

Press Release

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Council of Europe ministers promote good democratic governance at local level

Valencia, 16.10.2007 – Ministers from the member states of the Council of Europe today adopted the “Valencia Declaration” which sets out their agreement on a number of important proposals aimed at promoting good democratic governance in Europe.

The final declaration of the **15th session of the Conference of European ministers responsible for local and regional government**, which was closed today in Valencia, emphasizes the need for states to adopt measures for ensuring ethical behaviour by local authorities and transparency in public management and decision-making. The ministers agreed to develop an **additional protocol to the European Charter on Local Self-Government** that would consolidate at European level the right to democratic participation, the right of citizens to information and the duties of authorities with regard to these rights.

The ministers further endorsed the **Strategy on Innovation and Good Governance at Local Level**, which aims to mobilise action by national and local authorities through a public commitment to 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance. The Strategy foresees that governments and associations of local authorities will agree on specific action programmes and provides for the creation of a European Label of Innovation and Good Governance and a European Award for Excellence for local authorities.

In the final declaration the ministers agreed to improve the integration of foreign residents in local life, and requested a report to be prepared for the next ministerial conference on democratic participation in member states, including the participation of foreigners.

The participants re-committed to the full implementation of the **“Budapest Agenda for delivering Good Local and Regional Governance (2005-2010)”**, which identifies current challenges facing local and regional democracy in Europe and the actions to be taken in response to them. They agreed to make a formal review of the Agenda’s implementation at the next ministerial conference in 2009.

The ministers entrusted the Minister of Public Administration and Local Government of Finland, Mrs Mari Kiviniemi, with preparing a report on the way the work of the Council of Europe on local and regional democracy can be enhanced, including in its relations with other international organisations and structures, in particular the European Union and the OECD.

The ministers also supported self-evaluation strategies with regard to participatory policies and supported the use of CLEAR, an analytical tool developed under the aegis of the Council of Europe, as a common European tool for such self-assessment. The tool has already been tested in 35 towns in Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia and Spain.

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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 47 member states.

On the occasion of the conference, the Council of Europe launched the “**European Local Democracy Week**”, which aims to increase the awareness of the importance of local democracy for citizens and encourage their participation.

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