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Council of Europe One in Five campaign: Congress debate on local initiatives to stop sexual violence against children

Strasbourg, 19.10.2001 - What can local and regional authorities do to prevent sexual violence against children? How best to foster and develop practical initiatives and good practices in this area? The members of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe examined these issues in a debate on 18 October 2011.

The debate formed part of the general theme of its 21st session – "living together in dignity". It was one of the Congress contributions to the Council of Europe's One in Five campaign, which sets out to promote the Lanzarote Convention, the main legal instrument on the subject. The campaign also seeks to make all those concerned – including the children themselves – more aware of the gravity of this form of violence and of what can be done to prevent it.

The Congress is responsible for the local and regional dimension of the campaign, which reflects its 2009 resolution on preventing violence against children. The aim, first and foremost, is to encourage local and regional authorities to establish appropriate multidisciplinary bodies and mechanisms and to promote a more child-friendly culture.

These two aspects of the problem were presented during the 21st Congress Session by, respectively, Bragi Gudbrandsson, Director General of Iceland's Government Agency for Child Protection, and Roswitha Wenzl, Commissioner for Children's Affairs, City of Stuttgart and project director of the "Cities for Children" European Network. According to Mr Gudbrandsson, the Iceland's thirteen year experiment with special children's centres should be a good example: "They brought all the services and agencies responsible for dealing with children who had suffered sexual abuse – justice, the police, therapists and social services – under one roof, in a suitable environment." Mrs Wenzl said that the Cities for Children network, made up of 70 cities in 32 countries, would be offering the campaign its strong support, to ensure that information on good practices could be shared and put into effect on the ground.

"The campaign also has the firm support of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly", stated Carina Ohlsson, Chair of the Assembly's Sub-Committee on Children and contact parliamentarian for this campaign. She invited Congress members to contribute as representatives of the local and regional tiers of government. "United action from all the Council of Europe bodies is the only way to achieve the sought-after results", she underlined.

[The local and regional dimensions of the Council of Europe ONE in FIVE Campaign to stop sexual violence against children: A Strategic Action Plan for the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe](#)

[Website of the 21st 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).