



Local & Regional
Europe

CEMR multi-annual Strategy 2020-2030

January 2021

“Empowering local and regional Europe since 1951, while promoting a more inclusive and sustainable future for all citizens and generations to come”

CEMR's vision 2020-2030 |

Foreword | CEMR as a Driver of Change

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CEMR Secretary General, Frédéric Vallier

The COVID crisis puts us in a situation where we collectively need to rethink our way of living, our economic model and our relation to the environment. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 brings a situation that most people of the current generation haven't experienced in their lifetime. Within a short time, political leaders had to make difficult and wide-ranging decisions, adapt to an evolving situation, hoping to have positive effects on the health, economic and social situation of their populations.

There is a lot of uncertainty about the effectiveness of the measures taken; developments over the next months will reveal whether they will be successful. However, it is clear that the pandemic is changing our lives considerably and that we have to adapt to rapidly changing living and working conditions.

Other challenges may have been pushed into the background due to the pandemic, but they persist and need to be tackled within the changed environment. The threat created by climate change calls for a rapid transition of our over-carbonised societies to a more sober, more sustainable and fairer economy. Changes will concern all areas: political, economic, social, societal, environmental, health, climate, etc. and require forward-looking, courageous leadership and shared responsibility of all levels of governance.

For many years now, CEMR has been convinced and defended that nothing can be accomplished without the involvement of local and regional governments; what is more, we are now certain that the latter cannot effectively take action without being fully involved in defining the policies that concern them. Like the 2015 refugee crisis, the recent experience with the COVID-19 pandemic is again proof that subnational governments are at the frontline of managing emergencies. Effective crisis management plans need to be developed with local and regional governments and they must be equipped with the necessary resources to handle the challenges.

The recovery from the novel COVID crisis and its devastating impact on almost all parts of our lives is a unique opportunity to commit and invest in measures to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the

common European policy objectives as announced in the European Green Deal, the Digital Strategy and the European Pillar of Social Rights. This is our chance to foster the just, green, digital and social transition which is crucial for the next generations and for Europe to become more competitive with the rest of the world.

Arising from climate change, the rise of populist nationalism, division and polarisation, the foundations of society itself risk being overwhelmed. National governments, the traditional political structures, no longer seem able to provide appropriate responses alone and more and more institutions, citizens and private and public actors have been turning to local and regional governments to bring about a society that is more sustainable, less unequal and more mindful of the future of generations to come, the environment and biodiversity.

All of us, individually and collectively, governments, businesses and society are requested to play an active role and to set changes in motion in order to prepare for the future, to make the 21st century an era of renewal. Drawing on the strength of its 60 national associations and the 100,000 local and regional governments it represents, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions can and must play its role to the fullest in fostering the emergence of a new model of development. Development that is driven by territories, here in Europe and all over the world, propelled by actions undertaken by our cities and regions in cooperation with their partners, in all their diversity.

With this strategic review of its own future, CEMR is calling for a paradigm shift for European governance. Local and regional players have to contribute to public policies and to provide input as agents of change by committing to be partners of the national, European and international institutions. In short, partners who are committed, respected and consulted!

With the Green Deal, the Digital Strategy and the conference on the future of Europe, launched in 2019, the European Union hopes to address the doubts and meet the expectations of European citizens. The European legislator can count on our commitment,

provided that local and regional governments can participate in developing policy whenever it is of concern to them, from conception to implementation, as well as arbitration and negotiation.

We must also have to acknowledge that we are living in a globalised world with more and more effects on local and regional governments. Our reflections and actions cannot stop at European borders; we have to consider the linkages and interaction of our policies in relation to other parts of the world, and we have an interest in good relationships and cooperation with our immediate neighbours and our partners at international level.

This is ideal timing to bring these elements together with the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. CEMR and its members are committed to their implementation and we are convinced that they cannot be achieved without the involvement of all stakeholders, starting with local and regional governments and their representative associations. Our participation in the UN's representative and decision-making bodies – particularly through our international organisation, United Cities and Local Governments – must be guaranteed.

The challenges lying ahead of us are huge – but they may be a chance for local and regional governments to prove that they are important actors and agents for change to make Europe a better place and to save our planet for future generations.

