



**Local & Regional
Europe**

CEMR 2018 Work Programme

Political and Thematic Priorities

JANUARY 2018

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Introduction

The CEMR Presidency's Priorities 2017 – 2019, adopted at the Policy Committee in June 2017, provide the frame for the CEMR draft work programme 2018, both for the thematic priorities and the activities. The direction is clear:

CEMR will be an actor to relaunch the European project and will defend and promote local and regional competences towards the European institutions.

Furthermore, CEMR's position on the future of Europe contains relevant elements that will guide our advocacy work in the upcoming months.

I. Political and thematic priorities

The future of Europe debate will enter into an important phase when the heads of State and governments will position themselves at their Summit in December. For CEMR, it will be an opportunity to highlight the role of local and regional government in Europe, and reaffirm the commitment of CEMR and its members to the construction of a strong, united, peaceful and prosperous Europe, founded on common values such as democracy, human rights, equality and the respect for rule of law.

In all relevant policy initiatives, CEMR will examine the potential impact on local and regional governments and the application of the **subsidiarity and proportionality** principles. We will continue to call for appropriate governance structures, democratic civic participation and efficient tools that allow local and regional governments and their representative organisations to be involved in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and legislation.

The debate on the future **multi-annual framework of the EU** will enter into a decisive phase and address the question of how to compensate the reduced income due to the Brexit, how to finance new tasks in the area of security and defence, but also exploring potential own resources and reviewing current spending in the different areas, such as the Common Agricultural Policy, **Cohesion Policy**, Research and International Cooperation with the Neighbourhood, ACP countries, etc.

Connected to this debate is the **European Semester** and its objective to monitor the economic development of the Member States, to ensure sound public finances, incentivise structural reforms and boost investment. The future EU structural and investment funds are expected to better take into considerations the country specific recommendations that the Commission proposes and finance ministers adopt every year. CEMR will advocate a stronger involvement of local and regional governments in the European Semester process, in particular when it comes to the assessment of the situation in the territories and lobby for a better recognition of the regional and local specificities. Also the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) will provide a thematic framework for the measures to be supported by the future cohesion policy.

Structural reforms, whether initiated by the European Semester process or for domestic reasons, deserve constant monitoring and analysis of their impact on local and regional democracy. Beyond the borders of the European Union, CEMR, together with its members and in cooperation with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities could raise its capacity as platform for exchange of knowledge and experience and strengthen its role as centre of expertise for local and regional governments. This will also serve to foster the intercultural dialogue and the mutual understanding between member associations, local and regional politicians and experts.

Our **Conference on equality, diversity and inclusion** in June in Bilbao will be an important moment to increase our visibility and provide the opportunity for CEMR to be recognised as a serious actor in these areas.

Finally, we will prepare for the upcoming **elections to the European Parliament in 2019** by identifying the messages we want to convey to the candidates and to the future members of the EP.

1. Future of Europe: a local and regional agenda for bolstering Europe and the EU

We will contribute to the debate with the publication of “Europe from a local level”, the collection of contributions from local and regional politicians,” Europe 2030, mayors and local leaders’ contribution“. We will present our position, adopted in June 2017, and vital elements, such as the recognition of the diversity of our cultures, history, political systems, etc. and we will promote our scenario that we provide: **a local and regional agenda for bolstering Europe and the European Union**. Whenever possible, we will combine the discussion about the future of Europe with the remembrance to our past, our history and address Euroscepticism.

Objective: Contribute to the debate on the future of Europe on the basis of our position paper and influence EU institutional thinking on engaging with local and regional government in developing future EU policies with a territorial dimension.

2. Digitalisation

Digitalisation is a huge challenge for all; it requires the necessary infrastructure, resources, skills, regulation and coordination of many and different actors. Local and regional governments are concerned to a great extent as providers of digital services and as employers. Relevant Commission proposals for the **Digital Single Market** will be examined on their potential impact on local and regional governments and actions proposed, and the impact of digitalisation on local and regional governments will be discussed as a general phenomenon, not only as a regulatory challenge.

