

European & External Affairs Committee

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Title: The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. European and External Affairs Committee, National Assembly for Wales

20 January 2005

Congress and the Council of Europe

The Congress, as it is known, is the Council of Europe's local and regional arm. The Council of Europe (CoE), based in Strasbourg, is a pan-European intergovernmental body of 46 member states established in 1949 to promote human rights and democracy. The CoE's institutions are supported by the Secretariat or civil service, headed by Terry Davis, a former Member of the UK Parliament. The main institutions are the:

- Committee of the Ministers; representing the 46 governments and responsible for the political direction of the CoE;
- Parliamentary Assembly; representing the 46 national parliaments and responsible for scrutiny of the Committee of Ministers; and
- The European Court of Justice: the court of final appeal on human rights cases, as outlined by the European Charter of Human Rights.

What does Congress do?

The CoE set up the Congress in 1994 with two main aims:

- To monitor the establishment and development of local and regional democracy in accordance with the principles of the Charter on Local Self-Government; and
- To promote good local and regional governance.

How does Congress work?

The Congress is split into two chambers: the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions. The Congress has an Institutional Committee to monitor the development of local and regional democracy, and three other policy committees to promote good governance (Culture and Education; Social Cohesion and Sustainable Development). The Congress draws up reports which make recommendations to the member states and local and regional authorities on key policy matters. The Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly also consult the Congress of CoE on matters that have an impact on local and regional government.

The Congress agrees its reports in plenary session and also has the right to question member state governments on the state of autonomy and democracy in their local and regional authorities.

How does the United Kingdom participate in the Congress?

The UK Government appoints the UK delegation from nominations made by the Devolved Administrations and UK local government associations. The delegation has 18 full members of the Congress, nine in the local chamber and nine in the regional chamber. There are also 18 substitute members who stand in for full members if they cannot attend.

In the UK, members from the Devolved Administrations, English counties and larger unitary authorities sit in the Regional Chamber. Councillors from Northern Irish, Scottish and Welsh local councils, London boroughs, county districts and smaller unitaries sit in the Chamber of Local Authorities.

This delegation is appointed for a period of two years. The current mandate runs from May 2004 to May 2006. The UK delegation nominates its members to sit on the Congress committees. The UK delegation meets at the annual Congress plenary session and at an annual meeting in the UK.

All full members have the right to a place on one of the Congress committees and attend the annual plenary session. Both full and substitute members can participate in the Congress's work, for example, as rapporteurs, election and local democracy monitors, as well as member of ministerial working groups, and senior office holders within the Congress.

The UK delegation is one of the most active in the Congress, with UK members active both in senior positions and rapporteurships. Full details are attached to the end of this briefing.

The United Kingdom Secretariat

The Local Government International Bureau (LGIB) provides the UK delegation's secretariat. The LGIB is a top-slice publicly funded body based at local government house in London. In 2004 the LGIB carried out a member review of the work of the UK delegation, which involved both the UK delegation and the LGIB Board of Directors. The key outcomes of the review, to be implemented in 2005 were:

- To seek an extension of the mandate from two to four years. This would allow for continuity of membership and give more opportunities for substitute members to participate in the Congress.
- To improve the reporting back of member activity in the Congress to the nominating bodies, through nominating body structures and new briefings produced by the LGIB secretariat.
- To support joint working with the UK delegation to the Committee of the Regions and promote better liaison with other national delegations.

The key issues in 2005

Regional Self Government

The CoE is drafting a Convention, which sets European benchmarks for good regional governance and the relationships with local and national government. The next meeting of 46 Ministers responsible for local and regional government, in Budapest in February, will consider the proposed Convention.

Third summit of the heads of state (17-18 May 2005, Warsaw)

This will be a fundamental review of all the Council of Europe's activities context for the Summit is

- The changing political and legal relationships between the CoE and EU in the light of an enlarged EU and constitutional treaty.
- Budgetary constraints on the activities of the CoE.

The review is being driven by the new CoE Secretary General, Terry Davis and the Ministers' Deputies. The Ministers' Deputies have set up a working group (GT-SOM3) to steer the work of the summit. There are four themes for the summit:

A A Europe of shared values and common standards

- Review the CoE's mission statement;
- Highlight the role of the institutions in the new Council of Europe;
- Strengthen legal and judicial cooperation;
- Develop a pan-European intergovernmental, inter-parliamentary and regional/local dialogue; and
- Increase participation of civil society and young people in governance.

B A Europe for Citizens

- Reform of the European Court of Human Rights;
- Review CoE programmes;
- Review the CoE budget; and
- Enhance the visibility of the Council of Europe

C A Europe of complementarity

- Strengthen relationships with the European Union;
- Develop cooperation on human rights with the EU to allow EU accession to the European Charter of Human Rights;
- Develop closer working relationship with EU in areas of common concern;
- Strengthen relationships with OSCE and United Nations;
- Develop a strategy to promote regional coordination and cooperation.

