

Press Release

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

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19th Session approves Congress reform, with new priorities and changes to its structures and working methods

Strasbourg, 27.10.2010 – The 19th Session of the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities today adopted its priorities for 2011-2012 and the proposed changes to its structures and working methods. The session also asked the Committee of Ministers to amend the Congress Charter in line with the changes.

The aim of the reform is to increase the impact of the Congress' action and make it more effective and more relevant to European citizens and territorial communities. The objective is to make the Congress better adapted and more capable of pursuing its mission as the main contributor to the Council of Europe's action in the field of democracy and human rights at local and regional level.

The new priorities are focused on five areas: monitoring of local and regional democracy, observation of local and regional elections, targeted post-monitoring and post-observation assistance, the local and regional dimension of human rights, and streamlined thematic activities.

The adopted changes include the creation of three new statutory committees, to replace the existing four: a Monitoring Committee, a Governance Committee and a Current Affairs Committee, which will be set up immediately. Once the amendments to the Charter are approved by the Committee of Ministers, the Congress' Standing Committee will be replaced by a Statutory Forum, the mandate of Congress members will be extended from two to four years, and the 30-per cent requirement for women's representation in national delegations will be applied also to substitute members. The role of the Bureau as the executive body of the Congress will be strengthened, and the adopted texts will be subject to a clearer and more concrete follow-up procedure, giving priority to issues inherent to the Congress mission.

Congress members acted on the proposals put forward in the reports on priorities, by Ian Micallef (Malta, EPP/CD), and on the reform of the Congress, by Halvdan Skard (Norway, SOC) and Günther Krug (Germany, SOC). Their adoption completes the first stages of the process launched in 2008, which included reflection, formulation of proposed changes and consultations with national and European associations of local and regional authorities. In June 2010, the Congress' Standing Committee had already adopted new rules of procedure for monitoring activities and observation of local and regional elections, as well as a resolution on the Congress' budget and resources.

"The reform process is entering an implementation stage. Its success lies in the active engagement of all Congress members because this reform is all about the ownership of the Congress and its activities by all of us, and our commitment and participation," Ian Micallef stressed addressing the session.

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: Yavuz Milden (Turkey, EPP/CD), President of the Chamber of Regions: Ludmila Sfirloaga (Romania, SOC),

President of the Chamber of Local Authorities: Ian Micallef (Malta, EPP/CD).

Political Groups: Socialist Group (SOC), Group of the European People's Party – Christian Democrats (EPP/CD), Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (ILDG).