



News from the Independent and Liberal Democrat Group

CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES – COUNCIL OF EUROPE

MAY 2017

EUROPEAN LOCAL DEMOCRACY WEEK

by Marc Cools, President of the ILDG

The 2017 European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) will be celebrated from 9 to 15 October. The theme of this tenth edition is “Citizen participation, consultation and commitment for a thriving local democracy”.

The ELDW is coordinated by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and serves to get to know our municipalities and the many services they provide. This yearly initiative gives us the opportunity to promote the idea of local democracy everywhere in Europe.

Democracy is not only about choosing and periodically renewing (or not) our representatives. It is a living and continuous process. Democracy is also about responsible citizens encouraged to take interest and to participate in public affairs. The local level is the best arena to enable such participation.

Here are three concrete examples of how such citizen participation can be organised. In my home municipality of Uccle, which is one of the 19 municipalities forming Brussels in Belgium, we created a consultative council for handicapped persons and a local youth council where citizens can take part. Almost every week, I chair the Concertation committee where citizens – after the public consultation has been launched – can make remarks and proposals regarding any major urban planning and development project in my municipality.

Every year, Brussels’ municipalities organise many activities during the ELDW. Last year, we supported the screening of a documentary “Tomorrow” (by Mélanie Laurent and Cyril Dion who traveled worldwide to investigate concrete solutions to environmental and social challenges). The screening was followed by round table debates bringing together elected representatives, citizens and NGO activists who discussed the issues of living together, people newly arriving to Brussels, “identity that kills, identity that saves”, the future of Europe after Brexit, different forms of solidarity, and types of citizen participation (Agenda 21, participatory budget, sustainable neighbourhood, repair café, community gardening and collective composting system, etc.)

The European Local Democracy Week is a pan-European event to remind about the universal values on which the Council of Europe is founded: human rights, democracy and the rule of law, values particularly dear to our ILDG group. These values are never achieved once and for all, as show the barbaric terrorist acts committed in the name of radical Islamism. It is crucial to keep reminding about the importance of these values and to defend them. These values are at the very foundation of the European project.



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MANCHESTER, SAINT-PETERSBURG AND STOCKHOLM HIT BY TERRORIST ATTACKS

23.05.2017 After London, Madrid, Paris, Brussels and many other towns and cities, a deadly terrorist attack hit Manchester Arena last night. Our thoughts go to the victims and their families. We also remember the victims of the blast in Saint-Petersburg Metro on 3 April, and a few days later, another attack perpetrated in Stockholm.

These attacks show once again how important the fight against terrorism feeding on radicalism is. A resolute commitment and coordination of actions among all the European countries is required.

2017 ILDG BUREAU ELECTIONS

On 27 March 2017, ILDG reelected Marc Cools as President of the group and renewed the composition of its bureau. Congratulations to all those who were elected!

PRESIDENT:



Marc Cools, MR
Belgium

VICE-PRESIDENTS:



Thomas Andersson
Centerpartiet
Sweden



Dr. Helen Carr
Independent
United Kingdom



Marianne Hollinger
Parti libéral radical
Switzerland



Gabriele Neff
FDP
Germany

TREASURER:



Patrick McGowan
Fianna Fáil
Ireland

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS VICE-CHAIRS OF THE CONGRESS:



Vice-Chair of the Chamber of Local
Authorities
Liisa Ansala, Finland



Vice-Chair of the Chamber of Regions
Yuliya Svitlychna, Ukraine

THOMAS ANDERSSON, CENTERPARTIET, NEWLY ELECTED ILDG VICE-PRESIDENT

by Thomas Andersson

I'm Thomas Andersson, 45 years old, living in a village called Fåker, in the region of Jämtland Härjedalen in the northern part of Sweden. I run two businesses in wood sector, one in circular economy and another one in real estate. Since 1998 I have been elected to different positions in the former County Council, now the region of Jämtland Härjedalen. During these years, I've been commissioner, councillor and was also strongly involved in the Assembly of European Regions (AER), where in 2007-2012 I lead the work within the taskforce for the future cohesion policy.

