



Local & Regional
Europe

CEMR 2016 Work Programme

Report of Activities & Results

as of November 2016

2016 CEMR Work Programme

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INTRODUCTION

At CEMR, the first months of the year were marked by the preparation of CEMR's Congress in April in Nicosia. Some 600 participants local and regional elected representatives from all around Europe gathered and attended 30 sessions. Through this Congress, CEMR gave the opportunity for participants to:

- Meet peers and partners during various workshops and “*world café*” configured to facilitate exchange and interaction. Participants had also the possibility to network during an official reception, gala dinner and several coffee breaks and lunches served inside and outdoors.
- Learn from each other's practices and experiences thanks to 30 sessions touching the seven main themes, drivers of local and regional government on the road to Europe 2030: EU Integration, Governance & Leadership, Society & Culture, Economy & Finance, Environment, Climate & Energy, Business, Technology & Innovation and Cooperation & partnerships.
- Get inspired from leaders engaged in local public policy and during impactful debates and lectures with personalities such as: Yann Arthus-Bertrand, film director and UN Goodwill Ambassador, Mpho Parks Tau, Mayor of Johannesburg or Jan Olbrycht, Member of the European Parliament.

New technologies were largely used to echo the congress discussions worldwide. Several sessions were live streamed while others were covered by professional photographer and video. The most relevant quotes were disseminated on social networks thanks to a CEMR secretariat staff assigned to twitter leading to 1000 #CEMR2016 tweets in three days.

The Congress was also the occasion to launch the new edition of the publication *Structures and Competences, Local and Regional Governments in Europe* to which all national associations members of the CEMR contributed. Followed by a dynamic communication campaign – *Ten things you (might not) know about Europe's towns and regions* ; it received many positive feedbacks.

In Europe, this year was dominated by the question how the European Union will manage the number of refugees that were coming to Europe, and – following the vote in the United Kingdom in June – the debate about the future of the European Union.

These two subjects were also given particular attention by CEMR; after the declaration adopted in Paris in December 2015 and a open debate within CEMR, we adopted a call for a real European Asylum Policy in Nicosia and launched a campaign promoting this call with the support of mayors and local politicians and representatives of our member associations. On the future of Europe, CEMR launched a call for ideas, proposals and contributions from local elected representatives and leaders on a vision of Europe in 2030. The process is on-going; the discussion of the ideas and the presentation of the outcome are foreseen for 2017.

CEMR raised its profile by increasing its visibility towards the European institutions, in particular the European Parliament and the European Commission, but also the respective Presidencies. This concerns in particular the area of regional / territorial / urban policy: as the only association of local and regional authorities we were invited to present our position to the High Level Group on Simplification, and to participate in a conference organised by the

Slovak Presidency on the future cohesion policy. Together with the URBAN Intergroup, and in cooperation with PLATFORMA, CEMR organised an event in the European Parliament on Habitat III, and in cooperation with other European stakeholder organisations, we organised an event in the European Parliament on the importance of public investments. We held meetings with rapporteurs and shadow-rapporteurs on relevant dossiers (e.g. refugees, citizenship programme, gender equality, transparency, waste legislation, etc.),

Our advocacy work was organised along the relevant decision making processes, such as the Transparency Register, the future of the Europe for Citizens Programme, the revision of the waste legislation in the framework of the 'circular economy package', energy and climate actions, the Urban Agenda for the EU, simplification of the structural funds and the future of the cohesion policy, work-life balance, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), the VAT Action Plan and State Aid in relation to locally provided services of general economic interest.

Our knowledge work was carried out by further actions serving the exchange of experience and information, to a great extent with the financial support from the European Commission. This was the case in the framework of projects on the participation of young elected representatives in local politics, (YELAC), local measures to reduce CO₂ emissions, increase energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy (Covenant of Mayors), mainstreaming climate adaptation actions (Mayors Adapt), innovative financing models for energy efficiency in buildings (CITYinvest), new forms of service delivery for municipalities (Social Dialogue) and an integrated urban development approach (Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities).

Further exchanges took place on actions to achieve equality between women and men in local life, the situation of local finances and public investments, with the aim to prepare policy initiatives. Colleagues also shared information on the transposition and application of the new public procurement directives.

In the framework of our cooperation with the Observatory on Local Autonomy (OLA), we organised a seminar on "regionalisation, inter-municipal cooperation, and metropolitanisation on local, regional, and national governments in Europe". Further research and studies activities concentrated on the update of our publication on *Structures and Competences*, on local finances, a survey on training and education of local public servants and elected representatives (in cooperation with OLA and CNFPT) and our "Europe 2030" initiative. Finally, the publication of the first event co-organised with OLA on *Local Autonomy in the 21st Century, between tradition and modernisation* was made available.

1. GOVERNANCE, DEMOCRACY & CITIZENSHIP

1.1. CITIZENSHIP & TWINNING

CEMR contributed to the advocacy process in order to strengthen the **Europe for Citizens** programme with targeted action since the start of the mid-term review of the programme's implementation, due to be completed in 2017. Ahead of the European Commission's mid-term review, CEMR actively participated in the Civil Dialogue on citizenship that was held in Barcelona in June. We pushed for an increase in the budget up to 1 euro per citizen, while also highlighting the need to better link the policy dimension with the programme's objectives.

In addition, the CEMR worked closely with the European Parliament's rapporteur and shadow rapporteurs on the own-initiative report on the implementation of the Europe for Citizens Programme. CEMR's lobbying action has witnessed some successes, given that the draft report was amended to include the request for increased resources, with the aim of improving the success rate for applications submitted. Even more, the draft report explicitly mentions the CEMR proposal of allocating €1 per citizen to the Europe for Citizens Programme. We have proposed further amendments and are now awaiting that they will be tabled.

The Expert Group on Twinning together with the Committee on Governance, Democracy and Citizenship, met to exchange views with the Education, Culture and Audio-visual Executive Agency, ECAEA, responsible of the implementation of the programme to discuss the results of the programme following its first year of implementation. The secretariat also had the opportunity to present CEMR views on the new multiannual priorities of the programme and to provide the European Commission with some input regarding the flexibility of the new multiannual approach and on the preparation of the EU Citizenship report to be launched this year.

CEMR successfully organised the last activity of the project **Young European Leaders for Active Citizenship** (YELAC) in the framework of the CEMR Congress in Nicosia. Young councillors, mayors and young representatives of civil society discussed the main outcomes of the project with respect to youth participation, employment, education and housing. The last activity was also an opportunity for an exchange on the potential follow-up of the project and how CEMR will continue working on youth-related issues as well as to assess how youth participation in decision-making should be mainstreamed.

1.2. REFUGEES CRISIS, MIGRATION AND DIVERSITY

Since the beginning of the year, CEMR has been very active in the field of migration, asylum and integration. In particular, we have had several meetings with Members of the European Parliament, European Commission officials, civil society representatives, stakeholders, etc. These were valuable opportunities to flag up the specific local and regional angle to the migration issue.

CEMR has been very active in its advocacy towards the institutions through the **Partnership on the Inclusion of Refugees and Migrants** of the URBAN Agenda for the EU, as well as through influencing the legislative proposals of the European Commission and the European

Parliament. CEMR is one of the formal members of this partnership, which aims at strengthening the role of local authorities by providing better knowledge of what is happening, and better data and funding, in the field of asylum and integration and from a local perspective.

