



CEMR Executive Bureau, Bratislava, 8 July 2016

We, the members of the Executive Bureau of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, representing 130,000 of Europe's local and regional governments federated in the national member associations of CEMR, take note with concern of the overall view expressed by UK citizens to leave the European Union and the result of the referendum in the different regions of the United Kingdom.

We wish to extend our friendship and our support to our Members in the UK. It is during these moments of great uncertainty regarding the future that this invitation for continued collaboration with European counterparts, comes as a call to retain bonds of friendship built over the last forty years. We recognise the diverse results of the referendum in the different regions and will endlessly offer our support to each individual association to secure the future they seek as representatives of local government.

Over sixty years ago, CEMR was created by local politicians who aspired to contribute to the creation of a peaceful, prosperous and united Europe. Today we are composed over 60 national associations from 41 countries and our ambition remains unchanged.

The full repercussions of the referendum may not be known for many years, but it is likely to be the start of a very significant period of change for the European Union with its impact felt well beyond our continent.

As representatives of local and regional politicians in Europe, it is important we continue to pursue the development of a Europe that is closer to the needs of citizens, a Europe where municipalities and regions are respected and seen as active and full partners in the governance of Europe. Furthermore, there is clear value in defending together local democracy and the improvement of local services in Europe¹. We expect the Heads of State and Government, to work with us to promote a Europe that puts the interests of its citizens at the centre.

The major challenges that we face in Europe can best be addressed on the basis of commonly agreed, democratic principles, the result of efforts following the ravages of two world wars and the fall of the iron curtain, and which have led to the creation of today's European Union.

The outcome of the vote in the United Kingdom is a timely reminder to all, of what has been achieved through the construction of Europe: the defence of common values, peace freedom, rule of law and freedom of movement, fundamentals upon which the European project is founded.

Programmes such as 'Europe for citizens' or 'Erasmus', that allow people to meet, to exchange and to understand each other, play a vital role to create a European spirit and identity. These initiatives must be reinforced and further developed.

We must seize this chance! The current situation provides a window of opportunity for Europe; by grasping it, we can put in place a project that meets the expectations of future generations.

¹ by contributing to the work of the European Union, Council of Europe and the OECD and in the world by contributing to the negotiations on Climate Change, the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the preparation and follow-up of the HABITAT III.