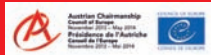




Questions & Answers

The Congress of Local
and Regional Authorities
and the Austrian
Chairmanship of the
Committee of Ministers
of the Council of Europe

**November 2013 –
May 2014**




Land Salzburg

Für unser Land!

Impressum:

The Austrian Delegation to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

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Foreword

Austria will chair the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, for the third time in that institution's history, from 14 November 2013 until 14 May 2014. The Austrian Chairmanship of the highest body of the Council of Europe adds a new chapter to Austria's long history of commitment to the Council of Europe and its aims.

This brochure is intended to give an in depth overview of the events and political priorities related to the Austrian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, and in so doing it provides information on the Council of Europe, in particular the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, on Austria's contributions to the work of the Council of Europe and on some of the most important issues and events of the Austrian Chairmanship.

The Austrian authorities consider the chairmanship to be of great significance; the participation of President Fischer, Chancellor Faymann and Foreign Minister Kurz in Parliamentary Assembly sessions, of Foreign Minister Kurz in the Congress' March Session and the organisation of thematic conferences on 5-6 May 2014 in Vienna on the occasion of the 65th anniversary of the Council of Europe illustrate this position very clearly. In addition, many conferences and workshops will be held in Austria and in Strasbourg over the course of the chairmanship. A list of all these events is provided at the end of this brochure.

The Austrian delegation to the Congress wishes to contribute to improving awareness of and knowledge about the important activities of the Council of Europe and the different Austrian actors involved in them. This brochure is aimed at citizens, politicians and experts as well as members of the other 46 national delegations to the Congress. With the support of the Salzburger Landtag, the regional Parliament of the Land Salzburg, this information can be made accessible to a broader public. The Land Salzburg, which has already produced an information brochure about the first Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 1998, now takes the chairmanship of the Council of Europe as the occasion for another publication with background information on a key European institution.

The Congress welcomes this new form of presenting the chairing member state and its priorities – as well as that country's delegation to the Congress – and hopes that this example will be followed by other delegations.

Gudrun Mosler-Törnström

Head of the Austrian delegation to the Congress

Andreas Kiefer

Secretary General of the Congress

Priorities of the Austrian Chairmanship

The priorities and activities of the Austrian chairmanship are focused on the Council of Europe's core tasks. These priorities and activities in Strasbourg, as well as in Austria, have been prepared by the federal government with contributions by the Austrian Bundesländer, the Austrian Association of Cities and Towns, the Austrian Association of Municipalities, the National Council and the Federal Council, and were adopted by the cabinet on 26 September 2013. The Austrian priorities reflect the current challenges the 47 member states are confronted with in the three core areas of the Council of Europe – human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

- Civil society, human rights activists and journalists play an indispensable role in modern-day democracy. The **freedom of expression** and the **safety of journalists** are therefore of utmost concern.
- In our societies, the **internet** increasingly has become a vital tool for connecting people and for participation in democratic processes. Human rights and fundamental freedoms need to be protected and respected online as well as offline. This requires finding an adequate balance between security and freedom.
- The fight against **trafficking in human beings** is a top priority for the Austrian Chairmanship and specific attention will be given to further encouraging ratifications and the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.
- Austria will continue to lend its support to the Council of Europe's work aimed at promoting democracy through ensuring the **rule of law** and improving the efficiency of justice. A conference in Innsbruck 8-9 May 2014 organised in co-operation with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities will address the issue of fighting corruption at local and regional level.

- Austria will push for a swift entry into force of the Convention on Preventing and **Combating Violence against Women** and Domestic Violence, adopted in 2011.
- **Equal opportunities and independence of people with disabilities** are essential for improving their quality of life. Under the Austrian Chairmanship, a conference in Vienna on "Human Rights and Disability" will focus on an evaluation of the Council of Europe's legal instruments which aim to secure the rights of persons with disabilities.
- Austria will support the activities of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities as the guardian for the quality of **local and regional democracy** in Europe.
- Austria will continue to fully **support the current reform process** of the Council of Europe initiated by the Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland as well as the further improvement of the Council's co-operation with other international organisations.
- The priorities of the Austrian Chairmanship were officially presented by the Austrian Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger at the handover of the chairmanship from Armenia to Austria in Strasbourg on 14 November 2013.



