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Local democracy in Ireland

Strasbourg, 30 October 2013 - The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, meeting in Strasbourg (France), has examined today a report on the situation of local democracy in Ireland following two monitoring visits to the country in October 2012 and May 2013. Congress rapporteurs Andris Jaunsleinis (Latvia, ILDG) and Merita Jegeni Yildiz (Turkey, EPP/CCE) welcomed the fact that Ireland had made substantial changes since the last monitoring report in 2001, and stressed the commitment of the Irish authorities to move from an almost fully centralised system to a certain level of decentralisation, through an ambitious Action Programme adopted in October 2012.

The report notes, however, that the constitutional protection of local self-government is rather weak, that local governments only manage a modest amount of public affairs, and that the administrative supervision of their activities by the central level remains high. The report also draws attention to the very limited powers of local authorities to levy taxes or to set rates within the limits of the law.

"It is recommended to the Irish authorities that they revise their legislation in order to ensure that the subsidiarity principle is better enshrined and protected in the law," explained Merita Jegeni Yildiz. The authorities are also encouraged to implement the Action Programme rapidly with a view to devolve more powers and financial autonomy to local governments and improve the financial equalisation procedure" she added. In addition, Congress recommendation invites the Irish authorities to develop the procedures and mechanisms of consultation with local and regional authorities and to continue the existing regional development efforts.

Addressing the Session, Irish Minister of State Fergus O'Dowd welcomed the Congress report and presented his government's priorities under this reform. "I see the Congress report as providing additional underpinning to the reform agenda that we are implementing and I look forward to the continuing support of the Congress in this regard and to the Council of Europe generally", he explained.

Congress Rapporteur Andris Jaunsleinis stressed the willingness of the Congress "to pursue the political dialogue with national authorities after the 2014 local elections when most of the changes proposed by the Action Programme will have come into effect". "This is in line with our revised resolution on post monitoring and also an effective way to continue our dialogue and work with the government", he concluded.

Finally, Congress recommendation calls on the Irish 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).

Video of the debate : [original](#) | [French](#) | [English](#)
[Speech of Irish Minister of State Fergus O'Dowd](#)

The Congress has two chambers, the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions. It brings together 318 full and 318 substitute members representing more than 200 000 European territorial communities.

President of the Congress: Herwig Van Staa (Austria, EPP/DC), President of the Chamber of Regions: Nataliya Romanova (Ukraine, IDLG), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities: Jean-Claude Frécon (France, SOC)
Political Groups: Socialist Group (SOC), Group of the European People's Party – Christian Democrats (EPP/CD), Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (ILDG), European Conservatives & Reformists Group (ECR)