

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities



20th PLENARY SESSION
CG(20)11

2 March 2011

Statement by the Secretary General of the Congress at the 1107th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (2 March 2011)

Andreas Kiefer, Secretary General of the Congress

Communication to the Committee of Ministers



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I. ACTIVITIES OF THE CONGRESS

1. The reform process

Since the first report by Past President Halvdan SKARD (Norway, SOC) in June 2009, the process of the Congress' reform has run through a period of reflection, formulation and drafting of proposals, and consultations with Congress members as well as European and national associations of local and regional authorities, and finally decision making. It is now in its phase of implementation.

The 19th Session of the Congress (Strasbourg, 26-28 October 2010) approved main changes to its structures and working methods as well as amendments to the Congress' Charter, which have been submitted and approved by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers on 19 January 2011.

The changes include the setting up of three new statutory committees, to replace the previous four: a Monitoring Committee, a Governance Committee and a Current Affairs Committee. They began work in October 2010.

The Congress Bureau welcomed the adoption by the Committee of Ministers of the Statutory CM/Res (2011)2 on the reform of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. In its meeting on 18 February 2011, the Bureau also welcomed the statement of the Deputies on its reform and encouraged it to continue in this direction. The Bureau of the Congress has informed all Congress members about this positive and encouraging assessment by the Committee of Ministers and will pursue its work in the same spirit and in close consultation with the Committee of Ministers.

Following the decision taken by the Committee of Ministers, the Congress' Standing Committee will be replaced by a Statutory Forum composed of the heads of all national delegations and members of the Bureau of the Congress. The Statutory Forum will take up its work in June 2011. The extended mandate of Congress members from two to four years, and the 30-per cent requirement for representation of the underrepresented sex in national delegations, applied also to substitute members, will enable the Congress to ensure growing cohesion within its work programmes and to strike a better balance with respect to the gender balance of all Congress bodies as of the next renewal Session in October 2012.

A complete overhaul of the current Rules of Procedures of the Congress is currently underway, with a view to making Congress' working structures and working methods more targeted and more efficient. We expect to adopt these revised Rules of Procedure during the plenary session of the Congress in October 2011.

2. Monitoring and observation of elections

On 12 December 2010, a five member-delegation of the Congress carried out a targeted election observation mission to assess the political situation in the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia, in respect of the election of the Governor (Bashkan) of Gagauzia. In its findings the Congress delegation stressed the continued lack of correlation between regional regulations and the Election Code of Moldova, the fact that several regional provisions would need to be amended; as well as problems connected to the use of three official languages of the Autonomous Unit of Gagauzia. Furthermore some deficiencies in respect of the electoral administration, notably concerning the accuracy of voter's lists were observed.

The results of the election observation in Ukraine on 31 October 2010 will be presented and discussed during the next plenary session of the Congress. The election observation was jointly carried out by delegations from the Congress and the Committee of Regions.

For 2011, twelve more countries will be under the regular monitoring procedure of the Congress with clear political goals, not only to pinpoint problems and misgivings observed with respect to the commitments entered in to by state parties to the European Charter for local self-government, but with the clear political aim to enable countries concerned to improve their record, especially in compliance with the Charter but also in the field of good governance. These visits will also constitute an opportunity to promote Human Rights at local and regional level and make local authorities more aware of their responsibilities in this field. The countries concerned are France, Portugal, Ireland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy, Albania, Czech Republic, Moldova, Germany, Spain, Lithuania and "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia".

With the mission conducted in France, Austria, Belgium and Serbia, the Congress has completed the first monitoring cycle of the 44 member states which have, to date, ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government. The Congress' efforts to encourage all Council of Europe member States to become state party to the Charter system, is close to being completed. Andorra, when signing the Charter during the 19th

Session in October 2010, gave a clear signal encouraging the two remaining small states, Monaco and San Marino, to follow their example in this respect.

One major achievement of the ongoing reform process is the improvement of the Congress monitoring activities that includes, as you may know, all 44 countries that ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government. The objective is to make this exercise more fair and objective, more regular, more transparent but also more binding for the Congress itself.

As for the pace of this exercise, the Congress carried out 13 missions in 2010, almost three times more than in the previous year. In 2011, twelve countries will be visited under the monitoring procedure, with a clear objective of not only pinpointing problems and shortcomings observed, but also of assisting the countries concerned in improving governance and conditions for the implementation of human rights at local and regional level.

3. Cooperation activities

The meeting between the two Presidents of the Congress and of the EU Committee of the Regions held on 12 January 2011 allowed both parties present to build on their political willingness for structured co-operation. These increased co-operation efforts will be organized and structured around four main thematic axes dealing namely with multilevel governance, the promotion of local and regional democracy, the promotion and protection of fundamental rights, territorial and cross-border cooperation and intercultural dialogue.

