**Congress’ submission in response to a call for input to a report on the role of local government and the challenges faced in the promotion and protection of human rights, authorised under the Human Rights Council Resolution 45/7 “Local government and human rights”**

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe thanks the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for the opportunity to present an overview of the Congress’ activities with regard to the protection, fulfilment and promotion of human rights at local and regional levels and contribute to the preparation of a report on the role of local government and the challenges faced in the promotion and protection of human rights.

The Congress would like to take this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.

As a pan-European political assembly of local and regional elected representatives from 46 European states, the Congress has always been convinced that local and regional good governance entails, as a precondition, a full compliance with human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In its Resolution 296 (2010) on the role of local and regional authorities in the implementation of human rights adopted in 2010, the Congress highlights that protecting and promoting human rights is a responsibility shared by all levels of government within each Council of Europe member State. The resolution emphasises that local and regional authorities, given their proximity to citizens, are important players in guaranteeing human rights.

Nowadays, grassroots’ authorities must comply with human rights duties against the backdrop of the economic crisis, unprecedented migrant flows, the rise of extremism and the sanitary crisis. They need to keep up with the pace of constantly developing international human rights standards based on new international treaties that come into force covering new generations of human rights.

To support local and regional governments in discharging their increasing human rights responsibilities, the Congress has been promoting good practices of implementing human rights at grassroots’ level and undertaking relevant cooperation activities.

**Raising awareness on human rights at grassroots’ level:**

Since the adoption of the 2010 Resolution on the role of local and regional authorities in the implementation of human rights, the Congress has prepared numerous tools, publications, and practical guides for use by its members and other local and regional authorities, to assist and support them in their daily work.

To promote awareness among locally elected representatives of their responsibilities in dealing with human rights issues at the local level that affect people’s everyday lives, the Congress has been collecting and sharing data and good practice examples of human rights application by European local and regional authorities.

In 2018, the Congress started publishing a series of "Human rights handbooks for local and regional authorities" to serve as a practical tool for local and regional elected representatives and the staff of territorial administrations, on how to adopt a human rights-based approach to local policy making.

The Handbooks explore a wide variety of successful examples of human rights promotion and protection at grassroots’ level, implemented by various local and reginal authorities in the Council of Europe member States, and provide practical recommendations.

The first volume focuses on three particularly vulnerable categories: refugees, asylum seekers and migrants; Roma and Travellers; and LGBTI people.  It presents sixty-five examples of human rights initiatives implemented by communities in over twenty-five countries and highlights the practical aspects of human rights implementation at local and regional levels to facilitate the exchange of successful experience between local and regional elected representatives.

A second volume of the Human Rights Handbook has been dedicated to social rights. It features the role of grassroots’ authorities with regards to health, education, work, housing, social security and social protection and social inclusion and integration, with a particular focus on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Organised around six social rights, sixty-five practical examples and recommendations complement the Handbook to show how local and regional authorities can take advantage of their proximity to citizens to develop local solutions.

In addition, a separate chapter is devoted to the main challenges local authorities face in their efforts to promote social rights, such as changing technologies, demographic ageing, climate change, and limited local budgets.

A third volume, currently under preparation, will be devoted to environment and human rights. The Congress has chosen this subject based on its firm belief that good governance, environmental protection – including climate justice and security – and human rights are interlinked and interdependent. A safe, clean and healthy environment is essential for the enjoyment of human rights, as much as the exercise of human rights is vital to environment protection.

Local and regional authorities are on the front line of tackling climate change, given their varied responsibilities related to environment, such as waste management, spatial planning, urban development and greening of territories. In this respect, the Congress will also prepare a report on the environment and human rights. This report will be complementary to the third volume of the Handbook and will help to raise awareness about the role of subnational authorities in combating climate change from the standpoint of their obligation to protect human rights.

**Congress monitoring activities:**

By monitoring the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-government in the 46 Council of Europe member States, the Congress fulfils its statutory task of promoting local and regional democracy through decentralisation, good governance and the respect of the principle of subsidiarity.

When the Congress carries out monitoring visits to assess the implementation of the Charter in the countries, it identifies positive or negative developments with relation to human rights situation at local and regional levels. This information is included in the country monitoring reports that are addressed to the national governments and draw their attention to specific areas that need more actions and possibly an enhanced cooperation with subnational authorities to remedy the situation.

