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## **Living together in dignity, citizen participation and human rights at grassroots level as key issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> Congress Session**

Strasbourg, 12.10.2011. - The 21<sup>st</sup> Session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, to be held from 18 to 20 October 2011 in Strasbourg (France), will focus on societal inclusion, involvement of citizens and awareness raising for human rights at local level.

In the context of Congress activities to prevent the discrimination of Roma populations in Europe's cities and municipalities and as a follow-up to the 1<sup>st</sup> European Summit of Mayors on Roma which was organised on 22 September, a report on Roma inclusion at territorial level will be presented on 18 October, with the participation of José Manuel FRESNO, the General Rapporteur for this Summit. On that occasion, the "Dosta! Congress Prize for Municipalities" will be awarded to towns which have conducted outstanding initiatives, in the presence of Fanny ARDANT, Ambassador for the Council of Europe campaign.

Also in the frame of the general topic "Living together in dignity" a discussion on the fight against sexual abuse of children, in the context of the Council of Europe "ONE in FIVE" campaign, is organised on the same day. On 19 October, a debate will be held on "New forms of citizen activism and urban violence" against the background of recent urban unrest in Europe's cities.

Citizen participation at grassroots level is at the centre of two debates on "Citizen participation at local and regional level in Europe" on 18 October and on "education for democratic citizenship – tools for cities" on 19 October. The Congress Session will be also the moment to celebrate the 2011-edition of the European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) which is organised every year in October. This year's general theme of the Week aims at promoting human rights in cities and municipalities. A debate on the role of local and regional elected representatives in raising human rights awareness rounds off this topic on 20 October.

As part of the Congress monitoring mission, the members will have before them several reports on the state of local and regional democracy: Serbia, Slovenia, Finland, Latvia and Bulgaria. The findings of the observation missions at local elections carried out by the Congress in Albania (8 May 2011) and Moldova (5 June 2011) will also be debated.

Two debates scheduled for 19 October will address specific questions on the application of the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government– one on improving the reception, the second on lifting of reservations to this key legal instrument. Energy supply and efficiency at local and regional level will be highlighted at a debate on 20 October with the participation of Sergei SHMATKO, Minister for Energy of the Russian Federation.

Thirty years of promoting transfrontier co-operation in Europe on the basis of the Madrid Outline Convention will be discussed on 18 October. Recent developments in regionalisation and multi-level governance in Europe will be the subject of two round tables on the next day. These will be followed by a debate on participation of regions in devising macro-regional strategies in Europe.

The personalities addressing the 21<sup>st</sup> Session include Anatoly BLYZNIUK, Minister for Regional Development and Construction, Ukraine, on behalf of the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Armen GEVORGYAN, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Territorial Administration, Armenia, Mevlüt ÇAVUŞOĞLU, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn JAGLAND, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, and Piero FASSINO, Mayor of Turin, Italy.

## [Agenda](#)

### [Website of the 21<sup>st</sup> Session](#)

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).