



Local & Regional
Europe

CEMR 2017 Work Programme

December 2016

Council of European Municipalities and Regions
European section of United Cities and Local Governments

2017 CEMR Work Programme

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Introduction

The impact of the UK's decision to leave the European Union is highly dependent on the decision as to when Article 50 will be triggered. The latest indicated timetable from the British government is that this will be by end March 2017. However, the recent ruling by Britain's high court, that the UK's Parliament must be afforded the right to decide on the invoking of Article 50, rejecting the UK's government's claim that it has the sole power to decide, introduces potential delays to the UK government's planned timetable. In any event, it is highly probable that Brexit negotiations will be getting underway, as discussions on the next financial framework are starting to be launched. Undoubtedly, the prospect of the UK's exit will also weigh heavily on the direction of wider EU policy development during the next months. CEMR is taking a positive view on the basis that Brexit is a key opportunity for CEMR to bring discussion on the **future of the EU** back to concerns about the needs and wishes of ordinary citizens.

It remains to be seen the extent to which the outcome of the Presidential election in the U.S. will have repercussions on Europe and the EU.

We believe that 2017 will be an important year to express the view of local and regional government on the future of Europe and its reshaping. On the basis of our Europe 2030 document, we will advocate in favour of a Europe that is closer to the citizens with its local and regional governments being better involved in the policy and legislative setting.

The 60th anniversary of the **Treaty of Rome** may mark the debate on changes of the European Treaties and the call for a Convention to enter formally into these reflections. However, the presidential election in Austria and the referendum in Italy in December 2016, the presidential election in France, general elections in the Netherlands and in Germany in 2017 may also have an impact on the further development of the European Union and have repercussions on the sub-national level.

Strengthening **local government and local democracy** will be another key issue in that regard; we believe that today's problems and challenges in Europe and globally can only be addressed and solved with strong local democratic governments. This also concerns the situation in South-East Europe, in particular in the Western Balkan. With the European Commission's decision not to pursue any enlargement project in the next years, pre-accession support to local government has stopped. There is a need to raise awareness on this issue at European level and to stress the potential geopolitical consequences if Europe ignores the political developments in the neighbouring countries.

Beyond the European neighbourhood, many international institutions, organisations and agreements aim to address changes in society, climate and global governance and try to provide appropriate frameworks for actions. In the series of new global agenda's that were adopted in 2016, local and regional governments are getting more and more attention for their specific contribution to sustainable development. Europe's towns and regions continue to show their solidarity with peers on other continents. Several policies the European Union will adopt in 2017 will define the support they can get for it in the future and PLATFORMA is engaging with the institutions to maximise this support.

The integration of **migrants and refugees** in our communities will remain a core subject in 2017. We expect the measures taken by the heads of states and governments will show effects and that there will be less people arriving on our continent. Therefore, local and regional governments will concentrate on activities that will help migrants and refugees to integrate successfully into our societies. CEMR will continue advocating better coordination of the different levels of administration and governance, and adequate resources to be provided for the hosting authorities.

CEMR as European section of UCLG will ensure the links between **European** and **global initiatives**, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, the Climate Agreement, the global Urban Agenda and the Urban Agenda for the EU, etc. In particular, we will monitor and promote their application and implementation at the different levels of governance. International trade agreements and the impact of globalisation on local and regional governments will also be relevant issues of which we will remain mindful.

The upcoming **mid-term review** of the multi-annual financial framework and mid-term reviews of several multi-annual programmes of the European Union will be reflected in our work, alongside other legislative or non-legislative proposals of the European Commission as announced in its work programme.

In order to strengthen the voice of local and regional government, CEMR is seeking to sign an agreement to establish a closer working relationship with the Committee of the Regions and to launch a coalition with other relevant European networks that represent local and regional governments' interests. These actions highlight our ambitions for a more powerful involvement of local and regional governments in EU decision-making in 2017.

1. GOVERNANCE, DEMOCRACY & CITIZENSHIP

1.1. FUTURE OF EUROPE

The UK's decision to leave the European Union will have an impact on the further development of the EU. At its Congress in April 2016, CEMR began its work by launching the reflection about the future of Europe and the EU. Proposals, contributions and ideas, mainly from local elected leaders, but as well from thought-leaders, are being collected in order to give a scent of a common local and regional vision of Europe in 2030. A publication of the result is foreseen in 2017, not as a position of the CEMR but a contribution of the CEMR in the debate on the future of Europe. This work will be complemented by 20 ideas and 30 actions towards Europe 2030, prepared by a drafting committee, discussed and validated by the secretaries general and directors and to be presented for adoption to the Policy Committee in summer 2017.

