



Local & Regional
Europe

CEMR 2015 Work Programme

Adopted by the CEMR Policy Committee
Rome, 17 December 2014

Council of European Municipalities and Regions
European section of United Cities and Local Governments

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1. GOVERNANCE, DEMOCRACY & CITIZENSHIP

CEMR will promote the organisation towards the European institutions as strategic partner and raise its profile as broadest European organisation representing local and regional government.

By organising a series of events at the European Parliament and the European Commission, CEMR will be able to increase its visibility and profile and that of its member associations, obtain new contacts, and strengthen its presence all while raising the awareness of the importance of local and regional at an EU level.

CEMR will play a leading role in the organisation of a joint conference with the other main European associations of local government (AER, CPMR and EURO CITIES). The conference will provide an excellent opportunity to monitor the application of the "Governing in partnership" model, as a follow-up to our joint conference in 2011. This major "local and regional" event will be the focus of many highly influential EU stakeholders, including EU Commissioners, Members of the European Parliament, senior officials of the European Commission, local and regional representatives from across Europe, as well as EU Brussels journalists.

On the eve, CEMR will be organising an early evening reception at the European Parliament. In addition to consolidating our leading position, it will allow us to release the results of a survey entitled "How local is your MEP". This large-scale online survey will help us get a comprehensive overview of Members of the European Parliament with local experience or interest in the local dimension of EU policies and legislation.

On the occasion of the International Women's Day, to be held on 8 March, CEMR will be organising an awareness-raising exhibition and seminar. The event will be hosted by a Member of the European Parliament and should allow us to give a heads-up on the outputs resulting from the project of the Observatory of the European Charter for equality of women and men in local life.

A representativity study will be prepared to demonstrate the specificity of CEMR and its member associations and to highlight our value for the European institutions. CEMR needs to position itself as legitimate representative organisation of local and regional governments in Europe, based on democratic principles and accountable towards its members. We need to provide evidence that we represent a level of governance and that justify to be treated differently from any lobbying organisation.

CEMR will follow-up the outcome of the consultations on impact assessments and consultation guidelines, and continue its efforts to be represented in relevant expert groups, strategic dialogues, etc. of the European Commission and other European institutions. We will try to influence the guidelines on the implementation of the Inter-Institutional Agreement in relation to the application of the rules on the Transparency Register in a way that the specific situation of local authorities and their associations is taken into account.

CEMR will follow-up the evolution of Europe's local and regional government finances and will work for the update of local governments' structures and competences publication. Following the latest developments on territorial reforms in many European countries CEMR will monitor and start working on the renewal of our knowledge and evidence-based expertise on the situation of decentralisation in Europe. We will try to assess recent recentralisation, decentralisation and specially, regionalisation and metropolisation trends in Europe.

To do so, CEMR will continue collaborating with researchers and academics in the levels and dimensions of the simplification of local administration in Europe, in order to have an evidence-based approach both for our advocacy and knowledge exchange pillars.

In parallel, CEMR will continue working closely with the Congress of Local and Regional authorities of the Council of Europe and strengthen its role in the monitoring of the European Charter on local-self government of the Council of Europe. As an observer, CEMR will also continue to collaborate with the newly formed 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 (1967-2013). This inter-governmental committee is composed of representatives from national government ministries responsible for local and regional governments and will oversee the Council of Europe's work on in the field of democratic governance, with a particular focus on local and regional democracy.

Since the origin of the programme, CEMR has closely followed the results of the implementation of the Europe for Citizens Programme 2014-2020 as well as continue advocating for an increase of the budgetary allocation to it in future revisions. Furthermore, we will try to enhance our role as a partner of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) and Directorate General Communication in order to influence the design of the annual priorities as well as promote citizens exchanges and town-twinning as the main *raison d'être* of the programme. In this respect, CEMR will continue strengthening its position as the main promoter of town-twinning in Europe and the platform of reference on European town-twinning knowledge exchange. CEMR's www.twinning.org will be re-defined and updated according to the new programme, while technical changes to improve its functioning will also be introduced.

