers and did not comply with the principles of the Charter, while according to other speakers the Netherlands were now in breach of this instrument and should review their tax reform.

To receive our press releases by e-mail, contact : Council.of.Europe.Press@coe.int

A political organisation set up in 1949, the Council of Europe works to promote democracy and human rights continent-wide. It also develops common responses to social, cultural and legal challenges in its 46 member states.