CEMR will contribute to the **general reflection process on the future of Europe**, demonstrating that local and regional governments are willing and seek to play an active role in building a democratic European society. We are convinced that a future Europe needs to be more attuned to the concerns of citizens and that local and regional governments are best suited to acting as allies, bridging the gap between the European level and citizens. Therefore, we will continue to advocate better involvement of local and regional governments and their associations in the political and legislative processes.

CEMR in cooperation with NALAS will take measures to raise awareness at European level on the situation of local democracy in South-East Europe. With the decision to discontinue enlargement for the next years, there is a lack of support for the development of democratic structures and procedures, and in particular for the local level, in our neighbouring countries, which constitutes a serious risk of the achievements that have been reached so far.

We will celebrate the 60th anniversary of the **Treaty of Rome** on 25th March 2017 and this will be a good opportunity to discuss changes to the European Treaties. Rising critical or even hostile public opinion toward the European Union in an increasing number of Member States, make it necessary to have an open debate about the kind of Europe and European Union our citizens want and deserve.

The outcome of the presidential election in France and the general election in the Netherlands and in Germany may also have an impact on the further development of the European Union. Local and regional governments are enjoying a high level of trust and

support from their citizens; therefore, CEMR needs to assert that they are crucial partners for a stable, democratic and functioning European Union.

We will defend an appropriate role for local and regional governments within a future Treaty change, as well as insisting on the clarification and, if necessary, re-definition of the **subsidiarity and proportionality principles and increased democratic legitimacy of the EU**. CEMR believes that Europe needs to better respect and value the diversity of its countries and that this should also be better reflected in the policy and law-making. A Union composed of 28 (or 27) Member States should not harmonise every policy; it should concentrate on the major issues, agree on joint objectives and leave more flexibility to its members in choosing the appropriate means, taking into consideration existing measures and tools.

The **Better Regulation** agenda features much further down the European Commission's priority list in its 2017 work programme and consequently, there will be far fewer areas where CEMR will be active next year as regards the legislative agenda. We will nevertheless explore opportunities for improving the contribution of local and regional government to the work of the REFIT Platform. The work being carried out within the Partnerships of the Urban Agenda for the EU also provides a valuable opportunity to improve implementation of EU policies which could enhance the desire for shared ownership of policies and better results.

CEMR will support initiatives that aim at achieving transparency at all levels of government; therefore, we will continue our lobbying action via the work of the European Parliament and the Council on the European **Transparency Register**, where we expect the conclusion of discussions on the Interinstitutional Agreement in early 2017. An update of our study on the legal status of national associations representing local and regional governments will help us to clarify their role at national and European level, and to prove our continuous statement that we are not lobbyists.

On a general basis, CEMR will continue to work with the Committee of the Regions, in particular in relation to its reflection on the future of Europe; and with the relevant bodies of the **Council of Europe**, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the European Committee on Democracy and Governance, aiming to share knowledge in the field of local democracy and to advocate the central governments beyond EU membership.

1.2. MIGRATION, INTEGRATION AND DIVERSITY

Despite indications that this issue will have a lower profile going forward, CEMR will continue to work on the challenges related to refugees and migrants, as their integration at the local and regional level, as well as the strengthening of best practice exchange and multilevel governance, continues to be one of our priorities.

CEMR's active involvement in the **Partnership on the integration of refugees and migrants** of the URBAN Agenda for the EU will be maintained. We will participate in the meetings and events, continuing to build synergies with all stakeholders taking part, especially, the European institutions and the participating central governments. We will **work closely with DG Regio and DG Migration and Home Affairs** in order to ensure a follow-up to the high political roundtable on migration and cities.

From a policy perspective, the main priorities of CEMR in 2017 will be to ensure more targeted resources for local and regional authorities and to reinforce "governance in partnership". In this respect, we will follow closely the reform of the **Dublin system** and the different initiatives concerning the **Common European Asylum System**, as well as monitor the implementation of the **EU Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals**, the **legal migration Package and the EU-Turkey follow-up**. In addition, we will maintain a

close watch on all legislative and non-legislative proposals concerning the external dimension of EU integration and asylum policies, such as the **New Migration Partnership with third countries** and the focus on the protection of external borders through better operationalising the European Border and Coast Guard. In general, we will also closely follow further developments under the **EU Agenda on Migration**, also with respect to the work of the Committee of the Regions.

