

# Press Release

## Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

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## Congress' Standing Committee: Developing local self-government in Belarus and transfrontier cooperation in South-East Europe

Strasbourg, 29.05.2009 – The Standing Committee of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe will meet on 10 June 2009 in Brdo at the invitation of Slovenian authorities, currently chairing the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers.

The Standing Committee will discuss ways of promoting territorial self-government in Belarus and developing cooperation with Belarus' authorities. The Congress is convinced that local democracy is a foundation of any democratic system, and that promoting democratic processes at grassroots level creates a solid basis for democratic change.

Representatives of the two Belarusian organisations which enjoy observer status with the Congress will participate in the debate on "Belarus: progress of local and regional self-government and prospects of future cooperation": Anatoly Rubinov, Vice-President of the Council for Cooperation of Local Self-Government Bodies in Belarus (observer since December 2008), which operates under the authority of the Council of the Republic (upper chamber) of the Belarus National Assembly; and Miroslav Kobasa, President of the Lev Sapieha Foundation (observer since June 2001).

Sinikka Hurskainen, President of the Subcommittee on Belarus within the Political Affairs Committee of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, will speak during the debate, the Assembly Committee having just recommended restoring the Special Guest status of the Belarusian Parliament. Congress Vice-President Anders Knappe (Sweden, EPP/CD) will, for his part, make a presentation on the role of national associations of local and regional authorities in territorial self-government.

The agenda of the Standing Committee also includes a debate on transfrontier cooperation in South-East Europe, with the participation in particular of Zlata Plostajner, Slovenian Minister for Local Self-Government and Regional Development; and a presentation of priorities of Slovenia's Chairmanship by Damian Bergan, Head of the Task Force of the Foreign Ministry. In addition, the Committee will discuss the reports on observation of local elections in the "former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and the first-ever elections of the Mayor of Yerevan (Armenia).

Meeting on the eve of the Standing Committee, on 9 June, the Congress Bureau will examine in particular the follow-up to its recommendations on, or new developments in, the situation of local and regional democracy in Azerbaijan, Latvia, Moldova, Romania, Russia and Turkey.

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).