Stefano BONACCINI



CEMR's vocation remains one of federating not only its members, but all representative organisations of cities and regions. On the strength of our reputation and the projects that we bring to life, we are the only organisation which can bring together the entire family of local and regional governments in Europe. We are taking action for the common good by uniting our members around activities that bring common knowledge and capacity and dealing with issues such as sustainable development, good governance, democracy, citizenship, equality, public services, twinning and international cooperation.

Together with our sister institutions, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and the Committee of the Regions of the European Union, we will continue to defend self-government, local democracy and territorial cohesion in Europe. We can go further still by imagining a new and ambitious approach to decentralisation and the relationships between the different levels of governance, grounded in our research and that of our members.

As we are celebrating our 70th anniversary in 2021, recalling that we are the most senior organisation representing local and regional governments, our multi-annual approach aims to accomplish a strategy for the next 10 years, drawn up for and with the entirety of our network. As the outcome of our work and discussions in recent years and particularly these last few months, our strategic project will be what we collectively make of it, a commitment as strong as that of our founders when they called for local self-government within European unity.

Frédéric VALLIER



Introduction: setting key core principles and overall vision of CEMR for 2030

CEMR's main objective for the next years is clear: achieve the recognition of the principles of local self-government as laid down in the European Charter, promote decentralisation and division of powers, including appropriate financial resources, and engage with citizens and all relevant actors in order to leave a safe and healthy planet to the next generations.

The Strategy

The objective of this Strategy is to provide a long-term vision of CEMR's activities and objectives, both on thematic priorities and on organisational issues. These will be complemented by concrete actions, which will be updated annually in the work programmes that will be prepared each autumn. This will allow the organisation – the members and the secretariat - to better plan, prepare and organise its work, including the allocation of resources.

The document is addressed to the CEMR member associations; they were invited to consult their members within their governance structure and provide feedback to the proposals. This approach contributed to a shared ownership, which is key for its successful implementation.

The implementation of the framework will be monitored and regularly assessed. CEMR's annual retreats will be moments to share views on the achievements, to adjust and to propose further actions. The Strategy as such shall be assessed in 2023 and 2027, and modifications or adjustments discussed and approved. In 2030, a final evaluation will take place.

The COVID-19 pandemic

The outbreak of the pandemic in 2020 has major impacts also on local and regional governments, which cannot yet be fully assessed at the time of the Strategy's drafting. However, we believe that the crisis highlights the relevance of our main objectives as presented in our Strategy: strong local and regional governments playing an active role in handling the challenges that we are facing and ensuring resilience in the face of future threats. We have to seize the opportunity and use the recovery from the crisis to "build back better" with shared values such as democracy, equality, and sustainability at the heart of our efforts to implement common European policy objectives, the SDGs and other relevant international agendas, such as the Paris Climate Agreement.

Link to 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, the member states of the United Nations adopted the [17 Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere. CEMR supports the implementation of the SDGs at local level and cooperates with its European partners (in the framework of PLATFORMA) and at international level (within our global organisation UCLG) by sharing information and experience, and advocating the role of subnational governments towards the European and international institutions. Where possible and appropriate, our strategy includes links to the relevant SDGs.