D A Europe in Action

- Develop a policy programme in light of the above reforms

The Congress and the Committee of the Regions – a shared agenda.

The Congress and the Committee of the Regions has a joint work programme. There is a CoR-Congress joint working group, with two UK members on it. The main focus so far has been on European governance. Activities have included:

- Congress independent advisers working with the CoR on the monitoring of the new subsidiarity monitoring powers;
- A joint meeting of the Congress Institutional and CoR Constitutional Affairs Committees in Prague;
- A joint declaration on local self government;
- Undertaking by both the Congress and CoR to work closely with the Local and regional government associations; and
- It is likely that there will be more joint work , at a committee level, in key policy areas such as cross border cooperation, sustainable development, civil protection, neighbourhood policy and promoting the establishment of local democracy.

South East Europe

The Congress has led the way in promoting democracy and good local governance in the Balkans. The LGIB is engaged in this work via a capacity building project with the Association of Kosovan Municipalities.

Application of the Charter of Local Self Government

The UK government signed up to the Charter in 1997. The Charter is a benchmark to test local democracy and autonomy. This is particularly relevant in the debate on the future of local government funding, the central-local partnership and arguments about freedoms and flexibilities.

UK Secretariat Contacts

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Links

Congress home page www.coe.int/T/E/C/rae/

Appendix 1 UK Delegation to the Congress 2004-2006

Regional Chamber - Full Members

1. Cllr Doris Ansari	Cornwall County Council	South West	Liberal Democrat
2. Cllr Ken Bodfish	City of Brighton and Hove	South East	Labour
3. Cllr Sue Bolam	Northumberland County Council	North East	Conservative
4. Cllr Mehboob Khan	Kirklees MBC	Yorks & Humber	Labour
5. Cllr Owen Masters	Devon County Council	South West	Conservative
6. Sean Neeson MLA	Northern Ireland Assembly	Northern Ireland	Alliance
7. Tavish Scott MSP	Scottish Executive	Scotland	Liberal Democrat
8. Cllr David Shakespeare deputy delegation leader	Buckinghamshire County Council	South East	Conservative
9. Cllr Keith Whitmore deputy delegation leader	City of Manchester	North West	Liberal Democrat

Regional Chamber - Substitute Members

1. John Biggs GLA	Greater London Assembly	London	Labour
2. Cllr Celia Cameron	Norfolk County Council	Eastern	Labour
3. Cllr Brian Coleman GLA	Greater London Assembly	London	Conservative
4. Cllr Gretta Cousins	Cheshire County Council	North West	Conservative
5. Tamsin Dunwoody-Kneafsey AM	National Assembly for Wales	Wales	Labour
6. Cllr John Edney	Somerset County Council	South West	Conservative

7. <i>Phil Gallie MSP</i>	<i>Scottish Parliament</i>	<i>Scotland</i>	<i>Conservative</i>
8. <i>Cllr Alex King</i>	<i>Kent County Council</i>	<i>South East</i>	<i>Conservative</i>
9. <i>Cllr David Lloyd-Williams</i>	<i>North Yorkshire County Council</i>	<i>Yorks & Humber</i>	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>

Local Chamber - Full Members

1. Cllr Muriel Barker	North East Lincolnshire UA	Yorks & Humber	Labour
2. Cllr Sandra Barnes	South Northamptonshire DC	East Midlands	Conservative
3. Cllr Sue Davis	Telford and Wrekin UA	West Midlands	Labour
4. Cllr Dr Malcolm Green	City of Glasgow	Scotland	Labour
5. Cllr Mary Hunt	Waverley DC	South East	Liberal Democrat
6. Cllr Alan Lloyd ^{delegation leader}	City of Swansea	Wales	Labour
7. Cllr Amrit Mediratta	Three Rivers DC	Eastern	Conservative
8. Cllr Christopher Newbury	West Wiltshire DC	South West	Independent
9. Cllr Kathryn Smith	London Borough of Bexley	London	Labour