Austrian Chairmanship
Council of Europe
 November 2013 – May 2014
Présidence de l'Autriche
Conseil de l'Europe
 Novembre 2013 – Mai 2014



The Council of Europe

1. What is its mission?

The Council of Europe is an international organisation that aims to promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe. It also addresses contemporary societal challenges, such as intolerance, discrimination, xenophobia, domestic violence and sexual abuse of children. Furthermore, the Council of Europe is committed to strengthening awareness of the common cultural identity of Europe in all its diversity.

The Council of Europe is an independent institution with 47 member states. It is not to be confused with the European Council (the conference of the heads of state and government of the European Union) or the Council of the European Union (the council of ministers of the EU).

2. Who are its members?

The Council of Europe was founded on 5 May 1949 by Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The Council of Europe was the first concrete step towards the political integration of the continent. Austria has been a member since 1956.

At present the Council of Europe comprises 47 member states, among them the 28 member states of the European Union, with a total population of over 820 million people. With only three exceptions, all European states are members of the Council of Europe. The Holy See has an observatory status, Belarus has candidate status since 1993 and the membership of Kosovo can only be discussed after questions concerning its legal status have been settled.

Canada, Israel, Japan, Mexico and the United States of America have observer status.

All member states are obliged to respect the provisions of the European Convention of Human Rights which are guarded

by the European Court of Human Rights. In the case of grave violations of the Council of Europe's principles, membership of the states concerned may be suspended or terminated.

3. What are its symbols?

In 1955, the Council of Europe unanimously voted in favour of an emblem with a circle of twelve golden stars on blue background. Following a proposal of the Council of Europe, the European Communities (today: the European Union) also adopted this flag in 1986. The European anthem of the Council of Europe (the instrumental version of Ludwig van Beethoven's "Ode to Joy") was shared with the EU. The Council of Europe's logo is an "e" on the backdrop of the European flag.



Structure

4. Who is responsible for what?

The Committee of Ministers is the steering body of the Council of Europe.

The Parliamentary Assembly is the representation of the member states' national parliaments. It elects the Secretary General, the Commissioner for Human Rights and the judges of the European Court of Human Rights.

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities represents Europe's municipalities and regions. It promotes local self-governance, monitors compliance with the European Charter of Local Self-Government and observes local and regional elections.

The Council of Europe comprises further bodies, i.e. the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations that represents civil society and promotes participatory democracy at European level.

5. What is the Committee of Ministers?

The Committee of Ministers is composed of the Foreign Ministers of the 47 member states or their Permanent Representatives to the Council of Europe (Ministers' Deputies). The chairmanship rotates every six months in alphabetical order. Its sessions take place once a year at ministerial level while the ministers' deputies meet once a week in Strasbourg. Its sessions are also attended by the Secretary Generals of the Council of Europe and of the Congress.

The Committee of Ministers decides on current political matters that have been prepared in thematic steering committees. These committees are also attended by representatives of the Austrian federal ministries and of the Austrian Länder where their competencies are concerned.

Austria last held the chairmanship in the Committee of Ministers in 1993 under Foreign Minister Alois Mock. On 14

November 2013, Austria assumed the chairmanship for the duration of six months.

6. How does the Parliamentary Assembly work?

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has 318 members and 318 substitutes who are nominated by the national parliaments of the member states in proportion to population sizes and political landscapes. Its members have formed five political groups: the Socialist Group (186 members), the Group of the European People's Party (170 members), the Group of European Democrats (86 members), the Group of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (84 members) and the Group of the United European Left (36 members). 70 members have no affiliation to a group.

The Parliamentary Assembly is an important advisory body of the Council of Europe. Its task is to contribute to the Council's work and to provide political initiatives. It convenes four times a year in public sessions in Strasbourg in order to debate and vote on reports, resolutions and recommendations prepared by eight standing committees. The President of the Parliamentary Assembly is Anne Brasseur (ALDE, Luxembourg) whose mandate began in January 2014 and ends in January 2016.

To date there have been two Austrian presidents of the Parliamentary Assembly: Karl Czernetz (1975-1978) and Peter Schieder (2002-2005).



