



Local & Regional
Europe



CEMR 2021-2022 work programme



Introduction

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

CEMR 2020-2030 vision |

This document takes into account the discussion that took place during the CEMR Retreat in September 2020 and outlines what will drive us – members and Secretariat – for the next two years: 2021 and 2022. It shows the steps we will take to implement the multiannual strategy for 2020-2030, with a new transversal and comprehensive approach to the CEMR Secretariat’s work.

This work programme describes the general objective of the organisation, the four specific objectives and the main lines of action for the next two years. The annex provides further information on the activities and expected results for each specific objective.

The coronavirus crisis has underscored the relevance of our main objectives as presented in CEMR’s multiannual 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”*.

The European recovery plan, proposed in summer 2020 by the European Commission

to pave the way out of the crisis, constitutes a historic act of solidarity for our continent and a turning point for the European Union. We have to seize the opportunity and use the recovery strategy not only to get out of the crisis, but also to “build forward better”, based on shared values such as democracy, equality, and sustainability.

These are the values at the heart of our efforts to implement common European policy objectives, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other relevant international agendas, such as the Paris Climate Agreement.

2021 will be crucial for all of us as it will mark the 70th anniversary of CEMR and the 15th anniversary of CEMR’s European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life. 2021 will be the occasion to show our major contributions to local democracy and decentralisation throughout the years, and to reflect on the role of municipalities, regions, their associations and CEMR in a world already being transformed by the health crisis, climate change and the many other challenges of our time.

We not only wish to organise a series of celebrations for 2021, but we also want to make this a year of renewal with the launch of our multi-annual strategy and further reflection on our activities despite the unusual circumstances we are all going through.

¹ CEMR Strategy 2020-2030 - Updated Draft, Oct. 2020, p. 3

Overarching objective



Our overarching objective is to maintain our leading role in making the voice of local and regional governments (LRGs) and their representative associations heard in Europe and in the world, for a sustainable, green and resilient recovery.

As defined in the multiannual strategy, our reflection will be set around four “Ps”:

1. PEOPLE – Inclusive societies, leaving no one behind and bringing Europe closer to citizens:

Local and regional governments addressing societal challenges (including the impact of COVID). What role for national governments and European policies and initiatives?

2. PARTNERSHIP – Local self-government, subsidiarity, cooperation and involvement of local and regional governments:

Specific objectives

We will inspire the EU institutions and Member States thanks to a strong political and operational vision for a sustainable and resilient recovery in Europe’s territories. We will lobby for better support from EU institutions and national governments for local and regional governments’ actions and policies.

We aim to increase national associations’ capacity to engage at European, international and national levels, for sustainable, equitable

The management of the COVID pandemic has highlighted the importance of empowering local and regional governments in the national, European and international contexts.

3. PLACES – No territories left behind and a high quality of life:

The important role of local and regional governments in stimulating economic development and leading the way to a sustainable and resilient future.

4. PLANET – Carbon neutral Europe / building resilient territories:

Local and regional governments’ contribution to achieving carbon neutral societies, to protect the environment and to create resilient territories

and democratic development. To this end, CEMR will contribute to increasing the effectiveness of local and regional governments’ associations through learning, exchanges and peer-review.

CEMR will also ensure the visibility and messages of local and regional governments and their national associations through pan-European campaigns and powerful communication towards EU institutions, non-

EU bodies like the OECD and national governments as appropriate.

To meet all these objectives, CEMR's institutional capacity will be further strengthened to enable good governance and coordination.

To achieve our objectives, the CEMR Secretariat will adopt a new internal structure based on four new thematic teams (International Partnerships, Citizenship, Territories, Climate & Environment), each including policy, communication, administration and project officers.

The teams will be supported by horizontal communication, knowledge-sharing and internal resources teams and led by a coordination team. All teams are working in a coordinated manner to build synergies on transversal issues and activities.

From now on, CEMR will focus on fewer policies, strengthen its knowledge pillar and

accelerate the streamlining of internal processes in the years to come to adapt itself to the new context created by the health crisis across Europe and the world.

It will continue the internal reflection work on CEMR's organisation undertaken by a taskforce of 6 colleagues in 2020, who produced 15 recommendations. These were the starting point for improving our processes and develop a new CEMR structure.

Prioritise activities



Result-oriented



All members included
& can contribute



1. Be the essential reference for all policies related to local and regional governments at European and international level, and the reliable partner for European institutions

Expected result

The role, credibility and visibility of local and regional governments and their representative associations in achieving sustainable local and regional development is boosted vis-a-vis the European institutions.

Sample actions

The negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021-2027 are now coming to an end and EU programmes are expected to start as of January 2021. Monitoring the Multiannual Financial Framework and European budget for the 2021-2027 period will be essential, in order to influence the programming and

maximise the funding opportunities at EU and national levels in different areas covered by CEMR.