In order to improve the multilevel governance in the field of integration and asylum, CEMR intends to draft a project in order to improve the coordination between levels of government and to **exchange best practices** with respect to housing, education, vulnerable groups, funding and labour market integration. The project will be divided into two phases, a research phase to identify the needs and then a peer-review process, aimed at having peer-to-peer workshops on the different themes in order to identify best practices. The main outcome would be to **draw policy recommendations** and to **consolidate a platform of national contact points in each association** to disseminate information, ensure coordination with the national and European levels, etc.

CEMR will continue assessing how to improve and design targeted **funding opportunities at EU level for local and regional authorities**, while advocating a better inclusion of local and regional government in the **design, implementation and evaluation** of the different programmes available (such as the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund, the European Social Fund or the European Regional Development Fund). We will monitor and advocate the need for additional resources for local and regional authorities during the **Multi-Annual Financial Framework mid-term review**, supporting our message for more targeted resources for local and regional government in the field of integration. In this respect, we will closely monitor the developments under the new investment priority, to be launched in the following months, aiming at dedicating more resources to integration, under the European Regional Development Fund from next year onwards.

We will push for greater involvement of local and regional governments in EU and national decision-making processes, through the recently created **European Integration Network**, the European Migration Forum and other bodies. CEMR will also continue participating in the meetings of the European Migration Network.

In addition, CEMR will contribute to the **OECD study on the impact of migration in cities**. Preliminary work is currently underway, exploring the opportunity for CEMR to collaborate with the OECD, so as to ensure the inclusion of associations of local and regional government in the consultation process.

In 2018, CEMR will organise a **conference on diversity, equality and inclusion**, hosted by the Basque association, EUDEL, and the city of Bilbao. Some local and regional authorities are already advanced and experienced in ensuring appropriate environments to enhance harmonious living within their diverse communities. CEMR will look for existing initiatives at local and regional levels that promote inclusiveness and diversity, in order to prepare the concept for the conference. We will also explore potential partnerships with key organisations for the co-organisation of certain sessions, where appropriate.

1.3. CITIZENSHIP & TWINNING

CEMR will monitor the outcome of **mid-term review** of the **Europe for Citizens programme**, continuing our push in support of increased resources being dedicated to the programme (at least 1 euro per citizen).

We will continue reinforcing our role as a partner of the Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) and DG Home Affairs of the European Commission in order to promote citizens exchanges and **town-twinning** as the main *raison d'être* of the programme. In addition, we will push for strengthening the links between the programme priorities and the policy developments in the field of citizenship.

To do so, better connection between the priorities of the programme and the policy work of the institutions in the field of citizenship is necessary. This is not only with respect to the rights resulting from the European citizenship (merely legal), but also as concerns reinforcing a sense of European active citizenship (active participation, better inclusion of civil society in decision-making, multi-level governance, etc.).

CEMR will strengthen its position as the main promoter of town-twinning in Europe and the platform of reference on European town-twinning knowledge exchange. We will kick start a discussion about the future of the www.twinning.org **website** in order to assess how to re-define the work of CEMR and member associations in this field. The idea is to launch a brainstorming process in order to see how to innovate in the field of partnerships and twinning.

In the context of the multiple crises being experienced by Europe, and which are driving an unprecedented rise in populist forces, CEMR intends to assess how to **combat populism at the local and regional level**. As part of this process, we will work on issues that include, the reinforcement of new forms of **citizen participation** through **e-democracy** tools and other innovative forms of active citizenship such as **open data**, **participative budgeting**, etc. In addition, CEMR will monitor developments in the field of fundamental rights and comparative citizenship at the local level.

Related to CEMR's work in the citizenship field, we will also assess potential follow-up the YELAC project. We will also work towards consolidating the Committee of **Young European Leaders for Active Citizenship** and work for a better involvement of young generations in politics and public life, and as regards EU policy development relating to young people, from a local and regional perspective.

1.4. GENDER EQUALITY

CEMR will continue to advocate gender equality as an essential issue at European, national, regional and local level. On the basis of the key priorities, a **policy paper**, accompanied by an **action plan** will be prepared to facilitate our advocacy work and our mutual learning and exchanging activities. Once approved, the policy paper and the action plan will be presented to key actors at European level, in particular the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, etc. Additionally, and as a result of some incidents during the CEMR Congress in Nicosia, a Code of Conduct is being developed for CEMR events to make clear that harassment and inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated.

