



**Local & Regional
Europe**

EUROPE FOR CITIZENS

**For an accessible and useful programme for
all local authorities in the period 2014-2020**

CEMR position and amendments proposals for the proposal for a regulation establishing for the period 2014 – 2020 the “Europe for Citizens” programme / COM (2011) 884 final

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CEMR key messages

The CEMR approves the general objectives of the programme proposed by the Commission but would welcome some significant improvements of the programme.

The CEMR's position on the « Europe for Citizens » programme rests on two ideas :

- Town twinning is still needed in Europe ;
- This programme is vital for town twinning.

1. Town twinning is still needed in Europe

The general increase of the citizens' mobility in Europe does not make town twinning obsolete but complements it. There is still a great majority of citizens that never engage in inter-European exchanges, in particular teenagers, senior citizens or inhabitants of deprived or rural areas. Town twinning remains an irreplaceable policy to give all these citizens the occasion to engage in such exchanges and get modestly, yet personally, implicated in the European construction and debate.

The growing distance between citizens and the European Union makes it more than ever necessary to give all citizens the occasion to discover the very benefits of the Union's existence and debate together of its future. Local and regional authorities are the administrative level the closer to the citizen and the more able to lead efficient public policies for this purpose. Local councils continue to use town twinning massively in order to bring citizens closer together and closer to the European construction.

The programme shall clearly mention, consider and foster town twinning as an efficient tool in promoting the active participation of citizens in the European debate.

2. This programme is vital for town twinning

Town twinning projects are badly hit by the situation of local authorities' finances. However, municipalities still make important efforts to keep their twinning agreements alive, efforts that more and more of them may not be able to carry on in the future.

In this context, the 2014 – 2020 programme will be truly vital for the twinning movement. The conflict on the legal base of this programme shall thus be solved by all means.

Recommendation for amendments

Preliminary note: in this section and in the following ones, every information in italic is a modification from the Commission's proposal for a regulation. Information in bold is simply highlighted as particularly important from the CEMR's point of view.

Recommendation for amendment 1

Introductory section
Whereas (10)

<i>Commission proposal (14.12.2011)</i>	<i>CEMR proposal (10.09.2012)</i>
Special attention should be paid to the balanced integration of citizens and civil society organisations from all Member States into transnational projects and activities, taking into account the multilingual character of the EU.	Special attention should be paid to the balanced integration of citizens, local authorities and civil society organisations from all Member States into transnational projects and activities, taking into account the multilingual character of the EU.

Explanation

As the democratic and administrative level the closer to the citizen, local councils are the organisations which are the more capable to make citizens really know the European Union. Only they perfectly know the realities on the ground and are able to put public policies in place that will allow citizens to discover the benefits of the European citizenship. They have the capacity to organise and coordinate the local European democratic debate.

For these reasons, local authorities must be at the heart of the programme.

Recommendation for amendment 2

Introductory section
Whereas (16)

<i>Commission proposal (14.12.2011)</i>	<i>CEMR proposal (10.09.2012)</i>
Preference will be given to grants for projects with a high impact, in particular those which are directly linked to EU policies with a view to participate in the shaping of the EU political agenda. Moreover, [...].	Preference will be given to grants for projects that are best suited to involve citizens in the shaping of the EU political agenda. Moreover, [...].

Explanation

The expression « with a high impact » is rather vague and suggests a privileged funding for big projects. Preference should be given to projects according to truly qualitative criteria (in particular the actual participation and personal involvement of citizens in the projects). Every criterion of a quantitative nature as regards to the number of citizens that shall be involved in a project would make the programme completely inaccessible to the tens of thousands of rural and small urban authorities. Yet, the citizens of these areas are often the ones who may feel the more distant from the European Union.

Indeed, the “progress [of the programme, as a whole, should] be measured against the number of beneficiaries reached directly and indirectly, the perception of the EU and its institutions by the beneficiaries, quality of projects, and percentage of first time applicants” (article 2).

On the other hand, the decision to fund a project should be taken on these three last criteria only (perception of the EU by the beneficiaries at the end of the project, quality of the project and being carried out by an applicant that has never, or rarely, benefited from the programme in the past).

The programme should not try to involve a great number of direct and indirect beneficiaries by funding big projects of which the real impact on participants has many chances to be merely superficial but, if needed, by funding a great number of projects, even small ones, which will have a truly significant impact on their participants.

The expression « in particular those which are directly linked to the EU policies » should be abandoned. Indeed, the overly restrictive nature of the programme has in the past and would again greatly hinder the use of the programme. The European Union should grant funding to the projects that contribute in a general way to the shaping of the European political project. The Union should however refrain itself from restricting too much the debate and the projects. This would indeed be contrary to the very spirit and objectives of the programme.