Furthermore, we will also partner with European institutions on the global stage to foster a local and regional perspective in multilateral organisations and in international fora. CEMR will also represent local and regional government interests in non-EU bodies, such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) work on public investment or territorial development.

2. Be the European umbrella organisation of local and regional government associations with members that share ambitions and engage in joint initiatives for mutual benefit

Expected result

National associations are strong players at the national, European and international levels. They mobilise local and regional governments and express their voice on strategic topics and advocate before national governments to have a seat at the table.

Sample actions

Knowledge and actions are based on facts and evidence, learning from peers, exchanges of policy practices and experiences, and strong collaboration across different levels of government. Providing methodologies, knowledge and tools is essential for strengthening national associations and will enable them to implement national, European and international policy frameworks in line with their competences.

3. Become a highly visible and influential thought leader on issues related to local and regional governments

Expected result

Local and regional governments, national associations and CEMR gain in visibility, able

to impactfully share our messages with European and international players.

Sample actions

We will pool our associations' expertise through the use of studies, surveys and best practices, so as to improve the quality of our content both in substance (data, facts, figures, impact on local and regional governments) and in form (a more hard-hitting, inspiring and illustrated style and storytelling).

Our messages will be disseminated through various media including print publications and video. By intensifying our communications during special campaigns and on key dates, in collaboration with our members and elected officials, we will maximise our visibility and political impact.

4. Switch to a more sustainable and inclusive organisation

Expected result

The functioning of CEMR's internal processes and with members are more efficient and inclusive.

Sample actions

CEMR will guarantee a democratic decision-making process in reaching its views and positions through the political engagement of its Presidency and the leading role of its thematic spokespersons and Policy Committee members. Members, in all their diversity, will be able to equitably participate in its activities and decision-making bodies. Based on changes introduced in 2020 and in its multiannual strategy, CEMR strives to reflect the territorial and regional diversity of its membership in the composition of CEMR's secretariat.

CEMR is also adapting its working methods to a changing environment, using smart technologies to facilitate interactive online debates, ensuring the continuous

development and wellbeing of its staff and guaranteeing smart and green procedures for the years to come.

Main lines of action for the next two years

To respond to the general objectives of the work programme, the following thematic actions will be prioritised:

PEOPLE

- Gender mainstreaming, and general promotion of universal human rights at European and international levels
- Capacity of member associations to carry out advocacy activities at the national/EU level
- Visibility of local and regional government and LRG association initiatives on topics covered by the Citizenship Team
- Consolidate the CEMR Committee of young elected leaders
- Development of local action plans and capacity-building activities (training academies) to reinforce LRG's and associations' skills and knowledge on inclusion policies at the local level
- Develop a CEMR position on EC Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 supported by the findings of the IncluCities.

PARTNERSHIP

- Empower local and regional governments and their associations to enhance their decentralised cooperation activities, with the support of their national governments, the EU and the international community, notably on the following clusters of topics: Development education and awareness raising, Sustainable Development Goals, Neighbourhood South, Eastern Partnership, and National associations focal points
- Mainstreaming gender equality and youth inclusion in development policies and practice

- Reviving twinning in Europe

PLACES

- European Semester: support to national associations to enable them to advocate at national level (to link with structural funds, economic governance, recovery plan).
- Economic and social recovery after the COVID-19 crisis
- Multiannual Financial Framework and European budget
- EU Funding programmes: ensure information on how programmes are implemented in different countries and how local governments can access funds
- Digitalisation: contribute to the EU's digital transformation and ensure local and regional perspectives in policymaking; With the support of expertise from members on digital policy: advocacy for the role of local and regional government in the digital transition of Europe.

PLANET

- Contribute to the EU's transition to a climate-neutral, resource-efficient clean and circular economy in a just and inclusive way, aligned with the Green Deal objectives, ensure local and regional perspectives in policy-making while avoiding detailed regulation that does not recognise varying conditions across the EU

- Localising the environmental and climate objectives of the United Nations' Agenda 2030 and its SDGs
- More visibility of what CEMR is doing in environment & climate area
- Foster the exchange of experiences led at local level on environment and climate policies and facilitate capacity building and access to funding in order to empower local and regional authorities and their national associations to take action and achieve ambitious goals
- Sustainable finances & access to funding: information about funding opportunities for climate & environment

Key dates for CEMR and its associations to join forces throughout 2021

We will mobilise our members associations on some of these dates to cooperate on communication campaigns.