Furthermore, President Bresso and President Whitmore agreed to increase the Committee of the Regions' capacity to actively contribute to improving CoR capability to participate in election observation missions as an integral part of the CoR's external relations strategy. Common training seminars have been organized; these joint initiatives will be pursued in the near future.

The Congress cooperates with the Fundamental Right Agency as one of the stakeholders in the context of "a joined up governance approach to fundamental rights implementation".

A common understanding was reached that it would be useful for both organisations to reinforce the inter-institutional cooperation and to draw up a Charter on multilevel governance with the view to establish a pan-European consensus on multilevel governance.

Two other fields of common interest have been identified: Cross-border cooperation and the development of common strategies with respect to the fight against corruption, as a follow-up to the Messina conference. The issue offers additional scope for increased cooperation notably when dealing with topics like integrity, transparency and elected members' duties, fully in line the Congress report prepared on this issue.

The Congress continued its partnership with the main European Associations representing local and Regional authorities in Europe. The Secretary General of the Congress presented the Congress' activities at the General Assemblies of the Assembly of European Regions (AER) (Istanbul, 10 November 2010) and the Conference of Presidents of European Regions with Legislative Powers (REGLEG) (Saragoza, Spain, 18 November 2010).

The Congress also followed the work of the different networks it contributed to create and to which it continues to give its support, in particular, the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA), with which it contributed to organising an important Conference in Kutaisi, (Georgia, 18 November 2010) on the development of local democracy in the South Caucasus, in cooperation with the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe (NALAS).

At the conference on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) in Geneva on 28 January 2011, the President of the Congress, Keith Whitmore, developed the idea of a strong partnership with CEMR, as a voice and representative institution of national associations, with a view to promoting multi-level governance based on common standards of the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

The Congress President also presented a contribution to the International Congerence on "European Regions with Special Status", organised in Madeira (15 November 2010) at the invitation of the President of the Government of the Autonomous Region of Madeira. The Chamber of Regions will organise a debate on this question at its March session.

Furthermore, on 7 February 2011, the “Contact Group Congress/Committee of the Regions” held its meeting in Paris. The Group discussed election monitoring missions, Eastern Partnership and Multilevel Governance and decided to bring forward the activity on rights and duties of local and regional elected representatives and the risks of corruption.

On 25-26 February 2011, in the context of the current upheavals in several Arab countries, the 2nd Euro-Arab Cities Forum jointly organized by the Congress, the City of Malaga, the Council of European Municipalities for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership of Local and regional Authorities (COPPEM) and the Arab Towns Organisation (ATO), brought together mayors of European and Arab municipalities, representatives of international organisations and associations of local authorities.

The Declaration adopted on “Cooperation experiences and prospects for facing common challenges”, puts a strong emphasis on helping to enable the people to “build a new model of participation of the citizens for the best development of our region.” The participants from both shores of the Mediterranean expressed their common will of the immediate cessation of all crimes against humanity perpetrated against the civilian population. In this context the forum commits itself to pursuing this action in order to guarantee peace in our countries. It has been agreed to further promote and develop Euro-Arab municipal cooperation for better governance.

The Forum reaffirms its readiness to actively contribute to advancing the democratic development of the communities concerned, exchanging and applying best practices and expertise, as well as providing assistance and support for improving standards of good local governance, living conditions within the communities and services to citizens, responding as far as possible to the aspirations expressed by the people.

Furthermore, the Congress has been following the drafting of the new Council of Europe convention on violence against women and domestic violence, which was completed in January 2011. Local authorities are best placed to provide shelter and concrete action on the ground. Alongside information and awareness raising, the action is, of course, locally based and lots of towns and cities offer women suffering from physical abuse, for example, the opportunity to move into alternative accommodation, either temporarily or permanently.

4. Focus on Roma issues

The Congress clearly intends to further develop its action to address the situation of Roma at local and regional level, following the High-Level Meeting on Roma of 20 October 2010, which underlined the crucial importance of local and regional action.

In December 2010, the Congress Bureau re-appointed Mr John Warmisham (United Kingdom, SOC) as Thematic Rapporteur on Roma and Travellers issues. The question of the situation of Roma as a challenge for local and regional authorities has been put on the agenda of the 20th Session of the Congress, which will hold a current affairs’ debate on this subject in the plenary sitting. Following the debate, Mr Warmisham will prepare a report proposing specific measures to be taken at local and regional level.

On 18 February 2011, the Congress Bureau also approved a proposal to organise a Summit of Mayors involved in addressing the situation of Roma. Its objective is to bring together representatives of various municipalities and municipal networks active in this field or interested in becoming involved, with a view to setting up a European cooperation framework on Roma issues at local and regional level.

Furthermore, the Congress is co-organising this year the 3rd edition of the Dosta! - Congress Prize for Municipalities, to be awarded during the 21st Session in October 2011.

