



**Local & Regional  
Europe**

# **CEMR 2015 Work Programme**

## **Report of Activities & Results**

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## Introduction

Following the evaluation of its working methods and structures in 2014, and elections at European level, 2015 has meant a **new start** for CEMR.

With a new **European Commission** fully in place, and the priorities of the Juncker team, CEMR has pro-actively sought contact with the Commissioners and the Directorates General whose work has a direct impact on local public policy and governance. These include Commissioner Karmenu Vella, in charge of environment and maritime affairs and fisheries, where we addressed the current air quality package and the new proposal for the circular economy; but also Commissioner Maroš Šefčovič (Energy), Violeta Bulc (Transport) and last but not least Commissioner Corina Crețu (Regional Policy).

CEMR also reached out to the “new” Members of the **European Parliament** with a campaign “How local is your MEP” which helped increase our visibility towards the Parliament and strengthen our relationship with dozens of MEPs.

Politically speaking, Europe has been facing two major challenges in 2015: the impact of the financial crisis (in particular on Greece) and the rules that have been introduced to tackle them on the one hand; and on the other hand the huge influx of refugees which has become the priority since the summer. CEMR has been active and pro-active on both fronts with studies, successful lobbying and exchange of knowledge and know-how among its members.

That said, **CEMR’s policy work** continued on several issues currently on the European agenda: circular economy, climate & COP21, energy, better regulation, gender equality, urban agenda, TTIP and public services, etc. In 2015, we have in fact been successful in influencing relevant European documents, which is the result of very good relationship and collaboration with key actors in the European institutions and the Presidencies of the Council.

In order to strengthen our lobbying efforts, and better coordinate with our members, a proper **lobbying strategy** was designed this year. This strategy complements the research strategy adopted in 2014 and the work achieved through the different projects CEMR is involved in and/or leading.

The use of the “**expert group**” as sole working structure was implemented, as recommended by the CEMR membership in 2014, along with the appointment of a dozen of **spokespersons** to echo the voice of CEMR and its member associations on different topics

These efforts are consistent with CEMR’s **ambition** of becoming the first interlocutor of European institutions for any matter related to local & regional public policy and governance. Since 2015, this is already the case on international development and cooperation as CEMR-PLATFORMA signed a strategic partnership with DG DEVCO – a first of its kind on both sides – which will enhance local and regional action for stronger and more sustainable development in EU’s partner countries.

Last but not least, as another important step in this process, preparations for the **CEMR Congress 2016** were launched this year, hoping to make our quadrennial event – and in fact Europe’s largest gathering of local and regional leaders – a success for all the organisation.

## 1. GOVERNANCE, DEMOCRACY & CITIZENSHIP

### 1.1. CITIZENSHIP & TWINNING

CEMR contributed to the advocacy process on the annual priorities for 2016 of the **Europe for Citizens** programme; from 2016 onwards, there will no longer be annual priorities, but exclusively multi-annual priorities in order to have a more structured and mid-term strategy.

Beyond addressing issues related to town-twinning, our expert group on twinning had discussions with the Education, Culture and Audio-visual Executive Agency (ECAEA; responsible of the implementation of the programme) on the first results of the programme after one year of implementation – concretely, on the geographic distribution of selected projects as well as between the sub-strands funding twinning-related projects (“Network of Towns”, “Civil Society” projects and “Town Twinning” projects) under the “Democratic engagement and civic participation” strand.

CEMR successfully **convincd** the EC to change the eligibility periods for those applicants who submitted projects in 2014, which enabled a greater number of projects to take place in 2015. Furthermore, CEMR managed to **influence** the priorities for 2015, as local authorities were explicitly mentioned in the Programme’s Guide annual priorities. Additionally, in terms of content, the priorities included many elements advocated by CEMR following our internal meeting of twinning coordinators and the meeting we had with the EACEA Agency.

With respect to the CEMR [www.twinning.org](http://www.twinning.org) website, we examined its further development to guarantee a better and more automatic functioning as well as a more user-friendly website in terms of content.

### 1.2. REFUGEES CRISIS, MIGRATION AND DIVERSITY

In the field of **migration, integration and diversity**, CEMR continued to participate in the European Integration Forum meetings, outlining the importance of local and regional governments when it comes to better integrating migrants and refugees. We **influenced** the agenda of the next Forum, as its Bureau accepted that the role of local and regional authorities should be mainstreamed as a topic of discussion in the different sessions and workshops of the next edition.

As regards the **refugee crisis**, CEMR moved this issue to the top of its priorities in September. Since then, CEMR has been assessing the various EU funds that local and regional authorities could access to deal with the enormous challenges on the ground, such as delivering basic services, healthcare or housing.