CEMR will also advocate the position and role of young local and regional elected representatives and involvement of young generations in public life through our Committee of Young Local and Regional elected representatives. To do so, we will closely cooperate with the European Youth Forum, the youth intergroup of the European Parliament and the Council of Europe's structures working in youth-related issues. Core objectives are the fight against youth unemployment, enhancing education and mobility as well as youth participation in the democratic life.

CEMR will also start exploring new questions in the field of citizenship and governance for the future such as new forms of urban governance (eg. Open data, participative budgeting, etc.) civic education, fundamental rights at the local level.

Following the recent developments in the field of migration, diversity and integration, CEMR will continue working in order to become a partner of European institution on how to better face integration challenges from the regional and local perspective. We will engage as an active stakeholder in the new European Migration Forum (formerly the European Integration Forum) to provide the multi-level governance dialogue on migration with expertise and good practices.

The financial support to the project of the Observatory from the Swedish government through the support of SALAR will come to an end in March 2015. However, the secretariat will continue updating the website www.charter-equality.eu and promoting the implementation of the Charter. CEMR will also look for new funding possibilities to finance future activities related to the Charter and promoting gender equality at local and regional level. The secretariat will also continue working on the pilot project on developing indicators of the Charter that will come to an end in the end of 2015. The final conference of the pilot project will be organised in October 2015. In general, the secretariat will take efforts to mainstream gender equality in its activities and the different policy areas that CEMR covers. As such, the relevant chapters of the Charter will be addressed and the gender dimension integrated in the policies.

2. ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE & ENERGY

In 2015, CEMR will continue its lobbying activities on the legislative proposals related to air quality and waste, as the latter have a direct impact on local and regional environmental policies. The Clean Air Policy Package proposed by the European Commission could substantially help municipalities and regions improving local air quality. CEMR will lobby the EU legislators in 2015 in order to ensure that the proposed level of ambition will not be lowered. The European Parliament and the Council of ministers will also take position on the Circular Economy Package. CEMR will actively promote its position in order to make sure that the ambition and clarification proposed by the European Commission, which are positive for local and regional government, remain in the final text. At the same time, we wish to convince the European decision-makers to set waste-related targets (e.g. municipal waste recycling target, targets for landfill ban, etc.), which could be realistically achieved by municipalities.

The Heads of State and Government decided on the objectives of the EU energy and climate policy by 2030 in October and the European Commission will translate these decisions into concrete proposals in 2015 to agree on the targets of the European Union for the Paris COP 21 United Nations conference in December 2015. CEMR will make sure that local and regional authorities will be involved in the implementation of these policies at national level through the new governance system to be developed by the Commission. At the request of the focus group on climate and energy transition, we will also organise an exchange of experience and information between our members on innovative financing solutions to implement ambitious energy and climate policies at local and regional level.

Furthermore, CEMR will pursue its involvement in the Covenant of Mayors' Office, aiming at raising attention on the contribution of local and regional authorities to the success of the EU climate and energy policies. This will include further cooperating with the European Commission's services to organise high-level events and to insert a local and regional dimension in their various initiatives. In addition, we will organise a series of events at national and European level aiming at developing the capacity-building of Covenant stakeholders and raising awareness about financing possibilities. Developing synergies with other EU initiatives and cooperating with networks of local and regional authorities involved in the Covenant will also count among our activities.

In preparation of the COP 21 on Climate (UN Conference Of the Parties) that will take place in Paris in December 2015, CEMR will coordinate the voice of European Local and Regional Governments and continue to lobby for the presence of LRGs and their national and European associations in the European delegations during the negotiation process. CEMR will cooperate as the European Umbrella organisation in the Climate Summit of LRGs in Paris in November / December 2015 together with UCLG/ICLEI/C40 and other relevant networks. In addition, CEMR will act to find good complementarity between European and International initiatives in the field of Climate and energy, notably between the World Compact of Mayors and the European Covenant of Mayors and lobby to ensure that adequate means are allocated in the future to finance climate action in municipalities, cities and regions.

3. ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL COHESION

With the implementation of the regulations of the Structural Funds, further actions are envisaged for 2015 to assist CEMR members in the implementation of the regulations and in particular to monitor the application of the 'Code of Conduct' and of the new instruments (Community-Led Local Development, Integrated Territorial Instruments, delegation of power). In this respect, CEMR intends to work closely with the European Parliament and the Commission in order to highlight concerns and make recommendations. In the context of the implementation of the structural funds, further specific issues may also be addressed: smart cities and communities, rural development, innovation, entrepreneurship, capacity building, financial engineering, synergies between structural funds and other EU programmes.