Last but not least, the Congress is supporting the training programme for Roma mediators, launched by the Secretary General for Roma issues. In January 2011, Congress President Keith Whitmore sent a letter of support to the heads of national delegations and some 40 municipalities in 14 countries selected for the first phase of the training programme. The President invited them to nominate candidates for training under this programme.

II. ACTIVITIES OF THE CONGRESS BUREAU

The Bureau met in Strasbourg on 3 December, 14 January and 18 February 2011.

On 3 December 2010, President Whitmore briefly reported on the elections held in the Ukraine on 31 October 2010 and drew members' attention to the information memorandum on this matter. The head of the delegation, Gudrun Mosler-Törnström, Austria (R, SOC), and the rapporteur, Nigel Mermagen, United Kingdom (L, ILDG) were invited to give a full account and to engage in an exchange of views with Bureau members on the Ukrainian elections. The draft report was submitted to the Bureau for approval at its February meeting and to the Congress at the 20th Session in March 2011.

The Bureau also considered, on this occasion, the invitation from the Moldovan Central Election Commission to observe the election of the Governor (Bashkan) of Gagauzia on 12 December 2010 and agreed on the composition of the delegation.

Furthermore, it considered the invitation from the Albanian Ministry for Foreign Affairs to observe the local elections on 8 May 2011 and agreed in principle to do so.

It was also decided to adopt the Rules of Procedure of the Congress in the light of the ongoing reform process of the Congress and to provide for the necessary adaptations in order to increase the efficiency of the working methods of the Congress and to make reform efforts operational on the ground.

The Congress Bureau also discussed Political Groups in the work of the Congress.

The Bureau approved the terms of reference of each of the three new committees with the participation of the chairs of the committees. (See Appendix).

On 14 January 2011, the Bureau approved the revised timetable of meetings linked to the 20th Session in March this year and agreed to organise current affairs debates on the following topical themes:

- In a plenary sitting: "Human Rights action at local and regional level"
- In the Chamber of Local Authorities: "Protecting cities from natural disasters;
- In the Chamber of Regions: "Energy supply and energy efficiency at regional level";

The approved draft agenda of the session has been revised accordingly. (See Appendix).

The issue of reform remains high on the agenda of the Congress and initiatives and actions have been discussed in order to increase exchanges of views with various partners inside and outside of the Council of Europe, and notably with the Parliamentary Assembly, in order to further improve possible interaction and useful co-operation.

The Congress Bureau discussed the Parliamentary Assembly report on the "Follow-up to the reform Council of Europe" on 25 January 2011, regretting that no consultation had taken place between the rapporteur of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress rapporteurs dealing with this matter. The members of the Bureau were of the opinion that much more could and should be done in the interest of both assemblies, composed by democratically elected representatives, in order to work closer together and to increase the efficiency of all of the Council of Europe bodies.

At its meeting on 18 February 2011, the Congress Bureau paid tribute to the late Mrs. Hilde Zach (Austria), a long standing member of the Congress, former Mayor of Innsbruck and Chair of the Committee on Culture and Education of the Congress.

It had also a close look at the results of local elections in the Ukraine (31.10.2010) and examined the results of the election of the Governor (Baskan) of Gagauzia (Moldova).

The reform process in view of promoting possible synergies with the intergovernmental sector of the Council of Europe has been further discussed and new proposals will be submitted and further worked upon notably with the CDLR.

III. FORTHCOMING SESSION

With this first range of decisions already adopted at the 19th Session, a new, restructured and more operational Congress is eager to make its mark on the European political scene. It is set to pursue, with vigour and dynamism, its core mission of monitoring and strengthening territorial democracy across our continent, improving local and regional governance.

The 20th Plenary Session of the Congress, 22-24 March 2011, will continue the reform efforts. The Congress will concentrate its work priorities around three major topics to be addressed during the forthcoming plenary session devoted to:

- The ongoing Reform process;
- Human Rights at local level;
- The situation of Roma in Europe.

A political dialogue with Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner responsible for Regional Policy, is scheduled on 24 March 2011 and will help to further explore and strengthen ways and means to increase concrete interaction between the European Union and the Congress in particular in the area of multilevel governance.

IV APPENDICES

1. Preliminary draft agenda of the 20th Session of the Congress

20th SESSION

PRELIMINARY DRAFT AGENDA - CG(20)OJ1PROV

(latest update: 3 March 2011)

PUBLIC MEETING

20th Session of the Congress

Strasbourg, Palais de l'Europe,
22-24 March 2011

Members' attention is drawn to:

- The deadlines for tabling **written questions** for oral reply (Office 1081): each member should limit herself/himself to one question to the **Secretary General** (deadline: **Tuesday 22 March at 16.00**) and one question to the **Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers** (deadline: **Tuesday 22 March at 15.00**).
- The deadlines for **tabling amendments** (Office 1081): at the latest at **10.00** on the eve of the day when the texts to which they refer are to be discussed.
- **Registration of speakers for the debates**: the form for registration of speakers for the debates must be submitted to the Table Office seated in front of the President's rostrum.
- **Finance Office** for reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses: Office 1040.
- **Table Office** for any further questions: Office 1081.

