

Europarådets pressekorrespondent i de nordiske lande

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Congress of Local and Regional Authorities holds its plenary session (Strasbourg 31 May – 2 June)

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe will hold its plenary session in Strasbourg from 31 May to 2 June (Palais de l'Europe). Congress members from 46 European countries will discuss reports on local and regional democracy in Russia, Georgia, the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark. They will also address the issues of intercultural and inter-religious dialogue and the role of regional media. In addition, reports on natural and industrial catastrophes and major oil spills will be examined.

A round table discussion is planned on the Charter on Local Self-Government, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary. Participants will include the Mayor of Vienna, Michael Häupl, First Vice-President of the Committee of the Regions of the European Union, Sir Albert Bore, and Minister for Municipal and Regional Affairs of the government of Quebec, Nathalie Normandeau.

An important part of the Congress discussions will be dedicated to the implications of the Warsaw Summit for local and regional democracy in Europe. According to the President of the Congress, Giovanni Di Stasi "The Third Summit of the Council of Europe underlined the key role of local and regional authorities, in particular that of the Congress. The strengthening and development of local and regional democracy as a result of Congress actions are major assets for European growth and cohesion".

The President of the Parliamentary Assembly, René van der Linden, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Terry Davis, as well as Eduardo Cabrita, Portuguese Secretary of State of Local Administration (on behalf of the Chair of the Committee of Ministers), Vladimir Yakovlev, Russian Minister for Regional Development, Rizvan Sulejmani, Minister for Local Self-Government of "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Miodrag Vlahovic, Foreign Affairs Minister of the Republic of Montenegro (Serbia and Montenegro), will make speeches during the course of the session.

A press conference of Congress President Giovanni Di Stasi will take place on Tuesday, 31 May, at 10 am (room 1).

Together with the President of the Chamber of Local Authorities, Halvdan Skard, and with the President of the Chamber of Regions, Yavuz Mildon, President Giovanni Di Stasi will hold a press briefing on Thursday, 2 June, at 12.45 pm (press room).

For more information, see <http://www.coe.int/congress-session/>

Contacts:

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Supplerende oplysninger:

Bemærk der er flere nordiske rapportører under sessionen : Halvdan Skard (N), Birgitta Halvarsson (S), Odd Arild Kvaløy (N), Anne-Grete Ström-Erichsen (N), Brith Fäldt (S) og Inger Linge (S).

Medlemmerne af de nordiske delegationer kan ses på Kongressens hjemmeside: www.coe.int/T/E/Clrae/ under « Structures and Yearbook ».

Der er udpeget en ny dansk delegation bestående af :
Borgmester Mads Lebech, Frederiksberg Kommune (delegationsleder)
Amtsborgmester Vibeke Storm Rasmussen, Københavns Amt
Amtsborgmester Kristian Ebbensgaard, Roskilde Amt
Borgmester Niels Larsen, Nørre Alslev Kommune
Byrådsmedlem Helene Lund, Farum Kommune
Regionsrådsmedlem Knud Andersen, Bornholms Regionskommune
2. viceamtsborgmester Søren Eriksen, Vestsjællands Amt
Borgmester Johnny Søtrup, Esbjerg Kommune
Borgmester Tove Larsen, Røddekro Kommune.
Sekretær for delegationen er Helle Sehested, Kommunernes Landsforening, der under sessionen kan kontaktes på mobil +45 29 74 13 04.

Resumé af rapportererne om lokalt og regionalt demokrati i Danmark og Sverige

Local and Regional Democracy in Denmark

CG (12) 8

Rapporteurs: Kathryn SMITH (United Kingdom, L, SOC)
Roberto RUOCCO (Italy, R, NR) and
Karsten BEHR (Germany, R, EPP/CD)

This monitoring report looks mainly into the broad reform of the administrative structure which is in process in Denmark. This reform aims at setting-up a more efficient public sector, delivering better public services with unchanged tax levels, improving health care service and establishing clearer responsibility between administration levels. The reform which is expected to come into force as from 1st January 2007, involves a new territorial organisation by dissolving the existing 13 county self-governments, creating five elected regional self-governments and setting-up larger municipalities. The main consequence of the reform on the Congress might be that the new regions might be left out of the scope of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. Considering that an international legal instrument on regional autonomy does not exist yet, it is suggested by the rapporteurs that the Government take measures to ensure that the new regions comply with at least with most of the provisions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

Local and Regional Democracy in Sweden

CG (12) 7

Rapporteur: Ian MICALLEF (Malta, L, EPP/CD) and
Karsten BEHR (Germany, R, EPP/CD)

This report is part of the process of monitoring member states' commitments in the field of local democracy carried out by the Congress as part of its statutory responsibilities. In their analysis of the system of local self-government in Sweden in the light of the provisions of the Charter, the rapporteurs acknowledge that Sweden's legislation, tradition and practice in this respect are largely in conformity with the spirit and the letter of the Charter. The report particularly salutes the fact that several key articles of the Charter (Articles 2, 3, 4.6 and 6) are echoed in Sweden's legislation and that the country has a long tradition of close involvement of local authorities in public affairs. Furthermore, local authorities play a very important role in the Swedish taxation system.

The rapporteurs note with satisfaction that the Swedish Association of local authorities and the Swedish Federation of county councils have constantly played an active part in promoting local democracy and defending the interests of local authorities.

At the same time the report pinpoints a number of areas where the implementation of certain provisions of the Charter gives cause for concern. They include the central government's regulations on local authorities (Article 4 of the Charter); the impact of the legislation on "rights"

(Article 4 of the Charter); the ceiling on taxation (Article 9.4 of the Charter); the equalisation system (Article 9.5 of the Charter); special grants (Article 9.7 of the Charter) and the legal protection and consultation of local authorities (Articles 10 and 11 of the Charter).

Concerning regional democracy, the rapporteurs support the Swedish authorities in the policy that has led to the establishment of two pilot regions, *Västra Götaland* and *Skåne*. The report finds that the experience of the pilot regions has brought economic growth and permitted the launch of a series of development programmes, and raises the question of the possibility of adopting an asymmetrical approach to the regions in Sweden.

In conclusion, the rapporteurs encourage the Swedish authorities to continue their regional government experiment, maintaining the two pilot regions and extending the experiment to other parts of Sweden where regions are willing to join in.

Rapporterne debatteres på plenarmødet onsdag eftermiddag, hvorefter der stemmes om rekommandationer med anbefalinger til henholdsvis Danmark og Sverige. Rapporterne og udkastene til rekommandationer kan ses på Kongressens hjemmeside.