



PISA 1983 / PISA 2008

25 YEARS OF ACTIONS WORKING TOWARDS EQUALITY IN EUROPE



[INTRODUCTION]

These pages are intended to provide a brief glimpse of the rich history of the 25 years of actions promoting the equality of men and women in local life which have been carried out by CEMR since 1983. They retrace chronologically the major steps of this undertaking and single out some of the persons which have left their mark on these past 25 years through their political commitment and their dedication as a citizen.

Upon reading these pages, it can clearly be seen that the actions of women local and regional elected representatives is closely linked to the process of European construction. In fact, although their stated objective is equal access to the decision-making process, these actions also have repeatedly incorporated new concerns such as the EU membership of the Central and Eastern European countries or the affirmation of the European entity on the international scene.

CEMR is proud to share this retrospective with you filled both with the memory of past actions and a telling reminder of the unrelenting will constantly shown to place European women citizens at the heart of the decision-making process.



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[1983-1992]

FROM PISA TO HEIDELBERG, THE STRUCTURING OF THE ACTION OF CEMR'S WOMEN ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

THE MEETINGS OF WOMEN LOCAL AND REGIONAL ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

1983 – PISA: THE FIRST MEETING FOR "THE RENEWAL OF EUROPEAN SOCIETY"

Two hundred women representatives of European municipalities, provinces and regions met on the occasion of the first "Meeting of women local and regional elected representatives of the European Community" organised by CEMR in order to allow for the debating of the "Renewal of European Society" over a period of three days. Three women played pivotal roles in the organisation of this conference: the President of the Province of Pisa, Fausta Giani Cecchini; Fausta Deshormes, Director of the European Commission's Women Information Unit; and at CEMR, the Deputy Secretary General, Elisabeth Gateau.

By emphasizing the principle according to which local and regional authorities have a primordial role to play in ensuring a "balanced development" of the European Community, women elected representatives insisted on three points: the participation of European women in local and regional assemblies, the actions carried out by the European Institutions to promote equal opportunities and the impact of Community policy on local and regional authorities.

1986 – SAINT JACQUES DE COMPOSTELLE: SECOND MEETING OF EUROPEAN WOMEN LOCAL AND REGIONAL ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

Organised under the patronage of the European Communities' Commission, this second meeting brought together nearly 300 women local and regional elected representatives from all over the European Community. The choice of Saint Jacques de Compostelle represented the women representatives' desire to take action by standing by their Spanish and Portuguese counterparts at the time of their countries' joining the European Community. Several subjects of concern fostered their discussions: for example, supporting the Community's 1986-1990 programme in favour of equal opportunities and the need for actions vis-à-vis the governments in view of the adoption of new directives relating to the equal treatment of men and women in their professional lives. The women elected representatives also requested that the Community, in its transformation into the European Union, incorporate the principle of equal opportunities for men and women into the new Treaty on European Union. The British Delegation, with the support of two key women in CEMR's actions for equality, Baroness Farrington of Ribbleton and Doreen Fleming, submitted a resolution providing for the creation of a structure within CEMR which would allow for the monitoring and the support of the policies of the European Communities' Commission as well as the actions of the European Parliament's Commission on Women's Rights in favour of equality.

1988 – ANTWERP: THIRD MEETING OF EUROPEAN WOMEN LOCAL AND REGIONAL ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

More than 150 women local and regional elected representatives met on the occasion of the third meeting organised at the initiative of Antoinette Pecher, Municipal Councillor of Antwerp. The conference's theme was "the responses of European local and regional authorities faced with the challenges of contemporary society". At the heart of the debates was the Single Market of 1992, its coming realisation being a subject of interest to all local and regional authorities. Women representatives also highlighted, as was the custom at these meetings, local problems, in particularly violence in the cities, the integration of migrant women and initiatives aimed at youth.

1992 – HEIDELBERG: SETTING UP A STANDING CEMR COMMITTEE OF WOMEN ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

At this 4th meeting, women representatives were reminded of the paramount role played by CEMR and its national associations in the construction of the European Union at the time of the Maastricht Treaty which in fact recognised the principle of subsidiarity which promotes the development of a democracy at the level closest to citizens.

The meetings in Heidelberg were above all significant in light of the creation of the standing CEMR Committee of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities with the mission to increase the presence of women in politics and to promote their role in European construction. Through this committee, women representatives from different European countries have the opportunity to discuss their respective national situations, to exchange their experiences in view of transferring best practices in terms of equality and to monitor the evolution of European policies in this area.