Monday 21 March

Eve of the session

BUREAUX MEETINGS

Bureau of the Chamber of Regions (Room 6)

9.00 – 10.00

Bureau of the Chamber of Local Authorities (Room 7)

10.00 – 11.00

Bureau of the Congress (Room 8)

11.00 – 12.30

14.00 – 16.00

Tuesday 22 March (morning)

POLITICAL GROUP MEETINGS

European People's Party/Christian Democrats Group (EPP/CD) (Room 9)
8.30 – 10.30

Socialist Group (SOC) (Room 10)
8.30 – 10.30

Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (ILDG) (Room 11)
8.30 – 10.30

Meeting of the **Secretaries of Delegations** (Room 7) – 9.00 – 10.00

PLENARY SITTING – Hemicycle – 10.45 – 12.45

- **Opening of the 20th Session**
by **Keith WHITMORE**, United Kingdom (L, ILDG), President of the Congress
- **Verification of new members' credentials and new appointment procedures**
Presentation by the Rapporteurs:
Anders KNAPE, Sweden (L, EPP/CD) and **Ignacio SANCHEZ AMOR**, Spain (R, SOC)

Debate and vote
[CG(20)2] (RES)
- **Adoption of the draft agenda of the session**
[CG(20)OJ1PROV]
- **Debate: human rights action at the local and regional level**

Statement by **Thomas HAMMARBERG**, Commissioner for Human Rights

Statements by two guest speakers (tbc)

Debate

Tuesday 22 March (afternoon)

PLENARY SITTING – Hemicycle – 14.45 – 18.30

- **Adoption of the draft minutes of the last sitting of the 19th Session (28 October 2010)**

[CG(19)PV3 am]

[CG(19)PV3 pm]

- **Communication by the President of the Congress**

Presentation by **Keith WHITMORE**, United Kingdom (L, ILDG)

[CG(20)3]

Debate

- **Urgent debate : The reform of the Council of Europe – The role of the Congress**

Statements by:

- **Philippe RICHERT**, Minister of State, responsible for Local and Regional Authorities of France
- **Viktor TYKHONOV**, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Regional Development, Construction and Housing and Communal Economy of Ukraine

- **Current affairs debate : The situation of Roma in Europe – a challenge for local and regional authorities**

Statements by:

- **Jeroen SCHOKKENBROEK**, Special Representative of the Council of Europe Secretary General for Roma issues
- **Rudolf SARKÖZI**, President of the Advisory Council of the Roma National Minority and former District Councillor of Vienna
- **Penka PENKOVA**, Mayor of Lom (Bulgaria), winner of the 2008 Dosta!-Congress Prize for Municipalities (tbc)

Wednesday 23 March (morning)

Meetings – 9.00 – 9.45

Bureau of the Chamber of Regions (Room 8)

Bureau of the Chamber of Local Authorities (Room 6)

CHAMBER OF REGIONS – Hemicycle – 10.00 – 13.00

- **Opening by the President**
Herwig VAN STAA, Austria (EPP/CD)
- **Adoption of the draft agenda of the Chamber**
[CPR(20)OJ1PROV]
- **Communication by the President**
Herwig VAN STAA, Austria (EPP/CD)
[CPR(20)1]
- **Challenges for Regions in Europe (2011-2020)**

Statement by:

- **Michèle SABBAN**, President of the Assembly of European Regions (AER)

Exchange of views

- **Co-operation between the Congress and associations representing regions in Europe**
[RES 314(2010)]

Statements by:

- **Jean-Luc VANRAES**, President of the Conference of European Regions with Legislative Power (REGLEG), Minister of the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region, responsible for Finance, Budget, Civil Service and Foreign Relations (Belgium)
- **Nazario PAGANO**, President of the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE)

Exchange of views on the follow-up to Resolution 314(2010)

- **European Regions with special status: strengths and prospects**

Statements by:

- **João JARDIM**, President of the Regional Government of Madeira (Portugal) (tbc)
- **Victorin LUREL**, President of the Regional Council of Guadeloupe (France) (tbc)
- **Lorenzo DELLAI**, President of the Autonomous Province of Trento (Italy) (tbc)
- **Vladimir KONSTANTINOV**, Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (Ukraine) (tbc)

Exchange of views on the follow-up to the international Conference (Madeira, Portugal, 15 November 2010)

- **Role of Regional Ombudsmen in Europe**

Statements by:

- **Tom FRAWLEY**, Northern Ireland Ombudsman (United Kingdom)
- **Burgi VOLGGER**, South Tyrol Ombudsperson (Austria)

- **Energy supply and energy efficiency at regional level**

Statement by:

