

Press Release

Communication Unit of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

Ref:365a07

Tel: : +33 3 90 21 49 36

Fax : +33 3 88 41 27 51

congress.com@coe.int

www.coe.int/congress



47 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
Montenegro
Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Russia
San Marino
Serbia
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"
Turkey
Ukraine
United Kingdom

Congress debate on the launch of the European Week for Local Democracy and a Charter on regional democracy

Strasbourg, 01.06.2007 - On the occasion of the Plenary Session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, Ana Isabel Leiva Diez, Spanish Secretary of State of Territorial Cooperation, stressed that the revival of European democracy demands the greatest effort possible to integrate citizens into public life.

"Participatory democracy is not an alternative to representative democracy, quite the opposite – they both mutually reinforce the complex world we live in," she said. "We must provide people with the opportune means for participating in the decision-making according to their needs, which is most realistic at the local level.

Ms Leiva Diez outlined the key subjects of the Conference of European Ministers responsible for local and regional democracy, to be held in Valencia, Spain, on 15 and 16 October 2007 to focus on citizens' participation, good governance strategy and public ethics at local and regional level, advances in regional autonomy, and the launch of the European Week for Local Democracy.

This initiative, presented by Keith Whitmore, President of the Congress Institutional Committee, could be launched on 15 October, to mark the anniversary of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. The objective is to raise awareness of how local authorities operate and to draw the attention of European citizens to the fact that their participation in local affairs is crucial for the vitality of democracy.

A draft European Charter for Regional Democracy was presented by Jean-Claude Van Cauwenberghe, Rapporteur for the Congress Chamber of Regions. This text, after finalisation and adoption by the Congress in May 2008, could be submitted to the European Ministers responsible for local and regional democracy. The new draft takes account of all the developments in Europe over the last few years, particularly the irreversible assertion of the "regional phenomenon" in European policies.

The Congress has two chambers, the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions. It brings together 318 full and 318 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 Milden (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).