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Council of Europe Congress: Promoting local democracy in Ukraine through young local leaders

Kyiv, 17.09.2015 - The Congress of local and regional authorities of the Council of Europe organised a regional training seminar for young local leaders in Kyiv (Ukraine) on 15-17 September 2015 in the framework of the project "Promoting Local Democracy in Ukraine" and the Council of Europe Action Plan 2015 - 2017 for Ukraine.

The seminar was aimed at providing a platform for the exchange of best practices in developing local democracy in Ukraine and helping young political leaders of Ukraine gain an insight into European practices and developing their leadership skills.

Twenty-three young local leaders of NGOs, representatives of political party youth wings, as well as local elected representatives, shared their perceptions of local democracy, leadership and social capital in view of the forthcoming local elections in Ukraine, which will be held on 25 October 2015. They reflected on the challenges of engaging citizens in decision-making processes, as well as issues related to ethics and anticorruption measures in local self-government bodies.

Members of the Congress Mairi Evans (United Kingdom), Svitlana Bohatyrchuk-Kryvko, (Ukraine), Vitaliy Oluyko (Ukraine), Oleksii Reznikov (Ukraine) and experts discussed with participants key principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the implementation of Congress recommendations on local democracy in Ukraine. Svitlana Bohatyrchuk-Kryvko stressed that *"it is the young local councillors and leaders who are committed to democratic changes in their communities and who should focus on the Roadmap aimed at implementing the Congress recommendations in Ukraine"*.

Sharing her experience on campaigning, Mairi Evans encouraged participants to engage further in the forthcoming elections and advised to *"knock at the people's door in your community, discuss with them, listen to their needs so that they know that you will advocate for their wellbeing"*.

This seminar is a part of a series of regional workshops, launched in Ukraine by the Council of Europe Congress in 2014, that took place in Truskavets, Chernihiv, Odessa and Dnipropetrovsk.

Ukraine joined the Council of Europe on 9 November 1995, ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government on 11 September 1997 and its Additional Protocol on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority on 2 September 2014. Countries which have ratified the Charter are bound by its provisions. The Charter imposes compliance with a minimum number of rights and principles, which are the European bedrock of local self-government. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe ensures respect for these principles.

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The Congress has two chambers, the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions. It brings together 324 full and 324 substitute members representing more than 200 000 European territorial communities.

President of the Congress: Jean-Claude Frécon (France, SOC), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities:

Anders Knappe (Sweden, EPP/CCE), President of the Chamber of Regions: Gudrun Mosler-Törnström (Austria, SOC)
Political Groups: Socialist Group (SOC), Group of the European People's Party – Christian Democrats (EPP/CD), Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (ILDG), European Conservatives & Reformists Group (ECR)