



T +33(0)390214895

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congress.com@coe.int

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Congress Session: Europe's communities in times of crisis, efficiency of regional governance and intercultural cities on top of the agenda

Strasbourg, 16 March 2012. – The 22nd Session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, taking place from 20 to 22 March 2012 in Strasbourg (France), will bring together more than 300 local and regional elected representatives from 47 Council of Europe member states, to discuss the current challenges for grassroots democracy, in particular the financial crisis and its impact on local and regional authorities.

Against this background, specific debates will be held on the situation of intermediate levels of government and good governance, including keynote speakers from Italy, Romania and Belgium (on 20 March), and on mechanisms to evaluate the efficiency and transparency of regional governments (on 21 March). The central debate on the financial crisis and its impact on local and regional authorities is scheduled for 21 March (afternoon) and will include Wolfgang Schuster, the Mayor of Stuttgart (Germany), Alan Meale (UK) from the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly as well as Congress Vice-President Svetlana Orlova (Russian Federation).

A round table on 21 March will be dedicated to the "Intercultural cities" programme and the question of how the model of inclusive local identities could be strengthened in Europe. Among others, Andrew Montague, the Lord Mayor of Dublin (Ireland), Korrie Louwes, the Vice-Mayor of Rotterdam (Netherlands) and Mustafa Dundar, the Mayor of Osmangazi/Bursa (Turkey) will take part in this discussion.

As part of the Congress's core activity to assess the situation of local and regional democracy in Council of Europe member states, members will evaluate several monitoring reports: Lithuania, Czech Republic, Germany, Moldova, Portugal and Bosnia and Herzegovina (these debates are taking part on 21 and 22 March).

On 20 March, the Congress Plenary will hear a report on local elections in Bulgaria which were observed by the Congress in October 2011.

Debates on recent developments in regionalisation in Europe, transborder co-operation – presenting the example of the Euroregion "Yaroslavna" – and on initiatives to make cities resilient will round up the programme. In addition, there will be a presentation of further progress in respect of the building of the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma inclusion.

On the occasion of a reception by the City of Strasbourg on 21 March those communities who participated as a "12 Star City" in the 2011 edition of the European Local Democracy Week will be awarded a certificate for their involvement.

The personalities addressing the 22nd Congress Session include: Eric Pickles, State Secretary for Communities and Local Government of the UK, Ferdinand Poni, Deputy Minister for the Interior (Albania) and Council of Europe Secretary General Thorbjorn Jagland.

[Agenda](#)

[Website of the 22nd Congress session](#)

[Live webcast and multimedia resources](#)

Contact:

Renate Zikmund

Head of the Division of Communication and Observation of elections

Tel: 00 33 (0)3 90 21 44 03
Email: renate.zikmund@coe.int

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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: Keith Whitmore (United Kingdom, ILDG), President of the Chamber of Regions: Herwig van Staa (Austria, EPP/CD), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities: Jean-Claude Frécon (France, SOC)

Political Groups: Socialist Group (SOC), Group of the European People's Party – Christian Democrats (EPP/CD), Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (ILDG).