In this respect, CEMR held meetings with European Commission officials in order to **advocate** a better inclusion of local and regional authorities in the decision-making structures at the EU and national levels, as well as for a better consideration of their needs within the different EU programmes dealing with refugee management. Our core objective is to examine what EU support can be provided to LRGs in order to better deal with the integration of refugees, both in the context of emergency assistance and in the medium to longer term perspectives both in the EU and in neighbouring countries, notably Turkey and South Eastern Europe.

Furthermore, CEMR has been analysing potential ways to **strengthen capacity building** at the local and regional level, and will in 2016 elaborate a **Practical Guide** following up the questionnaire that was disseminated among CEMR members to assess LRGs needs towards the refugee crisis. A first analysis of the survey will be published before the end of the year (see the [PowerPoint presentation](#)).

The questionnaire is a first step for local and regional authorities to understand how to better integrate refugees in all dimensions of service delivery, both in hotspot municipalities where migrants arrive at a first stage, as well as in transit and final destination municipalities.

In October, CEMR **co-organised** together with the Conference of peripheral and maritime regions (CPMR), EUROCITIES and some European regions, an event on the refugee crisis in the European Parliament to further exchange with representatives from the Commission and members of the European Parliament on the main challenges at the local and regional levels.

We participated in external conferences and seminars, and further **shared** information and knowledge, such as for instance a seminar organised by NALAS, whose municipalities and associations are especially affected by the refugee crisis. In addition, a technical meeting was held with DG HOME to see how the EU could support LRGs in and outside the EU.

As a result, and in order to coordinate and strengthen our voice in this debate, we **established a specific taskforce** on asylum and integration as well as a **spokesperson** on the matter, nominated at the December Policy Committee.

Finally and most importantly, all the efforts CEMR has been bringing in this field have been complemented and **communicated** through several press releases and through social networks, placing CEMR as a leading voice on this issue in Europe.

### 1.3. BETTER REGULATION

CEMR has strengthened its efforts to defend the views of local and regional governments on the **Better Regulation Package**, in particular by crystallising a Position Paper covering the different elements of the Package together with the members of the expert group on governance, democracy and citizenship.

The CEMR Secretariat **helped coordinate** the amendments tabled by our national associations on the Committee of the Regions opinion on the Better Regulation Package. This pro-active move was viewed positively, as it allowed us to take a stronger and more unified position towards the CoR and the opinion itself. Earlier CEMR had, in addition, met the CoR rapporteur and his expert in order to shape the draft opinion.

Furthermore, CEMR participated in the CoR's Subsidiarity Expert Group in which we successfully **secured** a speaker for the 7<sup>th</sup> Subsidiarity Conference of the Committee of the Regions in November, in a session on better regulation. CEMR's spokesperson on public services, Elisabeth Vitouch, presented our position in the session about 'better regulation in practice' and referred to our experience with the public procurement directives.

The advocacy work on this particular folder was also completed and complemented with several press releases, activeness in the social networks and with the reinforcement of our contact and relations with the European institutions.

CEMR has **kept lobbying** for the exemption of local authorities to appear on the Transparency Register; and raising awareness on this key issue through meetings with EC representatives and through various articles in the media (including Politico, Europolitics, Agence Belga, Contexte, Agenda Publica).

#### 1.4. GENDER EQUALITY

To promote our work on gender equality, we co-organised together with SALAR a seminar in the European Parliament, on occasion of the week of the International Day of Women in March. At this seminar we called on the European institutions to recognise the vital role of local and regional governments in promoting and implementing gender equality and asked for further support for our work. CEMR wishes to contribute to the shaping of the “EU Strategy for equality between women and men post-2015” and successfully **managed to have** a number proposed **amendments tabled and adopted** in the European Parliament’s resolution. We also contributed and responded to a public consultation on the future EU Strategy for equality between women and men launched by the European Commission.

End of March, the financing of the **Observatory of the European Charter for Equality of women and men in local life**, provided by SALAR, came to an end. A comprehensive report was prepared, conclusions were drawn and recommendations formulated. It became clear that the implementation of the Charter very much depends on the capacity and contribution of the signatories and also of the national associations; the latter play an important role in providing assistance and a platform of exchange and information.

The **development of indicators** to monitor the implementation of the European Charter for Equality is a crucial element to support signatories. Therefore, CEMR dedicated its capacity to the pilot project, financed by the European Commission. Together with our partners, we launched the monitoring phase of the implementation of the articles of the Charter across the signatories in EU Member States. This helped us to get data on the current situation of the implementation of the Charter by articles and to prepare the report on the situation of gender equality at local level.

Moreover, CEMR **developed a toolkit** aiming at facilitating the understanding of the indicators, their implementation and the development of gender equality policies by local authorities elected representatives and civil servants. The outcome of the project was presented at the final conference on 14 October 2015, hosted by the city of Brussels. The Conference gathered 160 participants from 20 European countries, including representatives from EU institutions and associations working on women’s rights issues.

#### 1.5. LOCAL FINANCES

An expert group on **local finances** was created in 2015, with as first main objective the **preparation of a position paper** on the impact of European regulations on investments at local and regional level and the need for allowing adjustments.

