



THE CONGRESS OF
LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES
COUNCIL OF EUROPE

ACTIVITY REPORT

Communication by the
Congress Secretary General

at the 1167th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies on
3 April 2013 (November 2012 - April 2013)

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INTRODUCTION

In the framework of its reform, the Congress has increased and intensified its dialogue with the Committee of Ministers. The regular exchanges of views between the Congress Secretary General and the Deputies are an opportunity to discuss the Congress activity reports that provide overviews of its major institutional and thematic activities. The current report covers the past six months of activities, since November 2012.

Highlights in this period were events under the CM presidency of Andorra, who decided to put a particular emphasis on the promotion of local and regional democracy, as well as the 24th session (from 19 to 21 March), the monitoring visits to Italy, Albania, Spain and Georgia, and the election observation mission to the “former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”.

The monitoring visits have involved an increased level of political dialogue and co-operation with the states concerned. The Congress has also focused on evaluating the implementation of its recommendations as well as on the establishment of new forms of co-operation to address specific problems raised during visits. The resolution on “Congress post-monitoring and post-observation of elections: Developing political dialogue”, adopted during the 24th session, sets the framework for pursuing political dialogue with national authorities following a monitoring procedure and agreeing on a roadmap to implement the Congress’ recommendations.

For several years, Europe has been hit not only by a huge economical and financial crisis, but also by a crisis of confidence in the democratic functioning of our societies. The Congress has thus decided to devote a large part of its two annual sessions in 2013 to the theme “Europe in crisis – the challenges for local and regional democracy”. The aim is to help local and regional elected representatives exchange on ways of addressing the crisis and identify concrete responses at the grassroots.

The March session provided the first opportunity to hold such exchanges, with debates on themes such as promoting citizens’ participation, increasing social inclusion and preventing corruption by enhancing ethics in governance. The presentations made by Valentina Matvienko, Chairman of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, Tengiz Shergelashvili, First Deputy-Minister for Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia and Gilbert Saboya Sunyé, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Andorra, among others, as well as their answers to questions from Congress members, were also relevant contributions to this debate.

The European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion, launched during the Session, is the concrete result of a year and a half of work following the Summit of Mayors on Roma in September 2011. It currently brings together, with the support of the European Commission and other Organisation, almost 120 municipalities, regions and their networks to work on improving the condition of Romas.

The Congress also launched an interactive online platform to demonstrate good local and regional practices in combating the sexual abuse of children. This platform will act as a support tool for the Pact of Towns and Regions set up by the Congress as a local and regional contribution to the Council of Europe ONE in FIVE Campaign.

The Congress seizes each opportunity to expand its panoply of practical tools in order to refocus on its core business and fine-tune its actions accordingly. Its goal is to continue in its efforts to be less theoretical and more practical, operational, action-driven and result-oriented, engaging in concrete activities together with national governments.

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1. The political agenda of the Congress

- **Meeting of the Congress – EU Committee of the Regions contact group** (10 December 2012)

This meeting took place in the framework of the institutional co-operation between the Congress and the Committee of the Regions (see under section 6.)

- **Principality of Monaco signs and ratifies the European Charter of Local Self-Government** (Strasbourg, 10 January 2013)

This ratification comes just a short time after ratification by the Principality of Andorra. Thus the Principality has joined the 45 Council of Europe countries which have already signed this international treaty. Application of the Charter across “100% of European territory” is in fact one of the major objectives of the Congress. The text will come into force in respect of Monaco on 1 May 2013.

- **Congress President meets the President of Georgia** (Strasbourg, 22 January 2013)

During the official visit by Mikheil Saakashvili, President of Georgia, to the Council of Europe, in the context of the Parliamentary Assembly, the President of the Congress, had the opportunity to inform him of the progress made in monitoring local and regional democracy in Georgia. He expressed his concern with regard to the allegations of pressure exerted on a number of Georgian mayors following the parliamentary elections on 1 October 2012. He also informed Mikheil Saakashvili that the Congress intends to make a fact-finding mission to Georgia to examine the situation (see under 4.a.ii).

- **Entry into force of Protocol No. 3 to the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities concerning Euroregional Co-operation Groupings** (1 March 2013)

In the framework of the Protocol, these groupings, composed of local authorities and other public bodies, will have to put transfrontier and interterritorial co-operation into practice for their members, within the scope of their competencies and prerogatives. Indeed, the Protocol aims at facilitating co-operation between local and regional communities or authorities belonging to different States and simplifying the procedures enabling the creation of effective transfrontier co-operation bodies.

- **Official visit of the President to Montenegro** (7-10 March 2013)

The further development of local and regional democracy and projects to boost transfrontier and interregional co-operation were at the centre of talks held by Congress President Herwig van Staa with representatives of local and national government and other stakeholders. In particular, he met with the Mayor of Podgorica and the Secretary General of the Union of Municipalities of Montenegro as well as with the Mayor of Cetinje with whom van Staa participated in the 14th Austrian Trade Circle in Podgorica, a platform for exchange between representatives of politics, economy and the media, initiated by the Austrian Ambassador in Montenegro. The visit was rounded off by meetings with the Montenegrin Deputy Minister of Sustainable Development and Tourism with the Mayors of Zabljak, Kolasin and Kotor and with the Bishop of Kotor.

- **Statement to mark International Women's Day** (8 March 2013)

In his statement, President van Staa reiterated that the participation of women at every level of public life is a democratic requirement. “This requirement has been enshrined in the Congress Charter, which provides that women must make up at least 30% of all national delegations – and many delegations now actually go much further than that, thereby confirming our belief that it is vital to have a legal framework which ensures women’s participation”, he continued, before referring to the resolution and recommendation entitled

“Achieving sustainable gender equality in local and regional political life”, in which the Congress encourages women to become candidates and stand in elections.

- **Declaration of the Bureau on the arrest of the Director of the Baku School of Political Studies** (18 March 2013)

The Congress Bureau adopted a declaration expressing its deep concern at the recent arrest of Ilgar Mammadov, Director of the Baku School of Political Studies, as well as the decision taken by the Baku Court of Appeal on 8 March not to release him. Mr Mammadov was one of the interlocutors of the Congress delegation during its monitoring visit to Azerbaijan in April 2012.

- **Statement of the Congress concerning the situation of local and regional elected representatives in Turkey** (20 March 2013)

During its 24th session, the Congress adopted a Declaration in which it recalls that it has often expressed great concern towards the continued massive detention of local elected politicians in Turkey, including the former Mayor of Viransehir and former Congress member Leyla Güven, incarcerated since 2009. The Congress reaffirmed its position that the prolonged detention of a large number of mayors and city councilors, who are prevented from fulfilling their duties to the citizens, is debilitating for local democracy. It also expressed its support for the efforts currently being undertaken to establish a dialogue in the framework of the so-called “Imrali process” and reiterated his condemnation for any form of violence and terrorism to resolve disagreements.

Andorran Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers and territorial democracy

(November 2012 - May 2013)

For its first presidency, Andorra has continued efforts by previous presidencies – which will also be taken over by the future Presidencies of Armenia and Austria - in the promotion of local and regional democracy.

The following events have involved the Congress:

- **Meeting of the Congress Bureau** (Andorra la Vella, 11 February 2013)
(see under section 3.)
- **Conference on “Competences for a culture of democracy and intercultural dialogue: a political challenge and values”** (Andorra la Vella, 7 February 2013)
The Congress participated in this event designed to help to set strategic objectives in the education field for the 2014-2015 programme of activities and to prepare the next Conference of Ministers of Education to be held in Helsinki on 26 and 27 April 2013. The President of the Chamber of Local Authorities, Jean-Claude Frécon, (France, SOC) will represent the Congress at the Helsinki conference.

Coming up:

- April 15-16: **Conference of Ministers of Culture** in Moscow with the participation of the President of the Congress

- April 15-21: **Meeting of Young Ambassadors for Peace Seminar and training of young Andorrans to mediation** with the participation of a Vice-President of the Congress and its thematic rapporteur Sherman Batson (UK, SOC)

2. Cooperation within the Council of Europe

The Congress continued to foster increased dialogue and close co-operation with its institutional partners within the Council of Europe.

a. The intergovernmental sector

On 3 December 2012, the Congress bureau appointed the Chair of the Congress Governance Committee Karl-Heinz LAMBERTZ (Belgium, SOC), as the political co-ordinator for co-operation with the Council of Europe intergovernmental sector.

At the next Congress Bureau meeting, on 30 April, Mr Lambertz will present – for the approval of the Bureau – proposals for “joined up activities on local and regional democracy” –, which will include among others cooperation with the CDLR in several priority areas (responses to the economic and financial crisis, human rights at local level and transfrontier cooperation).

i. Action Plans

The Congress has included projects on local and regional democracy in the Council of Europe action plans for Albania, Armenia, Russia and Ukraine as well as activities in Belarus and Kosovo.

It is also contributing to the new Council of Europe policy towards neighbouring regions and has established relations with Morocco and Tunisia (see under section 6.).

ii. European Committee for Local and Regional Democracy (CDLR)

The President of the Congress met the members of the CDLR at their meeting on 19-20 November and discussed with them topics of common interest.

The Congress has contributed to the revised format of the CDLR’s structure and operation reports.

