



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

**25 Years of Action for Equality:
European Conference of Local and Regional Elected Women Representatives**

“ACTING LOCALLY FOR EQUALITY”

★ Pisa, 20-21 February 2008 ★

**Final Conference of the project “Implementation of the European Charter for
Equality of Women and Men in Local Life”**

- FINAL DECLARATION -

25 years ago, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) organised the first European Conference of local and regional elected women representatives on the theme of women and the renewal of the European community, upon the initiative of the President of the Province of Pisa, Fausta Giani Cecchini, and with the support of the European Commission.

Coming together in Pisa on 20th and 21st February 2008, we, representatives of local and regional government from 28 European countries,

Declare as follows:

1. We recognise the essential and positive role played by the European Union in the progress achieved regarding legislation promoting equality of women and men across our continent. However, we cannot forget or ignore the deep-rooted disparity between the *de jure* situation, and the *de facto* reality, and underline the enduring need to maintain and strengthen our efforts to combat the discrimination and inequalities which persist in political, social and economic spheres.
2. We underline the major role CEMR has played on behalf of equality of women and men in European local life throughout the last 25 years through numerous initiatives and projects, and in particular the constant work undertaken to promote a balanced representation and participation of women and men within democratic decision-making at local and regional level.
3. We particularly welcome the growing success of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, which, since its launch by CEMR in 2006, has to date received almost 600 signatures from across Europe. We underline, in this context, the vital role played both by CEMR's national associations, which have greatly contributed to the Charter's success – particularly by translating the Charter into their languages – and the European Commission, which has provided financial support for the development and follow-up of the Charter, as well as giving much support to past actions for equality.

The Charter aims to encourage local and regional governments to make a formal commitment to the principle of equality of women and men in local life, and to draw up and implement equality action plans in relation to their competences and services, to promote gender equality in all spheres of life, as well as to counter gender-based stereotypes and combat related discrimination and disadvantages.

4. This conference in Pisa – the final conference of the project on implementing the Charter – has provided the opportunity to assess and highlight local actions for equality which have been undertaken by many European local and regional authorities.

In the light of these experiences, we emphasize the importance of the Charter as a political and practical instrument for equality, and invite CEMR to continue in its work for equality of women and men in local life, in particular by facilitating the exchange of good practices between signatories and evaluating progress made in the Charter's implementation.

5. We welcome the proposal to draw up a guide, based on experiences gathered to date, to support signatories in drawing up action plans and to promote a more wide-scale implementation of the issues covered by the Charter. We also note the examples of possible "evaluation indicators" for the implementation of different articles of the Charter, and we underline that it will be important to continue to identify and refine such indicators gathered from practical experience on the ground.
6. We express our satisfaction that the common values of the member States of the Union presented in the reform Treaty adopted in Lisbon, on 13th December 2007, include that of equality between women and men, and with the duty on the Union to promote such equality. We will remain particularly vigilant to see that these provisions are given practical effect, once the Treaty has been ratified – which we hope will be done rapidly – by all the Member States.
7. We therefore call upon the European Union to promote pro-active measures for gender equality and to strengthen the application of empowerment and mainstreaming policies, in order to ensure real progress on the ground. We call upon the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Committee of Regions, the Council of Europe as well as the States and legislative regional governments to support the Charter. We note with regret that the European Commission currently has no specific programme to support the follow-up activity for the implementation of the Charter, and request that adequate means be identified in order to pursue this work in more depth. We welcome in this regard, that the European Commission annual policy strategy for 2009 affirms that standards for equality of women and men need to be effectively applied and evaluated, and express our willingness to co-operate to this end.
8. We express, in this context, our hope that the EU's new Institute for Gender Equality will become operational as rapidly as possible, and that the Institute co-operate fruitfully with CEMR and its national associations to support the implementation of the Charter, for example with the gathering and analysis of data on evaluation of local actions for equality in the light of the Charter.
9. With a view to the elections of the European Parliament taking place in June 2009, we appeal for the principle of parity to be respected in the candidacy lists so that the Parliament – the expression of European democracy – is constituted with a balanced representation of women and men. We further wish that the Committee on women's rights and gender equality will maintain a key role within the Parliament.
10. Aware of the essential role of local experiences and policies in the context of globalisation, we propose that an evaluation be carried out for local actions for equality in the framework of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women Committee (CEDAW) of the United Nations.
11. In solidarity with the citizens of the entire world, we hope that the Charter will play a positive role for equality beyond Europe, for example via the world organisation United Cities and Local Governments, of which CEMR constitutes the European section. Since gender equality is also one of the Millennium Development Goals, we hope that through the Charter, we can also contribute to the work of the Millennium Campaign and UN Habitat's work, as well as to other relevant international institutions.

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