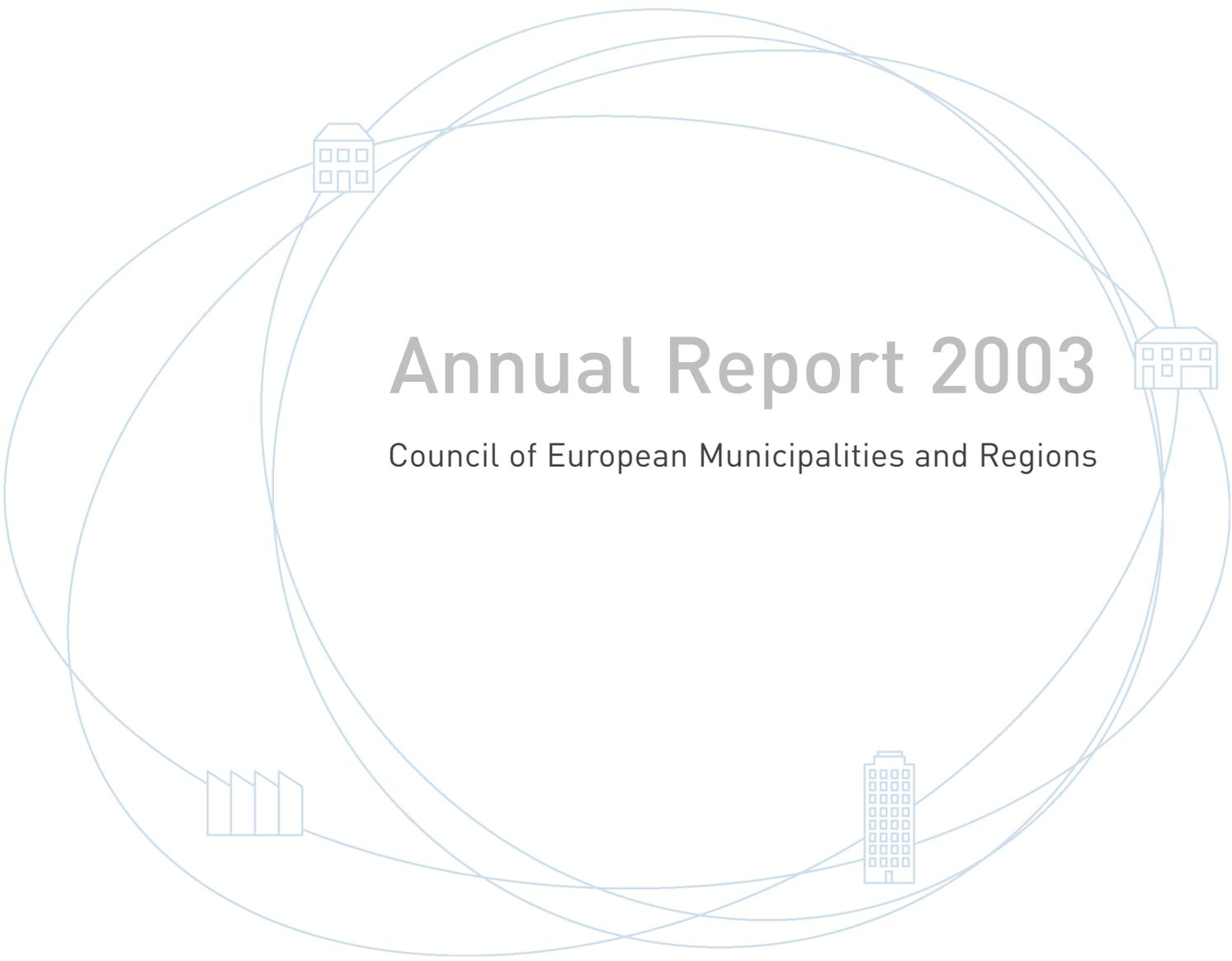




Annual Report 2003





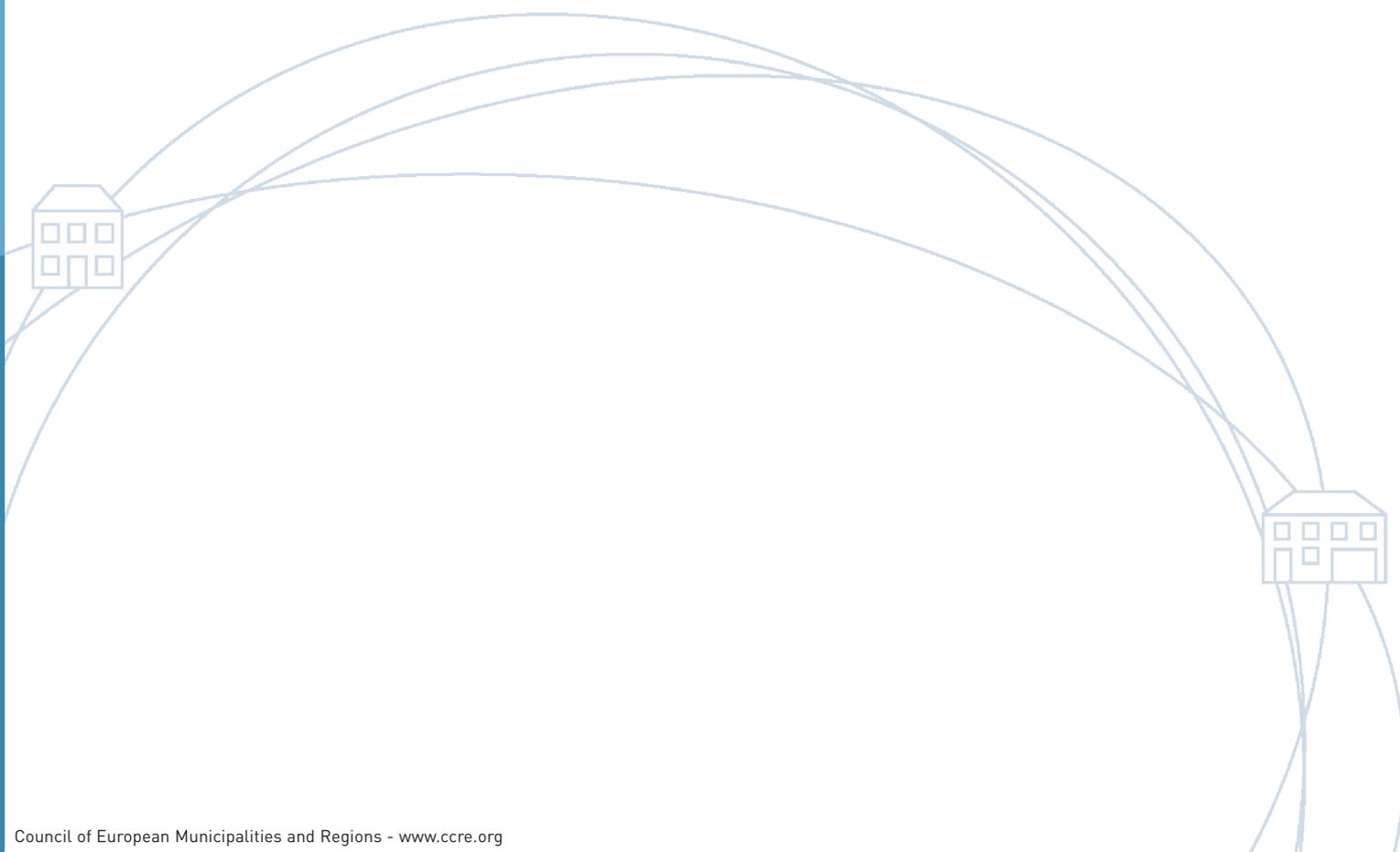
Annual Report 2003

Council of European Municipalities and Regions

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2003 : A special year...

2003 was a year filled with events for both the Council of European Municipalities and Regions and the European continent as a whole.

2003 saw the completion of the work of the Convention on the Future of Europe, which I had the immense privilege to Chair. I presented a full draft Constitution at the European Council in Thessalonica at the end of June 2003.

Consequently, it is now up to the governments of the UE to implement this project.

While a great majority of the 25 governments assembled within the Intergovernmental Conference (CIG) had expressed their agreement with the draft Constitution, the Presidency in office unfortunately neither succeeded in ensuring the adoption of the text nor obtained a consensus on two points - important, it is true – which today still provoke discussion.

It is undoubtedly the failure of the Council of Brussels, not the failure of the Constitution. This is why I remain convinced that the EU will soon have its own Constitution.