**European local democracy week:**

The European Local Democracy Week (ELDW), launched by the Congress in 2007, is an annual European event in the framework of which local authorities and associations from the 46 [Council of Europe](https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/home) member States organise public initiatives to engage with their citizens on issues of local interest.

The participants are encouraged to organise events, in accordance with the theme of the ELDW, during the whole year, culminating in a flagship event in the week of 15 October. The week around 15 October has been chosen as a tribute to the European Charter of Local Self-Government, opened for signature on that date in 1985.

The ELDW participants are encouraged to actively promote mutual exchange of information and good practice, especially by using the online platform on the ELDW website ([European Local Democracy Week (coe.int)](https://www.coe.int/en/web/congress/european-local-democracy-week).

**Congress priorities for 2021-2026 and human rights:**

In 2021, the Congress adopted five thematic priorities of its activities for 2021-2026, which are in line with the strategic orientations of the Council of Europe and the Sustainable Development Agenda of the United Nations. These are the responses to crises, and particularly to health crises; democratic governance and citizen participation; inclusion and the fight against inequalities; environmental policies; and digitalisation within democracies. The priorities will guide the Congress’ work in its cooperation with local, regional, and national authorities of the Council of Europe member states.

The Congress will continue, among other things, to further raise awareness on the respect of human rights at local level, fight corruption and promote transparency, fight discrimination, radicalisation and exclusion, promote inclusion of vulnerable groups such as Roma, promote gender equality, fight violence against women and children, contribute to the empowerment of women and youth as well as the reduction of the divide between rural and urban areas in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, in particular goals 11 (make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable), 16 (promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies) and 17 (revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development).

Congress texts **on human rights at local and regional levels** (can be downloaded on a special webpage [Human Rights (coe.int)](https://www.coe.int/en/web/congress/human-rights)

* + Congress resolution to endorse the Principles on the Protection and Promotion of the Ombudsman Institution (“The Venice Principles”):

[Resolution 451 (2019)](http://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168098acd3)

* + Promoting human rights at local and regional level:

[Report CG34(2018)10](https://rm.coe.int/promoting-human-rights-at-local-and-regional-level-monitoring-committe/168079416a)

[Resolution 427 (2018)](https://rm.coe.int/promoting-human-rights-at-local-and-regional-level-rapporteur-harald-b/168098ae3a)

* Revised Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist Society:

[Report CG32(2017)17](https://rm.coe.int/16806fe48b)
[Resolution 415 (2017)](https://rm.coe.int/16807035fe)

* Best practices of implementation of human rights at local and regional level in member states of the Council of Europe and other countries:

[Report CG(26)5](https://rm.coe.int/best-practices-of-implementation-of-human-rights-at-local-and-regional/168071aeed)

[Resolution 365 (2014)](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&id=2176895&Site=COE&BackColorInternet=C3C3C3&BackColorIntranet=CACC9A&BackColorLogged=EFEA9C&direct=true)

* Developing indicators to raise awareness of human rights at local and regional level:

[Report CG(21)10](https://rm.coe.int/developing-indicators-to-raise-awareness-of-human-rightsat-local-and-r/168071933b)

[Resolution 334 (2011)](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&id=1857407&Site=COE&BackColorInternet=C3C3C3&BackColorIntranet=CACC9A&BackColorLogged=EFEA9C&direct=true)

* Intercultural cities:

[Report CPL(16)1](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&Ref=CPL(16)1REP&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=COE&BackColorInternet=C3C3C3&BackColorIntranet=CACC9A&BackColorLogged=EFEA9C&direct=true)

[Resolution 280 (2009)](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&Ref=RES(2009)280&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=COE&BackColorInternet=C3C3C3&BackColorIntranet=CACC9A&BackColorLogged=EFEA9C&direct=true)

Publications

“[Human Rights handbook for local and regional authorities](https://rm.coe.int/the-congress-human-rights-handbook-vol-1-en/168098b094)” Vol. 1

“[Human Rights handbook for local and regional authorities](https://rm.coe.int/human-rights-handbook-for-local-and-regional-authorities-vol-2-social-/1680a1950a)” Vol. 2 - Social rights

Compendium “[Promoting human rights at local and regional level](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&id=2272565&Site=COE&BackColorInternet=C3C3C3&BackColorIntranet=CACC9A&BackColorLogged=EFEA9C&direct=true)”

Other texts

* Congress Human Rights Action Plan 2016-2017:

[Action plan - Human Rights at local and regional level](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=20161115_CHRAP&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&BackColorInternet=DBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FDC864&BackColorLogged=FDC864)