The Congress and CDLR secretariats have agreed to cooperate on local and regional authority responses to the economic crisis. The Congress Current Affairs Committee is preparing a report on this subject for the October 2013 session.

iii. Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues (CAHROM)

The Congress is represented at meetings of the Committee by the Secretariat and its thematic rapporteur on the Roma / Travellers, John Warmisham (UK, SOC) in order to coordinate the work of the Congress with the work performed by other CoE actors in this field.

iv. Others

The Congress is also represented in the Committee of Ministers’ Rapporteur groups, such as the GR-DEM, the GR-EXT, the GR-H and the GR-SOC, as well as in other Steering Committees and Committees of Experts of the Council of Europe - including the Steering Committee on Human Rights (CDDH), the European Steering Committee on Youth (CDEJ), the Steering Committee on cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue (CDDI), the European Committee for social cohesion (CDCS) and the Group of Specialists on child-friendly justice (CJ-S-CH) - through its thematic rapporteurs or its Secretariat.

b. The Parliamentary Assembly

The Congress has regular exchanges with the Parliamentary Assembly in areas of common interest in order to develop synergies and increase co-operation with the respective Secretariats and rapporteurs, notably in the area of monitoring and the implementation of the ONE in FIVE Campaign.

c. The Commissioner for Human Rights

The Congress has developed close relations with the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights in the fields of raising awareness and the protection of human rights at local level.

During his meeting with the Congress Secretary General in February 2013, the Commissioner Nils Muižnieks expressed his interest in the activities of the Congress in the field of monitoring of human rights at the local and regional levels and Roma inclusion.

Active cooperation was decided on the basis of exchange of information and regular dialogue, in particular with the Congress Monitoring Committee.

Moreover, on 19 March, during the Session, a meeting took place between the President of the Congress, the President of the Monitoring Committee and the Thematic Rapporteur on Roma.

d. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)

The Congress is represented in ECRI activities by Sherma Batson (UK, SOC), its thematic rapporteur on the fight against racism at local and regional level, in order to coordinate the work of the Congress with the work performed by other CoE actors in this field.

e. The European Commission for Democracy through Law (The Venice Commission)

The Congress has an outstanding level of co-operation with the Venice Commission, particularly in the fields of election observation and the monitoring of the Charter, as well as the programmes of co-operation with neighbouring regions.

Co-operation between the Venice Commission, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress in electoral matters mainly occurs by means of the Council for Democratic Elections (CDE). The principles found in the *Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters*, produced by the CDE, are taken into account in Congress reports and recommendations on electoral matters. Lars O. Molin (Sweden, EPP/CCE) and Gudrun Mosler-Törnström (Austria, SOC) are the Congress institutional representatives to the CDE. On 15 December, Mr Molin also took part in the meeting of the European Council for Democratic Elections and presented the Congress' recent and future work in the electoral field.

The Congress has also strengthened its co-operation with the Venice Commission on issues of local and regional democracy. Its opinions are also taken into account by Congress rapporteurs during their visits and in recommendations adopted by the Congress. Furthermore, Lars O. Molin, Chair of the Monitoring Committee, regularly represents the Congress at meetings of the Venice Commission. M. Molin participated in the 93rd plenary session of the Venice Commission on 14 December 2012 in Venice. He presented the Monitoring activities of the Congress including its work programme for 2013, as well as the post-monitoring activities launched recently in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The institutional co-operation activities with Morocco and Tunisia are conducted in close collaboration with the Venice Commission. The Congress has participated in several hearings and meetings of the Venice Commission with the National Constituent Assembly (ANC) of Tunisia on the draft Constitution. The Commission has also been involved in the discussions held by the Congress with the Moroccan Parliament on the draft law on advanced regionalisation (see under section 6.)

f. The Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Inclusion

Since the Summit of Mayors on Roma in September 2011, the Congress has been working in close co-operation with the Special Representative to establish a co-operation framework for cities and regions willing to promote inclusive policies for Roma. The European Alliance for Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion was officially launched on 20 March during the Session of the Congress (see under section 5.).

g. Council of Europe Conference of INGOs

The Conference of INGO's participates in the European Local Democracy Week organised every year by the Congress.

3. Activities of the Congress bodies

a. Meetings of the Bureau

- **Strasbourg, 3 December 2012**

During its last meeting of the year, the Bureau examined the follow-up to the 23rd Session (16-18 October 2012) and the preparation for the upcoming 24th Session (19-21 March 2013), the budget for 2012 and 2013, the observation of local and regional elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the timetable for local and regional elections in 2013. It also examined changes to national delegations and progress on the Congress's co-operation activities, as well as its contribution to the work of past, present and future chairmanships of the Committee of Ministers. The Bureau also adopted two new administrative rules and prepared the 2013 edition of the European Local Democracy Week.

- **Andorra, 11 February 2013**

Under Andorra's Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, the Bureau of the Congress met in Andorra-la-Vella. It examined the agenda for the 24th Session of the Congress (19-21 March 2013), the missions to observe local elections in Armenia (September 2012), Bosnia and Herzegovina (October 2012) and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (March 2013), and a draft report on the situation of local and regional democracy in Georgia, as well as the co-operation activities. It also examined the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion, the European Local Democracy Week and the contribution of the Congress to the priorities of the Presidencies of the Committee of Ministers.

- **Strasbourg, 18 and 21 March 2013**

At its meetings during the 24th session, the Bureau adopted a draft declaration on the situation of local and regional elected representatives in Turkey for debate and vote during the session, and a Congress Bureau statement concerning the case of Ilgar Mammadov in Azerbaijan (see also above under Chapter 1.). The Bureau appointed Karl-Heinz Lambertz as first stand-in for the President and Jean-Claude Frécon as the second stand-in to represent the Congress to The Stakeholders' Platform of the Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance at Local Level, and Anders Knape as thematic rapporteur on the right to consultation. The Bureau also examined preparation for the 24th session, the budget for 2012

and 2013 and the outlook for 2013, the calendar of local and regional elections in 2013, progress of the Congress' co-operation activities as well as the composition of the Congress delegation which will observe the local elections at Yerevan on 5 May 2013.

b. Plenary sessions

- **24th Session** (Strasbourg, 18-21 March 2013)

The Congress has decided to place its two annual sessions in 2013 (March and October) under the general theme "Europe in crisis – the challenges for local and regional democracy". The aim is to offer a platform for exchanges between European local and regional elected representatives on ways of addressing not only the financial crisis but also the crisis of confidence in the democratic process.

The Session examined monitoring reports on the state of local democracy in Spain, Hungary, Italy and Georgia and debated the results of the missions to observe local elections in Armenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the participation of representatives from the EU Committee of Regions, invited to take part in the debate (see agenda in appendix).

It also adopted Resolution 353(2013) on "Post-monitoring and post-observation of the elections of the Congress: developing political dialogue", which provides a formal basis for the work of the Congress in monitoring local and regional democracy (see under section 4.)

The session also held a number of targeted debates. The themes of these debates included: fostering active citizenship, combating social exclusion, "promoting ethics, combatting corruption", and "smart cities: new technologies serving democracy" (see under section 3. The Chamber of local authorities). There was also a Round Table on "Regionalisation and devolution in Europe in a context of economic crisis" (see under section 3. The Chamber of regions).

The launching ceremony for the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion took place on the 20 March. The President of the Congress, the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, the President of the European Roma and Travellers Forum, the Deputy Mayor of Heraklion, the founding participant city of the Alliance, and a representative of the Region of Madrid participated in the launch. Furthermore, a video message from Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner for Regional Policy, was broadcast at the event (see also under section 5.)

The Session welcomed Council of Europe Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland as well as several personalities among which Valentina Matvienko, Chairman of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, Tengiz Shergelashvili, First Deputy-Minister for Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia, Gilbert Saboya Sunyé, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Andorra.

The Secretary General underlined that corruption is the biggest threat to democracy. He said that local elected representatives at the grassroots have an important role to play "by designing and disseminating instruments and practices which curb administrative discretion in municipalities, by raising the quality and the ethical standards of local and regional governance and by increasing citizens' participation in it."

The First Deputy-Minister for Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia confirmed the Georgian authorities' desire to strengthen regional and local authorities. "We don't want superficial local democracy, but rather an in-depth reform," he said, indicating that his government wanted, in particular, to implement the principle of subsidiarity as laid out in the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

Valentina Matvienko 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. "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 professional, steady and systematic in nature over the past two years," she said.

Gilbert Saboya Sunyé, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Andorra, presented the themes of the Andorran Chairmanship, in particular the promotion and safeguarding of local democracy in Andorra and the other member states. He underlined the need to protect democratic processes and social cohesion, in the knowledge that both can be victims of the negative consequences of the current economic climate. He said that as part of the action to further democratic life, the top priority for the Andorran Chairmanship was to promote education in democratic citizenship.

c. The Chamber of Local Authorities

At its meeting during the 24th plenary session, the Chamber of Local Authorities debated and adopted two elections observation reports concerning the local by-elections in Armenia on 9 and 23 September 2012 and the local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 7 October 2012.

Henry Féral (France, EPP/CCE), rapporteur for the elections in Armenia, spoke of the need for the Armenian authorities to create the conditions for genuine political pluralism (see also under section 4).