On request of our Greek association (KEDE), we prepared a study on the financial situation at subnational level in Greece in April, when the financial situation of the country was very critical and negotiations with the international institutions were underway. The objective of the study was to **demonstrate** that all levels of governance should cooperate in order to achieve an economic recovery of all territories. The results of the study show that although the national public sector debt level in Greece was higher than the EU average, the subnational public sector debt in Greece (0,9% of the GDP and 0,5% of the public debt) was much lower than the EU (12,4% of the GDP and 15,1% of the public debt).

Furthermore, in cooperation with other partners (e.g. FMDV, OECD, OLA), CEMR intends to **update the study**, carried out in 2011 in cooperation with DEXIA, on ‘subnational public finance in the European Union’.

## 1.6. GOVERNANCE & DECENTRALISATION

CEMR continued its successful collaboration with the **Council of Europe**, and in particular with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. We **contributed** to both plenary sessions of the Congress in 2015 on youth-related issues: a representative of CEMR was nominated “youth delegate” in both sessions, in order to present the Young European Leaders for Active Citizenship project and represent CEMR in the different debates of the plenary. In addition, CEMR President Annemarie Jorritsma addressed the autumn plenary session with a keynote speech on new forms of governance.

CEMR continued to collaborate with the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG) of the Council of Europe, which in 2014 replaced the former European Committee on Local and Regional Democracy. This inter-governmental committee oversees the Council of Europe’s work in the field of democratic governance, with a particular focus on local and regional democracy. In this respect, CEMR participated in both plenary sessions of the CDDG in 2015. In particular, when the Committee addressed the question of radicalisation in Europe, CEMR **shared** some good practices that came out from the results of our questionnaire on the refugee crisis (see above).

As concerns the **Young European Leaders for Active Citizenship** (YELAC) project, CEMR successfully organised two activities in 2015. The **quality** of both activities was fairly recognised by participants, who increasingly show their interest to attend events related to the YELAC project priorities. Young members of the European Parliament and the Youth Intergroup, as well as representatives from the European Youth Forum and the Council of Europe attended the YELAC meetings on youth participation, employment, education and housing.

In 2015, CEMR also launched a survey among its member associations on the **legal status of local government associations in Europe**. In total, 25 associations from 19 countries responded: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom. We still would want to mobilise more responses in order to achieve a more comprehensive overview.

Our national associations also contributed to a study of the Joint Research Centre (JRC – ISPRA) of the European Commission on the **impact of decentralisation on economic activity**. Results are expected before the end of the year.

In collaboration with the **Observatory on Local Autonomy (OLA)**, CEMR organised a symposium in June on *Control of local government activities: A threat to autonomy?* Representatives of member associations contributed as speakers and participants; we organised a round table with very interesting interventions (see the article on CEMR round-table in [FR](#) and [EN](#)).

Finally, in addition to research and academics, we have continued collaborating and exchanging with the European Movement International and with other civil society platforms on the different strands of our work.

## 2. ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE & ENERGY

### 2.1. CIRCULAR ECONOMY

The European Commission published a “**Circular Economy package**” in summer 2014, entailing proposals to review a number of targets related to waste and directly concerning local authorities (e.g. municipal waste recycling targets). However, the new Commission withdrew the package and announced a revised package to be published in December 2015.

CEMR is concerned that some of the targets proposed in the first package may be maintained; however, they cannot be realistically achieved by municipalities. Therefore, the expert group on waste has responded to the Commission consultation and **prepared a position**, advocating that the local approach be taken into account in the future measures in the legislative process. The response is based on the position that was prepared on the withdrawn Commission proposal

As a start of our **lobbying** activities, we invited the rapporteurs of the European Parliament (Sirpa Pietikäinen) and the Committee of the Regions (Kata Tutto) to the two expert group meetings in June and September. In order to contribute with more substantial evidence, we are currently responding to concrete questions from their side on local examples.

When the new Package will be released, we will react with a letter and elaborate a position paper early 2016 with more detailed views. Our spokesperson on environment, Linda Gillham, participated in the September expert group and the CoR Environment Committee meeting which presented the outcomes on the circular economy consultation launched over summer.

### 2.2. ENERGY, CLIMATE & COP21

Following the publication of the “**EU Energy Union Package**” by the European Commission in February 2015, CEMR has **organised exchanges of information** and experience within its expert group on climate and energy transition to understand and assess the impact of the proposals on local and regional level. One of its key communications, the “Road to Paris”, set the path to implement actions ahead of the UNFCCC conference of the Parties (COP21) in Paris next December. This package reinforces the one from last year on 2030 framework for climate and energy.

Ahead of the publication of the Energy Union report, the CEMR President together with her colleagues from four other European networks (Climate Alliance, CEMR, Energy Cities, FEDERANE and ICLEI) signed an open letter to Maroš Šefčovič, the European Commission’s Vice-President in charge of the Energy Union, stating that “local and regional governments ought to be represented on an equal footing, alongside Member States, in the governance of the EU Energy Union.” The letter was largely disseminated by the European press, including Politico, a European weekly newspaper.