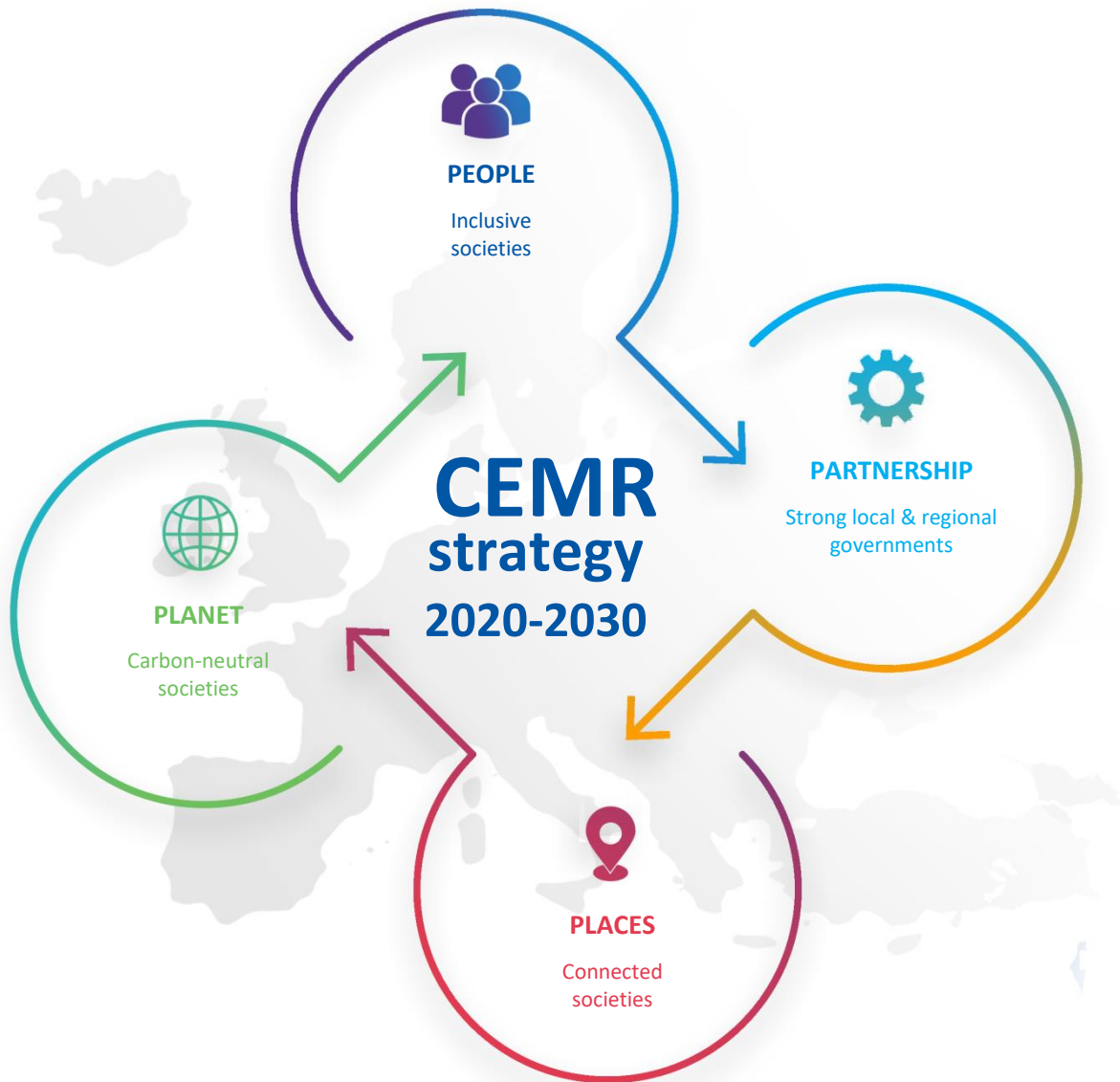
CEMR's strategy is structured along four 'P's: People, Partnership, Places and Planet, adapted to the European and EU context. Prosperity and Peace are of course also relevant in Europe and are reflected in our four Ps, ensuring that no one and no place is left behind.

The thematic part of the CEMR Strategy 2020-2030 is presented in the first part of the document. It is composed of four main pillars, each of them anchored on a specific vision. The second part of the document

lays out the direction in which CEMR as organisation aims to develop to achieve our vision:

“Empowering local and regional Europe since 1951, while promoting a more inclusive and sustainable future for all citizens and generations to come”

CEMR's vision 2020-2030 |



PART I: CEMR Strategy 2020–2030

1. PEOPLE: Towards inclusive societies

CEMR VISION: Leaving no one behind and bringing Europe closer to the citizens; foster policies at European, national and local levels for more inclusive societies

Inequalities still exist within Europe and among countries, regions and even local levels. In 2017, 112 million EU inhabitants were at risk of poverty or social exclusion, corresponding to 22% of the total population. Local and regional governments need to identify what they can do to create and foster inclusive and diverse communities, enabling citizens to engage in the shaping of local policies. The social divide in our communities is increasing and worrying.

However, as citizens grow increasingly aware that this widening division has a negative impact on their lives, they engage at local level. Communication technologies and innovative participative methodologies can be useful instruments, if applied appropriately. Sharing knowledge, learning from each other and introducing knowledge management tools may be beneficial to CEMR members as there are positive and encouraging examples that can serve as inspiration.