SIENCE 1992, FIVE WOMEN ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES HAVE BEEN ELECTED CHAIR OF THE STANDING CEMR COMMITTEE OF WOMEN ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

From 1992 to 1995: Ms Fausta Giani Cecchini (Italy, President of the Province of Pisa)

From 1995 to 1997: Ms Rosemary McKenna (Scotland, Councillor, North Lanarkshire Council)

From 1997 to 1999: Ms Joan Taylor (England, Councillor, Nottinghamshire Council)

From 1999 à 2002: Ms Edite Estrela (Portugal, Mayor of Sintra)

From 2002 à 2008: Ms Vicenta Bosch Palanca (Spain, Mayor of Bonrepós y Mirambel)

From February 2008: Ms Jocelyne Bougeard (France, Deputy Mayor of Rennes)

[1992-1996]

THE LAUNCHING OF ACTIONS AIMED AT CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Beginning in the 1990s, the members of CEMR's Committee of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities placed importance on the need to establish contacts with the women elected representatives of the Central and Eastern European countries in view of their future membership in the EU. The different meetings organised between 1994 and 1998 played a decisive role in opening this dialogue.

The cities of Cieszyn (Poland, 1994), Maribor (Slovenia, 1994), Ostrava (Czech Republic, 1995), Tallinn (Estonia, 1996) and Sofia (Bulgaria, 1998) hosted meetings of members of the Committee with their counterparts from Central and Eastern European countries as well as training seminars aimed at the women elected representatives of these countries.

The city of Cieszyn, thanks to the commitment of its Mayor at the time, Mr Jan OLBRYCHT, hosted in 1994 the first meeting of the Committee with women elected representatives from Poland, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia, who were able to share their experiences both before 1999 and during the period of transition towards democracy.

In Maribor, again in 1994, at the invitation of the Mayor, Ms Magdalena TOVORNIK, President of the Slovenian Section of CEMR, women elected representatives from Hungary and FYROM, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, joined their Polish, Czech, Slovak and Slovenian counterparts to debate women's participation in developing and establishing democracy.

In 1995, in Ostrava, the standing Committee organised a training and information seminar for women from the Central and Eastern European countries on the Community programme for local authorities and equality.

In Tallinn in 1996, a seminar on "best practice for promoting equal opportunities", organised in co-operation with the Association of Estonian Cities, provided the opportunity to discuss the question of the means aiming to increase the presence of women in decision-making areas. With the support and the co-operation of CEMR's Scandinavian associations, the seminar was able to present a new and effective methodology.

One year later in Sofia, the Bulgarian Association hosted a seminar highlighting "the prospects for equal opportunities in a wider Europe".

1995 – DUBLIN: "WOMEN, POLITICS, DEMOCRACY"

The Dublin Conference was a pivotal step for the women local and regional elected representatives of CEMR. Organised under the theme "Women, Politics, Democracy", the 5th European Conference of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities brought together around 600 women local and regional elected representatives from 32 countries. Organised with the support of the European Commission, the Conference benefited from the contribution of women elected representatives from Central and Eastern European countries. Many leading figures took part in the conference, including the then Commissioner for Equality, Patrick Flynn, the President of CEMR and Mayor of Barcelona, M. Pasqual Maragall, and Mary Robinson, the then President of the Republic of Ireland.

The conference coincided with the setting up of the Committee of the Regions, a European representative body of local and regional authorities, instituted by the Maastricht Treaty. The women elected representatives of CEMR worked hard to raise the awareness of the members of this institution with regard to the question of respect for equal opportunities. Following an ad hoc resolution, a working group was created within the Committee under the chair of Rosemary McKenna, Chair of the CEMR Committee of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities as well as a member of the Committee of the Regions. This working group drew up recommendations aiming to strengthen the presence of women within the national delegations of the Committee of the Regions named by the governments, as well as to ensure a monitoring of the dimension of equal opportunities in the opinions adopted by this institution.

