

# Press Release

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

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### **Yavuz Mildon: "Local action for people with disabilities is the best way for their full integration within our communities"**

Strasbourg, 02.12.2008 – "Policies for integrating people with disabilities may be decided at national level, but it is at the heart of our communities, at local and regional level, where the action to create an accommodating environment for these people is felt the most," Yavuz Mildon, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, stressed on the occasion of International Day of Persons with Disabilities, 3 December.

While local and regional authorities must pay particular heed to the needs of minority groups, such as people with disabilities, improvements to the physical infrastructures and changes in social mindsets will actually lead to a better quality of life for all. Access to public services, as well as access to public places and amenities for people with disabilities are issues that fall within the remit of local and regional governance, and must be an integral part of their action plans to promote inclusion, integration, participation and equal treatment for all, including with regard to employment opportunities.

"The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities welcomes the entry into force, on 3 May 2008, of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol as a major landmark which covers a number of key areas such as accessibility, liberty of movement, health, education, employment, habilitation and rehabilitation, participation in public and political life, equality and non-discrimination. Acting locally, implementing the Convention in concrete terms at local level is the best way of empowering people with disabilities and achieving their full integration within our communities," he said.

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 : Yavuz Mildon (Turkey, EPP/CD), President of the Chamber of Regions: Ludmila Sfirloaga (Romania, SOC),

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**).