With regard to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Congress Rapporteur Amy Koopmanschap concluded that the elections were well prepared, conducted in an orderly manner and organised in accordance with international standards (see also under 4.b Observing the local elections).

The Chamber meeting also included a debate on “Smart Cities: new technologies serving democracy.” The key points debated were the power of social media in shaping the way in which local issues are dealt with and the electronic and mobile tools, which enable people to interact with local government. Guest speakers - the Deputy Mayor of Tartu, Estonia, and the Mayor of Malmö, Sweden, described how social media, the internet and mobile phone apps are used in their cities to encourage participation, particularly amongst young people.

d. The Chamber of Regions

At the meeting during the 24th Session, President Nataliya Romanova presented the Chamber’s activity report since the 23rd session in October 2012. The Bureau of the Chamber introduced a new political approach for its activities by systematically dedicating an agenda item to political developments at regional level in Europe. The Bureau discussed the recent results of regional elections in several regions (regions of the Czech Republic, Austria, Italy, Spain, and in the Azores and Lower Saxony), the recent developments in Cataluña, the future referendum on Scottish independence and the project of a single “Territorial Unit” of Alsace.

Finally, the Chamber held a Round Table on “Regionalisation and devolution in Europe in the context of economic crisis”. The Round Table focused on the impact of the crisis on the regionalization process, possible responses to recession and social exclusion, and the links between the crisis and “regional nationalism” trends. The Round Table emphasized the risk of affecting the social services traditionally provided by regions, and analysed the risks of division between regions. The major problems detected were the impact on public services contracts, difficulties in local investments, the limitations of banking systems, barriers to internal stability pacts, the difficulties of small and medium size enterprises and the effects of the EU integration on regions.

The participants indicated the following priorities for the regions: the labour mobility investments directed to the green economy, the simplification of the relevant procedures, an efficient management of EU funding, an increased transparency, an increase in citizens’ participation and the boosting of cross-border and interregional cooperation.

Concrete proposals for overcoming the difficulties were made such as a moratorium to internal stability pacts constraints, a practical simplification of the use of the EU funding and a “vertical subsidiarity pact” as an incentive for local investments. The participants agreed that

the role of regions in Europe should be strengthened, both in institutional and economic terms, and that the goal cannot be to promote separatism of wealthier regions that wish to “free themselves” from poorer regions. The crisis exacerbated regional nationalism, and this phenomenon should not be under-estimated. In this respect, the Round Table emphasised that in legitimate cases, autonomy can be granted via a regional “special status” system. The Congress is currently carrying out an analysis of regions with special status, with a view to ascertain the conditions under which this asymmetric distribution of powers is well-grounded, effective and applicable.

The discussions and the conclusions of the Round Table will be taken into consideration for the future work of the Chamber, which will be directed to good governance, economic effectiveness and regional nationalisms trends.

e. The Committees

i. The Monitoring Committee

The Committee is responsible for monitoring the application of the European Charter of local self-government and following institutional developments in Europe’s regions, preparing reports on the situation of local and regional democracy in the countries that have ratified the Charter and monitoring specific issues related to local and regional democracy in Member States. Lars O. Molin (Sweden, L, EPP/CD) is the Chair of the Committee.

On 13 February, the Committee met in Caminha, Portugal and approved the reports on local and regional democracy in Georgia, Spain and Italy. The Committee also decided to undertake an additional visit to Ireland in order to update the report currently being prepared, in light of the action programme announced by the government in October 2012 following the visit of the Congress delegation. A draft resolution on the development of political dialogue for the post-monitoring and post-observation activities of local elections was also approved. Taking the reduction in the budget and human resources of the Congress into account, the Committee decided to delay four monitoring visits until 2014, and adopted its work programme which includes 10 monitoring visits, two post monitoring visits and one fact-finding mission.

The Committee agenda also included a hearing on the law on municipalities in Turkey, where Nurgül Uçar, the former mayor of Seyrek in Izmir, Turkey, presented the situation of her municipality, which had been dissolved according to this law. The Committee decided to ask the governance Committee to discuss a possible report on the issue of the merging of municipalities within the member states of the Council of Europe.

The Committee is also preparing a manual on follow-up activities for the rapporteurs, with the aim of providing members with an effective tool to improve the quality and efficiency of visits to the countries.

Finally, the members of the Committee participated in an exchange of views with Elisabeth Abiri, human rights expert, in order to discuss the content of the third report of the Congress on good practice in the implementation of human rights in the member states of the Council of Europe, as well as in other countries which are in the process of preparing and will be submitted for approval at the next meeting of the Committee.

The next Committee meeting is planned for 3 July 2013 in Tbilisi, Georgia.

ii. The Governance Committee

The Committee is responsible for affairs such as governance, public finance, cross-border and interregional co-operation and e-democracy, as well as co-operation with the European Committee of Local and Regional Democracy (CDLR). Karl-Heinz Lambertz (Belgium, SOC) is the Chair of the Committee.

At its meeting on 19 March during the 24th plenary session, the Governance Committee elected Jon Hermans-Vloedbeld (Netherlands, ILDG) as 5th vice-president. It held discussions on its on-going work programme, including: the criteria for standing for local and regional elections; the concept of adequate financial resources (Article 9 of the European Charter of Local Self-Government); trends in regionalism; interregional cooperation; application of Article 2 of the Congress Charter and regions with special status. The Committee appointed a thematic rapporteur to follow-up Recommendation 328 (2012) on the right of local authorities to be consulted by other levels of government.

The Committee also approved a proposal to hold a seminar and prepare a report on e-democracy, and discussed priorities and possible future topics for the Committee.

The Chair informed the Committee of the reply from the Committee of Ministers to Recommendation 307 (2011) on citizen participation at local and regional level, and of his recent appointment by the Congress Bureau as political co-ordinator for co-operation with the Council of Europe's intergovernmental sector.

The Secretary General of the Congress updated the Committee on the development of Congress activities in the framework of the Council of Europe.

The Committee's next meeting will take place on 3 June 2013 in Strasbourg.

iii. The Current Affairs Committee

Under its mandate, the Committee is responsible for studying the role of local and regional authorities with regard to the major challenges of our society; preparing work on thematic issues such as social cohesion, sustainable development, education, culture and intercultural dialogue from the point of view of the Council of Europe's core values; and proposing action to respond to existing or emerging problems as well as to emergencies at local and regional levels. Farid Mukhametshin (Russian Federation, ILGD) is the Chair of the Committee.

At its meeting in Strasbourg on 19 March 2013, the Committee elected Andrew Boff (United Kingdom, R, ECR) its 5th Vice-Chair. The Committee approved a report by Henrik Hammar (Sweden, L, EPP/CCE) on promoting migrant entrepreneurship in European municipalities, which will be submitted for debate and adoption at the Congress' 25th session in October, and heard statements about progress in the preparation of reports on the impact of the economic crisis on local and regional authorities, on the situation of Roma youth and on the situation of LGBT persons.

The Committee held an exchange of views about its future work and decided to prepare a report on promoting respect for cultural diversity at local and regional levels, based on the discussions during the conference on communication strategies to change diversity perceptions of the local population, to be organised in Ankara on 27 June 2013. Nawel RAFIK-ELMRINI (France, L, SOC) was appointed rapporteur for this report.

Following proposals by Raymond Svensson (Sweden, L, ILDG) and Josef Neumann (Germany, R, SOC), the Committee also decided to prepare reports on the partnership between civil society and local authorities in fostering citizen participation and on equal opportunities for people with disabilities at local and regional level, and appointed them respective rapporteurs. Furthermore, the Committee discussed a request by the Parliamentary Assembly, contained in its 2012 resolution on Jewish cemeteries, to organise co-operation of local authorities in protecting and preserving these burial sites, and appointed John WARMISHAM (United Kingdom, L, SOC) to prepare a Committee position paper on this question.

In addition, Johan van den Hout (Netherlands, R, SOC) and John Warmisham informed the Committee about the launching of, respectively, an online platform for the Pact of Towns and Regions to stop sexual violence against children and the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion.

The next meeting of the Committee will take place in Ankara, on 26 June 2013.

4. Monitoring local and regional democracy

a. The monitoring activities

The monitoring of local and regional democracy in its member States based on the commitments they have undertaken by ratifying the European Charter of Local Self-Government is the core mission of the Congress.

The Congress also focuses on the evaluation of the implementation of its recommendations addressed to national authorities in the framework of previous monitoring visits.

i. “Classical” visits carried out

Since November 2012, the Congress has carried out three local and regional monitoring visits in the following member States:

- **Italy** (4-6 December 2012)

A Congress delegation composed of Knud Andersen (Denmark, ILDG) and Marina Bespalova (Russian Federation, EPP/CCE) carried out the second part of the monitoring visit to Italy to examine the follow-up to the commitments undertaken in the field of territorial democracy and decentralization, particularly in the context of on-going economic and territorial reforms. The last monitoring mission was carried out in 1997.