7. Who represents Austria in the Parliamentary Assembly?

Austria is represented by six members and six substitutes to the Parliamentary Assembly who are nominated by the National Council (Nationalrat) and the Federal Council (Bundesrat):

Members:



Werner Amon
National Council
(ÖVP)
European People's
Party
Styria



Franz Leonhard Ebl
National Council
(ÖVP)
European People's
Party
Salzburg



Johannes Hübner
National Council
(FPÖ)
Non-affiliated
Vienna



Alev Korun
National Council
(GRÜNE)
Socialist Group
Vienna



Stefan Schennach
Federal Council
(SPÖ)
Socialist Group
Vienna



Gisela Wurm
Vice-President of
the PA, Head of the
Delegation, National
Council (SPÖ)
Socialist Group,
Tyrol

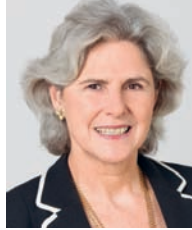
Substitutes:



Edgar Mayer
Federal Council
(ÖVP)
European People's
Party
Vorarlberg



Christine Muttonen
National Council
(SPÖ)
Socialist Group
Carinthia



Barbara Rosenkranz
National Council
(FPÖ)
Non-affiliated
Lower Austria



Nikolaus Scherak
National Council
(NEOS)
Non-affiliated
Lower Austria



Andreas Schieder
National Council
(SPÖ)
Socialist Group
Vienna



Angelika Winzig
National Council
(ÖVP)
European People's
Party
Upper Austria

© (Austrian Parliamentary Administration)/Wilke (Schennach, Mayer, Muttonen)/Photo Simonis (andere)

8. What are the Secretary General's responsibilities?

In collaboration with the Committee of Ministers the Parliamentary Assembly elects a Secretary General of the Council of Europe with a mandate of five years. The Secretary General is responsible for strategic planning, leading the activities of the Council and managing the budget. He or she manages everyday activities and represents the Council. In October 2009, Thorbjørn Jagland (Norway) took office. The next election is expected to take place in June 2014. Austria has already been the home of three of the hitherto 13 Secretary Generals: Lujó Tončić-Sorinj (1969-1974), Franz Karasek (1979-1984) and Walter Schwimmer (1999-2004).

9. What is the purpose of the European Court of Human Rights?

The European Court of Human Rights of the Council of Europe guards the basic and human rights of all Europeans as guaranteed by the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR). The Court can be called upon by states and individuals irrespective of their citizenship. The 47 judges are elected by the Parliamentary Assembly on proposal by the member states for terms of nine years.

The ECHR entered into force in 1953 and has since been amended by additional protocols. It encompasses important basic rights, such as the right to life, the prohibition of torture and inhumane treatment, the right to liberty and security, the right to respect for privacy and family life, to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the right of free speech, the prohibition of discrimination and the ban on the death penalty. In Austria the ECHR is part of the constitution.

10. What are the tasks of the Commissioner for Human Rights?

The office of the Council of Europe's Human Rights Commissioner was created in 1999 as an independent authority to promote human rights in the member states and to raise public awareness of these principles.

The Human Rights Commissioner evaluates the state of human rights in member states by conducting monitoring visits that include dialogue with interlocutors of governments, parliaments, the judiciary and human rights organisations. The reports are published along with recommendations to the member state under scrutiny. Since 2012, Nils Muižnieks (Latvia) has held the office of Human Rights Commissioner, which is for a term of six years.

11. Which other institutions belong to the Council of Europe?

The Council of Europe comprises a number of additional bodies. Many of its activities result from international partial conventions. The Venice Commission (European Commission for Democracy Through Law), for example, which is composed of constitutional law experts, advises states worldwide on constitutional matters.

The Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport supports international cooperation between states, sport associations and non-governmental organisations to combat malpractices such as match-fixing.

The European Directorate of the Quality of Medicines and Health Care (European Pharmacopoeia) is a leading international organisation that protects public health by enabling the development, supporting the implementation and monitoring the application of quality standards for safe medicines and their use. It combats counterfeit medicine and doping.

Congress of the Council of Europe

12. What is the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities?

The Congress is the voice of 200,000 municipalities and regions in the 47 member states of the Council of Europe. It aims to strengthen democracy and self-government at local and regional level. Key instruments for promoting local and regional democracy are the monitoring procedures and the observation of elections. The Congress monitors the state of local and regional democracy in the member states in order to ensure that the commitments arising from the ratification of the European Charter of Local Self-Government are honoured.

The Congress comprises 318 representatives who hold local or regional elected offices in their member states. The mandate has a duration of four years. Most Congress members are affiliated to one of four political groups. These are (as of 1.1.2014) the European People's Party Group (223 members), the Socialist Group (174 members), the Independent Liberal and Democratic Group (91 members), and the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (23 members). One hundred and nineteen members are without group affiliation. The Congress convenes twice a year in plenary sessions in Strasbourg (typically March and October). It elects a president from among its members biannually.