CEMR will also address open government in general, focusing on participatory budgeting, access to information and accountability, and explore the issue of e-democracy in close cooperation with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

Objective: Increase the capacity and awareness of CEMR members regarding the digitalisation of LRAs and e-government.

3. Climate and Energy

Climate and Energy remain high up on the agenda. The **Paris Agreement** will continue being a key pillar for our members in the EU and beyond, and how the local level can play a crucial role in implementing the different actions and process in such agreement which will affect cities. COP24 in Poland will be an important meeting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to prepare the path beyond 2020. By Mid-2018 we will also see the light for the **Evaluation of the EU Adaptation Strategy** (ending a consultation period from October 2017 – January 2018). In view of the publication of the **mobility and climate change** package, CEMR will prepare the work by collecting evidence and identify key messages and will assess the interest of the members to work further on the package in particular, and on the topic in general.

CEMR will continue its lobbying actions with regard to the **Clean Energy for All Europeans** Package which is now going through the EP voting. We will continue lobbying together with the other European networks on joint actions on various dossiers: governance, market design and renewable energies.

Objective: Continue contributing to the relevant actions at EU and international level; advocate our positions in relation to EU legislation and policy initiatives.

4. The Multi-annual Financial Framework

The draft for the next Multi-annual Financial Framework beyond 2020 will be presented in May 2018 for discussion. CEMR will prepare a position addressing all relevant issues and areas from a local and regional perspective, taking into account the specific positions that we have adopted so far, such as cohesion policy, migration and integration of migrants, gender equality, International development cooperation, energy and climate, circular economy, etc.

Objective: Ensure that the draft Multi-annual Financial Framework post-2020 foresees adequate financing for policies and funding instruments that can help local and regional governments to deliver resilient and sustainable communities; furthermore ensure that local and regional governments can readily access these funds.

5. The future EU Cohesion Policy

In 2018, the Secretariat will continue its knowledge action on cohesion policy, focusing on community-led local development and on smart specialisation strategies to feed in the reflections of EU institutions on the future of cohesion policy and its territorial dimension. In parallel, the advocacy work on the future of cohesion policy will continue. Joint actions with members of the Cohesion Alliance formed by the Committee of the Regions and EU associations of local and regional governments, may be considered. CEMR will also strongly encourage its members to work with their national governments in this lobbying work.

Objective: Advocate the new EU regulations to reflect CEMR's position.

6. Education and skills

CEMR members are interested in addressing education and skills as relevant elements for our societies and economies, and the role local and regional governments can play to keep up with the needs and challenges. CEMR will be involved in a number of complementary activities of the EU on employment policy, and we will seek to increase the involvement of our member associations in the exchange of activities and knowledge, also to provide input to the European Skills agenda. This will be done according to the engagement of members, thus broadening the work of CEMR in this policy area beyond its traditional role of employers' organisation in order to address relevant employment and social issues in the local economy, such as skills and education.

Objective: Collect information and experience from members.

7. Local and regional governments as employers

CEMR will be working on the involvement of local and regional governments in the European Semester cycle and continue its lobbying on relevant legislative and non-legislative proposals of the European Commission and examine new proposals on their relevance for local and regional governments (e.g. the European Labour Authority).

Objective: Advocate that new EU initiatives take into account CEMR's position.

8. The Sustainable Development Goals and the Urban Agenda for the European Union

CEMR will continue working on the monitoring of the implementation of the SDGs in Europe and the EU, by collaborating with the different institutions involved and the Global Task Force of local and regional governments. The recognition of local and regional governments' actions in these global agendas is essential. All CEMR teams concerned will work on the SDGs and on the Urban Agenda for the EU, where CEMR is involved in eight of the thematic partnerships (integration of migrants and refugees, circular economic, skills & jobs, digital transition, urban mobility, public procurement, energy transition, and climate adaptation). These partnerships will formulate action plans along three strands: better regulation (including recommendations for the post-2020), better funding and better knowledge. CEMR will also continue to participate in the Urban Development Group meetings for Member States led by the EU Presidency, as

official partner of the Urban Agenda for the EU. It is useful to input and monitor the whole process alongside the European Commission and Member States. Promoting a territorial approach to development (both in internal and external action) will allow to position the cities in relation with their hinterland. The World Urban Forum (February 2018) will create a good opportunity to disseminate that position in close coordination with UCLG.