- **Albania** (12-14 December 2012)

A Congress delegation composed of Zdenek Broz (Czech Republic, ECR) and Ake Svensson (Sweden, SOC) examined the follow-up to the commitments undertaken following the last monitoring mission in 2006. On 13 December, high level meetings were scheduled with representatives of the government, including the Deputy Minister responsible for local self-government, the Ombudsman as well as the President of the Constitutional Court and representatives of the State Auditor's Office. On 14 December the delegation met with Mayors, including, the Mayor of Tirana, the Mayor of Elbasan and the Head of Elbasan Regional Council. The draft recommendation will be submitted to the Congress for adoption during its session in October 2013.

- **Spain** (14 January 2013)

A Congress delegation composed of Rapporteurs Marc Cools (Belgium, ILDG) and Leen Verbeek (The Netherlands, SOC) carried out the second part of its monitoring visit to Spain, after the first part in June 2012. They met with the Secretary of State for Public Administration, the Spanish Delegation to the Congress as well as with the President of the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP). Among others, they were presented the status of the Spanish National programme of reform, regarding in particular local and regional authorities.

ii. Fact-finding missions

The Congress may undertake field missions if allegations of non-respect of commitments regarding the European Charter of Local Self-Government are brought to its attention.

- **Fact-finding mission to Georgia** (27-28 February 2013)

A delegation composed of Congress rapporteurs on Georgia Nigel Mermagen (United Kingdom, ILDG) and Helena Pihlajasaari (Finland, SOC) carried out this mission to obtain information on the situation of local and regional democracy in this country. They were to

examine, in particular, the allegations of pressure put on elected representatives and local authorities which could undermine local democracy and raise issues in the light of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. A complaint on this matter was sent by the National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (NALAG) to the Congress at the beginning of February. The delegation met with the President of Georgia, the Prime Minister, the Chairman of the Parliament, and the Deputy Minister of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia, as well with as the mayors of Tbilisi, Martvili, Abasha, Tetriskaro and Tsalka. The mission report was debated during the March session.

iii. Adopted recommendations

During the **24th Session** (March 2013), the Congress adopted three Recommendations on local and regional democracy in the following countries:

- **Georgia** (19 March 2013)

The Report and Recommendation 334(2013), presented by Nigel Mermagen (RU, GILD) and Helena Pihlajasaari (Finlande, SOC) notes the progress made since the visit in 2004. Causes for concern are also highlighted, such as the lack of standards to be applied to the auditing of local self-government entities, and the restricted financial autonomy of local authorities, which do not have sufficient “own resources”. However, the Rapporteurs note that the current Georgian Government shows a clear political will to incorporate the guiding principles of local self-government into domestic legislation (see also the conclusions of the fact-finding mission carried out 27-28 February under section ii).

- **Spain** (19 March 2013)

A report and Recommendation 336(2013), jointly presented by Marc Cools, Belgium (L, ILDG) and Leen Verbeek, Netherlands (R, SOC) underline the progress made since the previous recommendations by the Congress in 2002, and concludes that Spain generally fulfilled its obligations under the Charter. They welcome the direct incorporation of the Charter into Spanish national law, making it possible for the domestic courts to use and interpret it. The rapporteurs nevertheless very much regretted the overlaps in responsibilities between the different levels of governance, and the lack of efficiency of policies and measures in the area of local budgetary autonomy, which obliges local communities to depend on transfers from the State or regions. They recommended that the Spanish authorities take practical measures in this sphere. The rapporteurs, finally, urged the Spanish authorities to sign and ratify, in the near future, the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No. 207).

- **Italy** (19 March 2013)

A report and Recommendation 337 (2013) presented by Knud Andersen (Denmark, R, ILDG) and Marina Bespalova (Russian Federation, L, EPP/CCE) welcome the fact that the principle of local self-government is enshrined in the Italian Constitution, along with a new chapter on Regions, Provinces and Municipalities. However, the Rapporteurs noted with regret that the rights of local communities to manage a large section of public affairs as their own responsibility were not wholly respected, and that the principle of direct election of leaders on a provincial level were called into question. They also found the inadequacy of mechanisms for financial equalization regrettable, as well as the lack of consultation procedures concerning the redistribution of financial resources to local communities. As well as recommending taking independent measures to resolve the problems raised, the rapporteurs encouraged the Italian authorities to complete the reform project launched over a decade ago. Lastly, the rapporteurs encourage the Italian authorities to sign and ratify the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No. 207) in the near future.

iv. Post-monitoring activities

The Congress is determined to better assess the follow-up given to its recommendations in the framework of the monitoring of local and regional democracy in member States. It has started to organise specific activities in member States to step up dialogue with and between authorities and to assess progress made.

During the 24th session it adopted Resolution 353(2013) on “Post-monitoring and post-observation of the elections of the Congress: developing political dialogue” (see in appendix) which provides a formal basis for the work of the Congress in monitoring local and regional democracy. In particular, this Resolution should allow the Congress to increase the impact of its monitoring mechanisms, develop political dialogue with Member States and, together with the relevant authorities, create a roadmap for the implementation of its recommendations.

b. The observation of local and regional elections

Since 2010, the Congress has been taking steps to widen the scope of the local election observation missions, that it undertakes and to which it invites the EU Committee of Regions to participate. The election observation now includes assessments on the political system, the legal conditions and the media landscape as well as information collected at the pre-electoral stage, in particular concerning the electoral campaign.

The Congress is also focusing more intensely on the concrete follow-up to Congress recommendations resulting from election observation missions.

Furthermore, emphasis is placed on regular training sessions for Congress members. This training is usually carried out in co-operation with the Congress’s strategic partners in the field of election observation, notably with the EU Committee of the Regions, but also with national associations of local self-government.

On 20 March 2013, as part of its 24th Session, the Congress held a training seminar on activities of monitoring local and regional democracy and election observation for members of the Congress and Secretaries of delegation with the aim to encourage members to become more involved in these two key activities.

Since November 2012 it organised one election observation missions in:

- **“The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”** (24 March 2013)

A delegation led by Congress Rapporteur Jüri Landberg (Estonie, GILD), - and including members of the EU Committee of the Regions - carried out an observation mission of elections in “The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and observed the voting on 24 March. A pre-election mission had already taken place from 24 to 27 February 2013. The delegation met the Minister for Local Self Government, the President of the Central Electoral Commission, the Head of the OSCE Mission to Skopje and the Head of the OSCE/BIDDH Election Observation Mission for local elections in 2013. On the day of voting, seven teams from the Congress were sent to different areas to observe these elections throughout the country.

At the end of the observation, the delegation stated that the municipal elections were highly competitive and efficiently administered, but partisan media coverage and a blurring of state and party activities did not always provide a level playing field.

During the 24th session (March 2013), the Congress adopted two recommendations on local elections in:

- **Bosnia and Herzegovina** (7 October 2012)

In Recommendation 339(2013) and Resolution 355 (2013) presented by Rapporteur Amy Koopmanschap (The Netherlands, SOC), the Congress welcomed the improvements after the last local elections in 2008 but made further recommendations, in particular to revise the existing system of voter registration, including the so-called tender ballot system for unconfirmed voters, to professionalize the electoral process, and to reconsider the existing regulation allowing citizens who are not permanently resident in a municipality to take part in local elections. The representative of the Committee of the regions, who had participated in the observation mission, Uno Silberg, was also invited to take part in the debate.

- **Armenia** (9 and 23 September 2012)

In Recommendation 338(2013) and Resolution 354 (2013) presented by Henry Féral (France, EPP/CCE), the Congress concluded that the practical organisation of the local by-elections was satisfactory on the whole, but also urged the Armenian authorities to take measures designed to prevent election rigging, in particular by systematically punishing practices involving the distribution of money observed in certain polling stations, by reminding returning officers of the absolute necessity of checking the identity of each voter against their own personal passport, and by making sure that any help given to the elderly is appropriate for their actual needs. Moreover, the Congress drew up some recommendations on crowd control in the polling booths, which is largely caused by the continued presence of unauthorized persons, as well as on the representation of women in elective office. The representative of the EU Committee of the Regions Brian Meaney, who had participated in the observation mission, was also invited to take part in the debate.

5. Thematic activities

a. Social inclusion

The European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion

The main aim of the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma is to strengthen the capacity of cities and regions in developing policies and implementing successful projects for Roma inclusion.

The Alliance takes into account other initiatives of the Council of Europe, such as the Roma Mediators programme ROMED, the CAHROM, the Intercultural Cities Network, and activities of the Youth Department, among others. It will act in the framework of an international coalition for Roma inclusion, bringing together the Council of Europe, the Council of Europe Development Bank, the European Commission, the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme.

In November 2012, the Alliance finalised its extensive consultation process by organising a meeting with young Roma people.

In December 2012, it implemented two pilot events, focused on the topic of integrated housing intervention (Madrid) and inclusive education (Budapest). The official launch ceremony of the Alliance took place on 20 March 2013 during the 24th Session.

In the period 2013-2014, the Alliance will implement the ROMACT project. Around 30 cities around Europe will be selected to actively participate in the policy cycle on Roma inclusion, consisting of preparation work, workshops, study visits, consultative work and a final conference, and lasting for 18-20 months until the end of 2014. The other cities of the Alliance, which will not be actively involved in the cycle, will also benefit from information exchanges, networking and developing partnerships as well as the possibility to switch to the intensive cycle.