13. How does the Congress monitor local and regional democracy?

Monitoring the implementation of the European Charter for Local Self-Government in the Council of Europe member states is one of the main responsibilities of the Congress. The Charter, which was adopted in 1985 and entered into force in 1988, defines common and measurable standards for the rights of local and regional authorities and the democratic participation by their citizens.

The Congress evaluates the state of local and regional democracy in a member state about once every five years. In the course of a visit of several days' duration, two Congress rapporteurs supported by an expert hold meetings with ministers, parliamentarians, representatives of the associations of municipalities and regions, associations, NGOs and other interlocutors. Their findings and the subsequent recommendations are presented in a draft report, to which the national government of the member state concerned is invited to comment upon. The draft report is then discussed in the monitoring committee and then at the Congress session. After adoption, the report is published and sent to the national government for consideration.

In order to facilitate implementation of the Congress's recommendations, the Congress continues cooperation with member states even after the conclusion of the monitoring procedure. In the framework of post-monitoring, the Congress assists member states in developing strategies and roadmaps for improving local and regional democracy. Such roadmaps can be followed-up by co-operation projects which form part, in many cases, of broader Council of Europe Action Plans for specific countries. They are often financially supported by the EU.

14. How does the Congress view local and regional democracy in Austria?

Austria was last monitored in 2010-11. The rapporteurs Irene Loizidou (Cyprus) and Marc Cools (Belgium) commended the overall state of local and regional democracy in Austria. The cooperative interaction between federal, regional and local authorities has especially proven to be of value. However, the Congress was less satisfied with the year-long discussions on reforming the federal system which have not yet yielded tangible results and with the strong dependency of self-governing bodies on federal authorities, especially with regard to financial and administrative autonomy. The Congress therefore recommended a clearer distinction of competencies of the various tiers, strengthening the responsibilities of regional authorities, reforming the Federal Council and greater autonomy of the Länder in taxation. In addition, inter-communal cooperation across regional borders should be facilitated.

Since 2011, Austria has implemented many of the Congress recommendations. On 29 July 2013 a federal law entered into force that granted municipalities new opportunities for inter-communal cooperation and facilitated the creation of associations of local authorities aimed at pooling resources in order to fulfil municipal responsibilities. The recommendation to increase the attractiveness of the office of mayor was implemented by raising the limit for additional income and extending unemployment benefits to mayors. The Congress report also led to legislative changes in the Länder, such as in the case of Salzburg which reformed its law on municipal associations on 30 October 2013. The next monitoring mission to Austria is scheduled for 2016.

15. How does the Congress observe local and regional elections?

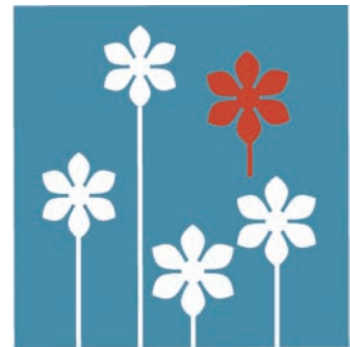
The observation of local and regional elections is another key task of the Congress. Since 1990, the Congress has observed more than 100 elections in Council of Europe member states and thus advanced the implementation of international standards for free, fair and regular elections at local and regional level. The Congress, in contrast to other international organisations, requires an official invitation from a member state in order to observe an election. The Congress delegations are composed of Congress members in a manner that takes into consideration the size of political groups, a fair representation of countries and the equal participation of local and regional politicians. These delegations not only observe the events on Election Day but also examine the broader context of an election, such as the role of the media, the financing of political parties and their campaigns, and the role of civil society. In conclusion, the head of delegation prepares a report that is discussed and voted on in the Monitoring Committee and at the Congress Session. To date, Austria has never been the object of a Congress election observation.

16. Which other tasks does the Congress perform?

Aside from its monitoring and election-observation activities, the Congress is also active in other fields relevant to the strengthening of local and regional democracy in Europe. The Congress coordinates the “European Week of Local Democracy” which takes place in municipalities throughout Europe annually between 14 and 20 October. This series of events aims to inform citizens about the working of local democracy and to raise interest in participation in local and regional politics.