Following the work with the **Observatory** and the Pilot project on developing indicators, CEMR will continue to **monitor and promote the implementation of the European Charter for Equality and disseminate and promote our toolkit**. A significant part of this work will be providing training to the national coordinators on the monitoring indicators thereby empowering them to provide training to signatories in their local language. Several **national seminars** on the Charter and monitoring indicators are envisioned for 2017. The monitoring tool will be further developed by making the monitoring training module available in additional languages and creating an interactive, user-friendly online interface for signatories to conduct self-assessments using the indicators.

Moreover, we will begin implementing the **new approach for signatories of the Charter**; this will entail an audit of the Charter signatory database – conducted with the assistance of national coordinators – to ensure contact details are up-to-date. Reinforced dialogue with Charter signatories is essential in order to respond to their specific implementation and monitoring needs. The Observatory website www.charter-equality.eu will remain a platform for exchange providing information and tools to support local and regional authorities in their work on gender equality. Periodic articles on local and regional elected women, inspiring gender equality initiatives, and the implementation of SDG n°5 (the achievement of equality and empowerment of all women and girls) will be shared via the Observatory website and Twitter.

At the Habitat III conference in October, the European Commissioner for regional and urban policy, Mrs Corina Crețu announced the launch of an initiative to favour participation of women in local authorities. CEMR is in contact with her and her services to see how we can assist in putting the initiative into practice. We will seek further support for the idea and in cooperation with our members and the Standing Committee prepare some input and ideas.

2. ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE & ENERGY

2.1. ENVIRONMENT & CIRCULAR ECONOMY

In 2017, CEMR will continue to monitor and lobby on the legislative proposals related to **waste**, contributing to the discussions at the European Parliament and the European Council. More comprehensively, relevant parts of the Action plan related to the implementation of the Circular Economy Package will be addressed (such as food waste, waste to energy, REFIT revision of the Drinking Water Directive, proposal on water reuse, etc.) and the preparation of position papers or participation to consultations will be considered.

In order to strengthen our knowledge on **Circular Economy**, CEMR will follow up the discussion in the expert group on waste held at the CEMR Congress, to assess the contribution of cities and regions in the transition towards a circular economy beyond waste management. Opportunities for studies, publications or project development on exchange of best practices and their replicability or methodology, will be examined.

CEMR and its expert group will also pursue its work on a range of related issues. For example, it will contribute to the **Thematic Partnerships aiming at implementing the Urban Agenda for the EU in the field of Circular Economy and Air quality**. In addition, the **international coalition of non-state actors on Circular Economy and Climate Change**, launched in 2016 in the framework of the Climate Chance summit in Nantes, will be followed up in collaboration with ACR+ and OREE with the implementation of the roadmap in the next three years. These actions will allow CEMR to increase its visibility and to play a strategic role in the discussion on the future actions or legislation on this topic, together with strengthening relationships with European and international stakeholders.

To ensure that the EU's legal instruments are efficiently used, the Commission intends to step up its efforts on the application, implementation and enforcement of EU environmental law. This includes simplification of environmental reporting; effective judicial protection at national level in environmental matters and environmental compliance assurance in Member States. CEMR will look into the different Commissions' initiatives, assess their potential impact for local and regional governments and propose actions when appropriate.

2.2. CLIMATE & ENERGY

Through the work of its expert group on climate and energy transition, CEMR will continue its work lobbying the EU institutions on the energy directives which concern local authorities such as: energy efficiency, energy performance in buildings, renewable energies. These three directives have a direct impact on the subnational level and therefore, CEMR will continue asserting the need for flexibility in their implementation.

CEMR and its expert group will actively contribute to the Thematic Partnership on Adaptation to climate and Energy transition aiming at implementing the Urban Agenda for the EU, which will provide an opportunity to the local level to discuss future actions or legislation on this topic.

CEMR will remain a committed partner in the global process of the subnational governments involved in the fight against climate change. CEMR has been working very closely with networks at EU and international level in shaping the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCM). 2017 will be the year when the Secretariat of the GCM becomes operational. CEMR will make sure that the city networks' efforts are taken into account and that the subnational governments' powers, actions and mandates are clearly visible in this new initiative. The GCM will also assure that the autonomy of the European dimension (through the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy) is maintained.

CEMR will also commit to preparing the next COP23 in Bonn in November (and the local summit on climate within COPs framework) and in the same way as participating to the Climate Chance summit in Marrakesh next autumn.

MAYORS ADAPT

CEMR will continue its commitment to inspire local authorities to undertake integrated actions on climate and energy in the context of the Global Covenant, where specific activities will be envisaged. These actions aim to mobilise CEMR National Associations and further promote the commitments of the Global Covenant, thereby reaching out and providing assistance to Local Authorities willing to join the initiative. The Mayors Adapt project will end in February 2017.