CEMR’s **involvement** in the **Covenant of Mayors’** Office considerably **increased** in 2015, which corresponds to the second of a new 3-year service contract signed with the European Commission. Around 6,600 municipalities and regions have signed the initiative, and 16 member associations of CEMR are supporters, which is raising more and more expectations from the European Commission, for instance in terms of contribution to the energy security of Europe. As part of our activities, we have organised webinars and workshops at EU and national level, such as a public event on 30 September with a focus on financial schemes for local energy policies.

In the context of the annual Covenant event, the new Covenant 2030 was presented on 15 October with new ambitious targets (at least 40% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2030) and with the goal of merging the current Covenant of Mayors and Mayors Adapt initiative. The new Covenant will also extend to other continents such as Africa, where the **EC reached out to CEMR** and asked us to prepare a project proposal to help implement the initiative.

Since March 2015 and within a 2-year contract, CEMR is a member of the consortium managing the European Commission's **Mayors Adapt** initiative on adaptation to climate change (<http://mayors-adapt.eu/>). Built on the success of the Covenant of Mayors, this initiative constitutes a parallel exercise in the frame of which Local Authorities commit to develop comprehensive Local Adaptation Strategies or in mainstreaming adaptation actions into relevant existing plans within two years from the adhesion.

So far, the Mayors Adapt counts 133 full members and other 18 pre-committed members, coming from 24 countries of the European territory and representing around 30 million citizens. Moreover, 123 of these Local Authorities are already engaged in the Covenant of Mayors initiative, while 28 are only committed to the Mayors Adapt "adaptation-specific" requirements.

CEMR is involved in the **CITYinvest** ([www.cityinvest.eu](http://www.cityinvest.eu)) project on supporting and replicating successful innovative financing models for energy efficiency renovations in public buildings. CEMR is mainly responsible for dissemination and promotion of the project and its outcomes. Through its interactive features, the on-line platform will facilitate exchange of information on existing successful models.

Finally, in the hope of supporting a strong climate agreement at the **COP21** in Paris, a real mobilisation of all the European and international networks has taken place this year.

CEMR has played a very **strategic role** and contributed actively in this process, **building bridges** between partners and stakeholders, thanks to our European and international nature.

As such, we have been involved in all the preparatory meetings in Paris and Bonn hosted by the COP21 Paris team, the French Government, our world organisation United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and the UNFCCC Secretariat respectively.

We organised two events during the World Climate and Territories Summit in Lyon last 1-2 July. Hosted by the Région Rhône-Alpes in cooperation with the French Government and UNFCCC, the Summit gathered for the first time all non-state actors active in the climate negotiations.

Earlier this year, we prepared 10 key messages which then were further **developed** into our full **position** for COP21. The position was presented by our spokesperson on climate and energy to all the EU Institutions and the Luxembourg Presidency at our expert group meeting on 30 September.

Finally, CEMR, together with PLATFORMA, the Covenant of Mayors and Mayors Adapt, **organised** a Thematic Conference "*European Cities and Regions United against Climate Change*" on 5 December in the framework of the Climate Summit for Local Leaders convened by Anne Hidalgo, Mayor of Paris, and Michael R. Bloomberg, UN Special Envoy on Cities and Climate Change.

### 3. ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL COHESION

#### 3.1. URBAN AGENDA

CEMR and its expert group on economic, social and territorial cohesion collaborated closely with the European Commission, the Latvian Presidency and the Dutch Ministry of Interior Affairs in the debate of the **EU Urban Agenda** that will be launched next year during the Dutch EU Presidency.

We were **successful in providing input to the Riga Declaration**, adopted on 10 June by the EU ministers responsible for territorial cohesion and urban matters. CEMR, together with the Committee of the Regions and EUROCITIES, is recognised in its role of voicing the interests of urban areas and regions. Further elements of CEMR were taken on board of the final text, which demonstrates the good relationship that we have developed in the inter-governmental cooperation on urban policies. The expert group has prepared a more detailed **position paper** on the EU Urban Agenda that will be disseminated to the relevant institutions, organisations and actors working on the topic.

The Urban Agenda will be taken forward in a close cooperation among Member States, the European Commission, cities and other stakeholders. As a next step, themes will be identified which will be part of the Urban Agenda and develop the governance structure of thematic partnerships to run pilots.

CEMR was **invited** by the Commission and the Committee of the Regions **to participate** in a first pilot to run a territorial impact assessment on the planned review of the Directive on Energy Performance of Buildings. Six out of our 13 proposed cities were selected and five of them participated in the workshop organised in that framework – making CEMR the **most represented voice** of local and regional governments. Thanks to this high representation, we were able to demonstrate that we can mobilise experts via our member associations.