Since the start of this Partnership, CEMR's contribution has been made, in consultation with our Task Force on Refugees and Migrants, thereby enabling us to address priority themes of the Partnership, such as community building, housing, funding, education, etc. The Partnership is the only multilevel platform (composed of some Member States, the European Commission, civil society organisations, CEMR, EUROCITIES and five major cities), which allows local and regional government to have a dialogue with all levels of government, as well as to build synergies and pool best practices to identify the main bottlenecks to achieving better regulation, funding, data and knowledge.

Our work has borne notable successes highlighted by the influence we have had on several legislative and non-legislative initiatives, such as concerns the **EU Action Plan on the Integration of Third-Country Nationals**, where we have been closely involved with the European Commission on the main elements of the initiative during several consultation meetings. The indications are that the role of local and regional authorities is increasingly viewed as being vital by the EU institutions. This is why the European Commission has decided to upgrade the former European Network of National Contact Points into a proper European Integration Network, composed of the EU institutions and national contact points, and whose aim is to facilitate the exchange of best practices and to strengthen the coordination between levels. Despite LRAs not formally being members of the network, the aim nevertheless, is that national authorities should improve coordination of their work with local and regional authorities and that once a year, the meetings are also attended by representatives of LRAs.

The success of CEMR in its advocacy towards the European Parliament should also be noted. In its recently approved report on the **Social Inclusion and Integration of Refugees into the labour market**, and for the first time, the European Parliament has recognised the need for more direct and targeted funding for local and regional authorities, as well as for better coordination between levels of government. The CEMR has achieved recognition too, for the role played by local and regional authorities in the integration of refugees and migrants. This is highlighted by the European Parliament in its report on the **Situation in the Mediterranean and the need for a holistic EU approach to migration**, which makes specific mention of the key role of local and regional authorities.

After the approval of the CEMR resolution, in response to the refugee crisis in December 2015, the CEMR also met the cabinet of Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos, in charge of Migration and Home Affairs, in order to present the main messages of local and regional government. At the initiative of the Commissioner for Regional Policy, Corina Crețu, CEMR participated in the first **High-level political roundtable** on the integration of migrants in European cities in April 2016. This meeting was a further opportunity to strengthen our synergies with EU institutions, especially, the European Commission. CEMR will also participate in the second roundtable that will take place early February 2017, and we also gave input to the design of the programme of the roundtable.

There is little doubt that the European Commission increasingly understands the importance of our role in developing integration policies. CEMR is regularly mentioned in official meetings as a crucial partner of the European Commission in the field of integration. Furthermore, our advocacy has resulted in the introduction of a new priority within cohesion policy. More concretely, following the revision of the Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF), it seems that from next year onwards, the European Commission plans to introduce a priority strand on integration with support from cohesion policy funds.

As a result of working intensively in this field for over a year, there are signs that the European Council conclusions in December 2016, will explicitly recognise the role of local and regional authorities in the integration of refugees and migrants. This is hailed as one of the more notable milestones for CEMR, demonstrating the strength of our advocacy in this field.

During the CEMR Congress in Nicosia last April, we successfully organised a session on the refugee crisis from the local and regional perspective. The session was an opportunity to strengthen our links to other stakeholders active in this field, such as the Council of Europe's *Inter-cultural Cities* initiative.

The CEMR Policy Committee in Nicosia adopted a **Call for a Common Real Asylum Policy**, allowing us to update our views on the refugee crisis following the latest political developments. Afterwards, in order to disseminate the Call, we launched a campaign through the www.change.org platform to obtain a significant number of signatures of Mayors and citizens. In this respect, the Call has attracted the signatures of around 160 mayors and 130 citizens, in addition to the many associations that have signed up. This includes, the Mayors of Lesbos, Brussels, Paris, Athens, Munich or Lisbon. CEMR also used social media in order to disseminate the campaign and coordinated our efforts with the communication departments of those signatory cities in order to boost the Call's impact. The results of these actions in the EU media in general, and several Spanish newspapers, has been positive.

In order to further our advocacy objectives and in collaboration with our associations, we organised a **CEMR Task Force on Refugees and Migrants**. The task force evaluated the campaign on the Call, discussed the developments linked to the Partnership on the inclusion of Refugees and Migrants of the URBAN Agenda, as well as policy developments and initiatives of the EU institutions. Progress was also made on the general idea of drafting a project on the multilevel governance of refugee integration policies.

CEMR is also a **partner to the OECD** with respect to a project that DG REGIO will fund on "**The need for a territorial approach to migrant integration: the role of local authorities**". The idea is to contribute to the study by also sending the questions that the OECD will send to the eight city study-cases, to CEMR members, in order to extend the potential results highlighted by the study, thereby making these results more representative. In addition, the CEMR and the OECD will co-write a paper on the results obtained in some of the areas of the study of most concern for CEMR members, especially with respect to multilevel governance.

The CEMR also participated in a meeting of the European Parliament's **URBAN intergroup** on the role of cities in integration, as well as in other events at the European and national

level, including a conference organised by KEDE on the refugee crisis. We continued our participation in the European Integration Forum meetings, outlining the important role of local and regional governments. In the **Cities for Life Summit in Paris** (21-22 November), CEMR Secretary General moderated a session on refugees and migrants integration challenges at the local level.

We have worked on several own-initiative opinions of the Committee of the Regions, such as the ones on legal migration, the reform of the common European asylum system and the integration of third-country nationals. We also attended the first meeting of the Radicalisation Awareness Network and we closely follow the developments of the network and disseminate the results of its work.

Finally, the CEMR has also been collecting literature currently available in this field, so as to be aware of what research already exists about the topic at the local and regional levels and to help reduce the risk of duplication of effort.

1.3. BETTER REGULATION

Working toward improved **involvement of local and regional governments** in the EU policy and legislative processes, and more effective EU decision-making processes, has been high on CEMR's agenda this year.

At the centre of CEMR's work with respect to the **Better Regulation** package, have been action regarding Commission proposals for a mandatory **Transparency Register**. CEMR responded to the European Commission's public consultation in June, and at several occasions we put our views directly to Vice President Frans Timmermans and members of his cabinet, through interventions in several high profiled interventions at events in Brussels, including the official structured dialogue where Vice-president Luc Martens represented the CEMR. These were valuable opportunities to maintain the pressure on this issue.

CEMR's efforts have resulted in a major success following the European Commission's proposals for an Interinstitutional Agreement on a mandatory transparency register, which were published on the 28 September. **In the proposals, it clearly states that local and regional authorities and their representative authorities should be excluded from the scope of the register.** The Commission's proposals will now be negotiated before an agreement is reached between the Commission, European Parliament and Council of Ministers. Our lobbying action will be maintained throughout the interinstitutional trilogue discussions.

Throughout the year, CEMR has also kept a close eye on the European Parliament's work relating to better law-making. Our efforts, in collaboration with several of our member associations, has intensified as committee work on the draft report on **transparency, accountability and integrity**, has advanced through its drafting stages. Unfortunately, the lead committee, Constitutional Affairs (AFCO), has unexpectedly decided to suspend the vote on the draft report, due to disagreements amongst the political groups. This is a disappointing development since there were clear signs that a compromise amendment supporting the exclusion of local and regional government associations from the scope of the transparency register was firmly on the way to being achieved. However, recent developments within the European Parliament raise the question of whether or not there will

be a vote on the draft report in AFCO, given that many of the issues it addresses have been overtaken by more recent developments (publication of the European Commission's proposal in September). Nevertheless, CEMR remains primed to respond in a timely way to the EP's response, as necessary.