Objective: Achieve recognition of the contribution of local and regional governments to achieve the goals, and to get them involved in the monitoring and reporting process.

9. External action and global strategy

Through its leading role in the PLATFORMA coalition and its position as European section of the world organisation UCLG, CEMR will continue to closely monitor the European Union's external action policies. The main files on the agenda in 2018 will be the implementation of the External Investment Plan and European Trust funds to tackle the root causes of migration, the future partnership with the ACP countries and roll-out of the 2018-2020 program under the Local Authorities thematic instrument.

For this, PLATFORMA will step-up its research capacities and its methodologies to source experiences from the partner organisations that can feed the advocacy documents. A new grant agreement with the European Commission is scheduled to start in January 2019 and will focus strongly on advocacy of the local government role in international sustainable development, training and exchanges between European local and regional government international officers and awareness raising of citizens and local government decision makers about the developmental role of subnational governments.

Objective: increase the de-facto accessibility for local & regional governments to EU instruments for external action through impactful advocacy towards the EU institutions and increased capabilities and political support to international action at the subnational level in Europe.

10. Gender equality

In the first six months of 2018, the preparation and execution of the CEMR conference on equality, diversity and inclusion in Bilbao will be a central priority. This will include preparation of concept notes for each session, liaising with invited speakers, communication campaigns to attract participants and promote the values of equality, diversity and inclusion in local and regional governance.

CEMR will continue to advocate gender equality as an essential issue at European, national, regional and local level. This essential value must be mainstreamed in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies and reflected in the allocation of resources. On the basis of the key priorities (2016), 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 at the Policy Committee meeting (June 2018), 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.

CEMR will continue to monitor and promote the implementation of the European Charter for Equality, including through the online Observatory, and disseminate and promote our toolkit at in Brussels and abroad at European conferences. Through PLATFORMA support will be stepped up to networks of locally elected women while also drawing inspiration from the existing practices in other regional UCLG sections to feed the CEMR work in this regard.

Objective: Organise an interesting conference on equality, diversity and inclusion; increase awareness and strengthen gender equality policy; monitor and promote the European Charter for equality of women and men in local life.

11. Circular economy

CEMR will carry on its lobbying and knowledge activities in the field of waste and circular economy. Together with the members, we will particularly look into upcoming Commission's proposals such as the strategy on plastics or the follow up of the waste to energy communication.

Objective: Engage for higher involvement and recognition of local and regional governments in the circular economy, and strengthen their expertise in this area.

12. Local finances

CEMR will monitor and analyse the development of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) package and its impact for local and regional governments and on other relevant European policies. The package will include the transformation of the European Stability Mechanism into a European Monetary Fund, a specific euro zone budget line for structural reforms assistance, the convergence instrument for pre-accession assistance for the Eurozone, and the integration of the substance of the Treaty on stability, coordination and governance in the EMU into EU law.

CEMR will take part in the work of the OECD and UCLG global observatory on subnational government finance and investment. CEMR Secretariat will also provide space to members to exchange knowledge on local finances, local public investments and the constraints experienced and proposes to launch a study on these topics, examining the situation in the countries of CEMR membership.

PLATFORMA will intensify its work on local public finances in partner countries as the European Commission rolls out the External Investment Plan. The EIP is designed in parallel to the Juncker Plan and collaboration between European towns and regions and their counterparts to manage private sector involvement in public investments will be increasingly valuable.

Objective: Assess the impact of the initiatives concerning the EMU on local and regional governments; support the global Observatory for advocacy at domestic and European level.

13. Citizenship, twinning and youth

CEMR will continue its advocacy work in order to reinforce the Europe for Citizens Programme, and in particular, its budgetary allocation. We will keep leading the campaign with other members of the civil dialogue on citizenship of the European Commission to reinforce the link with the policy dimension of EU policies in the field of citizenship.

