

Press Release

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Territorial democracy in Turkey, Russia, Croatia and regionalisation in Europe among the highlights of the Congress' Autumn Session

47 members

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Strasbourg, 12.11.2007 – The Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities will hold its Autumn Session from 19 to 21 November 2007 in Strasbourg, France.

Meeting on Monday 19 November, the Congress Bureau will discuss, among other things, the revision of the Congress' Rules of Procedure in the light of the revised Congress Charter, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 2 May 2007. The new Charter stipulates, in particular, that, as from 2008, there must be at least 30 per cent of women in each national delegation to the Congress.

On Tuesday 20 November in the morning, the two Congress Chambers will have parallel meetings. The Chamber of Local Authorities, meeting in Room 5 of the Palais de l'Europe, will examine in particular the situation of local democracy in Turkey, in the light of a report by Anders Knappe (Sweden, EPP/CD) and Hans-Ulrich Stöckling (Switzerland, ILDG) and their fact-finding mission to South-East Anatolia in August this year. Representatives of the Turkish government, former Mayor of Sur Abdullah Demirbas (the DTP party), Mayor of Diyarbakir Osman Baydemir and Süleyman Aktürk (the AK party) will make statements on this occasion.

The Chamber will also discuss the draft Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the proposal for a European Urban Charter II, and debate a report on integration through sport by Wolfgang Schuster (Germany, EPP/CD).

The Chamber of Regions, meeting in Room 1 of the Palais, will organise a round table on regional democracy in Europe, focusing in particular on the proposal for a European Charter of Regional Democracy, which should be finalised during the Congress' 2008 plenary session. Representatives of the European Committee on Local and Regional Democracy, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, the EU Committee of the Regions, and of different European regional organisations will take part in the round table, including in particular Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, President of the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies and Speaker of the Basque Parliament.

On 20 November in the afternoon, the Congress' Standing and Institutional Committees will have a joint meeting in Room 1. They will hear the priorities of the Slovak Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, debate a report on local and regional democracy in Croatia, and examine the follow-up given to Congress' recommendations by Spain and by Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the participation of Maria Tena Garcia, Director General of Local Cooperation in the Spanish Ministry of Public Administration, and a representative of the Bosnian government. The highlight of the session will be an exchange of views on the implementation of the Congress' 2004 recommendation on local and regional democracy in Russia, with the participation of Dmitry Kozak, new Russian Minister of Regional Development, and Victor Tolokonksy, Governor of the Novosibirsk Region.

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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).

On Wednesday 21 November, the Standing Committee will adopt the report on the observation of local elections in Moldova on 3 and 17 June 2007 and the texts approved the day before by the Chambers. The Committee will have an exchange of views with Swedish Secretary of State Christer Hallerby concerning the Forum on the Future of Democracy, and with Girard Stahl, Secretary General of the EU Committee of the Regions, on cooperation between the Committee and the Congress. Council of Europe Deputy Secretary General Maud de Boer-Buquicchio will make a presentation of the White Paper on intercultural dialogue, prepared by the Council.

On the occasion of the session, Congress President Halvdan Skard will award the Dosta! Congress Prize for Municipalities, launched by the Congress and the Dosta! Campaign of the Council of Europe as part of their ongoing work to strengthen the role of local authorities in the field of Roma and minority rights protection. The ceremony, which will take place on Tuesday 20 November at 12 noon in the Lobby of the Committee of Ministers, will also be the occasion for officially presenting the CD "Music beyond prejudice, Romani variations of the European Anthem".

All meetings on Tuesday 20 November are open to the press. All proceedings in Room 1 will be broadcast live on the Internet. A press conference with President Skard and Minister Kozak will be held on Tuesday 20 November at 4 pm in Room 2.

For more information: www.coe.int/congress

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