- 28 January 2021 CEMR 70th anniversary
- March 2021 UN Commission on the Status of Women
- 7 May 2021 Social Summit in Porto
- 9 May 2021 Europe Day
- 12 May 2021 15th anniversary of the Charter for equality between women and men in local life
- 31 May-4 June 2021 Annual Green Week
- July 2021 UN High Level Political Forum
- September 2021 State of the Union Speech
- 16-21 September 2021 European mobility week
- 25 September 2021 Annual UN Sustainable Development Goals day
- September CEMR Annual Retreat
- 11-14 October 2021 European Week of Regions and Cities
- 1-12 November 2021 COP26 in Glasgow
- 15-30 November 2021 Annual European Days of Local Solidarity
- Autumn 2021 Event on digitalisation hosted by CEM President in Bologna
- 2022 Event during the French Presidency of the EU or CEMR Conference
- 2022 World Urban Forum in Katowice

In-depth: Specific objectives (annex)

Expected results and proposal for activities

1. Specific objective (1): Be the essential reference for all policies related to local and regional governments at European and international level, and the reliable partner of the European institutions

We aim to be a recognised organisation representing local and regional governance with a clear focus on ensuring that EU legislation responds to the needs of those who have to implement it on the ground. Actions undertaken are based on past experiences and, in particular, on the evaluation of CEMR policy work and externally-funded activities. We believe that the better CEMR members are informed, the more impactful our advocacy will be.

In this sense, we aim to systemise and reinforce monitoring and information gathering on behalf of members. It will also help reinforce the dialogue with decision-makers in EU Member States which should boost the capacity of the organisation to deliver proactive and timely proposals and suggestions that feed the policy development at the level of both the EU and its Member States. CEMR has a long history in advocating for better regulation and providing input on how EU legislation is dealt with on the ground. This is one of its strengths, as only legal provisions that can adapt to local circumstances will be properly implemented. CEMR will continue this work as a cross-cutting priority.

We will focus on the role of and support to local and regional governments as policymakers, public service providers and gatherers of territorial stakeholders.

This role of sub-national governments is crucial for reviving citizens' confidence in European policy and decision-makers in the context of the Future of Europe.

Activity 1.1 Monitoring, analysis and contribution to EU policies and programming, and dissemination to local and regional government associations and their members across Europe

Expected results

Through a regular and thorough flow of information between the CEMR Secretariat and members, European local and regional government associations are informed in an appropriate and qualitative manner about EU policies and are thus better equipped to influence them.

Activities

Policy monitoring for the next two years will focus on various topics, depending on the EU legislative agenda.

Concrete proposals for EU programming, legislative timelines, thematic notes and policy briefs will be drafted as well as 'facts & figures' or reflections on some policy processes, to help members understand the impact of EU policies and initiatives in their national context. CEMR secretariat's commitments in these areas will be discussed and defined within the expert groups, depending on the priorities given by members and the resources available.

Overview of the topics covered in the four Ps:

People

- Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025
- The Rights and Values programme
- EU Disability strategy
- New Pact on Migration and Asylum with the Qualifications regulation and the Reception Conditions Directive
- EU Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 in synergy with the work being performed in the IncluCities external funded activities.
- Legislation to prevent and combat specific forms of gender-based violence
- Action plan on the European Pillar of Social Rights including the Adequate Minimum wage-proposal and with the exemption to exclusively set wages through collective agreements.
- Conference on the Future of Europe
- Social dialogue committee of LRGs

Partnership

- Programming phase - Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)
- Overview of culture in the EU's external relations strategy, mapping of members' practices on culture and decentralised cooperation
- Development Education and Awareness Raising programme (DEAR)
- Future of the Eastern Partnership
- Future EU-Africa strategy
- Enlargement package
- EU action plan on gender equality and women's empowerment in external relations for 2021-2025 (GAP III)

Places

- Multiannual Financial Framework and European budget
- ESF+
- European Semester

- EU financial support to LRGs for the social and economic recovery
- Public procurement & State aid, if any proposal of the European Commission
- Digitalisation: Digital Services Act and other relevant legislative files.
- Better regulation: new Communication and Fit for Future platform
- Enabling investments at local and regional level for sustainable recovery
- Cohesion policy: partnership principle, implementation of EU funds, the European Urban Initiative
- Rural development: long term vision for rural areas

Planet

- Green deal package
- Climate ('Fit for 55')
- Circular economy action plan
- 8th Environmental Action Programme
- Zero pollution action plan
- Water legislation (urban water treatment directive revision)
- Energy legislation
- Renovation wave, including New European Bauhaus
- Sustainable investments for a green recovery
- Smart and Sustainable Mobility strategy
- COP 26
- Biodiversity (EU and international)

Members will actively contribute through expert group meetings (twice a year), but also via questionnaires provided by the CEMR Secretariat. National perspectives will feed into pan-European overviews on specific issues, as in the case of the upcoming survey on gender balance on members' boards (2021).

A series of digital policy updates will be shared with members of expert groups and CEMR committees. Visibility will also be given to policy actions through social media,

contacts with European press, articles on websites managed by CEMR (CEMR, Charter Observatory, twinning, PLATFORMA and IncluCities and others managed by partners (Covenant of Mayors, Green City Accord, Covenant of Mayors for Sub-Saharan Africa).