- **Svetlana ORLOVA**, Vice-President of the Congress (Russian Federation)

Exchange of views

- **Closing** by the President

Wednesday 23 March (morning)

CHAMBER OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES – Room 1 – 10.00 – 13.00

- **Opening by the President**
Jean-Claude FRECON, France (SOC)
- **Presentation of the agenda and adoption of the order of business of the Chamber**
[CPL(20)OJ1PROV]
- **Communication by the President**
Jean-Claude FRECON, France (SOC)
[CPL(20)1]
- **European Local Democracy Week**
Presentation by **John WARMISHAM**, United Kingdom (SOC), Co-ordinator of the European Local Democracy Week
- **Meeting the challenge of inter-faith and intercultural tensions at local level**
Rapporteur: **Esther MAURER**, Switzerland (SOC)
Presentation of the report: **Sandra BARNES**, United Kingdom (NI)

Debate and vote
[CPL(20)2] (RES and REC)
- **Local democracy in Malta**
Presentation by the Rapporteur: **Emil CALOTA**, Romania (SOC)

Debate and vote
[CPL(20)3] (REC)
- **Debate : Protecting cities from natural disasters**
 - Presentation of the “Making Cities Resilient” campaign by **Helena MOLIN-VALDES**, Deputy Director of the United Nations Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR)
 - Presentation by a representative of ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability (tbc)
 - Presentation by **Stephan KIRICHUK**, President of the Russian National Congress of Municipalities
Debate
- **Closing** by the President

Wednesday 23 March (afternoon)

PLENARY SITTING – Hemicycle – 14.30 – 16.00

- **Adoption of the composition of the Standing Committee and statutory committees**
[CG(20)4PROV]
- Statement by **Thorbjørn JAGLAND**,
Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Oral reply to written questions
Deadline for tabling written questions: Tuesday 22 March at 16.00
- Statement by **Osman GÜNEŞ**, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior of Turkey
on behalf of the Chairmanship of the **Committee of Ministers** of the Council of Europe (tbc)

Oral reply to written questions
Deadline for tabling written questions: Tuesday 22 March at 15.00

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Current Affairs Committee (Room 8)
16.15 – 19.00

Governance Committee (Room 9)
16.15 – 19.00

Monitoring Committee (Room 10)
16.15 – 19.00

Thursday 24 March (morning)

Bureau of the Congress – 9.00 – 9.45 (Room 8)

PLENARY SITTING – Hemicycle – 10.00 – 13.00

- **Formal adoption of texts approved by the Chambers**
[CG(20)5]

- **Local and regional democracy in Turkey**
Presentation by the Rapporteurs:
Anders KNAPE, Sweden (L, EPP/CD) and **Herwig VAN STAA**, Austria (R, EPP/CD)

Debate and vote
[CG(20)6] (REC)

- **Observation of local elections in Ukraine (31 October 2010)**
Presentation by the Rapporteur: **Nigel MERMAGEN**, United Kingdom (L, ILDG)

Debate and vote
[CG(20)7] (RES and REC)

- **Strengthening co-operation with the European Union**

Statement by **Johannes HAHN**, European Commissioner responsible for Regional Policy,
European Commission of the European Union

Debate

Thursday 24 March (afternoon)

PLENARY SITTING – Hemicycle – 15.00 – 17.00

- **Local and regional democracy in Austria**
Presentation by the Rapporteurs:
Marc COOLS, Belgium (L, ILDG) and **Irene LOIZIDOU**, Cyprus (R, EPP/CD)

Debate and vote
[CG(20)8] (REC)
- **Local and regional democracy in Romania**
Presentation by the Rapporteur: **Jean-Claude FRECON**, France (L, SOC)

Debate and vote
[CG(20)9] (REC)
- **Closing of the session by the President of the Congress**

2. Other activities and events: 31 October 2010 – 28 February 2011

<i>31 October</i>	Local elections in Ukraine
<i>3 November</i>	44th meeting of the Executive Council of the North South Centre and Lisbon Forum
<i>3 November</i>	Monitoring visit to Latvia
<i>8 November</i>	Monitoring visit to Slovenia
<i>15 November</i>	Conference on "European Regions with special status: strengths and prospects"
<i>18 November</i>	Intercultural and inter-religious dialogue: 2nd Montchanin Meeting
<i>24 November</i>	Congress monitoring visit to Bulgaria
<i>26 November</i>	Implementing Fundamental Rights at the local and regional level following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty (organised by the Fundamental Rights Agency)
<i>29 November</i>	Monitoring visit to France
<i>29 November</i>	Training on observation of elections
<i>3 December</i>	Bureau of the Congress and its Chambers
<i>7 December</i>	Stakeholders' platform on the strategy for innovation and good governance at local level
<i>9 December</i>	Congress political assessment mission to the Republic of Moldova, in respect of the elections of the Governor of the Gagauzia Autonomous Territorial Unit
<i>10 December</i>	Monitoring Committee meeting
<i>17 December</i>	European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission)
<i>12 January</i>	Bipartite meeting of the Presidents of the Congress and of the Committee of the Regions
<i>13 January</i>	Meeting of the Chaves Group
<i>14 January</i>	Bureau of the Congress and its Chambers; Joint Meeting with the Bureau of the CDLR
<i>7 February</i>	Contact Group Committee of the Regions / Congress
<i>8 February</i>	Co-ordination meeting of the European Local Democracy Week
<i>17 February</i>	Meeting of the Monitoring Committee
<i>18 February</i>	Bureau of the Congress and its Chambers
<i>19 February</i>	Conference on the Western Balkans' European perspective
<i>25 February</i>	2nd Euro-Arab Cities Forum