CEMR also reinforced its work relating to the EU's decision-making process, by responding to the European Ombudsman's consultation on **trilogues** in March. We were pleased to note that CEMR's contribution has been taken into account by the Ombudsman, Ms O'Reilly, as the EU institutions are now requested to publish key documents, related to their informal negotiations known as "trilogues". These documents include trilogue dates and summary agendas, the positions of both co-legislators on the Commission's proposal; and the names of the decision-makers present in trilogue meetings. In addition, documents that track the main stages of the process should be published as soon as possible, after the negotiations have been concluded.

Improved **stakeholder engagement** continues to have an important place with respect to the better regulation agenda and here too, CEMR has been proactive. We have reached out to the European Commission's Stakeholder Unit seeking to underline the importance of closer involvement of local and regional authorities in the decision-making process. CEMR organised a meeting with officials in the European Commission's Secretariat General in May, where our members were invited to come forward with evidence and advice on how to improve future stakeholder consultations, where local and regional government interests are at stake.

Furthermore, and in order to provide evidence on the role and tasks of local and regional government associations, we started updating the study on the legal status of national associations of local and regional governments.

1.4. GENDER EQUALITY

2016 was a milestone year for the **European Charter for Equality**; over 100 new signatories have been added to the Observatory since January, bringing the total number of Charter signatories to 1,620. We continue to promote the Charter and the monitoring indicators and we are following up recommendations from the conclusion of the pilot project. CEMR and our member associations have drafted a short document outlining CEMR's key principles on gender equality to orient our advocacy work at European level that will be followed up by a policy paper and action plan in 2017. This document also serves as our response to the European Commission's "Strategic Engagement" for gender equality, published in late 2015.

On the initiative of the Chair of the Standing Committee for Equality, an ad hoc Task Force was created to contribute to: the drafting a differentiated approach to signatories based on results of the pilot project; the creation of a promotional brochure for the Charter; and to provide ideas for the debate session at the Policy Committee in December on equality and celebration of the Charter's 10th anniversary. On the official anniversary of the Charter – the 12th May – a press release was published on the CEMR and Observatory websites and sent out to CEMR contacts and press officers of member associations for dissemination.

To promote our work on gender equality, a **declaration for International Women's Day** on 8th March was published. The declaration, entitled *'Equality, if not now, when?'* was translated into 11 languages, signed by 56 European Mayors, Municipal Councillors and

several Presidents of member associations. It was shared widely via the Observatory website, Twitter and the Equality Update newsletter. The Equality Update newsletter has been launched and provides periodic information to members on our meetings and activities in the field of equality, information about Charter signatories and relevant developments in the EU institutions and EU networks on gender equality. This allows CEMR to maintain important visibility for gender equality matters within our work.

In March, CEMR participated in an experts' consultation meeting on an EU-wide survey on the benefits of gender equality through infrastructure provision currently being prepared by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). The report is expected to be published in Spring 2017.

PLATFORMA contributed to the drafting of a Euro Mediterranean Charter for Equality (inspired by the European Charter for Equality) led by the Euro Mediterranean Partnership of Local and Regional Authorities (COPPEM). CEMR and PLATFORMA participated in the final launch conference, organised by FEMP and COPPEM, of the Euro Mediterranean Charter for Equality in Madrid on 21-22 November.

A session on the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life was organised for the CEMR Congress in Nicosia. Attended by over 50 participants, the session featured a panel of local elected officials from member associations discussing the history and the future of the Charter.

CEMR continued investigating funding opportunities to maintain the work of the Observatory and to facilitate exchanges between national coordinators and signatories of the Charter. Based on the recommendations that were drawn from the results of the pilot project, CEMR must continue targeting the European institutions, advocating further recognition for the important role of local and regional governments in strengthening gender equality, and the need for further support for this work, in order to ensure continuity and long-term progress. Of particular interest, CEMR took contact with Corina Crețu, EU Commissioner for Regional policy to learn more about an initiative announced by her at the Habitat III conference to increase women's participation in local authorities and to position CEMR as a potential partner.

The profile of CEMR's work on equality was highlighted in an international forum by the Chair of the Standing Committee, Ibon Uribe, who presented the work of the European Section on gender equality at the UCLG Congress in Bogota in October. In November, CEMR, the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities of Serbia (SKGO) and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) were invited to present work on the Charter at the annual FemCities conference organised jointly by the City of Vienna Women's Department, the Luxembourg Ministry of Equal Opportunities and the Conseil National des Femmes du Luxembourg (CNFL).

In view of the planned **2018 conference on diversity, equality and inclusion**, CEMR developed new contacts and strengthened existing relationships with EU institutions and civil society organisations working on gender equality. Among civil society organisations worth highlighting, CEMR exchanged with Equinet (the European Network of Equality Bodies), European Women's Lobby (EWL), Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union (COFACE), and EndFGM Network. CEMR also had a preliminary meeting with the Equal Rights Adviser for European Commission Directorate General Justice to discuss the citizenship conference and the Commission's work on inclusion and LGBT rights.

1.5. LOCAL FINANCES

A strong accent was put on Local Finances during the Congress in Nicosia with 3 workshops organised around this theme: “Local Finances under pressure”, “Reviving local public finances: are the European Investment Bank Framework Loans the solution”, and “Innovative forms of financing local development: How to mobilise new resources through financial Intermediations”. Preparation of these workshops was the occasion for CEMR to develop new contacts and strengthen existing relationships with EU institutions and civil society organisations.

Following the adoption of CEMR’s position paper on “**Reviving local public investments**” in December 2015, it was circulated to representatives of the European Commission Directorate General Economic and Financial Affairs. A meeting was organised between the representative of DG ECFIN and the CEMR subgroup on the Stability and Growth Pact to propose some technical solutions to achieve flexibility for local and regional authorities’ investments.

Moreover, Mr Markku Markkula, President of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR), in his capacity as rapporteur of a CoR own-initiative opinion on "Bridging the investment gap", invited CEMR to hold a discussion with only few other targeted stakeholders and experts. This highlights the recognition of the work done by CEMR on this issue and was a valuable opportunity to influence at an early stage the CoR’s drafting work.

Furthermore, a meeting with Mr Dominique Riquet, Chair of the Intergroup on medium and long-term investments at the European Parliament (EP), was organised in November in order to exchange on local public investments and to raise awareness and influence MEPs thinking on this matter.

In parallel, the CEMR Secretariat has been contacted by other European thematic networks wishing to collaborate with CEMR on this issue. It has been agreed to collect evidence to demonstrate to EU institutions that low public investments at local level are a European problem and not a national issue. In addition, an event is organised at the European Parliament in collaboration with the URBAN Intergroup and the Intergroup on long-term investments on 6 December 2016.

Finally, the CEMR Secretariat has conducted a short survey to gain a clear picture of public investment and debt at local level across Europe and the impact of implementing the ESA 2010 rules. The result of this work will be made available in a small publication to be published in December 2016.

1.6. GOVERNANCE & DECENTRALISATION

An important event, co-organised with the Observatory on Local Autonomy (OLA), on governance and decentralisation took place in Bratislava end of June, ahead of the Slovakian presidency, on “**the impact of regionalisation, inter-municipal cooperation, and metropolitanisation on local, regional, and national governments in Europe.**” Eight national associations used this opportunity for knowledge-sharing, enabling them to

exchange academic views, as well as practical experiences, both as speakers or participants.