[1996-2000]

CREATION OF A EUROPEAN NETWORK OF WOMEN ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

At the XXth General Assembly of European Municipalities and Regions in Thessaloniki in May 1996, CEMR's Committee of women elected representatives launched a European Network of women local and regional elected representatives in order to improve the exchange of information and best practice in favour of equality at local level in Europe. This network, made up of nearly 1600 women elected representatives from 34 European countries, carried out its activities as part of the 4th Community Action Programme for equal opportunities. It undertook the following activities:

- the setting up of information tools for the use of elected representatives, both men and women, at local level (CEMR's newsletter, "CEMR Info", containing specific information pertaining to equality and local politics);
- the organisation of seminars on "the presence of women in local politics" in anticipation of local elections taking place in the host countries: Sintra (Portugal, 1997), The Hague (Netherlands, 1997), Amfissa (Greece, 1998), Luxembourg (1999), Stockholm (Sweden, 1999) ;
- the conducting of research on the presence of women in politics, particularly at local level, in the different EU countries, under the supervision of Ms Françoise Gaspard. This research enabled, for the first time, specific data to be assembled on women's participation in local politics in Europe. The CEMR study represented an important contribution by European women local and regional elected representatives to the conference organised in Paris in April 1999 under the French Presidency of the EU.

The Chair of the Committee at the time, Ms Edite Estrela, hosted in Sintra, the city of which she was then Mayor, CEMR's Executive Bureau, then presided by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (from 1997 to 2004). On this occasion, the Executive Bureau adopted a resolution recommending that a regular evaluation be undertaken on the application of the principle of the equality of men and women within CEMR, its national associations and member local and regional authorities.

CEMR's women local and regional elected representatives actively participated in the XXIst General Assembly of European Municipalities and Regions which was held in June 2000 in Oulu (Finland), during which time a special workshop on equal opportunities was organised under the chair of Edite Estrela. On this occasion, the women members of the CEMR Committee, further to the recommendation of the Executive Bureau in Sintra, approved a strategic action plan for governance and equality which constituted a genuine framework for achieving a balanced representation of men and women within local and regional authorities, the CEMR member national associations and the governing bodies of the organisation.

[IN THE 2000s]

EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL INROADS

The turn of the century brought to light CEMR's political commitment in favour of equality on the international scene. Ms Vincenta Bosch Palanca, elected Chair of the Committee in 2002, played an important role in this respect.

In June 2000, a CEMR delegation of women local and regional elected representatives participated in the "Beijing+5" Conference organised by the United Nations in co-operation with IULA. The European women local and regional elected representatives were able to share their experiences of local life in Europe with their counterparts from all over the world and speak of the results achieved in this area as well as persisting barriers. Five years after the World Conference on Women in Beijing, at which time a Platform for Action for the development of the status of women was launched, the New York Conference provided the opportunity to assess the progress accomplished since then. The theme of the 23rd Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly was therefore "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century". Almost 8000 women took part in this Conference. At the close of this event, the role of local authorities was recognised in the action plan for the implementation of "Beijing+5".

In 2004, the Congress in Paris set up a new world organisation of local authorities: United Cities and Local Governments, of which CEMR is the European Section. Ms Vincenta Bosch Palanca called for a strong role for women within the new organisation.

FROM "THE TOWN FOR EQUALITY" TO THE "EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND MEN IN LOCAL LIFE"

The objective of "The town for equality" was to depict, with the help of CEMR's network, a virtual portrait of a town that takes gender equality into account in all of its policies. The results of the project, which led to the organisation of several seminars involving elected representatives, local officials and representatives from civil society, were published in the "The Town for Equality, a guide of methodology taking into account the best practices in Europe on this subject.

Once town for equality was virtually established, local and regional authorities were encouraged to take a step in this direction through a political commitment.

"The European Charter for the equality of women and men in local life" was the resulting project. This Charter would never have seen the light of day without the personal commitment of CEMR's Secretary General, Jeremy Smith, who placed particular importance on compiling a summary of the proposals of all the contributors to this work in the final document. Divided up into three parts and taking into account the different competences of local and regional authorities where CEMR has members, the Charter invites signatories to implement, through an action plan, policies in favour of equality. The undertaking of this ambitious project has been made possible as a result of the European Union's support under the framework of the European Commission's 5th Community Action Programme as well as the active participation of the project's partners.

To date, nearly 600 local and regional authorities have signed the Charter. Certain municipalities have already begun drawing up action plans for its implementation. The Conference in Pisa in February 2008 should provide the opportunity for an assessment to be carried out on these "local actions for equality" so that equality between men and women may become, with the help of the Charter, a reality in Europe.