3. Terms of Reference of the Committees of the Congress

Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by member states of the European Charter of Local Self-Government

A. General terms of reference

1. The Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by member states of the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ECLSG) (hereafter referred to as the Monitoring Committee), may examine any matter within its specific terms of reference (Rule 36 of the Rules of Procedure) and Resolution 309 (2010) on the reform of the Congress: structure and working methods.

2. The Monitoring Committee shall prepare reports, including a resolution and/or recommendation, for debate in the Congress or its chambers:

- when stipulated in the Congress's Rules of Procedure, in particular Rule 36 and in the present terms of reference;
- when stipulated in texts adopted by the Congress;
- when instructed by the Congress Bureau or the Bureaux of the Chambers.

3. The Committee shall examine the action taken on texts adopted by the Congress or its chambers on the basis of their reports (Rule 36).

4. The Committee may propose activities to the Bureau for advancing local and regional democracy, in accordance with the priorities set by the Congress.

5. The Committee may organise conferences, hearings and other events on matters within its specific terms of reference and which are linked to its work programme, subject to availability of funds.

6. The Committee shall prepare the Congress contribution to other Council of Europe activities that come within its competence.

7. The Committee is entitled to establish and is responsible for developing working relations with the relevant Council of Europe structures and bodies, observers to the Congress and the relevant European and international organisations.

8. The Committee shall maintain close working relations with national associations of local and/or regional authorities in Council of Europe member states, with a view to:

- collecting information on existing and emerging problems;
- relaying the committee's recommendations for action at territorial level;
- contributing to the follow-up to these recommendations.

B. Specific terms of reference

9. In accordance with Congress Resolutions 296 (2010), 307 (2010), and 309 (2010), the Monitoring Committee is responsible for ensuring that member states develop and maintain local and regional democracy, in full compliance with their obligations under the European Charter on Local Self Government (ECLSG), and its Additional Protocol once entered into force. This also applies to states preparing to ratify the Charter.

10. The Committee is responsible, in particular, for:

10.1 - monitoring the European Charter of Local Self-Government;

10.2 - preparing reports on the situation of local and regional democracy in Europe;

10.3 - monitoring specific questions related to local and regional democracy in member states;

10.4 - ensuring that its recommendations to member states are followed up.

11. The Monitoring Committee shall in particular undertake:

11.1 - a regular general country-by-country monitoring mission in each member state approximately every five years;

11.2 - the examination of a particular aspect of the Charter, upon decision of the Bureau or the Committee;

11.3 - fact-finding missions to look into specific cases of concern upon decision of the Bureau.

12. In its monitoring work, the Committee shall take into consideration:

12.1 - the conclusions and recommendations of Congress election observation missions;

12.2 - the situation of human rights at local and regional levels in Europe, and, in accordance with Resolution 296 (2010) elaborate a report on this specific issue on a regular basis.

13. The Committee shall devise a strategy to strengthen the capacity of domestic monitoring bodies to exercise their oversight function in an efficient way. It shall coordinate its activities where possible with other Council of Europe monitoring bodies working on related issues with a view to improving the implementation of its recommendations.

14. On the basis of these activities, the Committee shall contribute to clarifying the interpretation of the Council of Europe's legal instruments, and other texts in the field of local and regional democracy, notably the European Charter of Local Self-Government, and the relevant recommendations and resolutions adopted by the Congress, as well as the Reference Framework for Regional Democracy.

15. The Committee shall make proposals to the Bureau of the Congress to improve the application of the European Charter on Local Self Government.

16. The Committee shall initiate a post-monitoring dialogue and elaborate, when necessary, targeted programmes of assistance on common issues identified during monitoring visits, in order to provide concrete assistance to local and regional authorities and an efficient follow-up to its recommendations.

17. The Committee shall establish and develop working relations with the relevant Council of Europe structures and bodies, in particular with the relevant subsidiary bodies of the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly's Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by member states of the Council of Europe, the Commissioner on Human Rights and the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission).