CEMR continued its collaboration with the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG) of the Council of Europe. 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 2016. CEMR's close collaboration with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe has continued. In this respect, CEMR's President attended the first session of the Congress to present and promote the CEMR Congress in Nicosia. The Chair of the Standing Committee was invited to speak at the autumn Session linked to the adoption of a report on women's political participation and representation at local and regional levels.

CEMR's continued cooperation and exchanges with the European Movement International and other civil society platforms on issues where we have common concerns on good governance, have been prominent in our work the past months. Furthermore, CEMR has begun working with the Council of Europe (CoE) on the Incubator on Participatory Democracy, a project of the CoE, aimed at strengthening and monitoring participatory democracy at the local level. All these examples highlight our engagement to the topic of effective governance at local and regional level and that it remains high on our agenda.

2. ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE & ENERGY

2.1. CIRCULAR ECONOMY

In 2016, CEMR pursued its lobbying activities on the legislative proposals related to **air quality and waste**, as they have a direct impact on local and regional environmental policies. CEMR monitored the legislative debate on the Clean Air Policy Package and took part in a petition of the Mayor of Paris “*Air pollution: Prioritise the health of citizens over that of industrial lobbies*” launched in March and we disseminated the campaign. The petition received the support of 130,620 persons.

With the support of the expert group on waste, CEMR prepared 15 key messages addressing the issues of the **Circular Economy Package** that are relevant for local and regional governments. Those were mainly the definition of municipal waste, the modalities of Extended Producer Responsibilities (EPR) schemes and financing the transition to circular economy at the local level. It was actively promoted in the Committee of the Regions; CEMR contributed to different stakeholders meetings and shared voting recommendations with the political groups.

In the European Parliament, CEMR worked closely with targeted members of the Environment (ENVI) Committee, presenting our key messages and suggesting amendments. In order to have a stronger impact in the European Parliament, CEMR also decided to work jointly with two other associations representing local governments, EUROCITIES and MUNICIPAL WASTE EUROPE, in order to elaborate common messages and amendments. 90% of the suggested amendments were tabled at the ENVI Committee. In preparation of the vote scheduled for January 2017, CEMR carried on its collaboration with EUROCITIES and Municipal Waste Europe to prepare voting recommendations that were sent to Members of the Environment Committee and the political groups. On the Council side, CEMR invited the Dutch and Slovak Presidencies at the expert group meeting and regularly exchanged with its representatives about specific issues of interest for local authorities. A common paper was also prepared in collaboration with EXPRA, the European organisation representing the producers, which highlights the different roles and responsibilities shared by the producers and local authorities.

CEMR also strengthened its link with the European Economic and Social Committee, sharing our position paper on the circular economy package with the rapporteur and having fruitful exchanges during an expert group meeting with the adviser in charge of the topic.

CEMR launched an international coalition on the link between **Circular Economy and Climate Change** in preparation of the Climate Chance summit in Nantes in September, and the COP22 in Morocco in November 2016 (UNFCCC Conference of the Parties). This coalition, led by CEMR, ACR+ and OREE is made of around 15 non-state actor partners (such as the European Environmental Bureau, UNEP (SCP/RAC), Cradle to Cradle Community, Veolia, Suez Environment, European Economic and Social Committee, Institut de l'économie circulaire, etc.). The aim of the coalition is to prepare a roadmap of actions for the next three years. This important involvement is a unique opportunity to foster synergies with external partners for actions or projects in the field of circular economy in the future.

CEMR spokesperson on environment, Linda Gillham, represented CEMR in various European and international level, such as the seminar on circular economy at CEMR

Congress, the Forum on circular economy in Nantes, Environment subcommittee at the House of Lords, etc.

2.2. CLIMATE AND ENERGY

CEMR has been actively involved in lobbying the EU institutions on the **Energy Union Package**, which contains three directives to be reviewed. CEMR's expert group on climate and energy met three times this year to discuss, among others issues, the impact of future legislation and prepared key messages on the upcoming review of the legislation on *energy efficiency*, *energy performance in buildings (due in October)* and *renewable energy (for the end of this year)*. These messages are: 1) Governance: empower local and regional government to mobilise the bottom-up approach; 2) Regulation: call for flexible regulation and integration in relevant policy areas; 3) Financing: access to financing; 4) International dimension: recognise the international potential for cooperation and collaboration with networks on climate and energy.

CEMR was also an active participant at the Climate Chance Summit for the non-state actors, in Nantes in September. The Declaration of Nantes "*Strengthening concrete action to bridge the gap between current commitments and the objectives of the Paris Agreement*", adopted on 28 September is based in the actions of all Non-Parties to the UNFCCC, which set out clear action in the fight against climate. CEMR/ PLATFORMA have co-led various events linked to energy, climate: the Forum on decentralised cooperation, a workshop on financing, a focus session on the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy and a High-level participatory dialogue on the New Covenant 2030. The CEMR/PLATFORMA spokesperson on climate, Linda Gillham, represented CEMR at this summit. She intervened in various sessions and reported on the progress of actions done since the Territories and Climate summit in July 2015 until now.

CEMR/PLATFORMA has also been involved very actively in the preparation of COP22 in Marrakesh through the process of the Global Climate Action Agenda. COP22 dedicated one full day to the local level where our spokesperson on climate, Linda Gillham, represented CEMR. This local day was the opportunity for the subnational level to claim before the UNFCCC process the role that the local level can play in the fight against climate change, and it concentrated on the implementation of actions reached at the local summit at COP21.

Six months after cities were crucial voices in shaping and advocating for a strong Paris Climate Agreement in December 2015, the world's cities worked together in 2016 to take bold climate actions as part of a new first-of-its-kind, and now the world's largest, global coalition of cities leading in the fight against climate change. The new coalition, The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy, formally brings together the Compact of Mayors¹ and the Covenant of Mayors², the world's two primary initiatives of cities to assist cities and

¹ **COMPACT OF MAYORS:** Launched in 2014 at the Secretary-General's Climate Summit by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Michael R. Bloomberg, UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Cities and Climate Change, and activated under the leadership of the global city networks – C40 (led by Mayor Paes of Rio), ICLEI (led by Mayor Park of Seoul) and UCLG (led by Mayors Topbas of Istanbul and Hidalgo of Paris), the Compact of Mayors now has commitments from more than 512 cities from 6 continents and 94 countries representing over 433 million people or 5.98% of the global population.

² **COVENANT OF MAYORS:** Created by the European Commission in 2008 after the adoption of the 2020 EU Climate and Energy Package, the EU Covenant of Mayors puts cities and regions at the forefront of climate action representing more than 6,800 cities in 57 countries. Signatories pledge to reduce CO₂ emissions by at least 40% by 2030, to adopt an integrated approach to tackling mitigation and adaptation to climate change, and to tackle energy access.

local governments in their transition to a low-carbon economy, and demonstrate their global impact. The Global Covenant of Mayors (GCM) for Climate & Energy is an international coalition of local and regional authorities with a shared long-term vision of promoting and supporting voluntary action to combat climate change and move to a low-carbon society. CEMR has been working in 2016 with European Commission and world city networks to shape the GCM and assure that enough flexibility is maintained for the two existing regional covenants already (Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa) and in others that will be created.

