



CEMR message on the future  
of gender equality



Conseil des Communes  
et Régions d'Europe  
Council of European  
Municipalities and Regions

## [ MESSAGE ]

The CEMR constitutes the largest organisation of local authorities in Europe: bringing together 52 national associations of European cities and local and regional authorities of 38 countries, thus representing around 100,000 cities and regions in Greater Europe.

Currently presided over by the Mayor of Vienna, Michaël Häüpl, the CEMR works to promote a united Europe founded on local and regional self-governance and democracy. In order to reach this objective, the CEMR endeavours to construct the future of Europe by reinforcing the contribution of local and regional authorities as well as by influencing Community legislation and policies.

Only recently have cities been considered strategic actors *de facto* in the quest for equality. The CEMR has, for a long time, been working for the promotion of equality between women and men in towns, through its Committee of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities – currently presided over by Jocelyne Bougeard, deputy Mayor of Rennes (France).

The CEMR, with the assistance of the European Commission, introduced a study on the inequality between the genders in local life and the potential ways of readdressing the imbalance. Between 1996 and 1999, seminars were held bringing together local elected people and researchers on equality which allowed for a collection of data – at that stage unpublished – and also an exchange of experiences between different countries as well as the diffusion of practices that create inequality.

In 2004, the European Commission supported another particularly ambitious CEMR project: elaboration of the “portrait” of a virtual town, one in which gender equality will be fully achieved. It was apparent, at that time, that there was a lack of expertise and instruments that would allow for the establishment and evaluation of a global gender equality policy at local and regional level. “The town for equality” united the policies implemented in around one hundred European cities and communities in eleven of their fields of expertise.<sup>1</sup>

Owing to another major project financed by the European Commission which allowed for the active participation of hundreds of local and regional representatives of CEMR member countries, the CEMR launched in 2006 the “European Charter for equality of women and men in local life”. The Charter, submitted to local and regional authorities for signing, aims to encourage political commitment in favour of equality between women and men in local life. The Charter has, up to now, been signed by 1000 European local and regional authorities: large and small cities, towns, small communities, departments and regions.

The CEMR’s Committee of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities keenly supported the roadmap for equality 2006-2010 and responded in October 2009 to the consultation launched by the European Commission.

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<sup>1</sup> The climate, space management, education and training, minority integration, the elderly, employment, security, health, culture and urban symbolism, sport, inter-town relations.

**The CEMR's Committee of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities met, at the invitation of SALAR (the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions) on the 6-7 May 2010 in Stockholm and hoped to send a message to the EU.**

**The CEMR's Committee of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities is satisfied with its work and reports:**

- the inclusion of equality into the new Barroso II Commission in the portfolio concerning the fundamental rights of the Union of which Commissioner Viviane Reding is responsible;

**The Committee of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities is unsatisfied with:**

- the lack of consideration given to sub-national levels, particularly local and regional authorities, in European equality policies;
- the lack of follow up on activities approved during the 2001-2006 programme which allowed for the support of a vast range of positive actions like the CEMR Charter which, despite its current success on the ground, does not have the support of the European Commission in its application phase;
- the demanding nature of daily paperwork management which result in the Commission being less present on the ground of the wide-spanning initiatives – precisely where local and regional collectives have demonstrated a request for dialogue and support.

**The Committee hopes:**

- that whilst maintaining the promotion of equality through mainstreaming at its core, the new Commission will engage in European policy for equality between women and men with real strategies, means of application and concrete programmes;
- that the local and regional authorities will have a mechanism and specific finance available dedicated to the promotion of equality between women and men given that, as the sphere of government closest to citizens, they represent the best placed level for intervention to fight the persistence and the multiplication of inequality;
- that sub-national levels (local and regional authorities and their associations as well as social partners and organisation from civilian society) will be systematically included in consultations with the EC on the follow up of forthcoming policy regarding gender equality and that defined national indicators in the roadmap will be integrated into local and regional indicators;
- that the Gender Institute of Vilnius will be equipped with sufficient means to allow it to accomplish its mission successfully and that it will constitute a real centre of resources for equality between women and men in the European Union.

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