We will also showcase our activities via CEMR and externally-funded activities' newsletters such as LOCAL INSIGHT (targeting the general public, EU institutions and local and regional governments) and IN BRIEF (members only).

Activity 1.2 Influence EU policies and advocate for easier access of local and regional governments to European decision-making processes

Expected result

Thanks to CEMR's influence, European institutions will take better account of local and regional governments and their associations' perspectives in the implementation of new programmes. Both CEMR's Secretariat and member associations will continue engaging with both EU institutions in Brussels, at national level and in EU Delegations.

Activities

Active relations will be strengthened with decision-makers in the European institutions, notably the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of the EU (including the rotating presidencies), the European External Action Services and its EU Delegations in partner countries, the European Committee of the Regions and the Congress of the Council of Europe, as appropriate.

Events and webinars will be organised in 2021 and 2022 to ensure visibility to the contributions of local and regional governments and their associations to EU policymaking, notably on policy coherence,

urban mobility, COVID-19, with the support of PLATFORMA. EU institutions' representatives are encouraged to collaborate around these events and webinars which enable the creation of trust-based relationships.

Members – and in particular CEMR's thematic spokespersons and Presidency – will also be invited to speak on behalf of CEMR at the European Parliament's hearings and other events organised at EU level such as the Forum on Cities and Regions for decentralised cooperation, the European Development Days, the Green Week, the European Week of Cities and Regions, the Policy Forum on Development and the activities of the Cohesion Alliance.

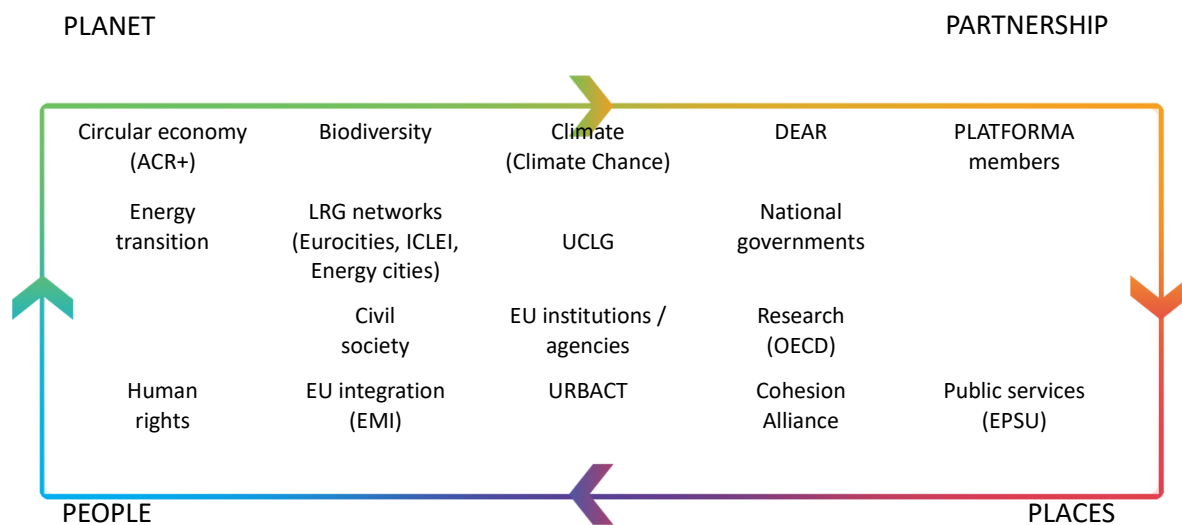
Moreover, in order to ensure successful advocacy work, members are invited to share the positions developed by CEMR – adapting them, when necessary, to the national context – with the national Permanent Representations to the EU as well as with relevant national ministries. Through this action, members promote local and regional governments' perspective on EU policies and programmes in view of the Council's role in the elaboration of conclusions and monitoring of EU programmes. A common narrative will also be shared with members to advocate towards their own national governments, through the use of joint letters, position papers or thematic briefings, as appropriate.

Some CEMR members are also well engaged in the Committee of the Regions and the Congress of the Council of Europe, often being the contact point for their national delegations. Those members are invited to share those institutions' views in CEMR expert groups and committees, and conversely to relay CEMR positions in those institutions.

The CEMR Secretariat will engage with the Committee of the Regions ahead of the Conference on the Future of Europe, but also with the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and

Local Assembly (ARLEM) and the Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP) through PLATFORMA.

Alliances with external stakeholders will also be fostered in the different thematic areas:



Activity 1.3 CEMR becomes a key actor on the global stage

Expected result

Local and regional governments in Europe localise the global agenda in their territories. Through their international leadership, local and regional government associations are also visible, make relevant contributions at international events and partner with national governments and EU institutions in global fora.