Recommendation for amendment 3

Article 3, paragraph 2 Supported actions

<i>Commission proposal (14.12.2011)</i>	<i>CEMR proposal (10.09.2012)</i>
(list of supported actions, inter alia)	(list of supported actions, inter alia)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Citizens' meetings, town-twinning – Creation and operations of transnational partnerships and networks – Support for organisations of a general European interest – Community building and debates on citizenship issues based on the use of ICT and/or social media – Union level events – Debates/studies and interventions on defining moments in European history, in particular to keep the memory alive of the crimes committed under Nazism and Stalinism – Reflection/debates on common values – Initiatives to raise awareness on the EU institutions and their functioning – Actions that exploit and further valorise the results of the supported initiatives – Studies on issues related to citizenship and civic participation – Support of programme information/advice structures in the Member States. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Cooperation, mutual learning and reflection activities such as :</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Citizens' meetings in the framework of town twinning and networks of twinned towns ; - <i>Projects implemented by transnational partnerships including different types of stakeholders [...];</i> - <i>Remembrance projects with a clear European dimension ;</i> - <i>Exchanges based on the use of ICT and/or social media</i> b) <i>Structural support for organisations such as:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Organisations of a general European interest [...];</i> - <i>« Europe for Citizens » contact points</i> - National associations of local authorities c) <i>Union level analytical activities such as :</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Studies on issues related to the objectives of the programme</i> d) <i>Awareness raising and dissemination activities to exploit and further valorise the results of the supported initiatives such as :</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>European-scale events including conferences, commemorations or award ceremonies ;</i> - <i>Peer reviews, expert meetings and seminars.</i>

Explanation

THE CEMR approves and completes the reorganisation and rationalisation of this article as done by the COREPER1 (4 May 2012). The importance of citizens' meetings in the framework of town twinning as well as of networks of twinned towns must be clearly affirmed. The regulation establishing the programme must also assert the possibility to fund measures of structural support for the national associations of local governments, which play a key role in coordinating the twinning movement and lead training actions on the field of twinning.

Recommendation for amendment 4

Article 6 Access to the programme

<i>Commission proposal (14.12.2011)</i>	<i>CEMR proposal (10.09.2012)</i>
The programme shall be open to all stakeholders promoting European integration, in particular local authorities and organisations, European public policy research organisations (think-tanks), citizens' groups and other civil society organisations (such as survivors' associations) and educational and research institutions.	The programme shall be open to all stakeholders promoting European citizenship and integration , in particular local authorities, their national and European associations, twinning committees , European public policy research organisations (think-tanks), civil society organisations (including survivors' associations) and <i>cultural, youth</i> , educational and research organisations.

Explanation

The CEMR approves the rewriting of this article done by the COREPER1 (4 May 2012) and insists on the importance of opening the programme to twinning committees, the which lead the twinning activities in many municipalities (large and small).

A growing part of local authorities' European work is put in charge of their national and European associations; it is important that these may have access to the programme.

Additional comment

The CEMR recalls its commitment for the opening of this programme towards all candidate countries and demands that the attractiveness of this programme for these countries be taken into account during the debates.

This programme can, in particular thanks to the funding of town twinning, play a constructive and leading role in bringing closer together the citizens of the Union and of these countries as well as in the discovery of the European Union and citizenship by those.

Recommendation for amendment 5

Annex, 1. Description of initiatives Strand n°1 – Remembrance and European citizenship

<i>Commission proposal (14.12.2011)</i>	<i>CEMR proposal (10.09.2012)</i>
<p>[This strand] will support activities that invite to reflection on common values in the broadest sense, taking into account diversity.</p> <p>Funds may be available for initiatives reflecting on causes of totalitarian regimes in Europe's modern history (especially but not exclusively Nazism and Stalinism) and to commemorate their victims.</p> <p>The strand should also encompass activities concerning other reference points in recent European history. In particular, it will give preference to actions which encourage tolerance and reconciliation with a view to reaching the younger generation.</p>	<p>[This strand] will support activities that invite to reflection on the European cultural diversity and on common values in the broadest sense, taking into account the equality between women and men.</p> <p>Funds may be available for initiatives reflecting on the causes that lead to the totalitarian regimes in Europe's modern history and to commemorate the victims of their crimes.</p> <p>The strand should also encompass activities concerning other reference points in recent European history. In particular, it will give preference to actions which encourage tolerance, mutual understanding and reconciliation, in particular with a view to reaching the younger generation.</p>

Explanation

The equality between men and women is a fundamental principle of the European Union law. Actions involving the equality between men and women in the framework of this programme can contribute to the effectiveness of this right and, at the same time, support the efforts of the programme for the recognition by citizens of the advantages and benefits of the existence of the Union and of the European citizenship.

Totalitarian regimes have hit almost every European country at a moment or another in modern history, the remembrance strand should feed with no ambiguity remembrance activities for all these regimes and their causes.