MAYORS ADAPT

Since March 2015 and for a two years period, CEMR has been 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, creating a framework within which local authorities commit to developing comprehensive **Local Adaptation Strategies** or in mainstreaming adaptation actions into relevant existing plans, within two years of them signing up. In October 2015, Mayors Adapt merged with the Covenant of Mayors into the [new Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy](#), which promotes an integrated approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

CEMR's work with the **Mayors Adapt** initiative has been key in highlighting the road ahead for local authorities in influencing the legal framework for more funding on climate adaptation, as well as in advocating for more technical assistance projects. CEMR presented this work on the occasion of a Thematic Debate on Climate and Energy, held at the meeting of the Secretaries General and Directors in October, providing the opportunity for greater involvement by CEMR member associations.

This work has also been showcased at the occasion of the Awareness Raising Seminar held in the frame of CEMR Congress in Nicosia "2030: Emission Impossible? The new integrated Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy".

So far, the Mayors Adapt counts 151 full members, and the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy already 394: a huge community of local authorities committed to take action on adaptation.

COVENANT OF MAYORS

CEMR's **involvement** in the **Covenant of Mayors Office** continued in 2016, which corresponds to the last of a 3-year service contract signed with the European Commission.

Following the launch of the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy on 15 October 2015, with the new target of reducing CO₂ emissions by 40% by 2030 and the merging with the Mayors Adapt initiative, CEMR's work in 2016 focused on offering support to local authorities to scale up their ambitions and sign the new initiative. As part of our activities, we have organised webinars and workshops at EU and national level, such as a workshop to promote the new Covenant of Mayors amongst Scottish local authorities.

At present, almost 7,000 municipalities have signed the initiative, 300 of which adopted the new commitments to 2030, thus contributing to raise the profile of the Covenant of Mayors and its important role in helping municipalities to deliver the EU 2030 objectives on climate and energy at the local level.

Moreover, CEMR National Associations are fully engaged in the promotion of the Covenant of Mayors on their territories. Our assistance to Covenant Supporters ranged from providing updated information and guidance to organising joint events.

CEMR is closely monitoring the impact of the merging announced in June 2016 between the Covenant of Mayors and the Compact of Mayors, which resulted in the launch of the Global Covenant of Mayors, the largest coalition in the world of municipalities engaged in the fight against climate change. The expansion of the Covenant of Mayors to other continents of the world is a major achievement of the European initiative.

CEMR's service contract to manage the Covenant of Mayors Office is coming to an end in December 2016. The European Commission launched in April 2016 a call for tenders for the next phase of the project. CEMR, together with other networks of local authorities (Energy Cities, Climate Alliance, Fedarene, EURO CITIES and ICLEI Europe) successfully submitted an offer, and was selected to continue managing the project for three and a half years. .

COVENANT OF MAYORS OFFICE FOR SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

During COP21 in December 2015, the European Commission launched the Covenant of Mayors in Sub-Saharan Africa (CoM SSA) initiative. This initiative's objective is to increase the capacities of Sub-Saharan African cities to provide access to sufficient, sustainable and safe energy-related services to urban and peri-urban populations. The focus is on energy efficiency and renewable energy as drivers for sustainable development. Drawing inspiration from the success of the Covenant of Mayors Europe, the initiative aims to assist cities in increasing their planning capacities and to provide them with a platform to share knowledge and best practices.

Under the umbrella of the Global Covenant of Mayors, the Covenant of Mayors in Sub-Saharan Africa will form a peer group of like-minded cities working together in order to tackle the numerous challenges ahead.

Having received a request from the European Commission, Directorate General International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO), CEMR is leading this project and began in spring with the organisation of four awareness raising workshops in Cape Town, Nairobi, Praia and Dakar, along with a workshop for supporting cities in the project preparation and a first implementation committee meeting in Accra, Ghana. On the basis of the results from a survey in SSA countries, the document of Political Commitment is in the process of being finalised and will allow potential signatories to endorse the commitments on a voluntary basis.

DG DEVCO selected the first seven pilot cities that will receive funding as pioneers in designing and implementing Sustainable Energy, Access and Climate Action Plans (SEACAPs). The selected cities were invited to participate in the side event organised at COP22 in Marrakesh, which brought together African mayors with inspiring examples leading the way for local governments in addressing the triple challenge: energy access, mitigation and adaptation. The event was a success and brought together more than 70 key participants from Sub-Saharan Africa. During the session, the first pilot cities introduced their proposed actions for implementing climate and energy objectives in their respective cities.

CITYNVEST

In the framework of the CITYnvest project, CEMR organised three capacity-building workshops on innovative financing models in Latvia, Lithuania and France, in cooperation with the CEMR member associations. In **Latvia**, the main concern of the local authorities participating in the event was, rather than a lack of investments, a lack of skills and standards for project development in retrofitting existing buildings. The interest in EU funds was higher than that in establishing innovative instruments identified in the framework of the CITYnvest project. Additionally, the municipalities are small and have limited in-house capacities to develop bankable projects and attract Energy Service Companies (ESCOs) that are still at an embryonic stage. As a result, they would need to aggregate the investments in bigger pools of projects to be attractive enough for ESCOs.

The main concerns of the participating local authorities in **Lithuania** were the debt constraints and borrowing limits. Lithuanian local authorities are mainly using the EU Structural funds for the retrofitting; innovative financing instruments are not yet very well known. The financial sector and bank institutions react rather sceptical towards the ESCO model. Discussions focused on the remaining debt consolidation in the public government accounts and on the usefulness of guarantee structures to assume part of the financial risks.

The workshop in **France** took place at the end of September, as an official side event of the Climate Chance conference. The participants noted that already several regions in France have developed financing models for energy retrofits, which are mainly based on third party investments. The experts stressed the need of involvement of local governments in the development of innovative financing models for energy efficiency renovations of buildings, as the purely private market is not able to provide financing for projects, which would require paybacks longer than 10 years. However, participants of the event found cooperative based financing as an interesting alternative, which should be explored further.

By the end of 2016, CEMR will outline and publish country specific capacity building materials on the CITYnvest website (www.citynvest.eu). They will include updated information about the current context in Latvia, Lithuania and France, indications for local authorities on how to start developing innovative financing models for energy retrofits, as well as policy recommendations.

3. ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL COHESION

3.1. URBAN AGENDA FOR THE EU

CEMR and its expert group on economic, social and territorial cohesion collaborated closely with the European Commission, the Dutch Ministry of Interior Affairs and the Slovak Presidency in the preparation of the **Urban Agenda for the EU**. In this respect, on 30 May 2016, CEMR spokesperson on urban affairs, Mr Ilmar Reepalu (SALAR), participated in the informal ministerial meeting on behalf of CEMR where EU ministers in charge of urban affairs adopted the Pact of Amsterdam, the basis for the Urban Agenda for the EU. The Urban Agenda is a major achievement for the CEMR and its members. We have been advocating for many years that local and regional governments should be better involved in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of EU policies. CEMR has been constantly involved in the drafting of the Pact of Amsterdam from the beginning, even if it was mainly an EU Member States-led process. CEMR has kept highlighting:

- The need for a '*governing in partnership*' approach and multilevel governance;
- The important role of urban areas of all sizes had to be recognised;
- Recommendations to be clearly related to the Better Regulation Package of the European Commission, and;
- The link with the EU position for Habitat III and in the particular the need for Member States to promote this new governance in the international discussions.

At the heart of the implementation process are now 12 thematic partnerships composed of EU institutions, Member States and representatives of the local level, to improve existing and future EU policies. As a member of the Urban Development Group, CEMR can propose local authorities for each partnership.