Participation in the Network “Together for co-responsibility”

This network was organised around eight cities from as many different countries to elaborate and apply social cohesion indicators based on Council of Europe methodology. It will be joined by 200 municipalities from 15 countries. The Congress Vice-President, Gaye Doganoglu (Turkey, PPE/CCE), participated in the Second International Meeting of the Territories of Co-responsibility, in Mulhouse, on 22 November 2012. The initiative of territories of co-responsibility dovetails with the Congress action in the field of social cohesion, in particular its *Urban Charter II: Manifesto for a new urbanity*, which invites local authorities to implement the principles of ethical governance, sustainable development and greater solidarity in their public policies.

b. Citizen participation: European Local Democracy Week (ELDW)

ELDW is celebrated every year during the week of 15 October, the date when the European Charter of Local Self-Government opened for signature. It aims at raising citizens awareness on the possibilities available to them in terms of actively participating in politics and in decision-making at the local level. It also encourages local elected representatives to enter into dialogue with inhabitants in order to encourage transparency and responsibility.

The assessment of events carried out in 2012 confirmed the continuous development of this initiative. The leading theme of this 6th edition was dedicated to the importance of human rights for more inclusive communities. Some 150 partners from 29 countries joined the ELDW. For the first time, municipalities in Morocco and Tunisia also registered as ELDW partners, in order to strengthen local democracy. A total of 342 activities and events were organised by towns, cities, regions, national and international associations. 18 municipalities gave special prominence to their participation in the ELDW and seized the chance to take part as a “12-Star City”.

The co-ordination meeting assembling representatives of European cities, regions and associations, held on 28 January in Paris, decided that the 2013 edition of the European Local Democracy Week will be organised from 14 to 20 October with the leading theme “Active citizenship: voting, sharing, participating”. The new ELDW Political Co-ordinator is Dubravka Suica (Croatia, EPP/CCE), Congress Vice-President and member of the Municipal Council of Dubrovnik.

c. Children’s Rights

The action of the Congress in promoting children’s rights and the fight against the sexual exploitation of children falls within both the new strategy to implement fundamental standards to protect and promote children’s rights, adopted in February 2012 by the Council of Europe, and the ONE in FIVE Campaign to combat sexual violence against children, launched by the Organisation in 2010.

The Congress is working in close collaboration with the Coordination Unit of the Children’s Rights Programme and the Parliamentary Assembly Secretariat on the ONE in FIVE campaign.

Having approved its Pact of Towns and Regions to Stop Sexual Violence against Children last year, the Congress is now working to promote it. As part of the promotion of the campaign, Congress Vice-President Clemens Lammerskitten (Germany, EPP/CCE) presented the Pact in the German Bundestag in Berlin on 14 March 2013 in the framework of a meeting of the Parliamentary reference Network of the Council of Europe parliamentary Assembly against sexual violence on children.

A new website has been developed which is an exchange platform where towns, regions and other stakeholders can sign up to the Pact and inform about their policies, initiatives and activities. This website will enable the Congress to draw a picture of what is happening at local and regional levels to combat child sexual exploitation and abuse.

d. Youth

The Congress tried to identify the reasons why young people are apparently disengaging from conventional political participation. It concluded that they engage differently today according to their own understanding of democracy and citizenship.

In order to better understand these new forms of political engagement so young people can continue to have their voice heard in decision-making processes, the Congress, in cooperation with the EU/CoE Partnership on Youth, has launched a call for research on this issue, the results of which will inform the Congress's future work on youth participation.

On 25 November 2012, a consultation between Congress members, representatives of Roma Youth Organisations and other actors working to promote Roma inclusion was held. The aim was to find out more about the challenges facing young Roma people so as to be able to define the sort of policies and initiatives local and regional authorities should be taking. The conclusions of this meeting will be input into the report currently being prepared by the Congress on the situation of young Roma people.

Enter! programme : Two of the participants in this Youth Department's 2013 long-term training course organised to promote access to social rights for young people are supported by Congress members, thus putting into practice some of the recommendations made in Congress Resolution 319 (2010) on the integration of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

e. Support of the democratic process in the Euro-Mediterranean region

- **Seminar on "Decentralisation, advanced regionalisation and human capital"**

The Congress participated in this seminar held in Rabat (Morocco) on 28 and 29 November 2012 in the framework of its engagements to promote territorial democracy in Morocco. Marie-Madeleine Mialot-Muller (France, SOC) Congress rapporteur on regionalization, spoke at a workshop entitled "Institutional, governance and statutory aspects of human resources management".

- **Lisbone Forum 2012**

Philippe Receveur (Switzerland, PPE/CCE) represented the Congress at the Lisbon Forum on 3 December 2012. During a workshop on the theme of overcoming the challenges of democratization, political reforms; including reforms on local autonomy, he recalled the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the Reference Framework on Regional Democracy that should be introduced in the reforms being carried out in these countries.

f. Intercultural dialogue

- **Conference of the network of intercultural cities**

Ludmila Sfirloaga (Romania, SOC), Vice-President of the Congress, represented the Congress at Dublin on 6 February 2013 during this conference, with the theme "An intercultural cities milestone event: Making diversity work for cities". She called upon elected representatives to unite strongly against prejudice and hate speech and publicly condemn them.

6. Cooperation activities and External Relations

a. External partnerships

i. The Committee of the Regions of the European Union

The Congress has continued its co-operation with the European Union's Committee of the Regions.

The election observation missions allow the Congress and the Committee of the Regions to assess together the electoral aspect of local and regional democracy on the ground. The Congress invites representatives from the Committee of the Regions to join the pre-electoral and electoral observation missions that it organises.

The Congress also invites representatives of the Committee of the Regions to take part in the debates held during the Congress plenary sessions on the adoption of the reports and recommendations that are drawn up following observation missions. By reciprocal agreement, the Rapporteurs of the Congress are invited to present the findings of the observation missions to the Committee of the Regions.

4 December 2012 (Brussels):

For the first time, the head of one of the Congress' election observation delegations presented the findings and the Recommendations of an observation mission to the Committee on Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs (CIVEX) of the Committee of the Regions (CoR). This meeting examined the findings of observation missions in Serbia, Armenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

10 December 2012 (Paris):

The Congress organised the 2012 meeting of the Contact Group Congress/Committee of the Regions. Jean-Vincent Placé (FR/PES), member of the Committee of the Regions, and Gunn Marit Helgesen (Norway, EPP/CCE), member of the Congress, were elected respectively President and Vice-President of the Contact Group for a two years term.

With a view to create synergy and avoid duplications, the members of the Congress and the Committee of Regions discussed their future work (the Priorities of the Congress 2013 – 2016 and the Committee of the Regions' Political Programme 2012 – 2015). The Congress presented the activities to be launched to implement its priorities. The CoR will concentrate its activities on achieving the targets of growth and employment in Europe (in particular by contributing to implementing the "Europe 2020" strategy and the EU cohesion policy). The CoR will also continue to monitor the principle of subsidiarity, multi-level governance and decentralised co-operation. An exchange of information on how local and regional authorities are facing the crises took place. The Group dealt with the Congress and CoR activities on the respective "neighbourhood policies" and held an exchange on approaches for counteracting corruption at territorial level. On these subjects, co-operation between the two institutions will continue.

The Congress also cooperated with the Committee of Regions on "devolution" - the CoR adopted, on first reading, a draft Opinion on "Decentralisation in the European Union and the place of local and regional authorities" and the Congress set up a working group to analyse subnational levels and trends in regionalisation in Council of Europe member states, which will lead to the adoption of a report of the Chamber of Regions on regionalisation. Fruitful synergies were established and the CoR findings will be taken into consideration for the Congress' on-going work.

11 February 2013 (Brussels):

The Congress took part in the meeting of the CoR Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs (CIVEX). Vincent McHugh (Ireland, GILD) and Henry Féral (France EPP/CCe) presented the findings of observation missions of joint elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Armenia in 2012 and proposed an amendment (recalling the Council of Europe's role) to the CoR Draft Opinion on "Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2012-2013".

March 2013:

The Committee of the Regions took part in the Congress' mission for observing local elections in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and was invited to take part in the training session on election observation, organised by the Congress during 24th session.

ii. Networks**• The Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA)**

The Congress monitors very closely the evolution of ALDA and is regularly represented at its major meetings and in its decision-making bodies.

During the 24th session, a meeting of potential partners for the Dnipropetrovsk local democracy agency was held. This Agency, which is to open its doors in Autumn 2013, in partnership with the Lower Silesia region of Poland, presented the way in which it operates to any local and regional governments which may be interested in joining the project.

• The Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe (NALAS)

This network, created at the initiative of the Congress in 2001, continues to be a special partner of the Congress in its field activities in Southeast Europe.

In January 2013, the Secretariat of the Congress took part in the meeting of the Executive Committee whose aim was to prepare the future General Assembly that will meet in 19 and 20 April next year.

iii. European Associations of local and regional authorities

The Congress gives a great deal of attention on cooperation with representative associations of cities and regions in Europe.

• Plenary assembly of the European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE)

Clemens Lammerskitten (Germany, EPP/CCE) represented the Congress at this Assembly in Merida on 29-30 November 2012 and presented the recent developments in European regionalism and the priorities of the Congress for 2013-2016. He highlighted that the decline of European regional integration, the intensification of governance on several levels and the effects of the crisis are some of the main challenges facing regional entities today.