COVENANT OF MAYORS

CEMR's service contract to manage the Covenant of Mayors Office is coming to an end in December 2016. Therefore, in April 2016, the European Commission launched a call for tenders for the next phase of the project. The current consortium plus ICLEI Europe submitted an offer, and was selected in October to continue running the initiative for three and a half years.. During this forthcoming period, CEMR will be involved in mobilising local authorities at the national and European level, with a focus on promoting the initiative in the national contexts in partnership with National Associations. Further collaboration with Supporters and National Associations will be strengthened to better serve local and regional governments and promote visibility of their actions.

COVENANT OF MAYORS IN SUB SAHARAN AFRICA

The workshops organised in 2016 will be followed up by providing technical support to individual pilot cities in Sub Saharan Africa in the development of sustainable energy access and climate action plans (SEACAPS). In collaboration with project partners, CEMR will define the main principles of the CoM SSA (e.g. establishing ambitious long-term objectives going beyond political mandates, allocate appropriate human, technical and financial resources, etc.) and provide guidance to potential signatory cities regarding their commitment to the initiative to tackle interconnected challenges: climate change mitigation, adaptation and sustainable energy. Networking and political advocacy among all levels of government, as well as promotion and communication activities will be at the heart of our activities throughout the year. Moreover, the coordination with other relevant initiatives and in particular, with the Global Covenant of Mayors, will be one of the main priorities to follow up in 2017.

CITYNVEST

The workshops organised in 2016 will be followed up by sending guidance materials to the participants of the events and other stakeholders. Those materials will include a guidance to technical staff in local authorities, as well as policy recommendations and will be developed and disseminated with the support of the CEMR member organisations in respective countries (Latvia, Lithuania, France).

In 2017, CEMR will contribute to development of policy recommendations for the EU level policy makers regarding the innovative financing models for energy efficiency in buildings. We will also organise the final conference, which will summarise the project. The event will take place in Brussels in autumn.

3. ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL COHESION

3.1. TERRITORIAL COHESION & FUTURE OF COHESION POLICY

The discussions about the **future of the EU cohesion policy** have started at EU level, with the European Commission exploring new scenarios. After the work of CEMR's expert group on territorial cohesion in 2016, and with the ongoing discussions on the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) at EU level, CEMR will engage in further discussions on the role of cohesion policy, the way it operates and its objectives during 2017. Our discussion paper will evolve on the basis of a common position, following which a position paper will be drafted. CEMR will advocate a more harmonised and integrated approach of the EU cohesion funds that gives more flexibility to local and regional authorities. In this perspective, CEMR will keep open a regular bilateral dialogue with EU Commissioners' Heads of Cabinet (DG REGIO, DG EMPL, DG AGRI, DG MARE) and with European Commission's Vice-President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, Mr Jyrki Katainen, who will be in charge of negotiating cohesion policy for the next programming period. As the Cohesion Forum and the 7th Cohesion Report will happen in 2017, CEMR will actively contribute through debates and written recommendations.

The expert group will also work further on **simplification** of the European Structural and Investment Funds, providing input to the High-Level group of the European Commission which formulates recommendations in this area. Moreover, we will focus our work on other key parts of the Cohesion policy such as territorial development instruments, financial instruments and grants, and the partnership principle.

Furthermore, the CEMR will align our efforts to the work being undertaken by the European Parliament's **REGI committee**, in particular, by focusing on the coordinators of each political group and proposing amendments to relevant reports for its members. We will also target the work of **upcoming EU Presidencies** on cohesion policy.

Integrated territorial development remains one of the core topics for the CEMR in the area of economic, social and territorial cohesion. The expert group will therefore follow those topics related to rural development, urban-rural interrelations and cooperation between municipalities.

The theme of **depopulated areas** and shrinking municipalities will also be further explored with the members of the expert group, focusing on how to better attract people and investments in some specific territories.

We will continue working on **demographic change** through our participation in the Societal Advisory Board of the Joint Programming Initiative 'More Years Better Life'. In 2017, a workshop on "wellbeing in later life, the 'oldest old'" is planned and the third call on "ageing and place in a digitising world" will be launched.

Finally the dissemination and consolidation of the **Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities (RFSC)** will take place in 2017 supporting the delivery of the Leipzig Charter for Sustainable European Cities, which will celebrate its 10th anniversary in 2017 with a conference in Germany. We will make the link with the Urban Agenda for the EU and the Article 7 of ERDF at the EU level, and with the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs at the global level. On the implementation side, we aim to give support and guidance to Local Authorities towards Integrated Sustainable Urban Development by providing an online self-assessment tool and by working in close collaboration with CEMR members.

