Dear Colleagues, Dear Citizens,

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions invites you to respond to the present consultation in view of the publication of a *White Paper for a New European Citizenship*. CEMR plans to present this document to the European Commission before the end of 2011 in order to ensure that the voice of local and regional authorities on the topics of European citizenship and town twinning is clearly heard.

The main themes addressed in this consultation correspond to the lines of thought which will fuel the debates at the European Congress on Citizenship and Twinning to be held from 29th September to 1st October 2011 in Rybnik, Poland. We kindly ask that you choose the topics of interest to you and that you respond to the questions which you feel are of the most priority.

Once this consultation has been completed, CEMR will prepare a green paper compiling all of your contributions along with the findings of the three regional seminars organised by CEMR in 2010 that helped to identify different approaches and practices relating to twinning and citizenship in the north, south and centre-eastern parts of Europe. This green paper will be unveiled at the Rybnik Congress.

The conclusions of the Rybnik Congress shall then be integrated into the *White Paper for a New European Citizenship* whose purpose is the formulation of proposals in view of the European programme which will follow the current “Europe for Citizens” programme beginning in 2014.

Your contributions should be sent to CEMR no later than 20 July 2011, either by email to manuella.portier@ccre-cemr.org or by post to the following address:

**Council of European Municipalities and Regions**
Secretariat General
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Introduction

Tomorrow’s European Citizenship

Arising from a desire to have lasting peace, the idea of a unified Europe took shape in the period after World War II. Sixty years after the launching of the Community project, what has become of the hopes engendered by this Europe? Faced with social crises and the retreat caused by fears raised as a result of globalisation, what kind of responses can Europe bring to the table?

Bringing Europe closer to its citizens, promoting an active European citizenship and reinforcing a sense of belonging to Europe underlie the core concerns of the European Institutions which must face up to a serious crisis of confidence on the part of its citizens.

The concept of European citizenship is complex and difficult to define as it encompasses a number of meanings and can be subject to many interpretations.

Town twinning was a founding instrument of European citizenship, which has been slowly forged through intercultural meetings, exchanges and partnerships. What is its status today?

Questions:

a) What are the main elements of modern citizenship in Europe? What are the reasons which lead you to feel that you are a European citizen?

b) What are the main obstacles to having a feeling of European citizenship? Why do you not feel that you are a European citizen?

c) As the level of government closest to citizens, what kind of contribution can local and regional authorities make towards exercising active European citizenship? What role can partnerships and twinning play in this?

d) Is the “Europe for Citizens” programme suitably adapted to this conception? If not, what would you propose?

e) How can exchange networks, city networks and European associations best respond to the expectations of today’s European citizens and youth in particular?

1. Europe at a crossroads – what concrete solutions for building Europe’s future?

1.1. A Europe without borders: what reality(ies) for citizens?

Even though Europe has successfully managed its wager of achieving unity in the fields of monetary policy, border controls and economics a political Europe is still struggling to become a genuine reality. The referendum results on the European Constitution and the low level of participation in European elections demonstrate the difficulty today of mobilising citizens around the European project. Yet, the European Union’s achievements have had a direct impact on citizens’ lives: the free movement of people and goods, the single currency, the Erasmus programme, etc.

On the other hand, the opening up of the markets of goods and services resulted in the placing of workers in direct competition with each other and the relocating of enterprises. The European Union’s
tangibility and actual meaning can thus be very different for citizens from the older member countries than for those from the Central and Eastern European countries.

In short, in light of current economic and political events – the economic crisis, the influx of migratory workers from North Africa, etc. – Europe is once again faced with new challenges to which a common response may not be easy to find...

Questions:

f) Faced with the challenges of opening up or withdrawing internally, globalisation and protectionism, the emergence of a European identity and the fear of losing one’s national identity, how is the Europe of today coping? What does a “Europe without borders” mean to its citizens?

g) Which European policies could endanger your national identity? What would you propose to make them less threatening? What kind of political decision would help to strengthen your feeling of belonging to Europe?

1.2. European citizenship education and the transmission of memory

In order to be able to identify oneself as part of today’s Europe and to appropriate the fundamental values of the EU, it is necessary to first be familiar with the beginnings of European construction. The emergence of European citizenship is strongly linked to the wars of fratricide and totalitarian movements which took place in 20th century Europe. Learning about this history requires an effort of remembrance in order to be just as familiar with the causes and consequences of the Holocaust as with those surrounding Stalinism. The twinning movement, born of the need to reconcile nations after the war, played a fundamental role in the development of European citizenship.