Gender equality has still not been achieved in Europe. In the past 30 years, gender equality has been high on the agenda of CEMR and it will continue to be in the years to come and until real progress is made. CEMR's 2019 study on women in politics shows that women's representation in decision-making - a key indicator of women's empowerment - is increasing very slowly. This is just one area which illustrates that much remains to be done to overcome the gender stereotypes and structural barriers to equality that women face in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres.

In our position paper (2018), we expressed our view that every girl, boy, woman and man should enjoy equal human rights and equal opportunities in all spheres of life; we called for action in key areas, e.g. political commitment, participation, ending violence against girls and women, economic empowerment, etc. It remains important to mainstream gender equality in policies, legislation, programmes and budgets. We must bring the local voice and contribute to the development and implementation of European gender

equality strategies and share our knowledge and expertise in Europe and with our partners at international level.

One of today's major challenges is digital technology and the impact that digital transition and technological innovation will have on the way we work, we communicate, we organise our day-to-day life. Local



The word clouds in this document do not reflect CEMR's priorities for the multi-annual strategy. It only serves illustration purpose.

and regional governments are experiencing unprecedented changes to which they have to adapt: the services for which they are responsible will be more and more organised on the basis of digital technology. There are opportunities, e.g. providing services closer to the citizens, user-centred services, but also challenges such as the necessary infrastructure, interoperability, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and collaborative economy.

A crucial issue remains the use of public data and its commercialisation, in particular considering the economic power of the major players, and the limited regulation that exists so far. All these issues need to be addressed by local and regional governments in the coming years and solutions need to be found.

Many activities of local and regional governments are regulated by European law; in particular the organisation of public services falls under the EU legal

framework for public services based on the concept of the European internal market.

In the aftermath of the COVID crisis a focus on a Post-EU Strategic Framework on Health and Safety at Work needs to be developed.

Strategically design the Action Plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights to integrate the local and regional conditions which must also be taken into account by the European and national legislation.

However, globalisation and digitalisation have changed the environment in which services are organised and provided. International trade agreements need to better reflect the SDGs, their impact on the territories better assessed and taken into account during the negotiations, in which representatives of local and regional governments should be associated.

With our Standing Committee for Equality, the European Charter and the Observatory, CEMR is well equipped to continue engaging local and regional governments into an agenda for equality that we propose to shape around four objectives to be reached by 2030:

Objective 1.1: Local and regional governments to provide an environment, mechanisms and processes that encourage civic engagement of all groups within the population to bring about inclusive and diverse local communities.

Objective 1.2: Promote gender equality at European and international level as a transversal issue: gender equality to be addressed in its own right and implications for women and men assessed in all policy areas, including budgets.

Objective 1.3: Take measures to achieve that education, public services and employment in local and regional governments are free from inequalities and discrimination.

Objective 1.4: Ensure that the rules and regulations concerning the provision of local and regional public services in the internal market are aligned with reality and challenges faced by local and regional governments and with the SDGs.

Sustainable Development Goals covered by this pillar:



2. PARTNERSHIP: Harnessing local and regional governments' strength

CEMR VISION: Achieve recognition of the principles of local self-government, subsidiarity and proportionality at national, European and international level; ensure involvement of local and regional governments in the preparation and decision-making of relevant policies with impact on their territories

Local and regional governments are facing many challenges, and political leaders are confronted with unexpected challenges, such as the refugee crisis in 2015 and the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and long-term challenges such as climate change and its consequences. Not only must they manage everyday local issues, but these must be addressed within an increasingly complex framework, often due to European or international politics, developments, rules and regulations, such as: climate change, increasing social inequalities, demographic change, the impact of a globalised economy, digitalisation, etc.

It becomes more and more obvious that strong and well-equipped sub-national governments are crucial to tackling the challenges that we face. The European Charter of Local Self-Government provides the adequate framework, in particular defining the concept, the structures and financial resources for local authorities to deliver the tasks. It remains our ambition to promote decentralisation, in particular in times where we observe attempts by central governments to re-centralise powers and competences cutting financial resources, or transferring tasks and responsibilities without the necessary funding, thus reducing local and regional governments' capacity to deliver their services effectively.