Local Chamber - Substitute Members

1. <i>Cllr James Allie</i>	<i>London Borough of Brent</i>	<i>London</i>	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>
2. <i>Cllr Olive Brown</i>	<i>Wear Valley DC</i>	<i>North East</i>	<i>Labour</i>
3. <i>Cllr Andrew Campbell</i>	<i>Dumfries and Galloway Council</i>	<i>Scotland</i>	<i>Independent</i>
4. <i>Cllr Pauline Dee</i>	<i>North Shropshire DC</i>	<i>West Midlands</i>	<i>Independent</i>
5. <i>Cllr Jim Dillon</i>	<i>Lisburn Council</i>	<i>Northern Ireland</i>	<i>UUP</i>
6. <i>Cllr Bill Flanagan</i>	<i>Chesterfield DC</i>	<i>East Midlands</i>	<i>Labour</i>
7. <i>Cllr Geoffrey Harper</i>	<i>Fenland DC</i>	<i>Eastern</i>	<i>Conservative</i>
8. <i>Cllr Simon James</i>	<i>Royal Borough of Kingston</i>	<i>London</i>	<i>Liberal Democrat</i>
9. <i>Cllr David Lyonette</i>	<i>Darlington UA</i>	<i>North East</i>	<i>Labour</i>

Updated 14 December 2004

Appendix 2 UK membership of the Congress Committees

Culture and education committee

Cllr Sue Davis(L) ^{Labour} *Cllr Pauline Dee* *Cllr David Lyonette*

Cllr Mary Hunt(L) ^{Liberal Democrat}	<i>Cllr Olive Brown</i>	<i>Cllr Kathryn Smith</i>
Cllr Ken Bodfish(R) ^{Labour}	<i>Tamsin Dunwoody-Kneafsey AM</i>	<i>John Biggs GLA</i>
Cllr Sue Bolam(R) ^{Conservative}	<i>Cllr Brian Coleman GLA</i>	<i>Cllr Doris Ansari</i>
Institutional committee		
Cllr Christopher Newbury(L) ^{Ind}	<i>Cllr Geoffrey Harper</i>	<i>Cllr Alan Lloyd</i>
Cllr Kathryn Smith(L) ^{Labour}	<i>Cllr Jim Dillon</i>	<i>Cllr Andrew Campbell</i>
Cllr David Shakespeare(R) ^{Conservative}	<i>Cllr Gretta Cousins</i>	<i>Cllr Keith Whitmore</i>
Tavish Scott MSP(R) ^{Liberal Democrat}	<i>Phil Gallie MSP</i>	<i>Cllr David Lloyd-Williams</i>
Social cohesion committee		
Cllr Muriel Barker(L) ^{Labour}	<i>Cllr Pauline Dee</i>	<i>Cllr Cllr Bill Flanagan</i>
Cllr Sandra Barnes(L) ^{Conservative (VPL)}	<i>Cllr Olive Brown</i>	<i>Cllr Simon James</i>
Cllr Doris Ansari(R) ^{Liberal Democrat(VPR)}	<i>Cllr David Lloyd-Williams</i>	<i>Cllr Brian Coleman GLA</i>
Mehboob Khan ^{Labour}	<i>Cllr Gretta Cousins</i>	<i>John Biggs GLA</i>
Sustainable development committee		
Cllr Malcolm Green(L) ^{Labour}	<i>Cllr Andrew Campbell</i>	<i>Cllr James Allie</i>
Cllr Amrit Mediratta(L) ^{Conservative}	<i>Cllr Mary Hunt</i>	<i>Cllr Geoffrey Harper</i>
Sean Neeson MLA(R) ^{Alliance}	<i>Cllr Alex King</i>	<i>Cllr Sue Bolam</i>
Cllr Keith Whitmore(R) ^{Liberal Democrat (P)}	<i>Cllr John Edney</i>	<i>Cllr Celia Cameron</i>

Standing Committee

Cllr Alan Lloyd(L) ^{Labour}	<i>Cllr Malcolm Green</i>	<i>Cllr Christopher Newbury</i>
Cllr Owen Masters(R) ^{Conservative}	<i>Cllr David Shakespeare</i>	<i>Cllr Keith Whitmore</i>

(L)= Chamber of local authorities

(R)= Chamber of Regions

(P)= President of the Committee

(VPL) = Vice President of the Committee (Local authorities)

(VPR)= Vice President of the Committee (Regions)

Italic = substitutes

Appendix 3 UK members in key Congress positions and working groups

Vice President of Congress (Local Chamber)

Cllr Alan Lloyd

President of the Socialist Group

Cllr Alan Lloyd

President of the Independent and Liberal Democrat Group

Cllr Keith Whitmore

Committee of the Regions/Congress Contact Group

Cllr Alan Lloyd, Cllr Keith Whitmore

Congress Working Group "Regions with legislative power"

Tavish Scott MSP (full), Phil Gallie MSP (sub)

CoE Working Group on local and regional elected representatives in South East Europe

Congress rapporteur: Cllr Owen Masters

CoE Working group on the Convention on human trafficking

Cllr Sandra Barnes

CoE Working Group on Crime Prevention

Cllr Pauline Dee

Updated 11 January 2005