Governance Committee

A. General terms of reference

1. The Governance Committee may examine any matter within its specific terms of reference (Rule 36 of the Rules of Procedure) and Resolution 309 (2010) on the reform of the Congress: structure and working methods.
2. The Committee shall prepare reports, including a resolution and/or recommendation, for debate in the Congress or its chambers:
 - when stipulated in the Congress's Rules of Procedure, in particular Rule 36 and in the present terms of reference;
 - when stipulated in texts adopted by the Congress;
 - when instructed by the Congress Bureau or the Bureaux of the Chambers.
3. The Committee shall examine the action taken on texts adopted by the Congress or its chambers on the basis of their reports (Rule 36).
4. The Committee may propose activities to the Bureau for advancing local and regional democracy, in accordance with the priorities set by the Congress.
5. The Committee may organise conferences, hearings and other events on matters within its specific terms of reference and which are linked to its work programme, subject to availability of funds.
6. The Committee shall prepare the Congress contribution to other Council of Europe activities that come within its competence.
7. The Committee is entitled to establish and is responsible for developing working relations with the relevant Council of Europe structures and bodies, observers to the Congress and the relevant European and international organisations.
8. The Committee shall maintain close working relations with national associations of local and/or regional authorities in Council of Europe member states, with a view to:
 - collecting information on existing and emerging problems;
 - relaying the committee's recommendations for action at territorial level;
 - contributing to the follow-up to these recommendations.

B. Specific terms of reference

9. The Committee shall consider legal and political issues relating to the effective development of good governance and democracy at local and regional levels.
10. The Committee shall in particular consider:
 - 10.1 - extending and developing the Council of Europe's legal instruments and recommendations in the field of local and regional democracy;
 - 10.2 - issues relating to governance and the functioning of local and regional authorities, such as citizen participation at local and regional level, as well as, in accordance with Resolution 309 (2010), public finance, cross-border and interregional co-operation and e-democracy.
11. The Committee shall follow the activities of and prepare the Congress contribution to the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Local and Regional Government and its follow-up.
12. The Committee shall establish and develop working relations with the relevant Council of Europe structures and bodies, in particular with the Parliamentary Assembly's Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs and the relevant subsidiary bodies of the Committee of Ministers, such as the European Committee of Local and Regional Democracy (CDLR) and its subcommittees.

Current Affairs Committee

A. General terms of reference

1. The Current Affairs Committee may examine any matter within its specific terms of reference (Rule 36 of the Rules of Procedure) and Resolution 309 (2010) on the reform of the Congress: structure and working methods.
2. The Committee shall prepare reports, including a resolution and/or recommendation, for debate in the Congress or its chambers:
 - when stipulated in the Congress's Rules of Procedure, in particular Rule 36 and in the present terms of reference;
 - when stipulated in texts adopted by the Congress;
 - when instructed by the Congress Bureau or the Bureaux of the Chambers.
3. The Committee shall examine the action taken on texts adopted by the Congress or its chambers on the basis of their reports (Rule 36).
4. The Committee may propose activities to the Bureau for advancing local and regional democracy, in accordance with the priorities set by the Congress.
5. The Committee may organise conferences, hearings and other events on matters within its specific terms of reference and which are linked to its work programme, subject to availability of funds.
6. The Committee shall prepare the Congress contribution to other Council of Europe activities that come within its competence.
7. The Committee is entitled to establish and is responsible for developing working relations with the relevant Council of Europe structures and bodies, observers to the Congress and the relevant European and international organisations.
8. The Committee shall maintain close working relations with national associations of local and/or regional authorities in Council of Europe member states, with a view to:
 - collecting information on existing and emerging problems;
 - relaying the committee's recommendations for action at territorial level;
 - contributing to the follow-up to these recommendations.

B. Specific terms of reference

9. The Committee shall be responsible for:

9.1 - studying the role of local and regional authorities with regard to the major challenges of modern society;

9.2 - ensuring a swift response to these challenges by recommending concrete action at national, regional and local level;

9.3 - preparing work on thematic issues such as social cohesion, intercultural dialogue, education, culture and sustainable development,

from the point of view of the Council of Europe's core values and taking into account the priorities established by the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers and the Conference of Ministers Responsible for Local and Regional Government.

10. The Committee shall in particular:

10.1 - identify immediate and potential problems and situations encountered or emerging in member states of the Council of Europe that have an impact on local and regional democracy;

10.2 - prepare reports and organise debates during Congress sessions on current affairs and urgent situations and crises affecting local and regional authorities of the Council of Europe member states, and recommend concrete responses.

11. The Committee shall follow the activities of and maintain working relations with the relevant Council of Europe bodies, in particular the subsidiary bodies of the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly, according to the issues that it treats.

4. Forum of Euro-Arab Cities – Draft Declaration

II Forum of Euro-Arab Cities

“Cooperation experiences and prospects for facing common challenges”

Malaga 25-26 February 2011

Draft Declaration

The II Forum of Euro-Arab Cities¹ is held at a particularly historic moment, as people from many countries are seeking democracy, progress, recognition and participation.