Crisis like the COVID-19 is bringing a major economic and social turnout with repercussions on local and regional governments' finances and investment capacities that can last several years like it was the case after the 2008-2009 economic turmoil.

We believe in the appropriate division of powers as we are convinced that sub-national government (towns, counties, intermediary authorities and regions) are the backbones of the political and administrative structure of our states.

The autonomy of local and regional governments is the bulwark of personal liberties; here, citizens can shape policy, influence how their communities are governed and play an active role in the society.



Strong local and regional governments are crucial parts of democratic states, built on shared values, such as human rights, equality, freedom of speech and expression and respect for the rule of law. However, we realise that these are not irreversible and must be nurtured; local politicians experience expressions of hate and are even threatened physically and on social networks.

We need to further develop and apply measures to achieve peaceful and inclusive societies, try to re-gain citizens' trust in politicians and harness their engagement in local policies. Exchanges of experience and knowledge in the form of town twinning, peer-to-peer learning or other formats help participants to cultivate the feeling of belonging to a common European community. CEMR will continue promoting the 'governance in partnership' concept, which involves all actors in horizontal and vertical cooperation towards the achievement of shared ambitions, and other measures that foster a European identity based on our common democratic values.

Local and regional governments play an important role in the implementation of European Union policies in their territories. Given their unique role, it is essential that local and regional governments' expertise is taken into consideration when European legislation and policies are being prepared, implemented, monitored, evaluated and modified.

We recall that we do not live in isolation in Europe: we are connected to the rest of the world and geopolitical developments, universal challenges, including demographic, economic, environmental, climate and security issues that cannot be ignored.

Local and regional governments have to be aware of their connection with global actors and actions: the way they organise their services and purchase goods can have an international dimension and impact elsewhere (policy coherence for sustainable development). Many challenges at local and regional level in Europe are experienced world-wide. These must be tackled collectively from a global perspective, so as to find long lasting, sustainable and common solutions.

The experience with the management of the COVID pandemic has confirmed that effective and adequate measures to tackle the crisis require very good cooperation of all levels of government. Therefore, regional and local governments must be involved in the design and delivery of policies to face such types of emergencies. It must be ensured that sub-national governments are adequately prepared and have the capacity and resources to handle these challenges.

The role of local and regional governments and their associations needs to be officially recognised in EU international action and at the global scale. In collaboration with our international partners, we need to be assured a strong and credible voice in global policy making and an equal seat around the table to reach the 2030 Agenda goals.

CEMR has sought to define its role in international action and to this end, CEMR has been proactive in seeking the involvement of local governments in EU development cooperation, having adequate financial support and institutionalising a structured policy dialogue with the EU for local and regional governments and their national associations at country level, and with European peers through decentralised cooperation.

A Framework Partnership Agreement was signed between CEMR and the European Commission in 2015 and CEMR as leader of PLATFORMA is organising the activities of its current 34 partners, among which are 17 member associations of CEMR.

Our ambition is to strengthen the ties between European Local governments and their partners from around the globe to help disseminate good practices, share knowledge and ensure that our democratic values serve as a model for the rest of the world. The FPA offer a

perfect Framework to engage with the European Commission and we intend to further intensify this way of working in the next years.

CEMR as lead of PLATFORMA and as the European Section of UCLG participates in a number of activities at international level, in particular in the area of climate, the localisation of SDGs, local finances, gender equality, capacity building, etc.

With PLATFORMA's support we have also established collaboration with UCLG Africa to jointly work on an African Charter for equality and the engagement of young elected representatives. Furthermore, we have established constructive collaborative arrangement with other international organisations and actors, such as the OECD, UN Women, C40, ICLEI, etc. It is time to define CEMR's role at the international level; a CEMR international strategy will clarify our ambition as CEMR, complementing our activities in PLATFORMA.

Objective 2.1: Develop appropriate and effective tools in the European governance structures where local and regional governments and their representative organisations participate in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and legislation that is relevant for the local and regional level.

Objective 2.2: Develop effective tools and provide a platform to enable cooperation and exchange within Europe, to bolster the dissemination of knowledge and good governance practices across the LRG sector.

Objective 2.3: Foster cooperation and partnership between local and regional governments and representative organisations throughout Europe and with peers in partner countries. To this end encourage twinning, foster international cooperation, and continue to partner with the European Commission in its international action.