The development of the EU Urban Agenda will also remain at the heart of CEMR's work programme. The CEMR will continue contributing to the Commission's and to the intergovernmental processes, by working closely with the Latvian and Luxembourgish Presidencies on their priorities regarding cohesion policy and the EU Urban Agenda (small and medium-sized cities and cross-border cooperation). CEMR will provide input to the report that the Commission is going to prepare on EU cities as contribution to the UN HABITAT III conference. CEMR will also continue to cooperate closely with the URBAN intergroup of the European Parliament. The preparation of the Habitat III Conference, foreseen in 2016, will continue and accelerate next year. CEMR will, in that context, increase its lobbying on key aspects such as diversity of local governments and the links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas. This work also include, contributing to the drafting of the 4th GOLD Report.

Furthermore, we will monitor and explore possibilities to influence the promotion and application of the International Standard (ISO 37120) on 'sustainable development in communities'. CEMR will promote the Reference Framework on Sustainable Cities (RFSC), which is based on a political decision and mandates (the Leipzig Charter and Toledo Declaration) from the EU Member States and has been developed in an inclusive and transparent way by experts, ministries, CEMR, financed to a large extent by France and also financially supported by the European Commission in the past years.

2015 will see the adoption, by our national governments, of two major international agreements with a specific mention to local and regional action. First, in September, world leaders will define a new framework to ensure poverty eradication and sustainable development that replaces the Millennium Development Goals. What will be known as the sustainable development goals (or SDGs) will be applicable universally, for the next 15 years and should include a goal aimed at "making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable." CEMR will continue to support the lobbying organised in that context through the Global Taskforce (www.gtf2016.org) and beyond. We will in particular be looking at how the SDGs will be implemented in Europe and their impact for European municipalities and regions.

CEMR will also contribute to the reflections on Territorial Development. Issues to be addressed will be territorial impact assessments, integrated territorial development, urban-rural relationships, etc. We will further collaborate with the OECD Territorial Development Policy Committee and other relevant organisations.

CEMR will continue to work on Demographic Change through its thematic network on Age-Friendly Environments, which is due to be set up and managed through the project 'innovation for age-friendly environments in the EU'. CEMR has a lead role for developing this network and providing local and regional authorities, researchers and other stakeholders a platform to discuss, exchange and develop ICT-based innovative solutions for age-friendly environments. CEMR will continue to be involved in the Joint Programming Initiative on Demographic Change accompanying the implementation of the Strategic Research Agenda for Member States.

4. LOCAL AND REGIONAL PUBLIC SERVICES MANAGEMENT

The new Commissioner on Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion is expected to present a proposal for a revision of the Working Time Directive in 2015. CEMR will continue to lobby the relevant actors at the different stages, in particular by providing evidence and data on the crucial questions such as 'on call time', 'inactive time', 'stand-by time', compensatory rest, reference period, etc. We advocate for the recognition of the specificities of the local and regional public sector and the changes in work and society requiring a high level of flexibility and adaptability of the work force and work places.

In our role as social partner in the European Social Dialogue Committee on Local and Regional Government, we will seek to strengthen the Social Dialogue at local and regional level by promoting the activities of the Committee to our members. The Committee provides a Platform for exchange of experience and information, and addresses issues that concern local and regional authorities as employers. The Committee will explore new forms of service delivery for municipalities, the contribution of social dialogue and good practice for well-being at work' and thus contribute to the implementation of the European framework on restructuring and anticipation of change.

Another issue on the agenda will be the implementation of the EU Framework on Safety and Health at Work and how social dialogue contributes to the well-being at work, how implementation of existing health and safety rules can be improved in particular also in small municipal companies. We will discuss how prevention of work-related diseases can be improved by tackling new and emerging risks and the ageing workforce will be of specific interest.

Furthermore, the Guidelines that were developed by the Committee in the past years will be followed up. The Guidelines on Third Party Violence aim to ensure that each workplace has a result-oriented policy. They set out the practical steps that can be taken by employers, workers and their representatives / trade unions to reduce, prevent and mitigate problems. The steps reflect the best practices developed in our sector and they can be complemented by more specific and / or additional measures.