The question of active citizenship will be an essential element in our promotion of our position on the future of Europe where we support a Europe that is closer to its citizens. We will dedicate a session on active and inclusive citizenship during our Conference in June 2018, where we will present and debate innovative democracy tools and the concept of open government. In addition, we will also use tools on innovative e-democracy and participation during the conference.

We will monitor initiatives on countering radicalisation in the framework of the EU Action Plan on protecting public spaces and – provided our members are interested in – contribute to the reflections and the exchange of best practices

CEMR will launch a process of reflection on the future of twinning aiming at keeping its civic and long-standing character as well as how to keep its European dimension, but at the same time introducing new methodologies of cooperation from a technical perspective as well as new approaches. Building on the existing tradition of CEMR to facilitate town twinings within

Europe and on PLATFORMA's experience and study work on international city-to-city cooperation, new methodologies and experimental collaboration tools between local authorities will be conceptualised.

In the field of youth, the Committee of Young elected representatives will start working in a project proposal to spread the idea of 100% youth cities and local authorities. The project will follow-up the YELAC project and will aim at pairing-up a total of 8-10 cities (one with more experience than the other in a given field) with young mayors / councillors in order to identify together gaps (and benchmarks) in the design of 100% youth cities in different fields (participation, civic space and infrastructure, housing, education and employment). But also, to discuss about the different scenarios on the future of Europe.

Objective: Re-invigorate twinning as a tool to enhance mutual understanding between citizens in Europe and beyond; strengthen active citizenship beyond its legal dimension, by reinforcing knowledge exchange about open government and transparency.

14. Migration and Integration

CEMR will continue monitoring the developments in field of migration and integration at the European level, in particular the mid-term review of the EU Agenda on Migration and the future resettlement commitments, the integration of third-country nationals at the local level, and initiate the exchange of experience and information if members, from within and outside the EU, are interested in it.

Following the survey that CEMR prepared with the OECD, together with the recommendations and actions put forward by the Partnership on the Inclusion of Refugees and Migrants of the URBAN Agenda, CEMR will develop a more in-depth position paper on the needs, challenges and recommendations of local and regional authorities in the field of migration and integration, focusing on better knowledge, better funding and better regulation pillars. But also focusing in the multilevel governance of migration and integration policies. On the other hand, CEMR will also launch a platform for local officials working in this field in order to exchange on good practices and challenges in the field of integration in close liaison with our work within the Partnership and as a follow-up of the OECD-CEMR study.

Objective: Ensure that the interests of local and regional government are taken into account in the mid-term review process of the EU Agenda on Migration, as well as strengthening integration measures, funding, better regulation and knowledge exchange from the local and regional perspective.

15. Mobility

Following the publication of the Urban Mobility Package (2013), the European Commission is planning to adopt a mobility and climate change package in 2018. Urban mobility is indeed facing big challenges: rising congestion, related air and noise pollution, climate change, the search for alternatives to fossil fuels and other limited resources, demographic change and the pressure on public budgets, impact of digitalisation, etc. are impacting the development of transport and mobility in Europe.

The challenge for local and regional governments is to deal with the increased demand for mobility whilst developing a resilient and sustainable mobility system. Furthermore, the concept of mobility has to consider the social, economic and environmental aspects in an integrated approach of a wider territorial development strategy, not limited only to urban areas, but extended to functional area – including peri-urban and rural areas, as well as inter-cities connections. This is also in line with recent related international agreements: New Urban Agenda Habitat III, Paris Climate Agreement and 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. CEMR will prepare the advocacy activities by collecting evidence and identify key messages.

Objective: Achieve involvement and recognition of local and regional governments in the discussion about mobility.

16. Public Services

Public Services are regulated in the EU by the rules of the internal market, including the digital single market, and tax regulations and international trade agreements can also touch local and regional public services. Therefore, and in the light of the debate on the future of Europe, the preparation for the elections to the next European Parliament and the new Commission in 2019, CEMR decided to prepare a position paper on the future of public services.

The objective is to have a policy paper, expressing our core messages to be accompanied by a technical annex, with more information on the issues at stake, in five major areas of interest: state aid, public procurement, digitalisation of public administration and Digital Single Market measures, collaborative economy, and international trade agreements.