The Congress has launched an “European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion” in order to support municipalities and regions with the implementation of projects for Roma inclusion at local and regional level. Since 2012, Austria annually delegates an Austrian Holocaust Memorial Servant to the Congress to contribute to this Alliance for Roma inclusion.

Moreover, the Congress ensures that Council of Europe campaigns actually reach local and regional authorities (such as the “ONE in FIVE”-campaign against sexual abuse of children).



one in five
un sur cinq

17. Who represents Austria in the Congress?

The Austrian delegation to the Congress comprises six members and six substitutes:

Chamber of Local Authorities: Representatives



Peter Koits
(SPÖ)
Mayor of Wels
Socialist Group



Christine Oppitz-Plörer
(ÖVP)
Mayor of Innsbruck
European People's Party



Johannes Peinsteiner
(ÖVP)
Deputy Head of the
Delegation, Mayor
of St. Wolfgang,
European People's
Party

Chamber of Regions: Representatives



Petra Bohuslav
(ÖVP)
Minister of the Regional Government in Lower Austria
European People's Party



Gudrun Mosler-Törnström
(SPÖ)
Head of the Delegation, Vice-President of the Regional Parliament of Salzburg.
Socialist Group



Herwig van Staa
(ÖVP)
Congress President of the Regional Council of Tyrol
European People's Party

Substitutes



Silvia Huber
(SPÖ)
City Councillor of Wels
Socialist Group



Carmen Kiefer
(ÖVP)
1st Deputy Mayor of Kuchl
European People's Party



Hannes Weninger
(SPÖ)
Councillor of Giesshübl
Socialist Group



Gabriele Nussbaumer
(ÖVP)
President of the Regional Parliament of Vorarlberg
European People's Party



Reinhart Rohr
(SPÖ)
President of the Regional Council of Carinthia
Socialist Group



Sybille Straubinger
(SPÖ)
Councillor of Local and Regional Council of Vienna
Socialist Group

Austria has a long history of active commitment in the Congress. Since October 2012, Herwig van Staa, President of the Regional Council of Tyrol, is President of the Congress. His mandate will end in October 2014. The office of Secretary General of the Congress is held by Andreas Kiefer (Salzburg) who was elected for a five-year term in 2010. Head of the Austrian delegation is Gudrun Mosler-Törnström, Vice-President of the Regional Council of Salzburg. Her deputy is the mayor of St. Wolfgang, Johannes Peinsteiner. In recent years, the Secretary General of the Congress has focused on implementing a fundamental reform, placing particular emphasis on the local and regional dimension of the core tasks of the Council of Europe: human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. The Congress supports the activities of human rights cities like Salzburg and Graz, implements projects to combat corruption and is developing a code of conduct for elected and public officials at local and regional level.



f.l.t.r.: Congress President Herwig van Staa, Congress Secretary General Andreas Kiefer, Head of Delegation Gudrun Mosler-Törnström and Ambassador to the Council of Europe Rudolf Lennkh in Strasbourg, September 2013

Activities of the Council of Europe

18. How does the Council of Europe work?

The Council of Europe applies a great variety of instruments to pursue its aims, such as the creation of and the monitoring of the implementation of reports, resolutions and guidelines.

Of key importance are the Council of Europe conventions, international treaties that provide legal frameworks for the Council of Europe's fundamental principles – human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Since its founding in 1949, the Council of Europe has developed more than 200 conventions, first and foremost the European Convention of Human Rights. Its adoption and ratification is a precondition to membership in the Council of Europe, whereas member states are free to choose in the case of other conventions.

The monitoring procedures of the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress flank the member states' activities in promoting democratic values and standards. Pressing political issues are also raised at international conferences and through campaigns and an ongoing dialogue with all stakeholders.

The Secretariat comprises about 2,300 civil servants. In addition to its headquarters in Strasbourg, the Council of Europe has external offices and liaison offices with international organisations. In Austria there are liaison offices with the United Nations and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Vienna. The Council of Europe's European Centre for Modern Languages is based in Graz.

The official languages of the Council of Europe are English and French, while German, Italian and Russian are working languages. Selected documents are also published in other European languages and are available online at the Council of Europe website.

19. How is the Council of Europe financed?

The Council of Europe is financed mostly by its member states. Their contributions reflect the differences in size of their populations and their economic performance. The annual regular budget comprises approximately 240 million euro. Austria's contribution amounts to 5.4 million euro (2014). In addition, the Council of Europe receives financial resources in the framework of projects co-financed by the European Union and through member states' voluntary contributions of about 160 million euro. The overall budget amounts to about 400 million euro.