CEMR, together with the Committee of the Regions and EURO CITIES, is also recognised in its role of voicing the interests of urban areas and local authorities in this process. 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 and that we are recognised for the added-value that we bring to the discussions on the urban agenda.

CEMR was also invited by the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions to participate in a second initiative to run a territorial impact assessment. It was to analyse the territorial impact of the "New Skills Agenda for Europe", adopted in June by the Commission. The Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania appointed a representative who participated in this exercise which is also closely linked with the better regulation initiative.

3.2. HABITAT III AND THE NEW (GLOBAL) URBAN AGENDA

Together with PLATFORMA, CEMR took part in the preparation of the HABITAT III United Nations Conference to design the new **Urban Agenda at global level** through the Global Taskforce led by UCLG. It took place in Quito in October 2016 after the II World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments.

In this perspective, CEMR and PLATFORMA worked on a Declaration presenting the key messages CEMR and PLATFORMA defended until Quito. It is based on key messages developed by CEMR's expert group on territorial cohesion, but also on the international work of PLATFORMA, focusing in particular on decentralised cooperation. The objective was to

feed in to the Global Task Force's key recommendations, which were released in parallel and which we strongly supported and promoted, and to lobby for the EU institutions' position.

Both CEMR and PLATFORMA have also been actively involved in the **European conference for Habitat III**, which took place in Prague mid-March 2016. We organised a side-event with the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic entitled: "*Linking Habitat III to the 2030 Agenda: How can municipalities promote sustainable development in their territories?*". The delegation's representatives (Mr Frédéric Vallier, CEMR Secretary-General, Mr Ilmar Reepalu, CEMR spokesperson on urban affairs, and Mrs Annemarie Penn-Te Strake, Mayor of Maastricht, representing PLATFORMA) also intervened in plenaries alongside Member States and side-events organised by other organisations such as the OECD or Cities Alliance. Meanwhile, the CEMR Secretariat seated at the negotiation table, from which resulted the adoption of the Prague Declaration by Member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

On 12 May, the Council of the European Union published its conclusions on "*Habitat III: The European Union and its Member States' objectives and priorities for the 3rd UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development*". It represented the EU position in the process and it was defended by the EU delegation to the UN until Quito. CEMR, PLATFORMA and the Global Task Force published reactions to the Council Conclusions and to the UN Zero Draft released the first week of May. The reactions have been quite positive as the advocacy ahead worked and most of our principles were already included: the involvement of local governments in all the phases of the policy cycle, decentralised cooperation, multilevel governance, etc.

In May, through the Global Task Force, CEMR and PLATFORMA have also been invited to the **informal hearings** for local and regional governments organised **by the United Nations**: it was the first time that local and regional governments had such an opportunity to directly address Member States. Frédéric Vallier and Ilmar Reepalu represented CEMR; and Mr Andreas Wolter (Vice-Mayor of Cologne), represented PLATFORMA. The results fed in the new version of the Zero Draft leading to the new Urban Agenda.

Furthermore on 21 June, a joint event of the European Parliament **URBAN Intergroup**, CEMR and PLATFORMA was organised at the European Parliament in order to debate with the European Commission, the Slovak EU Presidency, the Habitat III Secretariat, civil society organisations and local elected representatives.

All along the process, until Quito, the CEMR Secretariat has worked closely with the European Commission, and in particular Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) which was leading the negotiations for the EU.

Negotiations on the Zero Draft between UN Member States continued with the **3rd Preparatory Committee** (PrepCom3) which took place in Surabaya, Indonesia at the end of July. Mr van Zanen, Mayor of Utrecht and President of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG), as well as CEMR secretary general, Frédéric Vallier, represented European towns and regions on this occasion. After hard discussions, but supported by different (EU in particular) Member States and the EU delegation, this meeting confirmed that local governments will be visible and recognised in the latest draft of the New Global Urban Agenda in Quito.

Finally, in October in Quito, CEMR and PLATFORMA organised a side-event on the capacity of local authorities in terms of finances and competences to implement international agreements and the New Urban Agenda. Another event was organised to promote the Covenant of Mayors for Africa, We were also present with elected representatives in the official delegation of the Global Task Force. Our delegation, composed of around 20 elected representatives and mayors, was very active and well visible and valued. Most of them participated in various official sessions and side-events of the UN Conference. A special accreditation was also given to local and regional authorities, which shows the particular recognition given to us by the United Nations. Finally, EU Commissioner Crețu for regional policy, representing the EU delegation also acknowledged the work of CEMR in the preparation process. Besides, she launched three EU voluntary commitments that CEMR will closely follow in the coming months: 'delivering the new Urban Agenda through the Urban Agenda for the EU'; 'developing a global, harmonised definition of cities' (in collaboration with the OECD and the World Bank); and 'fostering cooperation between cities in the field of sustainable urban development'.

3.3. TERRITORIAL COHESION

Since several months the CEMR Secretariat and the members of the expert group on territorial cohesion have been working on the future of the cohesion policy, well ahead of any legislative work in order to influence the shape of the future policy. Discussions have already started informally at EU level and CEMR's Secretariat has established an important involvement in the work underway through our collaboration with the European Commission (DG Regio), the Committee of the Regions, the European Parliament and the EU Slovak Presidency.

Key principles have been developed to facilitate the orientation of CEMR's future work regarding cohesion policy. They were adopted by the Policy Committee in April. The Statement with the key principles was sent to the main representatives of EU institutions, such as Regional Policy Commissioner Corina Crețu and Members of the European Parliament. They now serve as a framework for a more detailed CEMR discussion paper, also based on CEMR members' responses to a questionnaire circulated by the Secretariat. The discussion paper was finalised in September and shared with key EU institutions' representatives to initiate the discussion.

At the beginning of the year, CEMR was invited by the Committee of the Regions to a workshop on the future of cohesion policy. Ms Carola Gunnarsson, CEMR spokesperson on territorial cohesion, presented the main ideas of the Statement on behalf of CEMR on this occasion.

Moreover, DG REGIO's Deputy Director-General attended a meeting of the expert group, and a representative of the Slovak Presidency in charge of regional another one. Following this, CEMR was invited by the Slovak Presidency to take part in the closed conference on cohesion policy which assessed the current state and aimed to start shaping the future cohesion policy: CEMR was the only European network invited alongside Member States and the European Commission.

At the beginning of September, the CEMR Secretariat and the Chair of the expert group have also met the Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Crețu, as well as the Head of Cabinet of

Commissioner Thyssen (Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility) together with the Cabinet expert and a representative from the Directorate General to already test the ideas which are in the discussion paper. Other meetings with key EU representatives will follow.

CEMR was invited to a closed brainstorming meeting at DG REGIO to discuss territorial and urban aspects of post 2020 cohesion policy, and at the last meeting of the expert group on territorial cohesion end November, the Director-General of the Directorate General regional and urban policy, Mr Marc Lemaître, joined for an exchange on the future of cohesion policy.

Furthermore, CEMR retains its engagement on the simplification topic. The Secretariat has been invited to speak at a meeting of the EC high-level group on Monitoring Simplification for Beneficiaries of the European Structural and Investment Funds. The intervention was done by CEMR's Executive Director European Affairs, Angelika Poth-Moegele, on "gold plating", meaning that central governments add further requirements to the European ones, state aid and audit. CEMR position entitled "Simplification and cutting red tape in **European Structural and Investments Funds**" was adopted by the Policy Committee in April and served as a basis for it.