• Assembly of European Regions (AER)

Johan Van den Hout (Netherlands, R, SOC), permanent co-representative of the province of Noord-Brabant, represented the Congress at the AER conference which discussed "the regions and the crisis: Youth as a source and a lever of regional growth in times of crisis: regional solutions in Warsaw" on 8 March 2013. The conference felt that the adoption of measures, which favoured mobility and entrepreneurial education for young people, should be a political priority. In particular, the Congress Chamber of Regions was to take part in the final AER summit on the crisis as well as in its General Assembly, which would meet in Paris on the 15 and 16 of May 2013.

b. Cooperation programmes and action plans

The Congress continued to develop its cooperation activities in a certain number of countries and has submitted projects for co-financing to several potential donors.

i. Member States of the Council of Europe

• Albania

In the framework of a project entitled “Strengthening the capacities of local elected representatives”, run by the Council of Europe, the Congress is building a unified platform for dialogue and co-operation between local and regional elected representatives.

This project, which will be implemented by 2015, is funded by the Swiss Development and Co-operation Agency. The total budget amounts to €1,480,000, of which €560,000 is for the activities of the Congress.

The first two meetings of the Executive Body (a restricted working group of ten representatives of Albanian local government units) were held in Tirana on 24-25 January and 26 February with the participation of Mayors of municipalities and communes and Presidents of regions to represent the three levels of local governance in Albania. The aim of these meetings was to provide information for future decisions of the Policy Committee, in particular to define the priority areas of work and to outline various options for a platform for dialogue between local and regional representatives in Albania.

The Council of Europe project was officially launched on 27 February 2013 in Tirana, in parallel to a meeting of the Steering Committee, which is an assembly of all the stakeholders involved in the project and whose main mission is to provide strategic guidance to the project. Representatives of the Albanian Government, the Swiss Ambassador in Albania, Albanian local and regional authorities, international partners and the local press were present at the launch of the project. The Congress was represented by Helen Eadie, United Kingdom (R, SOC). During this first meeting, the Steering Committee approved its statute and the action plan for 2013.

A series of three regional seminars aimed at all local units in Albania will take place on the 3,4 and 5 April in the towns of Fieri, Elbasan and Lezha. These seminars are designed to present the project, educate people about the need to create a shared platform for dialogue for the local and regional authorities and gather opinions on possible strategies for establishing such a platform. They also aim to give examples of good practice in the field of increasing income local communities and establishing cooperation between citizens and local elected representatives.

• Armenia

The Council of Europe Action Plan for Armenia was launched in Yerevan on 12 July 2012. The Danish authorities have expressed interest in local democracy issues, including the activities suggested by the Congress for 2013-2014 relating to the strengthening of leadership capacities of local and regional elected representatives. A funding decision is expected by June, with a possible implementation starting from September 2013.

• Russia

Local democracy is one of the priorities in the cooperation document for the Russian Federation in 2013-2014 which is currently being drafted. The Congress will contribute to a project which has been developed by the Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform of the Council of Europe. The project's main objectives are to improve the quality of local governance; to increase efficiency and effectiveness of local government; to promote sustainable policies; and to improve citizens' access to services, as well as their involvement in public decisions.

- **Ukraine**

Following the Conference on the implementation of the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine (10 September 2012, Kyiv, Ukraine), the projects which have not yet been funded were submitted to potential donors.

On 5 February 2013 in Kyiv, Natalya Romanova (Ukraine, ILDG), President of the Chamber of the Regions, participated in the Steering Committee meeting of the local democracy projects run by the Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform of the Council of Europe and presented to different local players and donors the Congress project relating to the reinforcement of local and regional elected representatives' capacity and the improvement of local government within Ukraine.

The Congress project will be developed within the next few months and adapted in the light of recommendations of the report on local and regional democracy in Ukraine which is currently being prepared.

- ii. **Council of Europe activities for the development and consolidation of democratic stability**

- **Belarus**

The Congress has included a project in the document describing the activities for Belarus to be undertaken by the Council of Europe. The project aims at raising awareness of the European Charter of Local Self-Government among national authorities, local authorities and civil society in Belarus; sharing the European experiences on the implementation of the Charter and providing an assessment of the compliance of Belarus legislation and draft legislation with Council of Europe standards in the field of local democracy. The proposed activities will be discussed with the Belarus authorities in spring 2013.

- **Kosovo***

The Congress has developed a project aimed at raising authorities' and local elected representatives' awareness of decentralisation issues and of the role of local elected representatives with the objective of strengthening democratic values and governance in Kosovo*. The proposed activities will be discussed with the stakeholders in 2013.

- iii. **Cooperation with neighbouring regions of the Council of Europe**

The Congress' proposals are part of the Council of Europe policy towards neighbouring regions and respond to requests received by the countries concerned.

- **Morocco**

The Congress is continuing to cooperate with Moroccan authorities, particularly in relation to the new territorial organisation of the country, which should take shape in 2013 as the Council of the Moroccan Government recently approved a bill which defines the principles for territorial delimitation of local and regional constituencies.

Following the presentation in July 2012 of the European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) to several Moroccan mayors, and thanks to the deep involvement of Moroccan local government

* All reference to Kosovo, whether in the territory, institutions or population in this text, shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo*.

units in 2012, seven Moroccan cities enrolled to the ELDW and organised various local initiatives with the participation of citizens. Contacts will be made to ensure increased participation in 2013.

- **Tunisia**

The Congress continued its discussions with Tunisian authorities in the framework of the Council of Europe's institutional assistance. It participated in several consultation meetings between representatives of the Tunisian National Constituent Assembly (NCA) and the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), in particular on the draft Chapter 6 on local authorities. Comments made by Congress representatives during these exchanges have been forwarded in writing to Imed Hammami, Chair of the Committee of the NCA responsible for regional and local public authorities.

On 13 and 14 December 2013, the Congress held a joint contact visit to Tunis on local and regional democracy with representatives of the Council of Europe Democratic Governance Directorate. The delegation was headed by Marie-Madeleine Mialot-Muller, (France, SOC).

This visit was organised with a view to new cooperation projects and to a study on local and regional democracy in Tunisia. The delegation met with potential stakeholders and partners (President Hammami, various ministries, presidents of special delegations, representatives for civil society, and the international community in Tunis).

As a follow up to this visit, a working meeting was held in Brussels on 21 December 2012 with the participation of Néjl Baccouche, Professor of Law in the University of Sfax (Tunisia), and Christian Behrendt, Professor of Constitutional Law in the University of Liege (Belgium), who have been asked to prepare a study on the situation of local and regional democracy in Tunisia and recommendations for the end of May 2013. This study will serve as the basis for the development of joint cooperation projects in Tunisia, by the Congress and the Centre of Expertise.

The events which took place earlier this year in Tunisia prevented the Secretariat from continuing contacts, in particular with the Constituent National Assembly, to respond to their request to hold a seminar on local and regional electoral systems, in the framework of the preparation of the draft electoral law.

APPENDICES

Appendix I

Congress post-monitoring and post-observation of elections: developing political dialogue

Resolution 353 (2013)[†]

Preamble

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe is a unique institution in Europe with responsibility in respect of local and regional democracy, through monitoring and local election observation in member states of the Council of Europe. These statutory duties of the Congress constitute the basis of further activities including dialogue and co-operation with the national governments and intergovernmental sector, as well as technical co-operation programmes and activities.

In concrete terms, the Congress assesses the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self Government by means of missions to member States and organises high-quality election observation missions according to recognised international standards. Both activities are based on guidelines adopted by the Congress[‡] in order to ensure high professional quality, transparency, comparability and dialogue.

Seeking more impact and effectiveness, the Congress wishes, beyond the adoption of recommendations and resolutions, to pursue political dialogue with national authorities and other relevant stakeholders involved in monitoring and election observation activities, in order to improve the implementation of these adopted texts.

In this perspective, the Congress adopts the following resolution on the development of the political dialogue on post-monitoring/post-election observation.

Activities in the framework of the political dialogue on Congress post-monitoring/post-election observation are subject to the availability of the necessary resources.

[†] Debated and adopted by the Congress on 20 March 2013, 2nd sitting (see document [CG\(24\)7](#) explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: Jean-Marie Belliard, France (R, EPP/CCE).

