



**Local & Regional
Europe**

CEMR Key priorities on gender equality

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INTRODUCTION

Gender equality is not only a democratic principle and a human right, it is also a fundamental requirement for the equal sharing of power and justice and for the well-being of our societies in general. Further, equality of women and men - in practice - is an essential component for economic growth, prosperity and competitiveness.

This is why it is essential to maintain gender equality as a priority on the political agenda while facing the multitude of challenges posed by the financial crisis, austerity, and the demographic, social and political shifts taking place in Europe and around the world. We must be aware of the specific impact that these phenomena have for women and men and for our democratic values.

Regarding the publication in December 2015 of a staff working document by the European Commission: "Strategic Engagement for gender equality 2016-2019", CEMR wishes to express its concern with the implicit lowering of the status of work on equality of women and men in the European Union. With this in mind, CEMR would like to share the views that will support our advocacy toward the EU institutions, including the Council of Europe and its Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, and Member States for the coming years, notably in regards to the development of a post-2019 European Strategy for equality between women and men.

CEMR has a long tradition of advocating for equality of women and men at local level, most importantly through the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life that we prepared together with our member associations and experts, and the online Observatory of the Charter. Moreover, local and regional governments have specific competences that allow them to advance gender equality on the level closest to the citizens and to provide, in practice, equal rights, opportunities, and services for women and men, and girls and boys in their territories.

As the largest organisation of local and regional governments in Europe and as a leading organisation in promoting equality of women and men in local life, CEMR can serve as a key partner in advancing true equality at every level of governance.

Ibon Uribe
CEMR Spokesperson on Equality
Mayor of Galdakao, (Basque Country, Spain)



CEMR Key priorities on gender equality

CEMR believes that further actions in Europe and beyond are needed for gender equality, therefore:

1. **Political commitment.** Gender equality needs to be at the centre of the political agenda and mainstreamed into all policies, legislation, services, activities, and budgets. A strong political commitment and high visibility—complemented by awareness-raising, capacity building, sex disaggregated data and concrete actions with sufficient funding—are needed from the European Union, Member States, towns, cities and regions.
2. **Equal participation.** The equal representation and influence of women and men in political life, at all levels of governance, is a prerequisite for a democratic society. It is critical to the progress of gender equality and for effective decision-taking and policy-making. In order to achieve this aim, positive actions, such as quota systems, are necessary.
3. **Social awareness and engagement.** The awareness, engagement and inclusion of boys and men, girls and women in gender equality will be necessary in all spheres of society to achieve real equality in Europe and globally.
4. **Ending violence against women.** Urgent action must be taken at all levels of governance to prevent violence against women and girls, assist victims and survivors, hold perpetrators accountable, and raise awareness about all forms of violence against women, with a view to changing attitudes and behaviours.
5. **Equal access to and control of services and resources.** Services and resources (for example: health, sports and recreation, social care) of the same quality should be accessible to women and men, girls and boys, and adapted to their needs and preferences.
6. **Strengthening women's participation in the labour market and economic empowerment.** Further steps are needed in particular to close the gender pay and pension gaps and to eliminate occupational segregation starting with educational and occupational choices made in young adulthood.
7. **Work-life balance.** Measures should be taken to achieve improved work-life balance for both women and men, for example, through introducing flexible work arrangements, non-transferable paternity leave and the provision of high quality, affordable care services. Unpaid care and domestic work must be shared equally between women and men.
8. **Equality as a core European value.** Europe should integrate the core value of equality between women and men in its actions at the global level such as in trade policy, development cooperation, and humanitarian work. The European Commission should develop synergies between EU gender equality action, the Europe 2020 Strategy and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Sustainable Development Goals).
9. **Gender perspective in refugee and migration policy.** Europe should raise awareness of the differing, specific needs that women and men migrants, refugees and asylum seekers face. Long term, gender-sensitive responses must be identified and implemented at all level of governance.
10. **European funding for local action to promote equality.** Appropriate funding and programmes are necessary to support efforts to advance gender equality; in particular, for the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life and its online Observatory, as well as for local and regional equality initiatives.

Contact

Jaimie Just
Policy Officer – Gender Equality and Diversity
Square de Meeûs, 1
Brussels, 1000
Tel. +32 2 500 05 49
jaimie.just@ccre-cemr.org

About CEMR

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) is the broadest organisation of local and regional authorities in Europe. Its members are 60 national associations of municipalities and regions from 41 European countries. Together these associations represent some 130,000 local and regional authorities.

CEMR's objectives are twofold: to influence European legislation on behalf of local and regional authorities and to provide a platform for exchange between its member associations and their elected officials and experts.

Moreover, CEMR is the European section of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the worldwide organisation of local government.

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