Objective 2.4: Advocate and strengthen the role of local and regional governments in the UNFCCC negotiations and contribute to international cooperation of local and regional government and to the success of collaboration with European and International organisations and associations of LRGs

Sustainable Development Goals covered by this pillar:



3. PLACES: Towards cooperative and connected territories

CEMR VISION: No place left behind; Local and regional governments as change agents will play a major role in ensuring good quality of life for all citizens, no matter where they live, through an appropriate European framework

Research shows that territorial fragmentation is increasing and demonstrates the importance of digital infrastructure and services, access to fast-speed internet, skills and appropriate hard- and software for a broad range of our society.

So far, private and public investments were concentrated in certain sectors and certain geographical areas. This has an impact on the economic activity in a given area and on the people that live there. However, it is one of our core European principles that a good quality of life should be ensured to all our citizens, no matter where they live.

People look for the necessary environment and services needed to enjoy well-being and quality of life. Local communities are also hubs for endogenous economic and social development, innovation and cultural exchanges.

Cities and communities have to deal with a number of challenges: urbanisation or depopulation, pressure on the housing market and affordable housing, mobility and accessibility, an ageing and more diverse society, relevance and use of public spaces, influence and use of technology, etc. European regions, cities and towns are also affected by international influences: globalisation, strategic decisions of internationally acting companies, transactions of finance investors, international trade agreements etc.

The development of digital communication has many repercussions on our lives and the way the new generations envisaged their social life. The development of teleworking, online shopping, changes in mobility, etc. lead to new thinking about spatial planning, architecture, urban and rural development, transport and provision of public services. Municipalities of all sizes will have to adapt to the consequences of climate change such as draughts, floods, heat and cold waves.

It becomes obvious that change is needed if we want to achieve the shift to a sustainable and resilient future.

Local and regional governments are agents of change and contribute considerably to make these changes happen. Therefore, we need informed debates and reflections on the territorial dimension of policies, addressing the issues at stake in an inclusive and holistic manner. It will be important to discuss and



design concepts for future territorial, urban and rural development with local and regional representatives. In the EU, this will be reflected in the debates on the European cohesion policy, the Green Deal, the Next Generation EU recovery plan, and how they serve the needs of the territories, and the citizens. The next funding period (2021-2027) will provide considerable financial support for a smarter, greener, more connected Europe, a more social Europe and a Europe closer to citizens.

It will be crucial to improve the uptake of the funds, through advocacy towards funds and financial instruments that are the most accessible for local and regional governments but climate change knowing no borders, it will also be crucial to enhance the capacities of the national associations and -by extension- of the European local and regional governments through – for example – facilitating peer-learning, trainings, exchange of knowledge and of experience among CEMR members and other relevant actors / partners.

Objective 3.1: Urban, rural and territorial development policies at national and European level based on an integrated and inclusive approach.

Objective 3.2: Local and regional governments have the capacities, skills, resources and funds to invest in the sustainable and long-term growth of their

territories, both in the European Union, in Europe and in partner countries.

Objective 3.3: Identify key issues for local and regional governments linked to the economic and societal challenges and to their role and responsibilities as employers; support CEMR members to confront challenges for local and regional governments in the areas of innovation and digitalisation as well as education and training.

Sustainable Development Goals covered by this pillar:



4. PLANET: Towards carbon neutral societies

CEMR VISION: Contribute to Europe becoming the first carbon neutral continent with highly resilient territories through managing all natural resources in a sustainable way

It is high time to manage our natural resources (water, air, soil) in a sustainable way to ensure that the future generations can have sufficient quantity and good quality of these resources. This will be a challenge considering the growth of the world’s population and the limited capacity of our planet.

The impact of climate change on forests leads to an increasing ecosystem degradation and a dramatic loss of biodiversity. This requires bold measures, including the sustainable production and consumption, which is the objective of the European Union’s circular economy concept, aiming to become a resource-efficient, green and competitive low-carbon economy. We need to maintain the value of products, materials and resources in the economy as long as possible, and to minimise waste and pollution.

Economic growth needs to be decoupled from the consumption of natural resources - a challenge for the European economy, which depends on the import of raw materials. Recycling and reuse of raw material, such as energy intensive materials, materials with a high impact on the environment and food waste will be crucial.