20. With whom does the Council of Europe co-operate internationally?

The Council of Europe works in close cooperation with the European Union, as well as the United Nations, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and partner states in Europe's neighbouring regions and beyond. The European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines and HealthCare, for example, which plays a leading role in fighting counterfeit medicine and doping, co-operates with Brazil, the People's Republic of China, South Africa and the United States of America.

Austria in the Council of Europe

21. Who represents Austria in the Council of Europe?

Austria's commitment to the Council of Europe has always been of great importance. Austria has been and continues to be particularly active in matters related to human rights, culture and education, women's rights, children's rights and combating domestic violence, and in fighting international terrorism.

Austria's interests at the Council of Europe are represented in a number of ways. The Foreign Minister and the minister's deputies promote Austria's views at the sessions of the Committee of Ministers. Representatives of the Austrian Federal Ministries and of the Austrian Bundesländer take part in sessions of the topical committees.

The Permanent Representation of Austria to the Council of Europe under the direction of Ambassador Rudolf Lennkh represents Austria's interests at various sessions and events of the Council of Europe. In addition, there is an Austrian Consulate General in Strasbourg under the direction of Wolfgang-Lukas Strohmayer.

Finally, the Austrian representatives in the Parliamentary Assembly and the members of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities represent the interests of the Austrian Republic in their respective parliamentary bodies.



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22. How significant is the Chairmanship in the Committee of Ministers for Austria?

The six-month chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers is an unique opportunity for Austria to set priorities, launch new initiatives and continue existing projects in the Council of Europe. Austria can thus augment its traditionally strong presence in the Council of Europe and raise its international visibility. Austria's previous commitment to the Council of Europe was expressed in the fact that it was home to three Secretary Generals, two Presidents of the Parliamentary Assembly and two Presidents of the Congress.

Furthermore, the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers is a welcome opportunity to raise public awareness in Austria of the importance of the Council of Europe and its activities. The events organised in the framework of the chairmanship provide many suitable occasions: the sessions of the Presidency, the Standing Committee and the Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly took place in Vienna from 21 - 22 November 2013. Judges of European constitutional courts will meet in Vienna between 12 and 15 May 2014. Besides high-level-meetings of politicians and diplomats, there are a number of expert conferences, such as the World Forum for Democracy (27-28 November 2013), an academic conference on the outbreak of World War I in 1914 and the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 (17 March 2014) and a Congress of Local and Regional Authorities' conference on the fight against corruption at local level (8-9 May 2014 in Tyrol).

Activities with a local and regional dimension with Congress participation/contribution:

Expert Conference on Integration policy

Topic: "Integration policy on a regional and local level – Best practice examples from Europe"
4 December 2013, Graz

Organisation: Federal Ministry of the Interior, Institute of the Regions of Europe

Conference on citizen participation

Topic: "Communities and regions as the foundation of a modern civil society"

7 February 2014, Edmundsburg, Salzburg

Organisation: Land of Salzburg, Austrian Association of Municipalities, University of Salzburg

Conference on 20 years of Congress and the Committee of the Regions

Topic: "20 years of Congress and the Committee of the Regions – the representation of regions and cities in the Council of Europe and the European Union"

27 February 2014, Landhaus, Innsbruck

Organisation: Land of Tyrol, University of Innsbruck, Austrian Institute for Federalism

Conference on education and youth

Topic: "Investing in our youth: education is the key"

31 March – 1 April 2014, Konzerthaus, Klagenfurt

Organisation: Land of Carinthia

3rd Conference on European democracy – EuDEM 2014

Topic: "Multilevel governance – from local communities to a true European Society"

5-6 May 2014, Palais de l'Europe and Robert Schuman University, Strasbourg

Organisation: Federal Chancellery of Austria, Austrian Institute of European Law and Policy

Conference on fighting corruption

Topic: "Combating corruption – preventive and repressive measures at the European, national, regional and local level"

