

Press Release

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

Communication Division

Ref: 123a09

Tel. +33 (0)3 90 21 49 36

Fax +33 (0)3 88 41 27 51

Internet: www.coe.int/congress

e-mail: congress.com@coe.int



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Congress session: Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, local consequences of the financial crisis and intercultural cities

Strasbourg, 18.02.2009 – The Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities will hold its 16th plenary session in Strasbourg from 3 to 5 March 2009, the first under the new calendar, providing for two plenary sessions a year.

Tuesday, 3 March

The need for engaging the southern rim of the Mediterranean in tackling common problems and the role of local and regional elected representatives in future synergies for Euro-Mediterranean cooperation will be in the centre of a debate with the participation of Lluís Maria de Puig, President of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, Luc van den Brande, President of the EU Committee of the Regions, Jesmond Mugliett, Vice-President of the 2nd Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, and Eleni Mavrou, Mayor of Nicosia (Cyprus).

Wednesday, 4 March

The debate on ways for European territorial authorities to cope with the consequences of the international financial crisis will feature as guest speakers Maurice Vincent, Mayor of Saint-Etienne (France), Svetlana Orlova, Representative of the Kemerovo Regional Parliament in the Russian Federal Assembly (Russian Federation), Vladimir Moskov, Mayor of Goce Delcev (Bulgaria) and Vice-President of NALAS, and Michèle Sabban, Vice-President of the Ile-de-France Region (France) and President of the Assembly of European Regions.

Best practices of European cities in promoting intercultural relations and fostering cultural identities, diversity and cultural exchanges, as well as the intercultural dimension of the European Urban Charter II, adopted by the Congress in May 2008, will be discussed during a round table with the participation of mayors of several municipalities taking part in the joint Council of Europe/European Commission programme "Intercultural Cities": Berlin Neukölln (Germany), Lublin (Poland), Melitopol (Ukraine), Reggio Emilia (Italy), Neuchâtel (Switzerland) and Lyon (France).

The award ceremony of the 2008 Dosta! Congress Prize for Municipalities with best initiatives for Roma people will take place in the Hemicycle at 12 (noon). The Joint First Prize will be presented to the Mayors of Mostar and of Prijedor (Bosnia and Herzegovina), the Second Prize to the Mayor of Volos (Greece), and the Third Prize to the Mayor of Lom (Bulgaria).

Thursday, 5 March

Marija Katovic, Mayor of Kotor (Montenegro), Roland Ries, Senator-Mayor of Strasbourg, and Jean-Paul Heider, Vice-President of the Association of European Border Regions, will participate in the debate on transfrontier cooperation, which will include presentations of the South Adriatic Eurodistrict and the Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict.

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 Milden (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).

Press Release

Chris Said, Parliamentary Secretary of State for Public Dialogue and Information of Malta, will lead a debate on local government reform in his country, and Mayor of Odessa (Ukraine) Eduard Gurvits will make a statement on citizen participation at local level. President of the Black Sea Euroregion Nicușor-Daniel Constantinescu, President of the Constanta County (Romania), will take part in a debate on activities of this Euroregion, launched by the Congress in September 2008.

The Congress will also hear statements from Council of Europe Secretary General Terry Davis and Maria Tena, Director-General of Local Administration (Spain) on behalf of the Committee of Ministers' Chairmanship. Other debates will focus on local and regional democracy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, combating domestic violence against women and Congress resources and its 2010 budget, among others.

Ian Micallef, President a.i. of the Congress, will give a **press conference** on Tuesday 3 March at 2 pm in Room 1 of the Palais de l'Europe. The **session is open to the press** and will be **webcast live** on the Internet. For more information: www.coe.int/congress-session