Citizenship does not naturally inspire certain sentiments - neither a feeling of belonging nor the desire to get involved and participate in the decision making process. One is not born a citizen but becomes one. Feelings of citizenship are primarily come by through formal and non-formal education. The role of schools consists of transmitting values and providing knowledge and skills to children but they also must act to foster notions of citizenship and multiculturalism. Participating in cross-border exchanges, volunteering in another European country or in a youth initiative project – generally made possible by civil society or local and regional authorities – contribute to citizens’ increased awareness and their active participation. Within this context, local and regional authorities – in partnership with civil society – constitute the most appropriate levels of governance for launching initiatives aimed at training in citizenship.

Questions:

h) The dramatic events of the past (Nazism and communism) resulted in the construction of Europe as it exists today. What kind of echo does this past leave today?

i) How can local and regional authorities and civil society work together to raise the interest of young people and transmit to them the history of modern Europe as well as the fundamental values encompassed in the European project?
1.3. The active citizen’s toolbox

The link between citizens and their elected representatives is only formed if citizens feel implicated and if political decisions have a visible impact on their day-to-day lives. To overcome the citizens’ lack of confidence with regard to their political representatives, the principle of participatory citizenship should be implemented, giving citizens the chance to debate with public authorities. In today’s digital age of social networks and Web 2.0, communicating through modern and well-suited means seems essential for interacting with citizens. New ways of participating, such as e-governance, allow for better dissemination of information and encourage participation in the decision-making process, thus leading the way to more transparent government. Likewise, the Treaty of Lisbon opens up new prospects with the establishment of the Citizen’s Initiative which gives Europeans the possibility, if certain conditions are met, of submitting a proposal directly to the European Commission. These new provisions should help elected representatives in becoming closer to their citizens and should enable citizens to take part in the political debate.

Questions:

j) How can citizens’ interest be roused and their active participation encouraged?

k) How can citizens be kept informed and brought closer to policymakers, thus contributing to the founding of a democracy of “proximity”?

l) How can the new technologies be integrated into local and regional authorities’ system of communication?

2. For a diverse and inclusive Europe

2.1. Gender equality… but what kind of equality?

European society suffers from a multitude of inequalities linked notably to gender, age, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, physical disabilities, etc. The European Union’s action in the area of equal opportunities is one of the domains where the impact of community decisions is strongest. An important body of European legislative texts is devoted to gender equality: equal pay, protection of motherhood, parental leave, etc. In spite of significant progress, much remains to be done. CEMR has worked for a long time to promote gender equality in cities. In 2006, CEMR launched the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life which aimed to encourage local and regional authorities to take a political commitment in favour of gender equality in local life.

Questions:

m) How is equality between women and men viewed and experienced in 21st century Europe?

What role can the European Union play to promote a balance between women and men in local life?
2.2. An intergenerational society for cohesive development

Europe is currently undergoing a significant aging of its population. Yet, the real and potential contribution of the elderly to the active life of a society is rarely taken into account and appreciated at its true value. Given that 2011 has been designated the European Year of Volunteering and 2012 is to be the European Year for Active Ageing, steps should be taken now to think about the active role of senior citizens in local life. On the other hand, the current generation of young people is also suffering from stereotyping and a lack of consideration. More attention is given to the gap which exists between youth and their elders even though an intergenerational dialogue is clearly an essential element in the transmission of knowledge and values. Town twinning can help a population’s elderly and youth develop interesting and useful actions for the local community together.

Questions:
  o) How can interaction among different generations be promoted, associating youth with senior citizens, pooling together their skills and areas of interest?
  p) Should the next “Europe for Citizens” programme address these issues more?

2.3. Diversity, an opportunity and a challenge for Europe

Within a multicultural and multi-religious context, citizenship can no longer be viewed only in terms of identity and belonging but as an essential step towards social inclusion. Twinning links between European municipalities and the rest of the world are often initiated by people with immigrant backgrounds who contribute to the intercultural dialogue between their country of origin and the country in which they reside. Twinning can thus be seen as a tool for integration, for exercising citizenship and political commitment, a means for international co-operation and for development with the place of origin. Participation in twinning activities can help foster an exchange of knowledge of the values and customs of the migrant’s host community (and original one).

While the twinning movement contributed to the reconciliation of populations torn apart by war at the beginning of the European unification process, today it can help with the integration of immigrants and promote an intercultural dialogue between populations with different mores and beliefs.

Questions:
  q) Moving beyond the fight against discrimination, how can the full citizenship of all be promoted?
  r) What role can citizens of immigrant origin play at local level to promote intercultural dialogue and tolerance?
3. Towards new types of twinning and partnerships

3.1. Twinning: bridges bringing Europeans together

Supported by CEMR ever since its creation in 1951, town twinning has become widely diversified as it gradually integrated all the European countries. Today, with nearly 20,000 strong links in Europe, the twinning movement is the most visible form of co-operation amongst European local authorities and remains the most widespread. Exchanges and meetings between citizens constitute the backbone of many of these actions. However, these exchanges often prove to be a starting point for more extensive co-operation or for concrete projects between cities. As a matter of fact, the European twinning programme has been taking steps to adapt to this development which it considers desirable. In this regard, an evaluation has just been carried out by the European Commission. We believe that careful thought is now more necessary than ever in view of the next programming period beginning in 2014.