[‡] Resolution 306 (2010) on “Observation of local and regional elections – strategy and rules of the Congress “ Resolution 307 (2010) Revised on “Procedures for monitoring the obligations and commitments entered into by the Council of Europe member states in respect of their ratification of the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122)”

1. Referring to:

a. its Resolution 31 (1996) and to Statutory Resolution Res(2011)2 of the Committee of Ministers or the Council of Europe, which reiterates that the Congress shall prepare on a regular basis country-by-country reports on the situation of local and regional democracy in all member states and in states which have applied to join the Council of Europe, and shall ensure, in particular, that the principles of the Charter of Local Self-Government are implemented. The same Statutory Resolution states that the Congress shall also prepare reports and recommendations following the observation of local and/or regional elections;

b. Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2011)2 which makes clear that recommendations and opinions of the Congress shall be sent as appropriate to the Parliamentary Assembly and/or the Committee of Ministers as well as to European and international organisations and institutions. Resolutions and other adopted texts which do not entail possible action by the Assembly and/or the Committee of Ministers shall be transmitted to them for their information;

c. its Resolution 307(2010) rev. in which it stresses the importance for the Council of Europe to ensure that the commitments entered into by all its member states are fully honoured;

d. its Resolution 306(2010) which underlines the importance of election observation at local and regional level and its complementarity to the political monitoring process of the European Charter of Local Self-Government which constitutes the cornerstone of local democracy in Europe. It points to the specific role of local and regional elected representatives as observers of territorial votes for the legitimacy and credibility of the electoral process at local and regional level;

e. the Priorities 2012-2013 proposed by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and supported by the Committee of Ministers,[§] which stress the need to increase the coherence and effectiveness of monitoring, allowing a better integration of monitoring results into the programme of activities;

2. The Congress:

a. contributes at local and regional level to the fundamental aims of the Council of Europe to foster democracy on our continent;

b. underlines that its recommendations following monitoring and election observation missions addressed by the Committee of Ministers cannot be efficient if not implemented by the authorities of the member state to which the text refers;

c. considers that its political dialogue with national authorities, in the framework of the monitoring process, should be pursued after the adoption of a recommendation, in the form of a post-monitoring dialogue, in order to discuss - together with the authorities - a roadmap to improve local and regional democracy in line with the recommendations addressed to national authorities by the Committee of Ministers;

d. discusses, in the light of the above-mentioned complementarity between monitoring and election observation activities, recommendations resulting from missions to observe local and regional elections in its Monitoring Committee;

e. stands ready, at the request of national authorities, to hold political exchanges of views on the European Charter on Local Self-Government with national authorities and all stakeholders involved in the monitoring process, in order to agree on a roadmap to implement Congress recommendations;

[§] Documents CM(2011)48 rev and [CM/Del/Dec\(2011\)1112/1.6](#)

f. is prepared to enter, at the joint request of the Congress and the national authorities, into a post-election observation dialogue with the national authorities and all stakeholders involved in the electoral process, in order to agree on a roadmap to implement its recommendations resulting from election observation missions;

g. concurs, on the basis of the defined roadmaps, with the relevant departments of the Council of Europe in the field of co-operation activities, aiming at providing input to, if appropriate, action plans or co-operation programmes;

h. confirms its will to continue contributing to the preparation and implementation of Council of Europe co-operation activities with the member States concerned to make the whole process meaningful and effective. It offers its operational capacities, mainly financed externally, to implement projects to develop and improve local and regional democracy also for activities supported by member States and/or other donors, especially the European Union;

i. carries out, in the framework of the objectives set up in the reform of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe^{**} a regular follow-up of the implementation of its recommendations in order to ensure the effectiveness and impact of its monitoring and election observation activities.

Appendix

Rules governing the implementation of political dialogue in the framework of Congress post-monitoring/post-observation of elections pursuant to Resolution 353 (2013)

Pursuant to Resolution 353 (2013), the purpose of the present rules is to define the arrangements for organising the post-monitoring and post-election observation political dialogue with all levels of government of the Council of Europe member states, with the aim of achieving the objective set forth in the aforementioned resolution, namely to pursue a political dialogue with national authorities of member states in order to implement the Congress recommendations addressed to the authorities.

1. The post-monitoring dialogue

1.1. The post-monitoring procedure may be carried out at the joint request of the Congress and the national authorities to which the Committee of Ministers addressed a Congress recommendation on local and regional democracy. It shall comprise five phases following the adoption of the recommendation by the Committee of Ministers:

- a) an exchange of views with the Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe of the country concerned;
- b) a political exchange with national authorities and other relevant stakeholders in order to identify the priorities laid down in the adopted recommendation;
- c) the development of a roadmap by the Congress delegation, in co-operation with national authorities, in order to determine the main steps necessary to implement the recommendations;
- d) a political dialogue with the national authorities in order to agree on a roadmap;
- e) the roadmap will be the basis for developing, if appropriate, an action plan or co-operation programme in association with the other relevant departments of the Council of Europe.

1.2. Composition of the delegation

^{**} Speech DD(2010)22rev delivered by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe at the 1075th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies – Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 20 January 2010

The delegation may comprise the monitoring rapporteurs, the Chair of the Monitoring Committee or in case of non-availability of the above-mentioned persons, any Congress member who has a particular knowledge of the given country. In the latter case, the criteria provided by Resolution 307(2010) rev. shall apply.

2. The post-election observation dialogue

2.1. The post-election observation procedure may be put into place at joint request of the Congress and the national authorities to which the Committee of Ministers addressed a Congress recommendation on observation of local or regional elections. It comprises the following steps:

- a) an exchange of views with the Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe of the country concerned;
- b) a political exchange with national authorities and other relevant stakeholders in order to identify the priorities laid down in the adopted recommendation;
- c) the development of a roadmap by the Congress delegation in co-operation with national authorities and other relevant stakeholders, in order to decide on major steps necessary to implement the recommendations;
- d) a political dialogue with the national authorities in order to agree on a roadmap;
- e) on the basis of this roadmap, if appropriate, an action plan or co-operation programme, in association with other relevant departments of the Council of Europe, will be developed.

2.2. Composition of the delegation

The delegation may comprise the Head of delegation/rapporteur – or in case of non-availability of the above-mentioned person(s) – any member of the Congress election observation mission as well as the rapporteur of the Monitoring Committee in charge of the respective country.

Appendix II

CG(24)OJ1PROV
18 March 2013

24th Session of the Congress

Strasbourg, Palais de l'Europe,
19-21 March 2013

DRAFT AGENDA
PUBLIC MEETING

THEME FOR 2013:
EUROPE IN CRISIS – CHALLENGES
TO LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEMOCRACY

Members' attention is drawn to:

- Deadline for submission of candidatures: election of the vice-chair of the Current Affairs Committee and of the Governance Committee: at the latest by **18.00 on 18 March**.
- Electronic voting on texts will take place in the hemicycle and in Room 1. The voting handsets will be distributed at the entrance to the meeting rooms upon signature of the attendance register. []
- Participants are reminded that access to the hemicycle is strictly limited to holders of badges which indicate the specific hemicycle symbol. Seating in the hemicycle and Room 1 will be allocated according to the seating plans available for consultation at the entrance to the meeting rooms.
- Tabling written questions for oral reply (Office 1081): each member should limit herself/himself to one question to the Secretary General (deadline: **Monday 18 March at 15.00**), one question to the First Deputy-Minister for Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia (deadline: **Monday 18 March at 10.00**), one question to the Chairperson of the Council of the Federation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation (deadline: **Tuesday 19 March at 10.00**) and one question to the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers (deadline: **Wednesday 20 March at 10.00**).
- The conditions and deadlines for tabling amendments (Office 1081): at the latest at **10.00** on the eve of the day when the texts to which they refer are to be discussed except for texts to be debated on Tuesday 19 March for which the deadline is **16.00 on Monday 18 March**. Amendments must be signed by 5 delegates from at least two delegations for texts debated in plenary sittings or in the chambers. Each amendment must specify the name of the delegate who will submit it.
- Registration of speakers for the debates: the form for registration of speakers for the debates, available at the entrance of the hemicycle, must be submitted to the Table Office secretariat seated in front of the President's rostrum.
- **Finance Office:** Office 1040.
- **Table Office** for any further questions: Office 1081.

Monday 18 March 2013 (eve of the session)

Bureaux meetings

9.30-10.30, Room 6	Bureau of the Chamber of Local Authorities
9.30-10.30, Room 7	Bureau of the Chamber of Regions
10.30-12.30 and 14.00-16.00, Room 8	Bureau of the Congress

Seminar on election observation and monitoring missions 13.30 – 16.00

Room 1	Open to all members of the Congress, secretaries of delegation and advisers
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Political group meetings 16.30 – 18.30

Room 6	European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR)
Room 9	European People's Party Group in the Congress (EPP/CCE)
Room 10	Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (ILDG)
Room 11	Socialist Group (SOC)

Tuesday 19 March 2013

Committee meetings

8.30 – 10.45

Room 6

Current Affairs Committee (vote in Room 7)

Room 8

Governance Committee (vote in Room 9)

Tuesday 19 March 2013

11.00 – 12.30, Hemicycle

Plenary Sitting

11.00

Opening of the 24th Session of the Congress by the President of the Congress

Herwig VAN STAA, Austria, (R, EPP/CCE)

Verification of new members' credentials [CG(24)2] (RES)

Presentation by the rapporteurs:

Anders KNAPE, Sweden (L, EPP/CCE) and Ludmila SFIRLOAGA, Romania (R, SOC)



Debate and vote

amendments tabled by 16.00

Monday 18 March

Adoption of the draft agenda of the session [CG(24)OJ1PROV]

Adoption of the draft minutes of the last sitting of the 23rd Session (18 October 2012) [CG(23)PV3]

Adoption of the composition of the Congress committees [CG(24)3]

Communication by the President of the Congress

Debate

Statement by Thorbjørn JAGLAND

Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Oral reply to written questions

Deadline for tabling written questions: Monday 18 March at 15.00

12.30

Suspension of the sitting

At the close of the sitting:

EVENT:

“Andorra’s parishes: land, country, state”, Inauguration of an exhibition presented by the Permanent Representation of Andorra