Finally, CEMR is contributing to the development of the third version **Reference Framework on Sustainable Cities (RFSC)** with the objective of making it simpler and more user-friendly for cities and municipalities, and thus a useful tool for the implementation of the EU Urban Agenda.

#### 3.2. TERRITORIAL COHESION

CEMR Secretary General Frédéric Vallier was **invited** to present CEMR's priorities at the meeting of the **REGI Committee** of the European Parliament in November. It was agreed that regular contacts and communication will be established and to plan concrete activities in the next year, such as a meeting with the Urban Intergroup on the refugees crisis, and cooperation in the assessment of the mid-term review of the Multi-annual Financial Framework.

The CEMR Secretariat updated the 2014 studies on the **Integrated Territorial Instruments (ITIs)** and on the **Partnership principle**. Both studies were sent to the EU Institutions and relevant actors, in particular it will be presented to the rapporteur for the forthcoming REGI committee report on "*New territorial development tools in Cohesion policy 2014-2020: Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) and Community-Led Local Development (CLLD)*".

CEMR was **invited to speak** at a Public Hearing entitled "Simplification and cutting red tape in **European Structural and Investments Funds**" organised by the Committee on Regional Development (REGI) of the European Parliament in October 2015. Together with the expert group on economic, social and territorial cohesion, an intervention was prepared and presented by CEMR's Executive Director European Affairs, Angelika Poth-Mögele. The

information collected from the expert group will be used to further prepare the CEMR position on the topic.

On **rural development**, CEMR participated in September in the first meeting of the RUMRA intergroup (Rural, Mountainous and Remote Areas) which aimed at emphasising the importance of the trends of the cohesion policy on the rural dynamics. The urban – rural interrelation and the integrated territorial approach is a key topic for the expert group, which agreed to follow closely the activity of the RUMRA intergroup and the state of play of the demand of some associations to the EC to launch a White Paper on rurality.

In the area of **mobility and transport**, CEMR has participated at the beginning of October in an informal meeting organised by the European Commission in order to exchange the current situation of in the implementation of the 2013 Urban Mobility Package. CEMR secretariat is also closely **following** the report of the EP on “Sustainable urban mobility” that will be voted in plenary at the end of 2015.

### 3.3. DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

Throughout 2015, CEMR organised webinars, workshops and other events in the framework of the Age-Friendly Environment **AFE-INNOVNET** project. The objective was to raise awareness among local and regional governments about the notion of age-friendly environments. The last months were dedicated to the **establishment of the Covenant on Demographic Change** as a non-for-profit association under the Belgian law and the organisation of its official launch on 7 December in Brussels. The Covenant will then be able to apply for EU and external funds to supports its members (European local and regional governments and other stakeholders). A substantial number of local and regional governments attend the high-level event and the technical workshop on 8 and 9 December, while some have already joined the Covenant on Demographic Change. More information is available [here](#).

CEMR continued to chair the Societal Advisory Board of the **Joint Initiative Programme** (JPI) on Demographic Change. The JPI is a Member State-driven research initiative; CEMR’s role is to contribute to the preparation of the calls for research to be done in this area. A first call was published early 2015 on “*Extended Working Life and its Interaction with Health, Wellbeing and beyond*” and a second is currently finalised on “*Welfare, wellbeing and demographic change*”, to be published early 2016. We were **able to provide useful input**, in particular we introduced the request that stakeholders should be involved in the research and that the results need to be transferable into policies at European, national, regional and local level.

## 4. LOCAL AND REGIONAL PUBLIC SERVICES MANAGEMENT

### 4.1. LRG AS EMPLOYERS

The Work Programme 2015-2017 of the Sectoral **Social Dialogue** Committee on Local and Regional Governments (whose rules of procedures have been updated) has steered the main activities of the expert group on local and regional governments as employers. Four themes for action have been identified, namely the economic crisis and its impact on local and regional government, anticipating and adapting to changes, the follow-up of the Multi-Sectoral Guidelines to tackle Third Party Violence and the follow-up and updating of the gender equality guidelines.

The **EC has approved** the CEMR-EPSU Joint Project 2015-2016 “***New forms of service delivery for municipalities, the contribution of social dialogue and good practice for well-being at work***”. In the framework of the theme “restructuring”, it is foreseen to organise four seminars; one has taken place under the thematic of ‘Identifying new forms of service

delivery in municipalities, technological developments and the impact on the workforce and employers' in September. Representatives of CEMR and EPSU have exchanged on the challenges of digitalisation in local administration, its benefits for the work organisation and public services delivery, its impact on the workforce and necessary adjustment measures to be taken. A joint declaration on the **challenge of digitalisation** in local and regional administration is under preparation and will be adopted at the plenary meeting on 2 December.