CEMR has been very active in this field: it drafted a large number of proposals aiming at strengthening Europe's local and regional dimension, and thus defended a more democratic European Union, closer to its citizens. 2003 will also remain the year of the General Assembly in Poznan, in Poland, in May. It was the first time that the General Assembly had been organised in central Europe. More than 700 participants assembled in Poznan to discuss the future of the Union, regional policy, transport and also twinning.

I would also like to underline CEMR's activity in the field of European legislation. Throughout 2003, our different working groups and committees have been involved in the EC legislative process by publishing various policy positions concerning topics as varied as services of general interest, transport, the environment, social policy, public procurement...

2003 was also the year we strengthened our dialogue with the European Institutions, be it the organisation of a "structured dialogue" with the Commission, the cooperation agreement signed with the Committee of the Regions, or joint initiatives with the European Commission concerning twinning, public transport prizes and various other events.

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing
CEMR President

1. Shaping the future of Europe

Throughout 2003, CEMR has mobilised its members to make CEMR's views on the future of Europe known – and taken into account – by the Convention, the EU member states and the European institutions. Simultaneously, it has consistently spread all information about the works of the Convention to its members throughout Europe, in order for them to relay them to Europe's municipalities and regions.

It is worth mentioning that the draft Constitution includes several CEMR proposals :

- Art I-5 on the relationship between the Union and its member states explicitly refers local and regional self-government
- Art I-9 on the implementation of the principle of subsidiarity adds that it covers local and regional spheres of government
- Art I-3 includes territorial cohesion
- Art I-46 calls for the consultation of representative associations
- The protocol on subsidiarity requires the local and regional dimensions to be taken into account
- The Committee of the Regions is given the right of recourse to the Court of Justice

"United we stand"

CEMR has been an active member of the Platform of European associations representing local and regional associations. It was created with the aim of bringing local and regional associations under "one banner" in relation to the Convention, rather than each of them issuing individual calls for a greater role for the towns and regions of Europe.

The Platform worked with Jean-Luc Dehaene as head of the Convention's contact group with local and regional associations. It lobbied the members on the convention for the February session dedicated to the role of towns and regions in tomorrow's Europe, and generally lobbied the members of the convention throughout the year.

For the rest of the year, CEMR worked closely with other associations representing municipalities and regions to enhance the role of local and regional authorities in tomorrow's Europe.

Poznan: The official position

CEMR's three-yearly general assembly took place in Poznan, Poland on 14-16 May 2003. It gathered over 700 representatives from towns and regions from the whole of Europe. One of the key issues discussed in Poznan was the Convention on the future of Europe. CEMR members issued "a last call" from towns and regions to the Convention. Following this call, several positive changes were made to the draft Constitution.



They also adopted the Poznan Declaration that covered a number of issues including the political future of Europe. Several thousands copies of the declaration were sent to all of CEMR's national associations, to EU institutions and to other local or regional organisations. It has been displayed at each public event organised by CEMR.

Martina Franca : "Calling the IGC"

The Policy Committee of CEMR met in Martina Franca, Puglia, on 29 and 30 October 2003. The meeting included a debate on the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) from the local and regional authorities' viewpoint, with interventions from CEMR president **Valéry Giscard d'Estaing**, Italian Minister for European Affairs, **Rocco Buttiglione** and President of Puglia region and of AICCRE, **Raffaello Fitto**.

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing warned the Inter Governmental Conference (IGC) not to weaken or complicate the Constitution.

The summary of the debate was made available to all of CEMR's members and to the national, regional and local media in Europe.

EU budget : Towns and regions support Romano Prodi

In December 2003, six EU Member States publicly advocated a ceiling for the EU's future budget of 1% of the Union's GNP. On 18 December 2003, the secretary-generals of four European organisations of local and regional authorities*, reacted in a letter to the President of the European Commission, **Romano Prodi**, expressing their support to his opposition to the six member States' views.

* The Association of European Border regions (AEBR), the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CRPM), Eurocities and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions.

2. The future of public services in Europe

The future of our public services is at the heart of the European public debate. CEMR promotes high quality local and regional public services, but opposes EU compulsory tendering rules that override local democratic decisions.

