



Opinion article

The future of Europe will be local

Last September, the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, invited all Europeans to think together about the future of our Union. Without waiting for this invitation, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, a federation of national associations of towns and regions from 42 countries launched a debate on the following question: “How do you see Europe in 2030?”

This enterprise led to the publication of a unique piece of work of nearly 400 pages: a collection of contributions of local elected representatives from all over Europe and a synthesis of our thoughts and analyses.

Every one of us took the time to speak, at local level, to express our commitment to European construction and to offer the measures we believe have the strength to relaunch the European project.

We launched this debate at a time when doubt is being cast upon all levels of responsibility in Europe. We launched it at a time when citizens themselves seem to be worrying about their future in a world that is increasingly shaken by wars, terrorism, attacks on the values that make up our unity, and economic, climate, and migration crises...

To answer these many challenges, we want to state loud and clear that Europe, beyond the European Union, is not only a Union of European nations. Before all else, Europe must unite its citizens through their territories.

Every crisis, every challenge we have yet to overcome shows a bit more that if challenges are global, their solutions are increasingly local. As mayors, local and regional leaders and heads of local government associations, we act to ensure the well-being of our citizens. We act to fight climate change, ensure social cohesion and territorial planning, as well as welcome vulnerable people with dignity, in particular refugees and migrants. We act to find solutions that states and the European Union struggle to implement.

For this reason, we are calling upon all European leaders, heads of states and governments of the European Union as well as the Council of Europe, members of the European Commission, Members of the European Parliament and all those who believe in the future of our continent, to fully and totally recognise local and regional governments as key players in governance. Let us dare to build our future together, beyond national selfishness or special interests. Together, let us invent a new co-responsible model. Let's build a Europe of communities that unite us, forgetting our old borders, and taking what's best in each and every one of us.

We have heard the calls for invention, we are ready to engage in the necessary debates in each of our town halls. We want citizens to build proposals together that will inspire the creation of a new, stronger Europe. A Europe with solidarity, inclusion and equality at its core, as it will be closer the reality of life on the ground, which we always have at heart.

To all Europeans, we are launching a call for unity and for action, making “united in diversity” our motto ! Europe will be what we make of it: a crumbling mosaic or a consistent union, proud of what it is and of what it will pass down to future generations.

The 21st century will be local, with strengthened cities and regions, recognised in their capacity to act. Let's give ourselves the means to change. To invest. To decide to build a Europe of everyday life, a Europe of solutions.

List of signatories

- Stefano Bonaccini, President of Emilia Romagna, CEMR President, President of CEMR's italian section
- Gunn Marit Helgesen, Councillor of Telemark, CEMR Co-President, President of the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities
- Rainer Haas, President of Ludwigsburg county, CEMR Co-President, CEMR's german section
- Anders Knappe, Chair of Karlstad City Council, Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions
- Annemarie Penn-Te Strake, Mayor of Maastricht, Association of Netherlands Municipalities
- Carlos Martínez Mínguez, Mayor of Soria, Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces
- Carola Gunnarsson, Mayor of Sala, Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions
- Christiane Overmans, Councillor of Bonn, CEMR's german section
- Christine Oppitz-Plörer, Mayor of Innsbruck, Austrian Association of Cities and Towns
- Christoph Schnaudigel, President of the County of Karlsruhe, CEMR's german section
- Cor Lamers, Mayor of Schiedam, Association of Netherlands Municipalities
- David Simmonds, Councillor of the London Borough of Hillingdon, Local Government Association
- Flo Clucas, Councillor of Cheltenham, Local Government Association
- Francisco de la Torre Prados, Mayor of Malaga, Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces
- Giorgos Patoulis, Mayor of Amaroussi, President of the Central Union of Municipalities of Greece
- Ibon Uribe, Mayor of Galdakao, Association of Basque Municipalities
- Ilmar Reepalu, Councillor of Malmö, Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions
- Juan Espadas Cejas, Mayor of Sevilla, Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces
- Lena Micko, Councillor of Linköping, President of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions
- Luc Martens, Municipal Councillor of Roeselare, Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities
- Mariana Gâju, Mayor of Cumpăna, Association of Communes of Romania
- Marianne Overton, Councillor of Lincolnshire, Local Government Association
- Monica Cerutti, Councillor of the Piemonte Region, CEMR's italian section
- Oldřich Vlasák, Councillor of Hradec Kralové, Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic
- Patrick Klugman, Deputy Mayor of Paris, CEMR's french section
- Petr Kulhánek, Mayor of Karlovy Vary, Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic
- Philippe Laurent, Mayor of Sceaux, President of CEMR's french section
- Robert Sorin Negoită, Mayor of Sector 3 of Bucarest, President of the Romanian Municipalities Association
- Santo Caruso, Mayor of Aci Sant'Antonio, CEMR's italian section