On the occasion of the high-level summit on restart social dialogue in March, CEMR welcomed the initiative of the European Commission and the demonstration of its willingness to launch concrete initiatives to reinforce capacity-building of social partners and strengthen industrial relations. CEMR **advocated** for leaving room of manoeuvre for collective bargaining and agreements at all levels, and being associated upstream of any decision or legislative proposal which would impact local and regional governments, the management of the workforce and the public services delivery.

CEMR's expert group on local and regional governments as employers has drafted a **response** to the Commission's consultation in the perspective of a potential review of the **working time directive**. Our key message is that in the current situation, no change of legislation is needed, unless adequate options are submitted by the European Commission and not beyond the scope of the Directive and the EU's competences. CEMR expressed its adamant request that the working time directive allows sufficient flexibility and legal certainty for employers, while ensuring health and safety of the workers and continuity, quality and efficiency of public services delivery.

Contacted by the European Commission of the issue of Information and Consultation of Workers, CEMR members have decided not to respond to the informal consultation, waiting for a formal initiative to review the Directive.

## 4.2. PUBLIC SERVICES

On the **Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, TTIP**, our Policy Committee adopted in June CEMR's formal **position paper**. CEMR recognises that TTIP has the potential to boost economic growth and competitiveness in Europe, but calls on the European Commission that the commitments must comply with local and regional autonomy and guarantee local and regional governments their right to organise, finance and deliver public services, while tackling the democratic deficit through fullest transparency. The position paper has been disseminated among members, which have been invited to share it with their affiliates and their national authorities, including their Members of national Parliaments who will have the final word to approve the agreement before it is ratified.

On top of that, following CEMR's request, the European **Commission has formally invited** our organisation to take part of the briefing and debriefing info sessions of the TTIP Stakeholders Panel. In line with its position paper, CEMR addressed its concerns to the MEPs and **succeeded**, thanks to efficient lobbying efforts, to enshrine in the EP's Report the exclusion of existing and future Services of General Interests and a comprehensive protection of public services respectful of the various models and challenges across the EU.

The impact of EU provisions on the way local and regional authorities organise, finance and deliver their **public services** has been closely **monitored**, notably in line with the transposition process of the 2014 Directives on public procurement in national legislation. The expert group on public services has addressed several key issues with officials from the European Commission, such as the European Single Procurement Document, public-public cooperation, new procedures incurred by the new legal framework, innovative and green procurement and

e-Procurement. On this specific issue, CEMR was **successful in appointing** an expert from one of its member associations to the Commission expert group on e-Procurement.

In accordance with its willingness to proactively engage with the European Parliament, CEMR has **deepened** its interactions with the EP's Intergroup on Public Services and Common Goods and has been involved in its activities and initiatives on the TTIP, the TiSA, the interlinks between public services and COP21.

### 4.3. ICT AND E-GOVERNMENT

It will remain important for CEMR to retain a close watch on upcoming developments of the **Digital Single Market Strategy**. The European Commission initiatives will have a significant impact on the public sector by smartly digitalising the ways of working, the delivery of public services and the relations with citizens. The expert group on ICT and e-government has led a survey among its members in order to identify the key topics of interest and will use the outcomes of this inquiry to focus its works on strategic initiatives to be launched.

In accordance with its decision to accompany the EC efforts to support the exchanges of good practices across the EU, CEMR will continue its cooperation with the Stakeholders Unit of DG CONNECT on issues such as e-government practices and tools, deployment of broadband infrastructures and related services, European Interoperability framework.

Another issue on the agenda may be the continuation of the negotiations on the Data Protection Regulation, and the future steps. The task force on **data protection** will follow up its actions towards the EU institutions in line with its activities in 2015.

Overall, CEMR will **contribute to the reflections** on the implementation of the Digital Agenda, depending on the initiatives linked to this horizontal priority of the European Commission.

## 5. INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT & COOPERATION

### 5.1. UNITED CITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS (UCLG)

CEMR has continued to play its **role as European section** of the world organisation United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), contributing both to its statutory meetings (Executive Bureau, June, Porto Alegre; World Council, December, Paris) and to its policy work.

In particular, CEMR contributed to the first edition of the UCLG Culture Summit held in March, in Bilbao, which led to the adoption of the Culture 21 Actions document. CEMR has also become an institutional partner of the Culture in Sustainable Cities pilot project implemented by the UCLG Culture Committee in 10 European cities, and which will organise an activity during our next Congress in Nicosia.

On the other hand, CEMR echoed the voice of European LRGs in **global fora**, in particular the Global Taskforce ([www.qtf2016.org](http://www.qtf2016.org)) which was particularly active in the run up of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda on sustainable development, and the sustainable development goals in September.

### 5.2. CEMR-PLATFORMA

Most importantly, however, CEMR-PLATFORMA have signed in 2015 a **strategic partnership** with DG DEVCO-EuropeAid, with two components – a political agreement signed in January and covering a partnership of 7 years; and a specific grant agreement with activities foreseen for the next 3 years. This is the first time that both CEMR and DG DEVCO-EuropeAid have

used this instrument, thereby recognising the instrumental role played by CEMR and PLATFORMA in echoing the voice of LRGs in the field of international development and cooperation.

