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Local and regional democracy, separatist tensions and youth participation among the highlights of the 27th Session of the Congress of the Council of Europe

Strasbourg, 9 October 2014 – The members of the Council of Europe’s Congress of Local and Regional Authorities will meet in session in Strasbourg (France) from 14 to 16 October 2014. Amongst other things they will be examining three reports following the observation of the local elections in the Netherlands (19 March 2014), Ukraine (25 May 2014) and Georgia (15 June 2014), and a report on the situation of local and regional democracy in Belgium.

Several texts will be discussed for adoption, on promoting equal opportunities for people with disabilities and their participation at local and regional level, the question of “adequate resources” for local authorities, inter-regional co-operation, the role of regional media in building participatory democracy, and promoting diversity through intercultural education and communication strategies.

The agenda also includes thematic debates, in particular a debate on separatist tensions in Ukraine and neighbouring countries with the participation of Vyacheslav Nehoda, First Deputy Minister of Regional Development, Building, Housing and Communal Services of Ukraine, Valeriu Chiveri, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova, Oleksii Reznikov, Deputy Mayor and Chair of the Kyiv City Council, and Tengiz Shergelashvili, Deputy Minister for Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia. In addition, the Chamber of Regions will be holding a thematic debate on promoting public ethics and preventing corruption at regional level.

Members of the Congress will also hear an address by Leyla Güven, Turkey, a former member of the Congress, who along with several other local elected representatives in Turkey was imprisoned in 2009 and who was released in July 2014.

In addition, Mbarka Bouaida, Minister of State at the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Co-operation, will speak during the debate on the Congress’s contribution to the Council of Europe’s neighbourhood policy and the introduction of the status of partner for local democracy.

Fikrat Mammadov, Justice Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan, on behalf of the Azerbaijan Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, and Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, will address the members of the Congress.

The overarching theme of this Session will be “Empowering youth: a shared responsibility for cities and regions”. This is the common thread running through the Congress’s activities in 2014 and the aim is to provide a forum for exchanges between European local and regional elected representatives on the participation of young people as stakeholders of local and regional democracy. In this context, young delegates, aged 16 to 30 years, from 34 different countries will take part for the first time in the Congress’s activities and debates.

During this session, the members of the Congress will also elect the Presidents of the Congress, the Chamber of Local Authorities, the Chamber of Regions, the Chairs of the Statutory Committees and the Vice-Presidents of the Congress.

Press briefing

The newly elected President of the Congress, will meet the press on 14 October 2014 2.30

pm in Room 17, Palais de l'Europe, Strasbourg, France.

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

President of the Congress: Herwig Van Staa (Austria, EPP/DC), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities: Jean-Claude Frécon (France, SOC), President of the Chamber of Regions: Nataliya Romanova (Ukraine, IDLG)

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)