8-9 May 2014, Congress Center, Innsbruck

Organisation: Land of Tyrol, Committee of the Regions of the European Union

Selected Events during the Austrian Chairmanship

14 November, Strasbourg	Official handover of the chairmanship from Armenia to Austria in the Committee of Ministers
15 November, Vienna	Conference: "Together for Europe. Mutual Relations between Member States, Council of Europe and European Union"
16-24 November, Austria	"Global Education Week" coordinated by the North-South-Centre
20 November, Vienna	PESTALOZZI seminar: Global Diversity
21-22 November, Innsbruck (Tyrol)	Advisory Forum of the European Culture Routes
21-22 November, Vienna	Sessions of the Presidency, the Bureau and the Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Standing Committee
27-29 November, Strasbourg	World Forum for Democracy
4 December, Graz (Styria)	Conference on integration policy at local and regional level
4-6 December, Strasbourg	Octopus conference on cybercrime
12-13 December, Vienna	Conference of experts of the Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe
17-19 December, Vienna	Session of the European Cinema Support Fund EURIMAGES
27-31 January, Strasbourg	Exhibition Desiring the Real
27-31 January, Strasbourg	Presentation of Austrian Films at the Arthouse Cinema Odyssée
7 February, Salzburg	Conference of the Congress "Communities and Regions as the Foundation of a Modern Civil Society"
17-18 February, Vienna	Conference „Not For Sale – Joining Forces Against Trafficking in Human Beings“
27 February, Innsbruck (Tyrol)	Conference of the Congress on occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Committee of the Regions and of the Congress
6-7 March, Vienna	Session of the Parliamentary Network "Women free from Violence"

17 March, Vienna	Scientific conference on the occasion of 100 years since the outbreak of World War I and 25 years since the fall of the Iron Curtain
20-21 March, Graz (Styria)	Conference "Education in 21th century society: traditions, challenges, visions"
31 March – 1. April, Klagenfurt (Carinthia)	Conference of the Congress "Education as Key Investment in Our Youth"
3-4 April, Vienna	Conference "Retirement Benefits for Women – Claims and Avoiding Poverty"
6-10 April, Hartheim Castle (Upper Austria)	PESTALOZZI seminar: Value of Life
10-11 April, Vienna	Conference "Human Rights und Disabilities"
7-11 April, Strasbourg	Exhibition of the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz
9-11 April, Vienna	Conference "Shared Histories for a Europe without dividing Lines"
23 April – 9 May, Austria	Citizenship Days "Europe – Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow"
5-6 May, Vienna	Session of the Committee of Ministers and Conference "65 years Council of Europe"
5-6 May, Strasbourg	EUDEM-Conference "Multilevel Governance – from local communities to a true European Society"
8 May, Innsbruck (Tyrol)	Award of the Kaiser Maximilian Prize
8-9 May, Innsbruck (Tyrol)	Conference of the Congress on the fight against corruption at local level
14 May	Start of the chairmanship of Azerbaijan in the Committee of Ministers
12-15 May, Vienna	Conference of European Constitutional Courts
7-25 May, Strasbourg	Roma Art Project "Strasbourg Graz"

Sources and Links

Council of Europe:
www.coe.int

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities:
www.coe.int/congress

The Council of Europe and Austria:
<http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/cm-chairmanship-austria>

Austrian Consulate General in Strasbourg:
<http://www.bmeia.gv.at/botschaft/gk-strassburg.html>

Austrian Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly:
http://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/AKT/SCHLTHEM/THEMA/J2013/2013_08_01_Parlamentarische_Versammlung_Euoparat.shtml

Video „Austria in the Council of Europe“ of the DVD
“Council of Europe – Europe’s Integration” (German only):
<http://play.webvideocore.net/Oesterreich-im-Euoparat>

Visits to the European Institutions in Strasbourg:
<http://de.strasbourg-europe.eu/die-europaischen-institutionen-in-stra-burg-besuchen,2092,de.html>

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

The voice of Cities and Regions in Europe

- The Congress is a political assembly composed of 636 elected officials - mayors, governors, councillors, etc. – representing the 200 000 local and regional authorities of the 47 Council of Europe member states.
- It speaks for Europe's local and regional elected representatives.
- The Congress promotes devolution through transfer of political powers and financial resources to the municipalities and regions.
- It ensures that policy decisions are made at a level closest to the citizens.
- The Congress guarantees civic participation and fosters a positive perception of local identities.
- It strives for living grassroots democracy in an ever more globalised world.
- The Congress reinforces local and regional democracy by permanently monitoring the due application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, observing local and regional elections, and issuing recommendations to the governments of the 47 Council of Europe member states.
- It upholds local self-government, together with democracy and human rights at local level.



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