3.2. LOCAL PUBLIC INVESTMENTS

Finally CEMR will continue its advocacy for **local public investment**, in particular towards the EU institutions and the European Parliament Intergroup on medium and long term investments, in order to identify where any room of manoeuvre in EU rules can be found to encourage more local public investments. Also, an update of the study done in collaboration with Dexia on local public finances in 2012, is planned in partnership with the French National Centre for territorial public administration (Centre National de la Fonction Publique Territoriale, CNFPT).

3.3. URBAN AGENDA

The implementation of the **Urban Agenda for the EU** remains a priority for CEMR. The relevant expert groups will closely follow the **eight partnerships**, which will be launched from January to summer 2017, in addition to the four existing ones. They will focus on 1) jobs and skills in the local economy (attracting and keeping enterprises, creating new enterprises, producing and consuming locally, supporting new ways of working, ensuring that skills meet the needs). 2) Sustainable use of land and Nature-Based solutions. 3) Circular economy. 4) Climate adaptation. 5) Energy transition. 6) Urban mobility. 7) Digital transition (provide better public services to citizens and create business opportunities). 8) Innovative and responsible public procurement to address social and environmental objectives. CEMR will be involved through municipalities and member associations, and directly in some of the partnerships, as Secretariat, in order to provide concrete input on better regulation, better funding and better knowledge in each of the thematic areas. The CEMR Secretariat will also keep liaising regularly with the European Commission (DG REGIO) and the EU Presidencies, and participate in the Urban Development Group and informal ministerial meetings, which coordinate the Urban Agenda for the EU. CEMR has also a special role to play as a guarantor of the cross-cutting issues for each partnership: integrated approach, international dimension, provision of adequate public services of general interest, urban-rural linkages and inter-municipal cooperation, and gender. CEMR will involve a broader range of local and regional authorities by closely working with its members, trying to organise events, joint meetings with other members of the Partnerships.

Furthermore, the expert group will follow the monitoring of the new **Habitat III Urban Agenda** adopted at the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development which took place in Quito (Ecuador) in October 2016, and in particular the three EU voluntary commitments launched in Quito by the EU Commissioner for Regional Development, Ms Corina Cretu. CEMR Secretariat has also been approached by the UN Habitat Brussels office to discuss the follow-up and how we could implement the new Urban Agenda in some pilot territories.

3.4. URBAN MOBILITY

CEMR will monitor any European Commission's initiative in this area, including on deploying clean alternatively fuelled buses in urban and suburban areas. Furthermore, to keep its members informed, CEMR will attend the informal meeting between DG MOVE and the "local authorities' networks" – CEMR, EUROCITIES, Polis, EMTA and ICLEI. The meeting is an opportunity to exchange on the implementation of the 2013 Urban Mobility Package, as well as on the work related to the Directive 2014/94/EU on the deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure and the Clean Vehicles Directive 2009/33/EC and their impact on urban mobility. This is a valuable opportunity for CEMR to facilitate exchanges between its members about sustainable urban mobility plans.

4. LOCAL AND REGIONAL PUBLIC SERVICES MANAGEMENT

4.1. LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS AS EMPLOYERS

The activities of the expert group on local and regional governments as employers are mainly steered by the implementation of the **Work Programme 2015-2017 of the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee on Local and Regional Governments** and most activities are carried out in cooperation with our counterpart, the European Federation of Public Service Unions, EPSU.

We will monitor European initiatives dealing with **labour market aspects and the impact on public services and their delivery of the refugees' crisis**, notably in the frame of the Commission's Action Plan on the integration of third country nationals. We will harness our revised **Guidelines for Migration and Strengthening Anti-Discrimination in Local and Regional Governments** to tackle these issues. In particular the objective set to enhance the capacity of local and regional government and their employees who have the primary and frontline responsibility of carrying out these tasks of welcoming and integration.

We will update our **Gender Equality Guidelines**, adopted in 2007 and CEMR will strengthen the internal collaboration between the expert group of local and regional governments as employers and the CEMR Standing Committee for Gender Equality.

CEMR will monitor any potential initiative related to the **work-life balance**, following the European Commission's second stage consultation that was closed in September 2016, and will focus on either potential future negotiations between European social partners or on the Commission's legislative proposal, covering at least one of the following measures: maternity leave, parental leave, paternity leave, and carers' leave.