PLATFORMA is gathering 34 partners including 15 members of CEMR. Through the strategic partnership and the ongoing project, PLATFORMA and its partners have achieved the following results in 2015:

- **EP REPORT ON LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN DEVELOPMENT**

PLATFORMA **influenced** the drafting of the report very early on and at different stages. As a result, 13 amendments suggested by the network are reflected in the final report. Overall, the amendments that were added to the initial version of the report are in line with PLATFORMA position.

- **PROGRAMMING OF THE COOPERATION INSTRUMENTS**

PLATFORMA sent some remarks on the multi-annual action programme of the CSO-LA thematic programme to the European Commission and shared some comments on the Development Education and Awareness Raising programme and the Call for proposal that will be launched in 2016.

- **NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY**

PLATFORMA **provided inputs** to a draft programming document on enhanced instruments for the future Neighbourhood Policy by DG NEAR and responded to the EC-EEAS consultation “*Towards a new European neighbourhood policy*”.

PLATFORMA and LALRG **co-organised** the event *Changing the European Neighbourhood Policy: focus on the Eastern Partnership* (June 18, Riga), targeted at representatives of the Eastern Partnership countries and of the EU Member States.

The first session enabled participants to provide inputs to the consultation launched in March 2014 by the EC and the EEAS “*Towards a new European neighbourhood policy*” around two key topics raised in the consultation documents – regional cooperation and differentiation. The discussion fed in the PLATFORMA response to the Joint consultation of the EC and the EEAS towards a new European neighbourhood policy.

The second session was an “info session”; participants were presented with funding programmes of the EU and of the EU institutions which can help fund the projects they have for their territories. They were presented with the CSO-LA thematic programme, the Municipal Project Support Facility of the European Investment Bank and a new programme, currently being designed to boost local economic development. In addition representatives of association of local/regional governments presented their perspectives on working with European funds.

Finally, given that many actors are involved in Eastern European partner countries to support local and regional governments and their associations in the process of decentralisation and capacity building, PLATFORMA organised a **meeting of actors and stakeholders** in December 2015 to map complementarities and synergies between existing and planned activities in Ukraine, and to seek better coordination between all actors, donors and the beneficiaries. Further events will be organised in Georgia and Moldova in the course of implementation of the strategic partnership.

- **CLIMATE CHANGE**

PLATFORMA participated in the Summit Climate and Territories held last 1-2 July in Lyon. PLATFORMA **led** a group of five organisations – AFCCRE, CEMR, CUF and Enda Energy in the preparation of the workshop “Partnerships and Cooperation between Territories”.

The outcome of the Summit is a declaration signed by 50 organisations and the 10 outcome documents of the workshops that mark the non-state actors’ commitments in the fight against global warming.

The text of the workshop “Partnerships and Cooperation between Territories” outlines commitments and proposals to strengthen actions of local and regional governments and civil society for tackling climate change through international cooperation.

- **THE EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT DAYS**

PLATFORMA contributed in the 2015 edition of the European Development Days, the landmark event of the European Year for Development (June 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015).

The network **co-organised** a high-level panel on gender equality “Ending gender inequality by 2030” with UN Women, DG DEVCO, Concord, CEMR’s Observatory of the European Charter for Equality of women and men in local life and the Practitioners’ Network for European Development Cooperation.

The panel brought together high-level speakers, from the North and the South, from the UN, the EU, national and local governments and civil society, to exchange views on key issues to tackle, strategies and concrete actions required at all levels to finally make gender equality a reality. Local and regional governments were represented in the panel by Fatimetou Mint Abdel Malick, the first woman Mayor in Mauretania (in the town of Teverah-Zeina), President of the African Network of Locally Elected Women (REFELA) and Vice-President of the UCLG Standing Committee for Gender Equality.

In addition PLATFORMA also co-organised a Project lab focused on gender and on the measurement of progresses on SDG 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Region Catalonia represented the network in the panel.

Finally PLATFORMA **partnered** with the Committee of Regions and the Province of Barcelona on the project lab “Urban future, leading the development agenda”.

- **“DIALOGUE & CAPACITY BUILDING OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES IN EU PARTNER COUNTRIES IN THE FIELDS OF DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE” PROJECT**

PLATFORMA **successfully ended** the implementation of the 3-year project (April 2012-June 2015), which aimed at building bridges between local and regional governments in partner countries and the EU development policy. The final conference organised in the context of the 4<sup>th</sup> Assises of Decentralised Cooperation (co-organised by the EC and the CoR) attracted 80 registered participants from 14 countries (7 EU Members States<sup>1</sup> and 7 non-EU countries<sup>2</sup>).