Activities

While maintaining its primary focus on EU policies CEMR will adopt its international strategy in 2021. It will also develop an action plan for international activities to improve the coordination at global stage, making the link with United Cities and Local Governments' (UCLG) Multiannual Strategy, which is planned for 2021. As mentioned in CEMR international strategy, CEMR will feed in UCLG structures with the European perspective and at the same time, parallel

structures of CEMR and UCLG must be avoided.

European local and regional governments and their associations are conscious of the co-responsibility they have towards achieving and localising the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Climate Agreement and the New Urban Agenda.

They therefore play an active role on the international stage, along the lines of CEMR's international strategy: through UCLG (and UCLG Women), the Global Taskforce, and with the support of programmes such as PLATFORMA, and the Covenant of Mayors for Sub-Saharan Africa (CoM SSA). Together, we will advocate for a seat at the UN table for local and regional governments and a strong recognition for them and their representative associations as partners in EU external action. Members will be invited to join their national delegations and thus develop a working relationship with the relevant ministries in relations with the United Nations.

We will also advocate for a clear role for LRGs ahead of COP26 in Glasgow and join forces at international level with other EU and International networks.

High-level gatherings will also be systematically organised with EU institutions such as the various European Commission's Directorates-General for Climate Action, for Regional Policy or for International Cooperation among others.

As for global affairs, we will organise gatherings and other advocacy activities within international events such as the annual UN Commission on the Status of Women (March), 15th Convention on Biological Diversity (May 2021), the annual High Level Political Forum (July), the annual UN General Assembly (September), the annual Conference of Parties (COP) on mitigation and adaptation to climate change (November), meetings of the United Nations Advisory Committee of Local Authorities

(UNACLA), World Urban Forum (2022), UN Habitat Assembly (2023). and.

CEMR will prepare briefings for members and contributions to the Global Taskforce work and declarations on the occasion of these events.

Cooperation with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) will also be reinforced on territorial development, COVID-19, and local finances. We will also work with the OECD stakeholder meeting on circular economy.

In addition, CEMR will be part of the International Observatory for Mayors at Risk created by the City of Paris. This initiative will gather relevant local governments' associations such as CEMR, UCLG, AFCCRE, CUF, AIMF and others. it aims to contribute to the respect of the rights of local elected representatives under threat throughout the world.

2. Specific objective (2): Be the European umbrella organisation of local and regional government associations with members that share ambitions and engage in joint initiatives for mutual benefit

Activity 2.1 Increase knowledge-sharing activities among associations of local and regional governments and directly with their members when appropriate

Expected result

CEMR will further develop its role as a knowledge hub, platform for exchange and space for mutual learning and inspiration for European local and regional government associations. CEMR is the reference for local and regional governments across Europe.

Activities

CEMR will develop a knowledge management strategy in 2021 to provide a structured and systematic approach to the capitalisation of the knowledge and experience available in CEMR's Secretariat and amongst members.

CEMR has an ever-growing library of interesting publications, studies and surveys, outcomes of projects, etc., which will be assessed and made available to members.

In addition to this capitalisation process, CEMR will facilitate improved knowledge of local and regional governments and their national associations through new publications over the next two years.

Past publications

- Women in politics: Local and European Trends
- Climate action & decentralised cooperation

- Compilation material of the political training academy on adaptation to climate change
- Promoting gender equality in decentralised cooperation
- EU delegations survey
- The 2030 Agenda through the eyes of local and regional governments' associations (SDGs)
- Publication on citizens' awareness-raising on international cooperation & global challenges
- Localising the European Semester: Final Report
- National associations of local & regional governments in Europe
- Europe 2030 - The book

Potential studies and publications

- Partnership principle in cohesion policy
- Access to trust fund finances and other aid modalities
- Trends and state of local finances
- Local Finances: impact of COVID-19
- Decentralisation and local democracy in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine (with NALAS)
- Survey on gender balance in member associations' leadership
- Annual report for UN HLPF 2021
- Handbook on SDG localisation tools
- Handbook on citizens' awareness-raising on international cooperation & global challenges
- Collaboration with the International Labour Organisation, UCLG and Public Services International to carry out a study on the workforce in LRGs
- Structure and Competences, institutional impact of COVID-19 and devolution of competences vs fiscal decentralisation
- 1 study on European Green Deal (2022)
- Implementation monitoring survey (Equality Charter, 2022)

CEMR will also develop tools and methods to stimulate and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experience among members. As of 2021, different webinars and exchange groups among technical and political members will be organised.

Topics such as decentralisation reforms and local self-government could be addressed.

In the other areas, working groups steered by members will be created to ensure knowledge exchange on a particular topic or institution, such as on digitalisation. The committee of young local and regional elected representatives will also be consolidated, with a view to increase the involvement of young politicians across CEMR's work.

In addition, a call will be launched for participation in a new city-to-city cooperation and twinning working group to work on the future of twinning.