CEMR will be particularly active on the initiatives of the European Commission related to the **Pillar of Social Rights** (aiming at identifying common principles and reference benchmarks for a greater convergence of employment and social performance over time). In particular, CEMR will follow up the public consultation of 2016 and its implementation in the legislative activity of the Commission, depending on the response to the consultation's results, at the Spring Council.

CEMR will also keep track of the developments of the **New Skills Agenda for Europe** and its implementation targeting different initiatives, such as the Skills Guarantee, a review of the Recommendation on Key Competences, an initiative on graduate tracking, a review of the European Qualifications Framework as well as the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition and a Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills.

CEMR will also monitor a potential Commission initiative on the Directive for **Information and Consultation Rights of Workers**, after the agreement reached in the Central Administrations Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee, which would include public sector in the scope in the same way as private employers, to the detriment of local and regional governments.

CEMR will focus on the cross-cutting subjects that concern local and regional governments, both as employers' organisation and as public services providers. The involvement of CEMR and its members will cover the discussions on national reforms and the Commission's reports in the framework of the **European Semester**; the implementation of European **digitalisation** policies, notably the eGovernment Action Plan and the New Skills Agenda.

CEMR will submit a project proposal for a **joint CEMR-EPSU project**; it is planned to be on the European Semester. The main goal of this project is to increase our members' awareness on the functioning of the European Semester mechanism and to strengthen capacity-building of social partners at national level, in particular in those countries where social dialogue practices are less common and the role of social partners in the national and local policy making need to be more structured and embedded in the national governance procedures.

As it has been identified by CEMR, the **new forms of works and occupational health and safety** will push CEMR involvement in all initiatives of the European Commission on these new trends, in order to strike the right balance between the necessary flexibility of work organisation and well-being at work.

4.2. PUBLIC SERVICES

The European Commission is leading strategic negotiations on a major trade agreement which will impact public services in the EU: the **Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA)**. The preliminary work on TiSA is under way. Its geographic (24 parties including the EU-28 Member-States) and legal scope (all services as defined by the World Trade Organisation by principle) may require CEMR to closely examine the impact on local and regional authorities and their public services, and engage with the EU institutions to make sure LRGs' interests are duly preserved. CEMR will also monitor the negotiations on **TTIP**.

Provided there is sufficient interest among the members of the expert group, CEMR may continue to monitor the transposition and implementation of the Directives on public procurement and concessions and further initiatives of the European Commission, such as the **European Single Procurement Document, e-Procurement** (in the frame of the REFIT initiative on Standard Procurement Document and Standard Forms for Public Procurement), and probably a revision of the **Remedies Directive**, following the public consultation in 2015.

Recently, in several state aid decisions, the European Commission has sent some positive signals regarding the application of the **State aid** rules on public financing of local services of general economic interest. Also, the Court of Justice of the EU in recent judgements provided interpretations on the application of internal market rules that demonstrate a better understanding of the specificities of the organisation and the financial compensation for local services provided in the general interest. CEMR will elaborate a comprehensive **position paper on state aid and local services of general economic interest** that we will use to advocate for rules that recognise that the majority of local public service compensation does not distort trade between the Member States. We will try to mobilise political support for our position, and look for appropriate possibilities to promote our view. This can also help us to position CEMR in relation to the results and initiatives following the **Consultation on the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) review**.

Depending on further proposals to implement the **VAT Action Plan** and the **eGovernment Action Plan** to be published by the Commission, CEMR will assess the relevance for local and regional government and engage with relevant stakeholders. CEMR is interested in the Commission's European agenda for a **collaborative economy**, and, provided we will have a position, we will provide input to the activities in the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions.

In collaboration with the Observatory of Local Autonomy, OLA, CEMR will organise the annual joint Symposium in Lille and Brussels in September 2017 on the topic of **Democratic and Electronic Changes in Local Public Action in Europe: REvolution or E-volution? A**

call for papers has been sent out, including CEMR members. They are strongly encouraged to participate and use this opportunity to be up to date with the latest news and experiences in this area.

5. INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT & COOPERATION

5.1 UNITED CITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS (UCLG)

CEMR will continue to play its **coordination role of the European section** of the world organisation United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).

Following the adoption of the New Urban Agenda approved at the Habitat III Conference in October 2016, the global agenda will enter in a phase of implementation and design of policies in which we will engage.

Following the renewal of UCLG statutory bodies in Bogota, CEMR will ensure that the next President of the organisation supports the values of the international municipal movement and ensure a good representation of the European section in the statutory organs.