1. The Forum pays tribute to the courage of the women and men, the cities and communities who are engaging in the path of democracy and the acquisition of basic freedoms, including the right to protest and freedom of expression. The Forum demands the immediate cessation of all crimes against humanity perpetrated against the civilian population. In this context we commit ourselves to pursuing our action in order to guarantee peace in our countries.

2. This call for democracy is an opportunity. As the representatives of authorities that are closest to the people, we are ready to build a new model of participation of the citizens for the best development of our region. It is time to invent the future in the best interests of our people. We have met in Malaga on 25-26 February 2011 to express our common will to conduct new projects together and with our respective citizens to build the new model of development which the citizens are expecting. We are ready to drive forward the dialogue with our national governments and international organisations to better represent our citizens and support the movements for change in our cities.

3. Today we are seeing a period of profound social and political changes, where citizens demand a world respectful of the fundamental principles of democracy, participation, justice and peaceful coexistence, according to the UN Human Rights Council resolution of 25 February 2011, as well as all UN declarations concerning conflicts in the region. Our links and relations of friendship across our communities allow us to exchange on these extraordinary events and processes in the Arab world which must be consolidated by institutional changes.

4. In the same spirit, we welcome the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations' Regional Strategy for the Mediterranean, adopted in Malta in November 2010, which aims to improve understanding and relations of cooperation among nations and peoples across cultures and religions and, in the process, helps to combat the forces that fuel polarization and extremism. We acknowledge that the Regional Strategy opens up new means for cooperation as it considers city-to-city cooperation or city diplomacy in the Mediterranean region as one its ten interdependent priority domains of action and synergies for 2011-2013.

5. We reaffirm our commitment to promote and develop Euro-Arab municipal cooperation for better local governance around the issues addressed in the four sessions of the II Forum, namely:

- Local governance and new challenges;
- Urban management for sustainable development and municipal services;
- Financial instruments;
- Culture, heritage and tourism.

6. We, representatives of European and Arab cities, and of relevant Institutions and associations, have discussed these topics and have underlined that:

a) As a platform for improving partnership relations among European and Arab cities, at this particular time, the Forum is of the utmost importance for advancing the democratic development of our communities, exchanging and applying best practices and expertise, as well as providing assistance and support for improving standards of good local governance, living conditions in our communities and services to our citizens. We hope that the current situations affecting our counterparts in several Arab countries will lead to a higher level of public participation and strengthen local government and democracy, responding to the aspirations of the people.

b) We underline the importance of promoting the effective participation of citizens, in particular of young people and women, in their cities' governance.

c) We recognize the necessity to make further efforts to preserve the environment and achieve a good balance between the economic, social and environmental dimension, taking into account key issues for

¹ This II Forum is organized in the context of an initiative which began with the Euro-Arab Towns Conference, held in Marrakech in October 1988, continued with the Conference in Valencia in September 1994, and the 1st Forum held in Dubai in 2008.

sustainable development of our cities. We will seek to work for integrated solutions for urban and municipal service development.

d) We therefore emphasize the importance of prioritizing cooperation among our cities in order to find financial resources for project development, for strengthening infrastructure, public transportation services, housing, clean water resources, waste treatment, environmental protection, cultural heritage, tourism, etc.

e) We express our full support for establishing a competitive framework and the financial capacity corresponding to the new challenges, work and responsibilities of our local institutions, so that – in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity and the UCLG Gold report² – they can organise and manage a significant proportion of public affairs closer to the citizens, and strengthen the role of our cities in the economic and social development of the European and Arab nations, in accordance with the ten appended recommendations on the financing of cities.

f) We underline that cultural heritage, with its diverse elements and scope, is a unique asset not only for each city or country but for all humanity. We stress the need to build and implement strategies to preserve and give an added value to our cultural heritage for the sustainable development of our cities.

6. Convinced of the mutual interest of cooperation in these areas, the Organizers of the Forum (ATO, Council of Europe Congress, CEMR, Coppem and the City of Malaga) will work closely together to identify a possible action plan to meet the expectations of our populations seeking a better life.

7. The Forum welcomes the decision of the European Union to allocate funds to support the transition in the Mediterranean Region and asks the EU to dedicate part of these funds to supporting the emergence of local self-government. To this end, the Forum welcomes any initiative that provides opportunities for exchanges and cooperation, such as the proposal to hold an international conference on support to political and economic reforms; we ask that local governments are fully associated in this process. We urge the members of the Forum to maintain their close cooperation, in a spirit of solidarity.

8. In accordance with the decisions of the Dubai Forum, the next Forum will be convened in an Arab city in 2014.

9. We express our gratitude to the Mayor and the Municipality of Malaga for hosting and supporting this II Euro-Arab Cities Forum.

² Possible footnote to be added by CEMR concerning this report