In parallel to the European Union-African Union Summit, official forums for local and regional governments will continue to be organised regularly, in order to input the EU-AU relationship from a local perspective, with a focus on gender equality (African Charter on Equality between Women and Men), and youth (exchange between young elected representatives).

When possible, member-driven requests will also be addressed through short surveys and extranet discussion groups, resulting in quick analysis for the requesting member, with results also being shared with all CEMR members.

Activity 2.2 Capacity-building of local and regional government associations to upgrade their practices

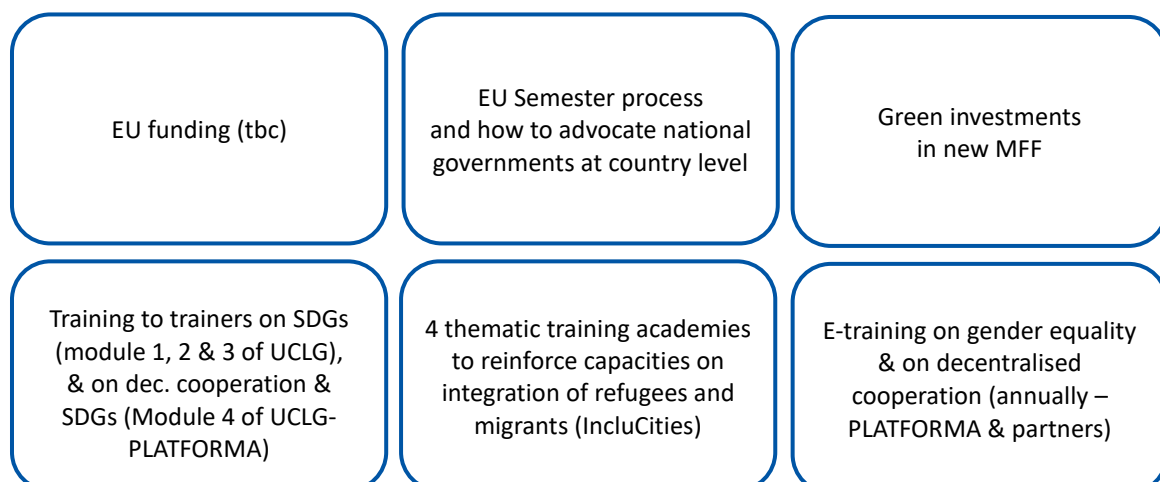
Expected result

Through a specific focus on the strengthening of their capacity, European local and regional government associations are able to fulfil their role at Member State, European and international levels.

Activities

Active coordination and dedicated capacity-building activities (e.g. about EU decision making processes) and continuous exchanges will further increase advocacy effectiveness. This activity will start in 2021 with an identification of the knowledge exchange needs in the dialogue with national governments, as part of the knowledge management strategy.

Trainings, peer reviews and thematic exchanges will form the basis for this activity. Various trainings can be offered to CEMR members.



In addition, through city-to-city cooperation in middle sized cities (IncluCities), CEMR will reflect on the integration of Third-country Nationals and facilitate the exchange of knowledge between 4 experienced (mentors) and 4 less experienced (mentees) middle-sized cities and 8 accompanying associations of local and regional government in different fields:

- Conducting a strategic assessment of the needs of migrant residents and developing an appropriate response;
- Developing and embedding a civic identity, culture and strategy that celebrates and harnesses diversity as a key strength;
- Mobilising citizens to develop tools for decent employment and entrepreneurship for migrants and refugees;
- Improving formal and informal opportunities for language learning for newcomers and established minorities.

CEMR and IncluCities will continue engaging in the Partnership on the Inclusion of Refugees and Migrants of the Urban Agenda which has identified new topics and accepted Mechelen (IncluCities partner) as a member.

Moreover, CEMR will continue its engagement in the Covenant of Mayors Europe which is renewing its ambition in line with the targets put forward in the European Green Deal and the Climate Pact. We will offer support to members to promote the Covenant of Mayors at national level and increase the number of signatories, organise capacity building activities for local governments as well as contribute to the advocacy work to reinforce multilevel governance in the field of climate and energy. The implementation of environmental legislation and transition towards a circular economy are challenges that were also

identified. Further knowledge sharing and capacity-building activities will be delivered to local authorities with the support of the member associations in the framework of the Green City Accord in the field of environment (air, waste, green spaces, water and noise) and potentially circular economy, depending on external funding availability.

Furthermore, we will work on exchange of knowledge and expertise at international level and cooperation with the Global Covenant, as well as capacity building and empowerment of local governments.

Peer reviews between national associations of EU and non-EU countries will be organised through PLATFORMA, with a particular focus on the Eastern Partnership countries (Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine).

These will strengthen their advocacy capacity towards their national governments and EU delegations present in those countries, in particular with the support of the network of associations of local authorities of South East Europe (NALAS).