Since 2016 I'm a member of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe where I focus on cooperation between local/regional authorities and civil society. Working in the ILDG, I would

like to strengthen liberal values around Europe. In this work all members of our group are important to share our ideas and help our political parties to grow stronger and get more support from the voters.

My political party is the Centre Party (Centerpartiet in Swedish). It is the former farmers' party in our country, which since the 1950s focuses on rural issues, and since the 1960s works on environmental questions. In the mid-1970s we collected 25% of the votes and ran the government.



In the last decades the party had around 6% of the votes. After a big and important discussion about our values and political programme we decided to go back to our social liberal values. This work has been hard but necessary. According to the different surveys about the political parties we now have the strongest trust from the citizens in Sweden and our leader, Annie Lööf, is ranked as the politician with the highest trust among the political party leaders in Sweden.

The different political ideas we work for are rural development, environmental questions and a strong focus on business issues. Whereas the large increase of the number of refugees coming to Sweden has turned many political parties to more conservative and restrictive positions, the Centre Party has remained in the frontline to defend a liberal and generous policy for welcoming new citizens to our country. In the last four years, according to the surveys, our support has increased from 2,8% to around 13% of the voters. We will continue our work for an open and inclusive society and hope to obtain strong results in the 2018 elections.

I'm very thankful for your support to become a Vice-President of the ILDG, and I will do my best to strengthen the role of our group within the Congress.!

REPORTS PRESENTED BY ILDG MEMBERS DURING THE SESSION:

Marc COOLS (L, Belgium)

- Revision of the Rules and Procedures of the Congress

Modifications to increase the flexibility of the provisions relating to the Partner for Local Democracy Status (Rule 64) in particular those referring to the admissibility of requests.

Stewart DICKSON (R, United Kingdom)

- Recurring issues based on assessments resulting from Congress monitoring and election observation missions (reference period 2010-2016)
- Local democracy in Malta
- Checklist for compliance with international standards and good practices preventing misuse of administrative resources during electoral processes at local and regional levels
- Observation of local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2 October 2016)

György ILLES (L, Hungary)

- From reception to integration: the role of local and regional authorities facing migration

Agenda and all texts adopted during the 32nd session:
<https://rm.coe.int/16806f9e11>

KHARKIV REGION: INVESTMENT POTENTIAL AND DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS

by Yuliya Svitlychna

Yuliya Svitlychna, Vice President of the Chamber of Regions of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, Representative of Ukraine in the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, Head of Kharkiv Regional State Administration, Deputy of Kharkiv Regional Council

This article is an excerpt of a larger presentation available on request and focuses on the economic structure of the region

Kharkiv Region is at the forefront of regional and national reforms. With advanced and diversified economy and quality human capital, our region uses today's challenges as stepping stones on the path to modernization. Because of this, despite its border status (the region is situated in the east of Ukraine and borders Russia to the north), Kharkiv is the leader of socio-economic development among Ukrainian regions. The region is home to nearly 2.8 million citizens. Half of them live in Kharkiv. Kharkiv possesses significant natural, financial, manufacturing, human and infrastructure potential and holds leading positions in the state economy.

