

Press Release

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South-East Anatolia, Turkey: Congress Bureau adopts a report on the situation of mayors

Strasbourg, 17.09.2007 - Meeting in Paris on 17 September, the Congress Bureau examined a report on the fact-finding mission to Diyarbakir and Ankara (8-10 August 2007), in connection with the situation of mayors in South-East Anatolia, Turkey. The Bureau endorsed the conclusions of the mission, which was comprised of Anders Knape (Sweden, L, EPP/CD), Hans-Ulrich Stöckling (Switzerland, R, ILDG) and Irina Pereverzeva (Russian Federation, L, SOC).

The mission's report focused on legal proceedings against mayors and municipalities in South-East Anatolia, notably the dismissal of the Mayor and Council of the Sur Municipality (in Diyarbakir) for decisions taken to provide information in Kurdish.

In the rapporteurs' view, the current law, in both its substantive and its procedural aspects, is so flawed as to be unsustainable. There is the asserted but fraught distinction between 'international' and 'ethnic' languages; there is the confusion over what exactly constitutes a 'political' abuse of power by public authorities; there is uncertainty about the distinction between those things done under the authority of an official resolution and those done as a matter of administrative practice; there is uncertainty, evidenced by the procedures in the Sur case itself, about the procedural protections available to the mayor and councillors when legal measures are taken against them; and, perhaps above all, the apparently arbitrary way in which the law may be invoked and enforced against different instances of alleged breach of the law.

It was also the view of the delegation that, whatever reforms are to be suggested to the laws and Constitution of Turkey, the reform programme should be integrated into a broader political initiative. Turkey currently stands at a point of significant political opportunity and the possibility of a momentum for broad political change. The Bureau therefore asked the Congress' Institutional Committee to prepare a recommendation to be addressed to the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, for the intention of the Turkish authorities, to underline the concerns highlighted in the report.

[Link to the report](#)

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**).