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Monitoring of local and regional democracy in Spain

Strasbourg, 19 March 2013 – A report and a recommendation on local and regional democracy in Spain were debated on 19 March 2013 during the 24th session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. The report, jointly presented by Marc COOLS, Belgium (L, ILDG) and Leen VERBEEK, Netherlands (R, SOC), looks at the progress made in this field since the previous recommendations by the Congress on this subject in 2002.

The rapporteurs pointed out that Spain generally fulfilled its obligations under the Charter, and they welcomed the direct incorporation of the Charter into Spanish national law, making it possible for the domestic courts to use and interpret it.

"The crisis which has struck all our countries particularly affected Spain, and that has clearly not been without effect on local and regional democracy. Spain's municipalities have been unequally affected by the crisis, and some of them have had to cope with serious budgetary problems and State-imposed restrictions on their capacity to contract debts", underlined Marc Cools. "In this context, we welcome the entry into force in 2012 of the Law on budgetary stability and financial sustainability of public administration, the aim of which is to reduce transfers of public resources and which strengthens both the authorities' capacity to keep their expenditure under control. We finally welcome the regular co-operation between central government and the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces", he added.

The rapporteurs nevertheless very much regretted the overlaps in responsibilities between the different levels of governance, and recommended that the Spanish authorities take practical measures in this sphere. "Every transfer of responsibilities to local authorities should be guaranteed by sufficient funds to strengthen municipalities' budgetary autonomy and should guarantee local authorities' financial sustainability. The legislation should also regulate the remuneration of local elected representatives as well as the remuneration for members of the parliaments of the Autonomous Communities, in accordance with the Charter", stated Leen Verbeek.

"Spain is currently carrying out a number of long-term economic and administrative reforms relating to local and regional authorities. Many changes are to be expected in the months and years ahead, and I hope that the recommendations addressed by the Congress to the Spanish authorities will be put into effect; I personally am fairly confident", concluded Marc Cools.

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).

[Report on local and regional democracy in Spain](#)

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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)