Climate change is the greatest global challenge of our generation. The speed in which the change takes place is not linear but progressive and our efforts are not even enough to stop the trend: 2018 was the year with

the highest CO₂ emissions since the beginning of the recordings.

The lockdown, enforced in many countries at the beginning of the COVID crisis, considerably reduced traffic and CO₂ emissions and thus improved air quality. Could this dramatic experience actually help the environmental cause, or are we going to return to “business as usual”? The challenge that we are facing is to seize the chance of the recovery and to invest in the transition to a more innovative, sustainable, resource-efficient and circular economy.

This transformative change across all sectors is



anchored in the European Green Deal, the new roadmap adopted by the Commission in December 2019 to drive the European Union towards climate neutrality by 2050. The COVID and the climate crisis should both represent an opportunity for change to advance towards this objective.

Modern society depends on reliable, affordable, sustainable and clean energy supply and services to function smoothly and to develop equitably. The European Union has decided to transform from a fossil fuels-based to a low-carbon economy with a digital and a consumer centric energy system, and to decouple greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumption and gross domestic product. Innovation, deployment of renewable energy and increasing energy efficiency need to be stepped up, and smart investments to stimulate the process.

Local and regional governments are affected in many areas and have to adapt, take measures to mitigate and prepare for the effects of the climate changes. CEMR supports the EU specific targets for 2030 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the high ambition to become carbon neutral by 2050, but these targets need to be accompanied by appropriate legal framework and financial and human resources, while avoiding detailed regulation that does not recognize varying conditions across the EU. For this to happen effectively and on time, it is essential for local and regional governments to be empowered with the appropriate means, skills and resources to integrate the necessary adaptation and mitigations measures into their urban and regional planning.

CEMR is engaged in the Covenant of Mayors since the beginning as we believe local and regional governments can learn from each other and exchange good practices to build enhanced capacities locally; the EU Covenant of Mayors is the largest movement for local climate and energy actions and offers support to those that engage in reducing CO₂ emissions, increasing use of renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Objective 4.1: Accelerate the transition towards a circular economy by supporting local governments to develop and apply instruments and knowledge, and facilitate the mobilisation of financial opportunities to achieve and if possible, exceed the objectives agreed in the EU.

Objective 4.2: Support EU’s commitments on climate action and energy transition, actively engaging and influencing EU legislation and initiatives such as the New Green Deal and National Energy and Climate Plans.

Objective 4.3: Provide information and support the exchange of experiences on innovative funding for sustainable investments at local and regional level, and assess potential collaboration with financial actors.

Sustainable Development Goals covered by this pillar:



PART II: CEMR an organisation fit for the future

In addition to the thematic and content-related priorities, CEMR as organisation also wants to develop further, in particular strengthening its relations and cooperation with its members.

VISION: CEMR, the European umbrella organisation of local and regional government associations with members that share the ambitions and engage in joint initiatives for the mutual benefit of all

I. Active members and shared ownership

As a membership-based organisation, CEMR's focus is to serve the needs and interests of its members. Better linking the EU / European level actions of CEMR with the national, regional, local level interests and context would be beneficial for both CEMR and the member associations.

In order to demonstrate the power and representativeness of local and regional government associations, CEMR needs to have strong messages, and strong representatives that act as voices and faces of the organisation. With our study on '[national associations of local and regional governments in Europe](#)', published in June 2019, we showed that the national associations cover 95% of their countries' population, and 92% of them are regularly consulted by their central governments. These are important indicators supporting our claim as a representative umbrella organisation.

For CEMR's visibility and reputation, it is important to have knowledgeable representatives at European and international level; they should represent the whole spectrum of our membership concerning the level and function. We aim to reflect diversity and in particular gender equality, and geographical balance among the representatives, in our statutory bodies and among the spokespersons. We also wish to involve young elected representatives in our work and debates.

Objective: Foster the involvement of CEMR members and strengthen the sense of shared ownership of CEMR and its members

II. Strengthening our advocacy and public interest lobbying work

The implementation of CEMR's Lobbying Strategy, adopted in 2016, responded to the need by CEMR and

our members, to reinforce the clout wielded by local and regional governments, in framing the issues and shaping public policy, where their interests are impacted. This is as much in an EU, a broader European and a wider global context. It is clear that advocating for LRGs and highlighting their role in transposing effectively public policies and legislation to the sub national level, requires first-rate local knowledge and evidence that can be contributed to the policy-making process.