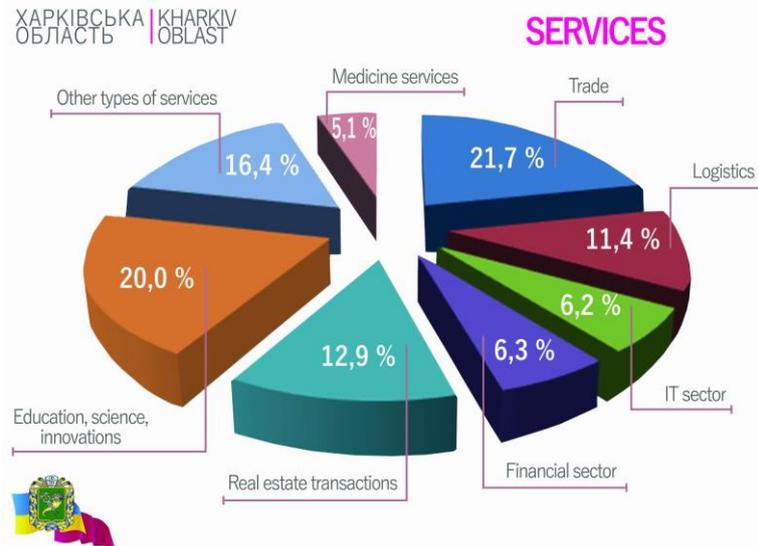
Industry

Kharkiv Region is one of the most powerful industrial centers of Eastern Europe. There are nearly a thousand large and medium industrial enterprises, 94% of which are privately owned. Processing industries account for more than 50% of the total figure. In 2016 the region's enterprises invested UAH 10 billion (roughly €340 mln) of their own funds in the modernization of production and

energy efficiency - 1.5 times more than last year. Another priority is the development of mining opportunities. Kharkiv Region contributes half of Ukraine's natural gas mining. The region has the largest deposits of natural gas and potentially largest deposits of shale gas in continental Europe.

Agriculture

One of the priorities of Kharkiv Region's economic development is to enhance sustainable agricultural development and its export capacity in the processing of agricultural products. Kharkiv Region made a significant contribution in the strengthening of Ukraine position as one of the

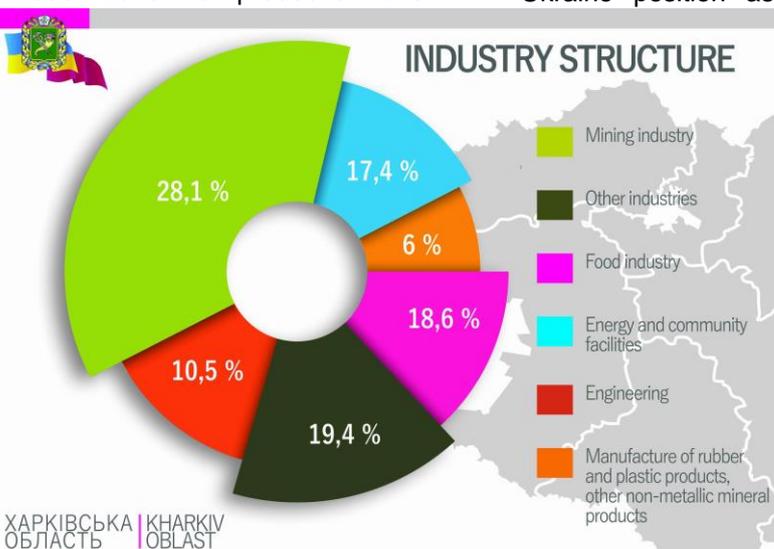


approximately 1.3 times ahead of Southern regions of Ukraine. Kharkiv Region is also one of the leading suppliers of livestock products in the domestic market of Ukraine.

Service sector

The service sector accounts for 65% of employment in the region and nearly 67% of GRP. It is the main generator of added value in the regional economy and makes Kharkiv a leading service center in Eastern Ukraine. In 2016 Ukraine ranked first in Europe by the number of IT professionals, showing the most dynamic market growth.

With its harvests of grain crops (4mln tons of grain and grain legume crops in 2016), Kharkiv Region is a leading exporter of plant products, especially wheat.



NEXT MEETINGS:

ILDG group and bureau meetings: 17 October 2017
 33rd Session of the Congress: 18-20 October 2017
CONTACT: Tel: +33388412682; Email: maria.bigday@coe.int

