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Joint declaration by the Presidents of the Congress and the CEMR: "Consolidating democracy requires partnership between all levels of governance"

Strasbourg, 28.11.2013 – On 26 November, the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) jointly organised a seminar in Strasbourg (France) entitled "1953–1988–2013: Decentralisation at a crossroads". At the end of the debates, a joint declaration by the Presidents of the two bodies, Herwig van Staa of the Congress and Wolfgang Schuster of the CEMR, was adopted.

"The European Charter of Municipal Liberties paved the way for the European Charter of Local Self-Government, which, as of 2013, is applied in the 47 member states of the Council of Europe. The next step is to deepen and extend its application," said the two Presidents. "The monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government by the Congress has been greatly strengthened in the past few years. The results of this monitoring are flagging up several causes for concern in member states. Governments are using economic arguments to recentralise and to claw back competences, squeezing local budgets and restricting the freedom of local authorities to raise income through taxation and to decide how to allocate and spend their resources," they pointed out.

"Much is at stake. We must highlight the risks, alert Europe's citizens and the elected authorities which represent them at local, regional and national levels. We need better governance and genuine partnership between all levels – European institutions and national, regional and local authorities."

The Presidents also called for new co-operation and participatory models, and new forms of dialogue and consultation, making use in particular of the new technologies which offered unprecedented opportunities to involve citizens directly in the processes of local government.

They underlined the need to adapt the European Charter of Local Self-Government to current developments and challenges, pointing out that the Congress and the CEMR stood ready to work together to improve the legal safeguards of territorial democracy in Europe and to support the efforts of committed mayors and municipal councillors.

[Joint declaration](#)
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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 Regions: Nataliya Romanova (Ukraine, IDLG), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities: Jean-Claude Frécon (France, 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)