In the context of the project on the "Future of the Workplace: Providing high quality, modern and sustainable jobs within local and regional government" (2011-2012), it was agreed that the Guidelines on Gender Equality (developed by CEMR and EPSU in 2007) need to be further promoted. They set out practical steps to implement equality between women and men and ensuring that unions, as representatives of employees, have a full role in the process. Gender equality at the work place is also addressed in CEMR's Charter for Equality of women and men in local life; the promotion of the guidelines therefore also support the implementation of the Charter.

The impact of EU provisions on the way local and regional authorities organise and finance their public services will constantly be monitored. The transposition of the public procurement and service concessions directives in national legislation and their application will remain an issue for exchange of information and experience. If proposed by the European Commission, we will provide input to a revision of the remedies directive.

Based on our response to the consultation on VAT and tax exemptions on public bodies, we will continue our discussions with the Commission's service and try to influence the preparation of the impact assessment and the proposal from the European Commission. We will promote an approach that recognises the different tax systems and we favour a solution that focusses on the initial objectives of an EU VAT regime: the prevention of fiscal fraud and tax evasion.

Other, more technical rules such as European Public Sector Accounting Standards (EPSAS) also have an impact on local finances. With the objective to harmonise public sector budgeting and accounting systems in the EU, the Commission requires comprehensive information on a public entity's financial situation adopting an accrual, resource-based view. CEMR will examine the context and the situation in the different countries to find out whether a joint initiative might be necessary.

CEMR will monitor the impact of changes in public service provision, in particular expected or potential provisions of international free trade agreements, such as CETA (Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between the EU and Canada) and TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership between EU and the US); and TISA, the Trade in Services Agreement of 23 WTO members, including the EU. We will focus on the issue of public procurement, services of general interest and on references or requirements of standards and to what extent they will impact local and regional governments such as accounting standards and technical standards. The role and way of working of standardisation organisations (e.g. ISO, CEN, CENELEC) needs to be addressed and discussed as well; we must call for an early consultation and involvement of local and regional government in areas that have an impact on them.

The further development of information and communication technology and their use in local and regional authorities increases the interest among CEMR member associations to address e-services and e-government issues systematically. The further negotiations of the data protection regulation, the implementation of the Public Sector Information (PSI) directive, the concept of 'smart cities and communities', active assisted living for elderly people, open data, etc. may be subject for exchange among member associations experts. They may also contribute to CEMR's lobbying activities on upcoming EU initiatives in the area of ICT and e-government.

5. INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT & COOPERATION

From January 2015, most of the international engagement of CEMR will be driven through PLATFORMA with the support of the European Commission.

2015 has been declared the European Year for Development. This will coincide with the start of the strategic partnership, in course of negotiation with the European Commission. Efforts will be put to advocate for and raise awareness on the role of local authorities in development, particularly through decentralised cooperation, and in a variety of domains – climate, urban development and others.

A specific support to CEMR member associations of the Eastern European Neighbourhood is also foreseen.

As the European section of UCLG, CEMR will continue to defend the interests and policy objectives of European LRGs in our world organisation (UCLG), particularly at the Executive Bureau in Porto Alegre in June, and at the World Council in Paris in November. CEMR will continue to defend democratic principles and European values in Human Rights, support local democracy, decentralisation, empowerment of LRGs and capacity building with the contribution of its members in relevant fora such as the CIB Committee, the Inter-Mediterranean Committee, ARLEM and CORLEAP...

6. COMMUNICATION & GENERAL AFFAIRS

In 2015, the private part of the CEMR website will be built. Reserved to members, this section will be accessible through the public part of the site. It will allow users to access a dedicated platform of exchange with a calendar of closed and open activities, and a space to share “members only” documents.

A new type of newsletter will be developed, more focused on results and achievements of CEMR lobbying efforts.

CEMR will publish a series of publications, including “*Local and Regional Government in Europe – Structures and Competences*”, and “*Factsheets, a figure-based portrait of local and regional Europe*”.

To further support our lobbying, a study will be conducted to demonstrate the specificity of CEMR and the representativeness of its member associations.



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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