

# Press Release

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

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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 session: membership renewal will reflect its growing political role

Strasbourg, 21.05.2008 – The 15<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, to be held from 27 to 29 May 2008, will be one of the Congress' membership renewal. It will begin with the approval of credentials of new national delegations from 47 member states, and the elections of Congress President and Presidents of its two Chambers, its Vice-Presidents, and Chairs of its four Statutory Committees. The Secretary General of the Congress will also be elected during the session.

It will be the first session at which national delegations must meet the requirement of the new Congress' Charter, adopted by the Committee of Ministers in May 2007 and stipulating that women must be represented at a minimum of 30 per cent in each delegation. All delegations have now met this requirement. The Congress is the first elected political assembly to establish a 30-per cent minimum gender representation as a condition for membership. Congress members will also discuss the question of organising a second plenary session per year, in line with the new Charter.

The growing importance of the social dimension of Congress activities will be reflected in debates on improving the integration of migrants through local housing policy, social reintegration of children living and/or working on the streets, integration and participation of young people at local and regional level, social approach to the fight against racism at local and regional level, and intercultural and interreligious dialogue as an opportunity for local democracy.

The Congress will further reaffirm its will to put into place means of responding to challenges facing our societies today, by adopting resolutions and recommendations on public local and regional action for a new energy culture, and responsible consumption and finance systems. It will also adopt European Urban Charter II: manifesto for a new urbanity, which sets out a body of common principles and concepts enabling towns and cities to meet the current challenges facing urban society. The new text offers citizens a vision of towns and cities as places which celebrate diversity, solidarity, sustainability and innovation.

As part of its mandate to monitor the state and development of territorial democracy in Europe, the Congress will discuss the situation of regional democracy in Greece, as well as dialogue with ministers from Croatia and Ukraine on local and regional democracy in their countries. The results of the fact-finding mission to Belgium with regard to the non-appointment of three burgomasters in the Flemish region will also be examined during the session.

It will also hold a general debate on how to enhance the activities of the Council of Europe for local and regional democracy in Europe and the role of the Council of Europe, with the participation of Mari Kiviniemi, Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government of Finland who was entrusted with preparing a report on the subject by the

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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 Meldon (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).

European Ministers of Local and Regional Government in Valencia, Spain, in October 2007.

Congress members will examine the draft European Charter of Regional Democracy, a proposed legal text similar to the European Charter of Local Self-Government, which will then be submitted for adoption to the Committee of Ministers.

Other discussions will deal with Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, regional fiscal policies in Europe, e-tools as a response to the needs of local authorities, electronic democracy on urban projects, the regional cultural identity, and Child in the city.

The newly elected President will hold a **press conference** on **Tuesday 27 May** at **2.30 pm** in Room 2 of the Palais de l'Europe. A **press briefing** will also be organised on **Thursday 29 May** at **12 noon** in Room 1, with the participation of the Congress President and Presidents of the two Chambers.

## Highlights of the Session

### Tuesday 27 March

#### **11.00 – 13.00 Hemicycle            PLENARY SITTING**

- OPENING OF THE SESSION
- Election of the Congress President
- Activity report of the outgoing President Halvdan SKARD (Norway, L, SOC)
- Statement by Luc Van Den BRANDE (Belgium), President of the Committee of the Regions of the European Union

#### **14.30 - Press conference of the President of the Congress (Room 2)**

#### **Hemicycle 14.30 – 17.00            CHAMBER OF REGIONS**

- Statement by the outgoing President Yavuz MILDON (Turkey, EPP/CD)
- Regional democracy in Greece
- Regional public finance policies

#### **Room 1 - 14.30 – 17.00            CHAMBER OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

- Statement by the outgoing President Ian MICALLEF (Malta, EPP/CD)
- E-tools: a response to the needs of local authorities
- Electronic democracy and deliberative consultation on urban project

### Wednesday 28 March

#### **Hemicycle 10.00 – 12.00            CHAMBER OF REGIONS**

- Communication by Shogo ARAI, Governor of Nara, Japan
- Communication by Sergey MITIN, Governor of the Novgorod Region, Russian Federation
- The need for regional cultural identity

#### **Room 1 - 10.00 – 12.00            CHAMBER OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

- European Urban Charter II: Manifesto for a new urbanity
- Improving the integration of migrants through local housing policy
- The social reintegration of children living and/or working on the streets
- Statement by Lilia VLASOVA, Coordinator for international co-operation and special projects, State Committee of the Russian Federation for Youth Affairs
- City diplomacy in Japan
- Statement by Kaoru KURATA, Mayor of Ikeda City (Osaka)

#### **14.00 – 19.00 Hemicycle            PLENARY SITTING**

- Draft European Charter of Regional Democracy
- Prize of the Regions of the Congress of the Council of Europe in partnership with DEXIA
- Debate on Local and Regional Democracy in Ukraine
- Statement by Vasil KUYBIDA, Minister for Regional Development and Construction, Ukraine
- Debate on Local and Regional Democracy in Croatia
- Statement by Antun PALARIĆ, State Secretary, Central State Office for Administration, Croatia

- Euromediterranean Co-operation: the role of the Congress  
Statement by Omar EL BAHRAOUI, Mayor of the City of Rabat, President of the National Association of Local Authorities of Morocco
- Rules of Procedure of the Congress and its Chambers

#### **Thursday 29 May**

##### **10.00 – 12.30 Hemicycle**

##### **PLENARY SITTING**

- Democracy and local governance in South-East Europe – the role of ALDA
- Local and Regional Democracy in Europe: the role of the Council of Europe  
Statement by Mari KIVINIEMI, Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government of Finland
- Debate on Children of Europe : Child in the city / Integration and participation of young people at local and regional level
- Partnership between local and regional authorities and NGOs in Council of Europe Member States

<b>12.00 noon - Press briefing of the President of the Congress and the Presidents of the Chambers (Room 1)</b>
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##### **14.00 –16.30 Hemicycle**

##### **PLENARY SITTING**

- Institutional activities of the Congress – new planning and organisation of a second Plenary Session per year
- Inter-regional co-operation – the Adriatic Euro-region
- Public local and regional action: for a new energy culture
- Responsible consumption and finance systems
- Intercultural and Interreligious dialogue: an opportunity for local democracy
- Social approach to the fight against racism at local and regional level

## **Practical information**

### **Further details:**

See the Congress website, [www.coe.int/congress](http://www.coe.int/congress). Additional information may also be found on the special file, [www.coe.int/congress-session](http://www.coe.int/congress-session).

### **For TV planning Units:**

Debates are broadcasted live. Videos in broadcast quality summing up Congress highlights can be downloaded for free at <http://dl.coe.int> around two hours after the event.

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