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28th Congress Session : local responses to human rights challenges

Strasbourg, 18 March 2015 - "Local responses to human rights challenges – migration, discrimination, social inclusion" will be the overarching theme of the two annual sessions of the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in March and October 2015.

The 28th Session, to be held in the Palais de l'Europe, Strasbourg (France) from 24 to 26 March, will include several events relating to this central theme, in particular a debate on the response of local and regional authorities to migration flows with the Mayors of Calais (France) and Siirt (Turkey), the first award ceremony for the Diversity Advantage Challenge prize, and a presentation of the Council of Europe's No Hate Speech Campaign.

On Wednesday 25 March, the members of the Congress will consider a draft resolution and recommendation on "Responses to radicalism in Europe's cities and regions: fighting terrorism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and hate speech" and, on the same day, they will hold an urgent debate, in the Chamber of Local Authorities, on "Cities and towns against terrorism" with the participation of Mustapha Abdi, the Mayor of Kobane, Syria.

There are also three thematic debates on the agenda: "The United Kingdom: prospects for devolution" and "Scotland in the aftermath of the 18 September 2014 referendum", with the participation of Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department for Communities and Local Government, and Lord Wallace of Tankerness PC QC, Advocate General for Scotland, as well as a debate on "The regional dimension of the process of decentralisation in Ukraine", in the Chamber of Regions, with the participation of Vyacheslav Nehoda, Vice-Minister, Ministry of Regional Development of Ukraine.

Several reports will also be debated for adoption, including "Guaranteeing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people's rights: a responsibility for Europe's towns and cities" and "Jewish cemeteries, the responsibility of local authorities" with the participation of Mendel Samama, Rabbi of Strasbourg, France, Roland Ries, Mayor of Strasbourg, and Yossi Beilin, former Justice Minister, Israel.

In addition, as part of its monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, the Congress will be considering the reports on local and regional democracy in Greece, Norway and Poland, in the presence of the relevant ministers. The members of the Congress will also consider the draft resolutions and recommendations on "Electoral lists and voters residing de facto abroad" and "Criteria for standing for local and regional elections".

Furthermore, the session will be attended by 15 youth delegates who have been invited to take part in all the debates and meetings. This initiative follows on from the theme "Empowering youth: a shared responsibility for cities and regions", chosen for the 2014 sessions, which resulted in particular in one young person being invited to join each of the 47 national delegations to the Congress at its October 2014 session. The Congress's goal is to create a forum for dialogue between the youth delegates and local and regional elected representatives and hence to fuel the Congress's debate on ways of fostering youth participation.

Press Conference:

Congress President Jean-Claude Frécon will meet the press on 24 March 2015 at 10 am, in room 17, Palais de l'Europe, Strasbourg, France.

More information:

[File "28th Session of the Congress"](#)

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: Jean-Claude Frécon (France, SOC), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities: Anders Knape (Sweden, EPP/CCE), President of the Chamber of Regions: Gudrun Mosler-Törnström (Austria, 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)