

Press Release

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

Communication Division

Ref: 374a10

Tel. +33 (0)3 90 21 52 40

Fax +33 (0)3 88 41 27 51

Internet: www.coe.int/congress

e-mail: congress.com@coe.int



47 member States

Albania
Andorra
Armenia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Belgium
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Bulgaria
Croatia
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Georgia
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Italy
Latvia
Liechtenstein
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Malta
Moldova
Monaco
Montenegro
Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Russia
San Marino
Serbia
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"
Turkey
Ukraine
United Kingdom

Messina conference endorses innovative methods to combat corruption at grassroots level

Messina, 07.05.2010 - An international conference on "Fighting Corruption at local and regional level", organised by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the EU Committee of the Regions, the Municipality of Messina, and the Sicilian Region, on 7 May in Messina (Italy), discussed innovative methods to tackle corruption at grassroots level and to develop new instruments for "ethical behaviour and integrity" for local and regional politicians and administrations.

Local and regional authorities in Europe - managing a large amount of public expenditure - presently face many problems related to a high degree of economic crime. The regions, being more and more involved in the co-financing and management of European funds, are also directly exposed to corruption. This is why the Council of Europe Congress together with the EU Committee of the Regions examined ways to raise awareness of the importance to increase transparency with regard to all decisions concerning the performance of municipalities and regions.

"Opinion polls show that mayors and local elected representatives enjoy a much higher level of public confidence than national and European politicians. This trust must be a duty and commitment for elected representatives at territorial level. It is imperative to make sure that our society remains healthy at grassroots and that the rule of law is upheld in our communities", said Ian Micallef, Acting President of the Congress of the Council of Europe, opening the conference.

The participants of the Messina conference - politicians, judges, civil servants, associations, journalists and businessmen - highlighted the initiatives that can be undertaken and suggested how to eliminate the conditions which make corruption grow. Amongst the successful practices, presented at the conference, are : the revision of local procurement procedures; the introduction of new practices for monitoring decision making processes; the introduction of "integrity pacts", applicable to local communities; and the creation of anti-corruption agencies at local level.

"There is an urgent need for preventive measures such as the possibility to submit information about corruption anonymously, two-person integrity, compulsory mobility for staff on sensitive posts, risk analyses on a permanent basis or the establishment of anti-corruption bodies", underlined Antti Liikkanen, the Chair of the Committee of the Regions delegation.

The conference underlined the interest of developing a new code to inform local and regional politicians about a conduct to be adopted in their day-to-day performances. At the same time, citizens should be aware of the behaviour they are entitled to expect from their elected representatives.

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).