They will also be supported in their work on decentralisation reforms and on more specific topics such as the localisation of the SDGs and gender equality, in complementarity with the Congress of the Council of Europe.

Exchanges between local and regional governments, their associations and peers in partner countries will also be pursued, in particular with UCLGA and the Network of Locally Elected Women of Africa (REFELA) for an African Charter for Equality Between Women and Men.

Exchanges will also be organised between young elected representatives' networks from both continents.

Capacity building of African Local Government Associations (LGAs) together with UCLG-Africa is planned through CoM SSA. This will cover the functioning of the initiative, the existing tools available for cities to develop a Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SEACAP) and multi-level governance tools. Four regional training workshops will be organised between 2020 and 2022 (West, East, Central and Southern Africa).

Finally, CEMR, with the financial support of the French Ministry for Territorial Cohesion,

3. Specific objective (3): Become a highly visible and influential thought leader on issues related to local and regional governments

Activity 3.1 – Produce genuine, impactful and quality content

Expected result

CEMR's local, national, European and international audiences are engaged by our messages and made aware of local and regional issues important to our members.

Activities

Together with our associations, we will pool our expertise through the use of studies, surveys and best practices, so as to improve the quality of our content, whether it is for publications, articles, op-eds, position papers, interviews, speeches, press releases or tweets.

This genuine and newsworthy content will be enriched both in substance (data, facts, figures, impact on local and regional governments) and in form (a more hard-hitting, inspiring and illustrated style and storytelling).

will continue to focus on promoting the Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities (RFSC), joining efforts and building synergies with member to organise events in the field of sustainable urban development.

At EU level, CEMR will continue to work with EU partners such as URBACT and the Joint Research Centre to organise several RFSC-related activities and events to assist local governments localising the SDGs. RFSC activities will also contribute to creating the momentum towards the French Presidency of the EU in 2022.

We will also make sure to more greatly cover CEMR's achievements and successes, notably through the production of brochures, videos and other means of communication.

Activity 3.2 – Increase the reach of our content by fully leveraging our network

Expected result

Local and regional issues and messages are disseminated as widely and impactfully as possible among relevant stakeholders and decisionmakers. CEMR and its associations enjoy maximal visibility at European level and at local level.

Activities

Strengthening coordination between associations on communication is crucial. To do so, we will lead a network of communications professionals from member associations with two purposes in mind: first, to pool our associations' expertise and knowledge on communication, press and social media, to name a few topics; and second, to ensure the effective coordination of joint communication activities and campaigns.

A collective approach and joint campaigns across Europe will be necessary on specific priorities that have already been identified. Three campaigns in particular will be developed in the next years:

- CEMR's 70th anniversary and the 15th anniversary of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life in 2021
- The annual European Days of Local Solidarity (November)
- The Conference on the future of Europe (2021-2022)
- A campaign on greener local and regional governments (Green Deal, climate, mobility, circular economy) in 2022

The PLATFORMAwards will be held again in 2022 in order to showcase good practices and reward excellence in the field of decentralised cooperation. We will also share our expertise through participation in various juries, such as those for the Fair Trade Award and the European Youth Capital Award.

We will also continue to maintain our presence and visibility during various annual events, such as the European Week of Regions and Cities (EWRC).

Associations and elected representatives, particularly our spokespersons and the members of the Policy Committee and Presidency, will have a pivotal role in communication and dissemination activities, whether during campaigns or at key dates (such as Europe's Day or the State of the European Union speech) so as to maximise our visibility, particularly with regard to the EU institutions.

CEMR must also reach out to its members' members to inform them on our successes, campaigns and activities. To this end, we will leverage our associations to strengthen our foothold locally. This can take the form of greater presence in magazines, newsletters and associations' web portals.

Improving the search ranking of CEMR's web tools will also be central to generate traffic and increase their visibility online.

Activity 3.3 – Manage and upgrade CEMR's communication tools and strategy to better meet our associations' needs and expectations

Expected result

CEMR's communication strategy, tools and activities are modernised and made fit for the future, and a smooth flow of information among our members is ensured.

Activities

A new communication strategy will be developed in 2021 in order to align with the new multiannual strategy and the revamp of CEMR's secretariat. It will be based on an evaluation of communication processes, websites and tools.

We will also create a "Best Practices" section on the CEMR website to strengthen the exchange of information and ensure knowledge "flows and grows" among our members. Regarding our members-only platform, we will configure a notification system according to each user's interests and needs.

4. Specific objective (4): Become a more sustainable and inclusive organisation

Activity 4.1 CEMR organises regular fora in which members can express their views and guide the work of the association

Expected result

Through the active participation of its member associations in decision-making bodies, CEMR demonstrates its leadership through its strong and democratic approach.