In addition to the preparation of the policy paper, we will monitor the relevant legislative and non-legislative proposals of the Commission, examine their impact on local and regional governments and propose actions, where appropriate.

Objective: Raise awareness for the challenges that local and regional governments are facing as public service providers and propose solutions.

II. CEMR as European umbrella organisation of local and regional governments

Reflecting the priorities of the CEMR Presidency, we will focus on the following actions:

1. Lifting CEMR's profile to reinforce its position as the interlocutor of choice for the European institutions

Over the past years, CEMR has steadily improved its profile and credibility in the Brussels arena, in particular as regards its engagement with the European Commission and the European Parliament. We are increasingly called upon by these institutions to provide evidenced based know-how and expertise, when it is important to understand the real impacts of policy-making on the ground.

CEMR is a permanent member of the Urban Development Group and the National Territorial Cohesion Contact Point, where member State representatives meet and discuss urban, territorial and cohesion policies. We are a recognised partner of the Pact of Amsterdam and participate in most of the 12 partnerships that have been established to implement the Urban Agenda for the EU. The European Commission recently commissioned CEMR to organise local and regional dialogues on the EU cohesion policy via a direct grant because of our specific membership.

The Strategic Partnership that the European Commission signed with CEMR in 2015 was already an important step, recognising CEMR as strategic partner for the Commission. A result of the very active role of CEMR on international action through PLATFORMA, we will explore how CEMR can further strengthen this status and build on this recognition in other thematic policy areas.

As European section of UCLG, CEMR is an important link between local actions in Europe and the global dimension, which becomes more and more important in a globalised world. This allows us to play a prominent role in the localisation process and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals.

CEMR will maximise opportunities to gain recognition for the contribution of local and regional government in shaping and formulating EU legislation. These efforts will result in positioning the CEMR next to the Committee of the Regions and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities as a key actor.

CEMR is now a Statutory Partner of the Congress of local and regional authorities of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg; it is the only association of local and regional governments to benefit from a direct link with the Council of Ministers of the 47 members of the CoE.

CEMR is very often invited to propose mayors to contribute to debates, meetings, conferences, events, etc. In general, the invitations are transferred to the relevant spokespersons, but quite often they are not available due to other commitments. Therefore, it is suggested to create a pool of Mayors, regional and local politicians that would be interested to be invited to European events and to represent CEMR.

Expected outcome: European institutions to contact CEMR to discuss relevant issues.

2. Strengthen CEMR's European policy work

CEMR will draft position papers on relevant legislative and non-legislative proposals of the European Commission. In order to allow more political debates prior to the adoption of position papers, it is suggested to modify the decision-making process. If the timing allows it, the spokespersons shall present the key questions and messages of a draft position to the Policy Committee who will hold a debate on the topic. Following the exchange, the expert groups will

finalise the position paper, which will be validated by the Secretaries General prior to its final adoption by the Policy Committee. This procedure will allow the members of the Policy Committee and the spokespersons to be more involved in the drafting of a position paper.

With our research and studies and as a platform to gather information, knowledge and expertise from national associations, we aim to become a centre of expertise for local and regional governments. In order to improve our work in this area, we are conducting an assessment of our strategy, adopted in 2014, with the intention to propose adjustments in 2018. In this context, we envisage to do a number of studies and surveys that are of particular interest to our members, which will also require their contributions and engagement.

Expected outcome: Greater involvement of politicians in the policy work, and CEMR to become a centre of expertise for local and regional governments.

3. Promote strong CEMR positions

The promotion of our position papers is an important part of our lobbying work. Alongside the meetings that we organise at technical level and in the context of our expert groups, we will target selected senior officials and politicians such as Commissioners and Members of the European Parliament to organise meetings and debates with our Presidency, spokespersons and members of the Policy Committee. We will cooperate with partners such as the Committee of the Regions, other territorial or sectoral networks.

As highlighted in our position on the future of Europe, our focus is on the whole continent and not only on the European Union. Therefore, we also wish to strengthen our cooperation with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, in particular in the areas of local democracy, local finances, e-government, diversity and inclusion. In addition, we intend to use our good relationship and increasingly strong links with the OECD Territorial Development Policy Committee and the responsible department in the Secretariat to provide input to their work and reflections.