Moreover, the CEMR has been working closely with the REGI Committee of the European Parliament over the last few months, amending the relevant reports which could influence the daily work of its members such as the report on "New territorial development tools in the cohesion policy 2014-2020: integrated territorial investment (ITI) and community-led local development (CLLD) " or "Supporting Member States in their work to make better and faster structural reforms" which would use unspent cohesion funds. Key MEPS (coordinators of political groups) have responded to the Secretariat and taken on board some of our amendments.

Finally as regards territorial cohesion, a debate was organised in Nicosia, where Mr Oldřich Vlasák, CEMR Executive President, and Carola Gunnarsson, CEMR spokesperson on territorial cohesion, took part in alongside the Deputy-Director General of DG REGIO and a representative of a European research institute (ESPO).

On **rural development**, CEMR has participated in the activities of the European Network for Rural Development led by DG AGRI of the European Commission. It is of interest for CEMR to keep following it as lots of discussions focus on the implementation of rural development programmes, and will now focus on simplification and the post-2020. The Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP) also presented its study on **depopulated areas** at the last Policy Committee. As the population in rural areas rapidly decreases, how to provide adequate public services, including social welfare and medical services, is becoming an important issue.

In the area of **transport**, CEMR has kept its members informed about EU developments on urban mobility at the European Parliament and the European Commission, providing analysis of the Communication for a European Strategy for Low-Emission Mobility. Moreover CEMR is invited twice a year to a closed meeting organised by DG MOVE with the main European networks to exchange on this issue.

Finally, the third version of the **Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities (RFSC)** has been launched during the CEMR Congress in April, with the participation of Mr Frederic

Vallier, CEMR Secretary General and Mr Yves Laurent Sapoval, representing the French Ministry of Housing and Sustainable Habitat. CEMR Spokespersons on Urban Affairs and on Territorial Development, Mr Ilmar Reepalu and Ms Carola Gunnarsson, respectively, have also actively contributed with their participation and messages. The dissemination strategy's implementation has now started, consisting at this phase in events with projects working on sustainable urban development and urban indicators (CITYkeys), strengthen collaboration with partners like the European Environment Agency and the International Urban Food Network and with other relevant actors and European initiatives such as the Urban Development Network (UDN), URBACT and ICLEI.

In line with the European vision of integrated and sustainable urban development, the RFSC has been **recognised as a delivery tool in the Pact of Amsterdam** and the Urban Agenda for the EU. The RFSC can contribute to the better shaping of EU policies by providing a framework based on the principle of integrated approach which can be used by the Urban Partnerships in their work, but also by supporting the Better Knowledge pillar through the collection and promotion of good practices on integrated and sustainable urban development.

4. LOCAL AND REGIONAL PUBLIC SERVICES MANAGEMENT

4.1 LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS AS EMPLOYERS

In the framework of the **CEMR-EPSU joint project** “New forms of service delivery for municipalities, the contribution of social dialogue and good practices for well-being at work”, financed by the European Commission, three thematic seminars took place during 2016: on the impact of migrations on the workforce; on recruitment of young workers and retention of older workers, developing new skills and life-long learning; and, finally, on well-being and health and safety at work in local public services. In November 2016, a conference in Barcelona concluded the project and the final report will be released together with a short film.

The local and regional government Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee discussed the recent agreement reached in the central administration SSDC on **information and consultation of workers** and decided to not undertake a similar initiative at local and regional level.

Another relevant topic for LRGs as employers are two consultations on the **Work-Life Balance** launched by the Commission in winter 2015-2016. CEMR submitted its opinions to the first phase consultation of social partners in December 2015 and then to the public consultation in February 2016. Subsequently, the Commission opened a second phase consultation, which lasted until 30 September. The key message of CEMR’s response to the first consultation is that no new legislation or revision of the existing one is needed, but a set of non-legislative initiatives, such as exchange of good practices and guidelines, would be welcome to allow LRGs to better apply the European legislation on this subject. In the response to the second phase consultation, CEMR expressed its support for negotiations [if the cross-sectoral European social partners enter into negotiations](#).

By the end of the year, CEMR will submit its response to the consultation on the **European Pillar of Social Rights**, in which the Commission invited social partners to assess the status of the EU ‘social acquis’ and to express their views on possible future legislative and non-legislative actions that the Commission might propose in this field.

The project “Promoting Employers’ Social Services in Social Dialogue” (**PESSIS III**) lead by European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities aims to create a new Sector Social Dialogue Committee of social services in Europe. At the moment, the partners of the PESSIS’ consortium are carrying out a mapping exercise of the sector, in order to identify those organisations that could potentially be recognised as European social partners, and organise mock social dialogue meetings to better understand the functioning of a SSDC. CEMR has communicated its availability to take part in these mock meetings and share its expertise; however, we are in general reluctant to support a new sectorial social dialogue committee in this area.

CEMR has also discussed, together with EPSU, how to increase the level of involvement at national and European level in the **European Semester**, meaning the capacity of national LRGs’ organisations as well as CEMR itself to participate or express their opinion on the drafting of the Country Reports (CRs), the National Reform Programme (NRPs) and the Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs).

CEMR agreed with the European Centre of Employers and Enterprises providing Public Services (CEEP), which is representing public employers in the European cross-sectoral social dialogue, to relaunch their cooperation, increasing the mutual involvement of CEMR

and CEEP's representatives in their activities and assuring a steady participation of CEMR in the **Public Services Employers' Forum** (PSEF), which is regularly organised by CEEP.

4.2 PUBLIC SERVICES

Key issues addressed by the Expert Group on Public Services were the negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (**TTIP**), the EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (**CETA**) and the Trade in Services Agreement (**TiSA**). We were also discussing the **VAT Action Plan** in particular in relation to the exemption of certain types of public sector bodies' activities, and we provided input to the Committee of the Region's opinion on the basis of our position, adopted in 2014.

Another issue is the **eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020** released by the Commission this year to support the digitalisation and modernisation of public administration. We are planning to draft a position paper. Since public services are more and more provided electronically or with a strong link to ICT, which is clearly demonstrated by the European Digital Single Market Strategy, the Single Market Strategy and the e-government Action Plan, the CEMR Secretariat proposed to merge its two expert groups on public services and on ICT & e-government and create the **Expert Group on Public Services and e-Government**.

The expert group continued its exchange on the transposition and implementation of the public procurement directives, and shared first ideas on the European agenda for **collaborative economy**, with an option to further follow the debate in the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions.

CEMR provided input to the CoR opinion on **State Aid and Services of General Economic Interest**, in particular on the parts concerning the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER), the Commission's notice on the notion of state aid and a potential review of the Almunia package on SGEIs. We will respond to the public consultation on the new criteria for the definition of **state aid for ports and airports**, on the basis of CEMR's position from 2013.

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, Kazan – Commission on Statutory Affairs, September, Barcelona) and to its policy work.

The members of the Policy Committee in Nicosia approved a common position in regard to the next UCLG Executive Bureau held in Kazan and mandated the Secretary General to lead a technical delegation to represent CEMR.

CEMR echoed the voice of European LRGs in **global fora**, in particular the Global Taskforce (www.gtf2016.org) which was particularly active on the preparation of the Habitat III conference and the drafting of the new urban agenda.

During its Congress in Bogotá, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) renewed its statutory bodies for the 2017–2019 mandate. As the European section of UCLG, CEMR ensured the preparation of the **electoral process in the European region**.