5.2 CEMR-PLATFORMA

Beyond the contribution to the world organisation, CEMR will continue to lead PLATFORMA and contribute to the implementation of the strategic partnership signed with the European Commission.

EU consensus on development

After the consultation process end 2016 the European Commission, Council and Parliament will work on defining the new European Consensus on Development over (at least) the first 6 months of 2017 – with approval expected June 2017. PLATFORMA has been contributing to the process and will increase interaction with EC, EP and the presidency of the Council of the European Union to maximise inclusion of a local perspective in the new consensus.

EU programming: Increase dialogue with European Union Delegations in partner countries

More and more EU programming of development funds is defined at country level, by the Delegations of the European Union (EUD). Particularly the operationalization of the Territorial Approach on Local Development (TALD mechanism) will happen at EUD level. Therefore, PLATFORMA will make efforts to increase dialogue with the EUD – i.e. by direct contact and by hosting a lunch with ambassadors in Brussels.

EU-ACP future relations.

In 2016/2017 the European Commission will launch its formal negotiation position for the future of the relations with ACP countries. The first building blocks published by the European Commission on 22 November 2016 show a large work ahead to increase acceptance of local and regional governments in the practice of the partnership – and this will happen in a context that will possibly see a drastic redesign of the structure, geographical scope and methodologies underlying the current agreement.

Implementation of global agenda's: the localizing process

2017 will bring the second wave of SDG progress reports and will see the kick off of the New Urban Agenda. Localising these global agenda's will be a particular challenge in which local and regional governments' positions are not self-evident to all stakeholders. Continued

participation in the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments will be instrumental to represent Europe's towns and regions. Together with CEMR secretariat, members of CEMR and other partners of PLATFORMA, we will ensure that the implementation of the SDGs at the local level answers the expectations of local and regional governments. In this context, PLATFORMA and CEMR will disseminate good practices and experiences already taking place and closely follow the work done by the European Commission under the title 'Next steps for a sustainable European future – European action for sustainability'.

Migration and refugees

Migration of refugees towards Europe cannot be expected to stop in the short run, hence the issue will remain high on the European agenda. End 2016 saw an important shift to addressing the root causes – a field where decentralized cooperation has a lot to offer. The position on the new Partnership Framework with Third Countries will be the basis to engage member states, European Commission and Parliament.

During the CEMR technical seminar organised to prepare the work programme for 2017, a number of topics for studies and research has been identified. One of them concerned International Cooperation and how local and regional governments are exchanging. For this PLATFORMA will propose methodologies in its thematic working groups.

6. COMMUNICATION & GENERAL AFFAIRS

6.1 PRESS & COMMUNICATION

In 2017, CEMR will publish a series of new **publications**, including a new presentation brochure following the renewal of CEMR's presidency and statutory bodies, a book on Europe 2030, as well as a study on local finances.

The press and communication team will ensure the visibility of CEMR's activities and outcomes throughout the year. Special attention will also be given to the development of communication and advocacy **campaigns**. To this end, a series of materials will be made available to the associations, thus strengthening cooperation in our collective advocacy activities.

In terms of web tools, we are planning to modernise **CEMR's website** (www.cemr.eu), making it more dynamic and responsive to new technologies, mobile devices and tablets. Regarding the **extranet**, CEMR will be gathering feedback in late 2017 from the member associations, enabling us to fine-tune the tool and to fulfil the needs of all users.

6.2 STATUTORY AFFAIRS

In 2017, the renewed **CEMR Presidency and Policy Committee** will take office after their election in December 2016.

2017 will see the preparation of the next thematic **Conference on diversity, equality and inclusion** in Bilbao in June 2018.

Influencing the European debate has evolved in the last period, we need to strengthen our capacities of influence together with other stakeholders representing local and regional interests. The strengthening of CEMR's relationship with other European associations representing local and regional governments will be one of CEMR goals this year. This cooperation could be reinforced by setting an informal **coalition (Local And Regional Government Europe – "LARGE")** that could deliver common political messages and organise a dialogue between the leaders of the European Associations representing Local and Regional Governments and the highest level representation of the European institutions. The good relations established with others and the position of CEMR as the federative organisation will help us leading such coalition.

This convergence could be launched officially, with the organisation of a debate with prominent leaders of the European institutions about our on-going work on the future of Europe and the launch of our book on "Europe 2030".

Research and Studies: 3 years after the launch of the research and studies strategy, 2017 will be the year of the assessment and evaluation of the steps taken and the given priorities.

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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.

www.ccre.org