In the lobby of the Hemicycle

Tuesday 19 March 2013

14.30 – 18.30 Hemicycle

Plenary Sitting

14.30	 <p>Local and regional democracy in Georgia [CG(24)10PROV] (REC) For information: Report on the fact-finding mission to Georgia on 27-28 February 2013 [CG(24)11] Presentation by the rapporteurs: Nigel MERMAGEN, United Kingdom (L, ILDG) and Helena PIHLAJASAARI, Finland (R, SOC) Debate and vote <i>amendments tabled by 16.00 Monday 18 March</i></p> <p>Statement by Tengiz SHERGELASHVILI, First Deputy-Minister for Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia</p> <p>Oral reply to written questions <i>Deadline for tabling written questions: Monday 18 March at 10.00</i></p>
	 <p>The budget and resources of the Congress in 2014-2015 [CG(24)5PROV] (REC) Presentation by the rapporteurs: Jean-Claude FRECON, France (L, SOC) and Svetlana ORLOVA, Russian Federation (R, EPP/CCE) Debate and vote <i>amendments tabled by 16.00 Monday 18 March</i></p>
	 <p>Local and regional democracy in Spain [CG(24)6PROV] (REC) Presentation by the rapporteurs: Marc COOLS, Belgium (L, ILDG) and Leen VERBEEK, Netherlands (R, SOC) Debate and vote <i>amendments tabled by 16.00 Monday 18 March</i></p>
	 <p>Local and regional democracy in Italy [CG(24)8PROV] (REC) Presentation by the rapporteurs: Knud ANDERSEN, Denmark (R, ILDG) and Marina BESPALOVA, Russian Federation (L, EPP/CCE) Debate and vote <i>amendments tabled by 16.00 Monday 18 March</i></p>
	<p>Fostering active citizenship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Making local democracy thrive <p>Statements by: Blanca SOLANS GARCÍA, General Director of Citizen's Participation, External Activities and Co-operation, Government of Aragón, Spain</p> <p>Katharina WALLENBORG, Municipal commissioner with responsibility for democracy and equality, Huddinge (12-star city), Sweden</p> <p>Debate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Involving the community: new forms of democratic participation <p>Statements by: Joe IRVIN, Chief Executive of NAVCA (National Association for Voluntary and Community Action), United Kingdom</p> <p>Fionn GREIG, youth worker and participant in the Enter! long-term training course, United Kingdom</p> <p>Debate</p>
18.30	End of the sitting
At the close of the sitting	<p>EVENT: Reception and musical event to launch an exhibition on the XXVII Summer Universiade (Student Olympic Games) in Kazan, Tatarstan (Russian Federation) <i>In the lobby of the Hemicycle</i></p>

Wednesday 20 March 2013

Chamber of Regions

9.00 - 12.00, Hemicycle

9.00	Opening by the President of the Chamber Nataliya ROMANOVA, Ukraine (ILDG)
	Adoption of the draft agenda of the Chamber [CPR(24)OJ1PROV]
	Communication by the President of the Chamber [CPR(24)1]
	Round table on: “Regionalisation and devolution in Europe in a context of economic crisis” Introduction by: Herwig VAN STAA, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, Austria (R, EPP/CEE) Ulrike GUEROT, Director of the Bureau in Berlin of the European Council on Foreign Relations, Germany Statements by: Michèle SABBAN, President of the Assembly of European Regions, France Françoise DUPUIS President of the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE), Belgium Jean-Marie BELLIARD, President of the Commission of Cross-border and Decentralised Co-operation of the Regional Council of Alsace, France Bruno MARZIANO, Member of the Regional Assembly of Sicily, Italy Marie-Madeleine MIALOT MULLER, Vice-President of the Regional Council of the Région Centre, Congress rapporteur on regionalisation, France
12.00	Close by the President of the Chamber

Wednesday 20 March 2013

Chamber of Local Authorities

9.00 - 12.00, Room 1

9.00	Opening by the President of the Chamber Jean-Claude FRECON, France (SOC)
	Adoption of the draft agenda of the Chamber [CPL(24)OJ1PROV]
	Communication by the President of the Chamber [CPL(24)1]
	Local by-elections in Armenia [CPL(24)2PROV] (RES and REC) Presentation by the rapporteur: Henry FERAL, France (L, EPP/CCE) Statement by Brian MEANEY, on behalf of the members of the Committee of the Regions participating in the observation mission Debate and vote <i>amendments tabled by 10.00 Tuesday 19 March</i>
	Local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina [CPL(24)3PROV] (RES and REC) Presentation by the rapporteur: Amy KOOPMANSCHAP, Netherlands (L, SOC) Statement by Uno SILBERG, on behalf of the members of the Committee of the Regions participating in the observation mission Debate and vote <i>amendments tabled by 10.00 Tuesday 19 March</i>
	Smart cities: new technologies serving democracy Statements by: Raimond TAMM, Deputy Mayor of Tartu, Estonia Ilmar REEPALU, Mayor of Malmö, Sweden Debate
12.00	Close by the President of the Chamber
12.30	EVENT: “Smile – a real value of life”: the delegation of the Republic of Moldova presents an exhibition of caricatures of the heads of delegation of the Congress In the entrance hall of the Palais

Wednesday 20 March 2013

14.30 – 19.00, Hemicycle

Plenary Sitting

14.30	<p>Russia-Council of Europe: Building a Europe of democracy and prosperity together</p> <p>Statement by Valentina MATVIENKO, Chairperson of the Council of the Federation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation</p> <p>Oral reply to written questions</p> <p><i>Deadline for tabling written questions: Tuesday 19 March at 10.00</i></p>
	<p>Congress post-monitoring and post-observation of elections : Developing political dialogue [CG(24)7PROV] (RES)</p> <p>Presentation by the rapporteur: Jean-Marie BELLIARD, France (R, EPP/CCE)</p> <p>Debate and vote <i>amendments tabled by Tuesday 19 March at 10.00</i></p>
	<p>The situation of local and regional politicians in Turkey [CG(24)17] (DEC)</p> <p>Debate and vote</p>
	<p>Combating social exclusion</p> <p>Statements by:</p> <p>Maria ANDRIKOPOULOU-ROUVALI, Deputy-Mayor of Patras, Greece</p> <p>Damien EGAN, Cabinet Member for Strategy and Communications, Lewisham Council, United Kingdom</p> <p>Bernard MULLER, Mayor of Commercy, France</p> <p>Debate</p> <p>Launch of the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion</p> <p><i>[see separate programme]</i></p>
	<p>Adoption of the draft minutes of the sittings of the Congress of 19 March 2013 [CG(24)PV1am] and [CG(24)PV1pm]</p>
	<p>Ceremony awarding the Congress Medal to honorary members:</p> <p>Valery KADOKHOV, Russian Federation, former member of the Congress</p> <p>Fabio PELLEGRINI, Italy, former Vice-President of the Congress</p> <p>Keith WHITMORE, United Kingdom, former President of the Congress</p>
19.00	<p>End of the sitting</p>
20.00	<p>EVENT:</p> <p><i>Reception given by the City of Strasbourg and the Conseil Général du Bas-Rhin, at the Hôtel de Ville, Place Broglie (departure by shuttle bus to the Hôtel de Ville at 19.30 and 19.45)</i></p>

Thursday 21 March 2013

Bureau meeting

8.30 - 9.15, Room 8

Bureau of the Congress

Thursday 21 March 2013

9.30 - 12.00, Hemicycle

Plenary Sitting

9.30	Formal adoption of texts approved by the chambers [CG(24)9]
	Adoption of the draft minutes of the sittings of the Congress and of the chambers on 20 March 2013 [CG(24)PV2, CPL(24)PV1 and CPR(24)PV1]
	<p>Andorran Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (November 2012-May 2013)</p> <p>Statement by Gilbert SABOYA SUNYÉ, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Andorra</p> <p>Oral reply to written questions</p> <p><i>Deadline for tabling written questions: Wednesday 20 March at 10.00</i></p>
	<p>Promoting ethics, preventing corruption</p> <p>Statements by:</p> <p>Marin MRČELA, President of the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) of the Council of Europe</p> <p>Jean-Pierre GUIZ, President of ANTICOR, Association of elected representatives and citizens against corruption, France</p> <p>Petra KNEUER, Director of Investigations of the European Anti-Fraud Office, European Commission, (OLAF)</p> <p>Sir Alan MEALE, General Rapporteur on Local and Regional Authorities, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe</p> <p>Debate</p>
12.00	Close of the 24th Session by the President of the Congress

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

The voice of Cities and Regions in Europe

- The Congress is a political assembly composed of 636 elected officials - mayors, governors, councillors, etc. – representing the 200 000 local and regional authorities of the 47 Council of Europe member states.

It speaks for Europe's local and regional elected representatives.

- The Congress promotes devolution through transfer of political powers and financial resources to the municipalities and regions.

It ensures that policy decisions are made at a level closest to the citizens.

- The Congress guarantees civic participation and fosters a positive perception of local identities.

It strives for living grassroots democracy in an ever more globalised world.

- The Congress reinforces local and regional democracy by permanently monitoring the due application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, observing local and regional elections, and issuing recommendations to the governments of the 47 Council of Europe member states.

It upholds local self-government, together with democracy and human rights at local level.