5.2 CCRE - PLATFORMA

Since the start of the implementation of the strategic partnership agreement with the EU Commission, Platforma secretariat (hosted by CEMR) and its partners have launched a flurry of activities.

PLATFORMA raised its (and decentralised cooperation's) profile at a range of events such as the European Development days (Brussels, June 2016) with a popular information stand on the CONNECT mechanism and with contributions to three parallel sessions: sustainable lifestyles, localisation of the SDGs and innovative forms of local governments' international action, at the Climate Chance summit (Nantes, September 2016) with two densely attended workshops and at the CUF-forum with a session on the European Neighbourhood Partnership. Similarly, PLATFORMA raised its profile via a number of events at key events such as UCLG's congress in Bogota, Habitat III in Quito and COP22 in Marrakech.

- CONNECT / Delivery Mechanism

CONNECT (previously “delivery mechanism”) has been dubbed one of EU Development commissioner Mimica's priorities and is one of the deliverables of the specific grant agreement signed with the EU Commission. Its aim is to help local/regional governments from partner countries find local or regional experts in any field, and to make their cooperation as efficient and fruitful as possible. VNGI is currently creating this mechanism on behalf of PLATFORMA and its partners. Commissioner Mimica wishes to present CONNECT to a live audience in March 2017.

- PLATFORMA's project IV

PLATFORMA's project IV came to an end on 30 June 2016. All targets were reached within time and budgetary constraints. PLATFORMA's final activity in the framework of Project IV was the production of a simple, practical handbook to help local and regional governments set up and manage a decentralised cooperation project. The handbook is available in French, English, Spanish, Italian and German.

- Reflection process on PLATFORMA's future

As the strategic partnership agreement considerably alters the structure of PLATFORMA and its relations with its partners, a reflection process was launched in the course of 2016. PLATFORMA's partners held a debate on it at the 3-4 November steering committee in Rome where it was agreed to create a working group on this issue. Proposals will be submitted to partners at PLATFORMA's next steering committee meeting in April 2017.

- Building partnerships

Throughout 2016, PLATFORMA reached out to a number of public bodies with the aim to enrich its work as well as to promote its partners' work in decentralised cooperation to the widest possible audience. The secretariat is in regular contact with Commissioner Mimica and his team, it is working with a number of UN bodies when relevant as well as the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions.

- New communication

In order to better meet today's audience behaviour, PLATFORMA has dramatically increased its visual communication (video & photo) as well as its presence on social media such as Twitter with spectacular results in terms of increase of followers and impact of its messages. A new website is planned to be operational by the end of this year.

- Advocacy. PLATFORMA endeavoured to influence EU policy on a number of issues:

- Review of the European Consensus on Development

PLATFORMA contributed to the consultation and published a summary of its contribution in September – ahead of informal hearings with the EP rapporteurs. PLATFORMA calls for the eradication of inequalities through investment in effective democratic governance to be the EU's priority, and suggests resting it on two pillars: policy coherence for sustainable development and the inclusion of a local perspective at territorial, national and global levels.

- The EU's New Migration Partnership Framework with third Countries: Local governments are key to its success!

PLATFORMA called on the EU to (a) to remove the link between development aid and performance in migration, (b) give local governments in partner countries a voice in design, implementation and evaluation of compacts with third countries – particularly in fields of local economic development, resilience to crises, administrative reform and decentralisation, (c) promote city to city cooperation as key instrument for the implementation. PLATFORMA

organised sessions on migration at CEMR's congress in Nicosia and AICCRE's congress. Additionally PLATFORMA participated in dialogues with the EC on the External Investment Plan.

➤ Habitat III: the New Urban Agenda

PLATFORMA and CEMR jointly published two positions on the Habitat III process – and have been actively involved in the process through the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments. The result of the local governments' advocacy is clear in the outcome document that, albeit not binding, recognises local authorities as key players in planning and implementing and gives specific attention to decentralisation, national urban planning and decentralised cooperation. Together with CPMR, UNDP and the Basque government, PLATFORMA organised an event on building partnerships to localise the SDGs on 14 June 2016. Position papers and an event co-organised with CEMR and the Urban Intergroup of the European Parliament contributed to the local governments' constituency being consulted in the New Urban Agenda.

➤ Emergency Trust Fund for Africa

The trust fund was rushed through the decision making process. PLATFORMA called for the inclusion of local ownership to ensure effective implementation, a mandate for the European Parliament to monitor the fund, the integration of decentralised cooperation as a modality and the refusal of using development funds to carry out security projects.

➤ The renewal of the relationship framework between the EU and ACP countries

PLATFORMA held high level dialogues sessions with EC officials at the Global Policy Forum on Development in April 2016 while the assistant of EP's shadow-rapporteur Louis Michel spoke to PLATFORMA working group 'EU-Policies and Programs'. The Parliament voted 14 amendments in line with those suggested by PLATFORMA.

Furthermore PLATFORMA raised its (and decentralised cooperation's) profile at a range of events such as the European Development days (Brussels, June 2016) with a popular information stand on the CONNECT mechanism and with contributions to three parallel sessions, at the Climate Chance summit (Nantes, September 2016) with two densely attended workshops, and at dozens of events organised by its partners.

6 COMMUNICATION & STATUTORY AFFAIRS

6.1 PRESS & COMMUNICATION

The press and communication team has led many actions to ensure the visibility of CEMR's actions and deliver its messages throughout the year.

Special attention was given to the organisation of the **CEMR 2016 Congress in Nicosia**; that gave great visibility to CEMR and local and regional governments, in part via social media ([#cemr2016](#)), as well as in local and European press.

In terms of studies, reports and **publications**, CEMR published "Structures and competences: local and regional governments in Europe", which was widely distributed, as well as a series of position papers made available to European policy makers. CEMR also produced Smartcards: educational cards on CEMR's different fields of work. These publications were widely disseminated online and during events at which CEMR took part.

The year 2016 was also marked by the organisation of a series of **campaigns**. There were campaigns on the transparency register, hosting refugees, equality of women and men and the "Climate Chance" conference in Nantes to only name a few. These campaigns were accompanied by visuals and communication materials.

Last but not least, CEMR is finalising the development of its new **extranet**. A test phase is currently underway in order to allow associations to give their opinion on the new tool. Its overall purpose is to improve and increase CEMR's collaboration with its member associations, while reducing email overload.

6.2 STATUTORY AFFAIRS

CEMR 2016 Congress gathered close to 600 participants in Nicosia from 20 to 22 April 2016. Local and regional elected representatives from all around Europe attended up to 30 sessions available this year.

Every four years, and in between two Congresses, CEMR organises a major Conference, together with its members and partners, on a theme of particular importance and relevance for European local and regional governments in the framework of European citizenship.

The candidacy of the City of **Bilbao** and the theme proposed for the **2018 Conference "Equality, diversity & inclusion"** were approved by the CEMR Policy Committee in Nicosia.

Two **spokespersons** on Public Services (David Lucas, FEMP) and on environment and climate (Linda Gilham, LGA) were appointed by the Policy Committee in Nicosia.

2016 being a year of renewal of both CEMR and UCLG statutory bodies, particular attention was drawn on the support to members and preparation of both renewals.

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.



Contact

Amélie Laussucq
Adviser – Statutory Affairs and Relations with Members
Tel. +32 2 500 05 45
amelie.laussucq@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.

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