A total of **15 studies** have been published through this project, each with a specific and geographic focus. They are available on the website of PLATFORMA: [www.platforma-dev.eu](http://www.platforma-dev.eu)

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<sup>1</sup> Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Spain

<sup>2</sup> Argentina, Cameroon, Chile, Mali, Morocco, Senegal, South Africa

## 6. COMMUNICATION & GENERAL MANAGEMENT

### 6.1. PRESS & COMMUNICATION

A new model of **newsletter** has been developed and is set to go out. Entitled 'Local Insight', its aim is to express local and regional government's views and concerns to the European institutions.

CEMR is finalising the development of its new **extranet**. Its overall purpose is to improve and increase CEMR's collaboration with its member associations while reducing email overload. New features include an easy-to-use interface which flows from the homepage down through every area of the portal, discussion forums where users can interact with one another, an e-mail notification alert, as well as a timeline that allows users to plan and track activity progress and milestone completion. The extranet is set to go online beginning of 2016.

We published a series of new **publications** (online and off-line), including:

- "The European Commission and its impact on local and regional governments";
- "CEMR presentation - a Europe of municipalities, cities and regions";
- "CEMR's Who's";
- "CEMR's spokespersons"; and
- Two infographics on the "charter for equality".

Finally, CEMR also **increased its presence on social media** (i.e. Twitter, LinkedIn) thereby contributing towards reaching audiences within the Brussels bubble and beyond.

### 6.2. STATUTORY AFFAIRS

The **Presidency** of CEMR should be strengthened by the end of the year while, following the 360° multi-perspective evaluation, the Policy Committee decided to renew the mandate of current **Secretary General** Frédéric Vallier for another six years, starting in February 2016.

Both decisions were however adopted on an ad hoc basis as no provision was foreseen in the CEMR Statutes and Rules of procedure, which members therefore requested to adapt. A new version of our **statutory documents** should be adopted by the Policy Committee in December.

Overall, the CEMR Secretariat has sought to better prepare **statutory meetings**, by linking them to the ongoing lobbying work, consulting Secretaries General and Directors on the Policy Committee agendas, and by simplifying and shortening meeting files, among others.

Finally, preparations were launched for the **CEMR Congress 2016** ([www.cemr2016.eu](http://www.cemr2016.eu)) scheduled next 20-22 April 2016 in Nicosia, Cyprus while a call for hosting the 2018 Thematic Conference and 2020 Congress were published, with the objective of choosing host cities/regions in Nicosia.

### 6.3. GENERAL MANAGEMENT

In 2014, CEMR evaluated its working structures and methods, which led to a series of recommendations that were implemented in the course of 2015.

First, we simplified and streamlined our **working structures, establishing the "expert group" as the sole format** for CEMR's policy work to prepare common policy positions in the different areas, to exchange information and experience, and to contribute to research and studies.

Two “political committees” remain – the Standing Committee on Equality of women and men in local life and the Committee of Young Elected Local and Regional Representatives – with most other political discussions to take place in our statutory bodies.

An online form was sent to all CEMR member associations in February with the view of establishing one single tool for members to follow and contribute to the work of the expert groups, leaving the possibility of colleagues to join an expert group at any time, and updating our data on participation in our working structures on a more regular basis.

The question of **political input** into CEMR’s work stood out in the evaluation, with a request and need for CEMR to strengthen both functions of accountability and representation played by politicians in the organisation. To this end, in 2015, CEMR has **undertaken or strengthened the following initiatives**:

- Policy debates in statutory meetings – e.g. on migration & the refugees crisis – linking them to the current policy work of the organisation;
- Regular communication with politicians through participation in European and national events and activities;
- The appointment of **CEMR spokespersons** to strengthen our political involvement in key moments of policy processes and raised the profile of CEMR as the leading voice of local and regional governments in Europe.

Finally, the results of the evaluation and discussions with the Secretaries General and Directors of CEMR member associations showed that the CEMR Secretariat should provide greater leadership and pro-activeness in our policy work – lobbying remaining the main focus for the organisation.

To answer this request, and following the transfer of the Paris office to Brussels and with the opportunity given by the strategic partnership with the European Commission (DG DEVCO-EuropAid), the **CEMR Secretariat** was reorganised in order to ensure a stronger and clearer allocation of resources for each of the 5 areas of work and support staff in communication, lobbying, research & studies, projects and management.

On the other hand, the evaluators had recommended that CEMR “*build on existing performance review and personal development procedures to identify individual team needs for capacity building and training*”. To this end, the CEMR Secretariat has now **established an internal performance management system**.

Finally, in an attempt for CEMR staff to **better grasp** the environment in which they work, the short-term traineeship programme continued with colleagues visiting member associations and the UCLG headquarters.



## Contact

Maxime RAMON  
Adviser – Statutory Affairs  
Tel. +32 2 500 05 45  
Maxime.ramon@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 over 50 national associations of municipalities and regions from 40 European countries. Together these associations represent some 150 000 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 members 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.

[www.ccre.org](http://www.ccre.org)