Therefore, as the representative of all local and regional governments in Europe, CEMR will continue efforts to amplify the voices and concerns of LRGs in the governance system of the European Union and the Council of Europe. We will ensure that our positions prepared and that decisions taken, fully respecting the interests of our affiliates and according to the principles of the European Charter on Local Self-governance.

Objective: Be the essential reference for all policies related to LRG at European and international level, and the reliable partner of the European institutions

III. Providing a platform of exchange of knowledge and experience

Sharing knowledge and experience has been identified as a priority of our organisation, to complement our advocacy and public interest lobbying work towards the European institutions. The three assessments conducted in the last two years on our research and studies strategy, our project (2018) and our policy work (2019) showed that members are interested in exchange of experience, sharing knowledge and practices. The result of the survey on the policy work confirms that many members have the need to have a fuller view of best practices, that they are interested in having access to information on best practices and good examples on how to implement the ambitious goals of the policy work. Whether it relates to funding opportunities, technical topics which require sound hands-on experience or exchange on new policies.

Through the last years, a lot of information has been gathered by CEMR and its members, which should be shared in an organised and structured way. It could be used for both, for advocacy and for learning and capacity building of local and regional governments and their associations.

Objective: Develop tools and methods to stimulate the exchange of knowledge and experience among the members, aiming at providing a knowledge centre for mutual benefit

IV. A sustainable, transparent and accountable organisation

CEMR is promoting sustainability and therefore has the intention to let actions follow the word. Therefore; the secretariat has started to prepare a guide on how to be(come) a (more) sustainable and greener organisation. The document covers several categories such as office equipment, transport and mobility, catering, hotels, events, technical visits, individual behaviour, compensation of our carbon footprint, awareness raising and the question of Eco labelling.

The travel and meeting restrictions introduced with COVID gave a boost to virtual meetings. Within short time everybody got familiar with the new way of communicating, and many welcomed the fact that it has become easier, less time-consuming and less costly to participate. With this positive experience and considering the financial and ecological implications of travelling to meetings, CEMR will organise more virtual meetings in the future.

CEMR will start applying a transparent and collaborative way of preparing, planning, monitoring and assessing its work. On the basis of the strategic framework, the annual work programmes will be prepared and translated into activities along a timeline, with indication of involved staff and politicians and the allocated financial resources. In addition to the reports on the implementation of the work programme and the achievements in spring and at the end of the year, a management report will be prepared with details about the link between the activities, the achievements and the spent resources.

Objective: Introduce measures, ways and procedures to make CEMR more sustainable, greener, transparent and accountable

V. Strengthening CEMR's communication and visibility

As the Internet, social media and teleworking invade our daily lives, digital transformation is key to shifting our practices in terms of political communication and networking.

More than ever, CEMR and its member associations must turn to digital technologies and adapt their communication tools by taking into account the changing behaviours and new expectations of citizens, local and regional elected representatives.

To support this process and develop new conditions for strengthened cooperation between associations, CEMR will lead a network of communications professionals from member associations. Its ambition: to build a platform for exchange of expertise and knowledge on communication, press issues and social networks, and to ensure the effective coordination of communication activities and joint campaigns.

In this respect, CEMR and its associations' capacity to maintain a presence, notably online, and to engage their elected officials and experts in communication, information and advocacy activities will be critical for the organisation's proper development, whether in Brussels or in the territories.

Finally, CEMR aims to optimise these exchanges, whether virtual or in person, capitalise on our knowledge and secure our shared know-how, notably through internal and external portals for information and training.

Objective V.1: Lead a network of communication professionals from CEMR member associations to strengthen the voice and visibility of local and regional elected officials.

Objective V.2: Strengthen the engagement of CEMR members in communication and advocacy activities at the local, European and international levels.

Objective V.3: Facilitate the exchange of good practices and interaction between experts, local and regional elected officials through tools tailor-made to the needs of CEMR member associations.

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 60 national associations of municipalities and regions from 41 European countries. Together these associations represent some 100,000 local and regional governments.

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 member 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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