

# Press Release

## Communication Unit of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

Ref: 691a06

Tel: : +33 3 90 21 49 36

Fax : +33 3 88 41 27 51

congress.com@coe.int

www.coe.int/congress



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### Congress : Russian local democracy in danger ?

Moscow, 14.11.2006 - During the Autumn session of the Congress, new developments with regard to local self-government in Russia were discussed with different interlocutors. The Congress continues to be preoccupied by a draft law on examination in the Russian Duma. In the eyes of the Congress, and indeed of many Russians, this draft legislation, should it be adopted by the Duma, could be in contradiction with the European Charter of Local Self-government, in two respects:

- If mayors in regional capitals or other big cities were not elected but appointed by governors, this would endanger one of the basic democratic principles, the right to elect local councils enshrined in Article 3.2. of the Charter.

- If the governors had the possibility to take over competences from the regional capitals or other municipalities, this might drive undermine the principle enshrined in the Charter that local authorities should be able to "regulate and manage a substantial share of public affairs under their own responsibility and in the interests of the local population".

Furthermore it is clear that municipalities in Russia will need federal guarantees to be able to have at their disposal adequate financial resources corresponding to their competencies.

However, means to achieve greater citizen involvement in local government should of course be discussed. State authorities do also have the possibility to monitor compliance of local government acts with legislation in force.

The Congress stands ready for an ongoing dialogue with all Russian authorities involved in this debate. The Council of Europe and its centre of expertise could be consulted on the conformity of any draft legislation with the European Charter of Local Self-government. The Congress Institutional Committee will be asked to start fresh work on monitoring the situation of local and regional democracy in the Russian Federation.

#### Press contacts on the spot:

**Dmitri Marchenkov**, Head of the Congress Communication Unit

Mobile: +33 (0)6 75 65 03 49 ; [dmitri.marchenkov@coe.int](mailto:dmitri.marchenkov@coe.int)

**Estelle Steiner**, Press officer,

Mobile: +33 (0)6 08 46 01 ; [estelle.steiner@coe.int](mailto:estelle.steiner@coe.int)

The Congress has two chambers, the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions. It brings together 315 full and 315 substitute members representing more than 200 000 European territorial communities. President of the Congress Halvdan Skard (Norway, SOC), President of the Chamber of Regions: Yavuz Mildon (EPP/CD, Turkey), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities: Ian Micallef (Malta, EPP/CD). Political Groups : Socialist Group (SOC), Group of the European People's Party – Christian Democrats (EPP/CD), Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (ILDG).