Recommendation for amendment 6

Annex, 1. Description of initiatives Strand n°2 – Democratic engagement and civic participation

<i>Commission proposal (14.12.2011)</i>	<i>CEMR proposal (10.09.2012)</i>
<p>[The strand] will accommodate activities that cover civic participation in the broadest sense with particular focus on structuring methods to ensure a lasting effect of funded activities. It will give preference to initiatives and projects with a clear link to the European political agenda.</p> <p>The strand may also cover projects and initiatives that develop opportunities for mutual understanding, solidarity, societal engagement and volunteering at Union level.</p> <p>Much remains to be done to attract more women in political and economic decision-making. Women's voices should be better heard and acted upon by those responsible for taking the policy decisions that impact on people's lives.</p>	<p>The strand will accommodate activities that cover civic participation in the broadest sense <i>with particular focus on structuring methods to ensure a lasting effect of funded activities</i>. It will give preference to initiatives and projects with a clear link to the European political agenda.</p> <p>The strand may also cover projects and initiatives that develop opportunities for mutual understanding, solidarity, <i>societal engagement</i> and volunteering at Union level.</p> <p>This strand will pay a particular attention to fostering the participation of young people and women in the political and economic decision-making process.</p>

Explanation

The current crisis clearly shows the lack of mutual understanding between European people; it is yet an obvious precondition to a more advanced European construction and to a deepened European solidarity. Mutual understanding must be pursued within this strand.

Young people are traditionally a privileged object of local public policies for the promotion of the democratic engagement and civic participation and of local councils' European and international actions. Their commitment to the European construction will be decisive for the future of the Union. It is essential that the programme grants a key place to policies targeting the young public.

Recommendation for amendment 7

Annex, 1. Description of initiatives
Horizontal action : **Support and** Valorisation

<i>Commission proposal (14.12.2011)</i>	<i>CEMR proposal (10.09.2012)</i>
<p>This action shall be defined for the Programme overall and be applicable to both Strand 1 and Strand 2.</p> <p>It will support initiatives that boost the transferability of results, provide better return on investment and increase learning from experience. The raison d'être of this action is the further "valorisation" and exploitation of the results of the initiatives launched for the purpose of boosting long-term sustainability.</p> <p>It will include "capacity building" – the development of support measures to exchange best practices, to pool experiences between stakeholders at local and regional levels including public authorities, and to develop new skills, for example through training. The latter could include peer-to-peer exchange, training for trainers, as well as for example the development of a database on the organisations/projects funded by the programme.</p>	<p>This action shall be defined for the programme overall and be applicable to both Strand 1 and Strand 2. <i>It is defined by the possible projects and initiatives that can be launched under its heading, not by the type of actors that can apply.</i></p> <p><i>It will contribute to activities supporting the project implementers active within the strands 1 and 2. To that purpose, it will fund "capacity building" activities, notably through the exchange of the most cost effective practices, to pool experiences between stakeholders at local and regional levels including public authorities and their associations and to develop new skills, for example through training. The latter could include peer-to-peer exchange, training for trainers, as well as for example the development of a database on the organisations/projects funded by the programme.</i></p> <p>This action will also contribute to initiatives that aim to promote the results obtained by the projects funded via the programme. Among other activities, it will aim to boost the transferability of results, to provide better return on investment, to increase learning from experience and to exploit the results of the initiatives launched for the purpose of boosting long-term sustainability.</p>

Explanation

This « horizontal action » should be renamed "Support and valorisation" and should fund activities that, on one hand, support the efforts of project implementers and, on the other hand, promote the results obtained by these.

It should allow funding large projects which will aim and result in the improvement of the general quality of projects funded under strands 1 & 2. The national associations of local governments could benefit from this action and thus continue their work with the local authorities; a work that has led to a significant increase of the quality of twinning project over the last years.

The activities managed by the European Union itself within the framework of this action must be reduced to the strict minimum. It must unambiguously fund the European stakeholders, national or regional, that put in place activities that aim at supporting project implementers and promoting the results obtained by these.

Commentaries

Commentary 1

Article 11 Coherence with other Union instruments

The CEMR invites the legislator to specify this article and in particular to indicate and plan more precisely and more concretely the coherence with the e-twinning action and with all Lifelong learning programmes.

Commentary 2

Annex, Legislative financial statement for proposals, 3.2.2 Allocation of funds

The CEMR calls for a rebalancing of the proposed allocation of funds in favor of projects implemented by local authorities, the which are the democratic level the nearest to the citizens and the more able to bring them closer to the European Union and construction.

Regarding citizens' meetings :

The CEMR calls to specify that "citizens' meetings" aim at funding projects taking place in the framework of town twinnings.

The "citizens' meetings" action meets an important success in the current programme and the CEMR member associations mention that there is still a strong demand for funding under that action. **It is necessary to maintain a high level of funding for this action.**

The CEMR calls in consequence for raising both the number of projects funded annually and the total amount of fundings devoted to this action. The CEMR also reminds that, under the 2007 – 2013 programme, an average of 725 citizens' meetings has been funded each year.

The access to funding under this action is already extremely difficult and competitive. It is important to not deteriorate further this situation by lowering the number of projects funded each year by this action.

Regarding the networks of twinned towns :

The CEMR is favourable to an increased funding of networks of twinned towns. The CEMR however notes that the number of projects that the Commission proposes to fund each year (more than the double from the current programme) seems overly ambitious with regard to the needs experienced on the ground. It calls for a slight rebalancing in favour of citizens' meetings.

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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 50 national associations of municipalities and regions from 40 European countries. Together these associations represent some 150 000 local and regional authorities.

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 members 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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