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## **The development of a legal framework for local self-government remains a priority for Russia**

Strasbourg, 21.03.2013 – A debate on “Russia-Council of Europe: Building a Europe of democracy” was organised on 20 March 2013 during the 24<sup>th</sup> Session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. Addressing the Congress members on this occasion, Valentina Matvienko, Chairperson of the Council of the Federation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, presented the state of local and regional democracy in her country.

She underlined, in particular, the Federal Law in force since June 2012 - which takes into account the Congress's recommendation 297 adopted in October 2010 - concerning the reintroduction of direct elections for regional governors in Russia. “The role of municipal structures in this process has been significantly enhanced. Today, the nomination for a governor's office should be supported by members of representative bodies or elected heads of municipalities” she explained. Other procedures have also been improved, particularly regarding the registration of political parties. “The development of a legal framework for local self-government remains our priority” stated Mrs Matvienko stressing the need to strengthen the financial autonomy of regions and municipalities. “Russia highly appreciates the Congress's work on monitoring the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, which has its clear criteria and has become business-like, steady and systematic in nature over the past two years.”

The President of the Congress, Herwig van Staa, welcomed the reforms taken by the Russian Federation and confirmed the willingness of Congress to pursue this cooperation with national as well as local and regional authorities, in particular within the forthcoming Council of Europe action plan for Russia.

Alongside their other recent activities, the Russian authorities have been very much involved in the Council of Europe's ONE in FIVE campaign, which aims to promote the Lanzarote Convention, signed by Russia on the 1 October 2012. They are involved, in particular, in the promotion of the Pact of towns and regions to stop sexual violence against children. This pact, launched by the Congress, was presented in Moscow, in November 2012.

Video of the debate: [Original](#) – [French](#) – [English](#)

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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: Herwig Van Staa (Austria, EPP/DC), President of the Chamber of Regions: Nataliya Romanova (Ukraine, IDLG), 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), European Conservatives & Reformists Group (ECR)