CEMR will provide input to the work of the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG) of the Council of Europe, where the European ministers in charge of local and regional affairs (ministerial conference) meet twice a year, when relevant issues are discussed.

Expected outcome: Contribute to the shaping of European policies and legislation, and strengthen the cooperation with the Congress of local and regional authorities, the OECD and the European Committee on Democracy and Governance of the Council of Europe.

4. Reinforce the link with the member associations

CEMR's membership is its great asset; representing 60 national associations from 41 countries provides our organisation a considerable reputation and credibility. Depending on the activity, members' participation is on average around 20 associations (in equality, YELAC, public services, cohesion, energy and climate, local and regional government as employers, governance, waste, refugees and migration) and can go up to 100% (in our study on structures and competencies in 2016).

CEMR's membership can be further promoted with the 2nd edition of our survey on the legal status of national associations of local and regional government. The 1st edition contains information from 15 associations from 12 countries. We would like to cover more countries, from the EU and beyond, and will relaunch the survey in 2018. The study shall demonstrate the role of local and regional government associations as strong partners at national and European level.

Debates on relevant policy issues and on draft positions during the Policy Committee shall lead to more involvement and more interest for the participating politicians. Member associations should propose topics – not only with EU relevance - to be addressed in these debates;

the Secretaries General and Directors and the expert groups could make proposals and suggest topics that are of interest to their members.

An ongoing issue of interest are territorial and structural reforms. CEMR proposes to monitor developments of local and regional structures, ongoing reforms and their impact on local and regional governments. The exit of the United Kingdom from the EU is accompanied by internal discussions about competences for local governments in the different parts of the country, and it will be interesting to follow the development in the UK and to share experience with CEMR members. In cooperation with the Congress and other partners a monitoring instrument could be established, exchanges organised and studies published on a regular basis.

In order to attract more experts to the meetings of the expert groups, it is proposed to organise the meetings from time to time outside of Brussels, on the invitation of a member association and to add side visits to the agenda to stimulate exchange of experience, information and knowledge. This has proven to be very interesting for the experts who are in general more engaged in their day-to-day business and related problems than in EU legislation.

Sharing experience and knowledge can be organised in the framework of a project. Preparing a project proposal is quite a challenge and there are some elements that are not in our control. However, we propose a different approach by first identifying project ideas, seeking members' interest and feedback, and then look for funding opportunities in the next two years. Such an approach would allow us a better planning and give more time for consultation. However, certain flexibility will be needed in case a very interesting call or proposal is popping up, and respecting the requirements and deadline of projects.

Expected outcome: Gain higher number of members actively involved in CEMR activities, in the preparation of studies of interest to members, and in coordinating engagement in projects. Enhanced communication and an improvement in CEMR's communication tools are also expected.

5. Support the local level in promoting European issues and contribute to the stabilisation of the European Union

CEMR will organise events – local talks - to increase its visibility and the understanding of local and regional governments in the European arena. We will launch a cycle of interactive debates between local governments' representatives and representatives of other organisations, EU institutions, civil society, etc.

The 'regional and local dialogues' that CEMR and member associations of selected eight countries will organise until June 2018, financially supported by the European Commission, are important activities to demonstrate our engagement in the debate on the future cohesion policy, but also on the future of Europe. There may be funding opportunities for further dialogues in 2018; CEMR will explore the interest of its members in the remaining EU countries.

The YELAC (Young European Leaders for Active Citizenship) project, carried out between 2014 and 2016 was a great success; due to the funding of the European Commission around 30 young politicians from 10 countries participated. CEMR will revive the work of its Committee of Young Elected Representatives and proposes that they will be involved in the debate about the future of Europe, and other activities as described in the work programme hereafter. In this context it will be important to engage representatives from outside the EU. It shall be of particular interest to combine the reflections on the future of Europe with the remembrance of our past, our common history and values, but also to foster the intercultural dialogue and the mutual understanding between members of the young generation from all over Europe.

Expected outcome: Increase CEMR's visibility and understanding of local and regional governments in the European area, and revive the Committee of Young Elected Representatives.