Activities

CEMR will reflect on new ways to make this system more efficient and engaging, beyond the traditional system of governance: Financial Committee meetings (twice a year), secretaries-general and directors' meetings (twice a year), Executive Bureau meetings (once or twice a year) and Policy Committee meetings (twice a year).

CEMR will offer on-line possibilities for all its meetings and publish guidelines, based on a survey among CEMR members, on which meetings will be only on-line and which meetings will be hybrid. The guidelines will also include measures to ensure that everybody can participate on equal level.

Most CEMR externally-funded programmes also have a steering committee which CEMR organises twice a year or contributes to advisory boards, in addition to a political council for PLATFORMA with 17 elected representatives.

The annual Retreat will also continue: it is a good way to select annual priorities with members and guide the work of the organisation, both from a technical and political perspective.

Activity 4.2 CEMR develops innovative activities and thinks out-of-the-box with its members

Expected result

The organisation is fit to face current challenges throughout the years to come, responds to members' needs and keeps them united in an innovative network.

Activities

Based on a change management process started in 2020, the CEMR Secretariat is developing new internal strategies. Collaborative design of the work programmes is encouraged within and across teams, and with members for strategic activities.

A thorough analysis of current procedures and processes will be pursued in 2021 to ensure modern tools for the daily functioning of the Secretariat, greater efficiency (online tools) and wellbeing of staff members.

A new task force on internal organisation made up of one person from each CEMR team will follow up the 15 recommendations formulated in 2020, based on a realistic and measurable result-oriented and collaborative approach.

To increase effective coordination with members and facilitate knowledge sharing, each member association will have one staff member assigned for general matters related to CEMR.

Beyond statutory meetings and expert groups, relations have to be cultivated with members on a regular basis in order to build trust, to know each other better and to share ownership, demonstrating that they all matter.

To frame this approach, we are developing a knowledge management strategy, aiming to facilitate the exchange of knowledge with and among our members. This will require understanding the expectations of our members and an assessment of their knowledge.

Each colleague will also be a contact person for a number of member associations and tasked with establishing and maintaining an ongoing information flow between the association and the CEMR Secretariat.

As such, the CEMR staff will find out the members' priorities, upcoming events and activities (including beyond CEMR), as well as forward them information on CEMR's upcoming activities. The statutory affairs officer and the office manager will be two cornerstones in the relations with member associations.

Activity 4.3 CEMR effectively manages all activities, and identifies and diversifies sources of financing for long-term sustainability

Expected result

The organisation is financially capable of delivering quality activities and responding to the broad range of member requests.

Activities

Regular financial and narrative reports are drafted to inform member associations. CEMR will also continue to ensure that contracts are delivered and donors' expectations are fulfilled in line with our interests. The handover and archiving process will also be improved.

Anticipating the impact of COVID-19 on member associations' fees and eager to maintain continuous high-quality work,

CEMR will also continue looking for external resources for the members through the monitoring of calls for proposals and contract services, but also for the Secretariat itself through call monitoring, partnerships with new types of donors and the continuation of agreements in process with the European Commission.

Additionally, costs of meetings will be monitored closely, in particular interpretation costs.

Some new possibilities will be explored, thanks to the development of a strategy for external funding to be developed in 2021, in order to be financially sound and sustainable, and aligned with the objectives of CEMR.

Activity 4.4 Setting up of adequate processes and ensuring staff are highly trained and well-equipped

Expected result

CEMR Secretariat ensures the high quality of its daily work.

Activities

This will happen thanks to a smooth functioning of the Secretariat based on quality assurance actions: around four external audits a year, an annual TVA check-up, accurate accounting, regular financial monitoring and suitable procedures, adequate administrative support for travel and events, and an effective office management.

Timesheets to monitor the time spent by activity and database integration will also be crucial elements to increase the efficiency of the Secretariat.

In addition, motivational activities are pursued to ensure teambuilding, such as an annual away day. Moreover, personal

development of the staff members will be encouraged with individual and collective trainings, adequate appraisals and a collective pitstop, handover processes and the creation of a newcomer's checklist.

CEMR is dedicated to providing a professional environment free from harassment, violence and discrimination for everyone, regardless of: gender, colour, ethnic and social, origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age, sexual orientation/identity or socio-economic status².

The CEMR Code of Conduct (adopted in 2018) shall be provided to CEMR staff, member association staff, elected representatives, and third parties participating in CEMR activities or events to ensure that the policy is well-known and understood by all concerned parties.

The functioning and activities of CEMR will also ensure the use of green procedures for events, computer use and the office. CEMR will promote eco-friendly behaviours in the office and among member associations, as defined in the CEMR sustainability checklist provided by the Secretariat.

An assessment of printed documents available will be prepared and our needs for future printed publications re-evaluated. Moreover, for a good information flow within the Secretariat, simple internal communication tools will be put in place to inform one another about each team's activity.

² Grounds of discrimination taken from the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, Principle 2 and Article 10.

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