Questions:

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<td>In light of the number of different new forms of co-operation which have been emerging (theme-based co-operation networks, cross-border and interregional co-operation), what is the role of town twinning in today’s Europe?</td>
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<td>u)</td>
<td>What types of twinning links are best suited to responding to the concrete needs of citizens and municipalities (e.g.: citizens’ exchanges, theme-based co-operation, etc.)?</td>
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<td>How can a new generation of more flexible, more creative and more innovative partnerships, which take into equal account both active volunteers and experts, small municipalities as well as large authorities, be promoted?</td>
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<td>w)</td>
<td>Does the “Europe for Citizens” programme respond to these expectations? Does it offer adequate support? If not, what would you propose in order that it might meet genuine needs?</td>
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3.2. Europe XXL – Opening up to its neighbours

Alongside the exchanges between twinned towns within the European Union, local and regional authorities of all types are increasingly forming ties with local or regional authorities in the European Union’s neighbouring countries. Following the wars in the 1990s in the Balkans, twinnings first helped with reconstruction and then assisted with the building of bridges between citizens (e.g. twinning between Barcelona and Sarajevo). Through the exchange of expertise and experiences, town twinning can help today with keeping the peace and with developing and modernising the region in view of its future European Union membership. CEMR has worked together with the countries of Southeastern Europe for many years now in order to help raise awareness amongst the citizens from neighbouring countries of the reality of the European Union as well as to promote mutual understanding between...
citizens from member countries and non-member countries and to contribute to the building of a lasting and stable neighbourhood policy. Albania, Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are already eligible to fully participate in all of the Europe for Citizens programme’s actions. We hope that the other Western Balkan countries who are potentially eligible (including Turkey) will soon be able to join the programme as well.

Twinning also represents a vital tool for co-operation for the Central European countries, which maintain many links with Ukraine, Moldova and the Caucasus.

At a time when the citizens of Mediterranean countries are mobilising and calling out for democracy and social justice, it is the European Union’s duty to build strong ties with its Southern neighbours. Within this context, town twinning has an important role to play in bringing citizens together and in helping to strengthen local democracy in these countries. CEMR therefore believes that it is important to open up the twinning movement to the countries located within Europe’s vicinity and to foresee tools which can be used by European local and regional authorities in international actions involving neighbouring countries. This approach can only help Europe in promoting a peaceful dialogue with its neighbours.

Questions:

x) How can the experience of member countries help the candidate countries? How can we encourage the development of partnerships facilitating the exchange of best practice and expertise between EU countries and their neighbours? Which European funds could cover this need?

y) How can we prepare the citizens and local actors from the countries awaiting accession for integration into the European Union and promote mutual understanding between the citizens from EU members and non-members?

z) How can twinning links and co-operation with neighbouring countries contribute to keeping the peace, developing the country and bringing the populations closer together?

3.3. A Europe open to the world

CEMR is the European Section of the world organisation, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). It also ensures the secretariat of Platforma, the European voice of local and regional authorities for development. As such, one of its priorities is to promote the strong role of the EU worldwide to combat poverty, notably by supporting decentralisation in its partner countries and effective local governance.

Local and regional authorities actually have a key role to play in the development of a territory as a result of the competencies assigned to them (water management, waste management, transport, civil registry, primary education, etc.). Decentralised co-operation allows European local and regional authorities to share their experiences with their counterparts from countries in the south. Based on exchange and reciprocity, these actions have led to a strengthening of the partner authorities’ capacities. They also bring about the consolidation of ties of friendship between the people involved and their opening up to the world at large through education on development issues. In addition,
certain CEMR national associations carry out specific actions to broaden the impact of their colleagues’ actions in non-European countries as well as to promote the development of local democracy outside of Europe.

The Treaty of Lisbon has made the European Union’s voice in the world stronger, particularly with the creation of the European External Action Service.

Questions:

aa) What place should Europe have and what place can it have in the world of the 21st century? What kind of added value do European local and regional authorities contribute towards promoting democratic local governance in Europe’s partner countries?

bb) Given that the European Union allocates a large budget towards co-operation with neighbouring and developing countries, do you think that part of these funds should be systematically earmarked for projects of decentralised co-operation?

cc) How can European cities and regions become more associated in the European Union’s external policy?