As local and regional governments are amongst Europe's largest purchasers, CEMR also backs workable EU procurement rules that give flexibility to choose the most cost-effective supplier, enabling environmental aspects to be considered.

"No forced liberalisation of public services"

The biggest issue of 2003 in this field was the Commission's Green paper on services of general interest. The Green Paper provided a long-awaited chance to analyse developments in this important field, and sought views on whether, and how far, legislation might be needed to regulate and protect SGIs.

CEMR's response, in September, welcomed this initiative, but strongly questioned some of the Green Paper's assumptions, e.g., that the role of public services is mainly to meet cases of 'market failure'. CEMR argued that clear guidelines are needed to define the boundary between Services of general *economic* interest (where the EU's competition laws apply), and non-economic SGIs (which are outside the EU's ambit). In recent years, more and more services are becoming open to definition as *economic* SGIs under existing definitions; CEMR argued that services should only be treated as *economic* if their main purpose is commercial rather than social or environmental.

CEMR also argued that public services provided by local and regional governments in their area for the local population should not be subject to EU competition laws nor to compulsory liberalisation. Many municipalities choose to tender out services, but this should remain their free choice, not an EU obligation.

Amongst other initiatives in that area, CEMR also co-organised a conference on services of general interest (SGI) in Leipzig, on 3-4 April. Over 200 participants, including representatives of the European parliament and the Commission, discussed the future of SGI.

The other co-organizers were the municipality of Leipzig, the Deutscher Städtetag, Eurocities and CEEP.

Revision of the public procurement directives : a greener, more flexible legislation

The public procurement package was the longest and arguably most difficult issue in this field. CEMR and its national associations lobbied the European Parliament to convince MEPs that Europe needed a more flexible, clearer and greener legislation on public procurements. CEMR succeeded in getting the Parliament to endorse most of its main points.

On 2 December, the Council and the Parliament reached an agreement that will allow local and regional authorities to use environmental benefits as a criterion in awarding contracts.

Also in December, CEMR took part in an Italian presidency conference on the new legislative package, defending the environmental and social provisions.

Lastly, CEMR contributed to the preparation of a Commission's communication and draft directive on the purchase by local and regional authorities of cleaner vehicles. In this context, it coordinated a Commission's survey of local and regional authorities. CEMR also sent its position to the Commission, in which it argued in favour of the need to promote the market for cleaner vehicles. However, CEMR warned that imposing obligations on public authorities to buy such vehicles would be costly and unworkable. A more voluntary approach between local authorities and manufacturers would be desirable.



3. Active citizenship: a Europe for and by its citizens

CEMR promotes a multi-level Europe that recognizes the vital role of regional and local self-government, including the need for partnership between all spheres of government to tackle the major issues facing our citizens.

It also sees twinning as a vital means of bringing Europe's citizens together across national frontiers, to help build a peaceful united Europe with grassroots support. As the European organisation promoter of town twinning, CEMR is regularly consulted by the European Commission, more specifically the DG Education and Culture in charge of twinning, on the content and the procedures of the twinning action programme of the EU.

Establishing a "permanent dialogue" with the Commission

In the framework of the White paper on European governance, the Commission has recognised the importance of local and regional government as the spheres of government closest to the citizens. Therefore, it announced its intention to publish in 2003 a communication on a systematic dialogue at political level with the European and national associations of local and regional authorities on the making of policy.

On 9 April, CEMR took part in a first consultation meeting with representatives of the Commission. A meeting of CEMR working group on European governance, in Brussels, on 29 April, followed, at which a position paper was drafted. CEMR's opinion was then sent to the Commission. The Commission published the communication in December 2003.

Twinning : when citizens build *their* Europe

As far as twinning is concerned, the highlight of 2003 was the Poznan general assembly.

A special session was dedicated to twinning and was followed by the Golden Stars for town twinning awards ceremony. The prize, awarded by DG Education and Culture, rewarded the European cities which had the most innovative and successful twinning initiatives in 2002.



CEMR also organised a seminar on "the role of town twinning to help with the reconstruction of regions having suffered from war" (Rome, 27-28 February). This brought together, in particular, local and regional representatives from the countries of South-East Europe which are not yet candidate to the EU and cannot thus benefit from the EU programme for town twinning.

It successfully lobbied the European parliament to increase the 2004 budget for the twinning programme from 12 million to 14 million euros.

Lastly, it issued a call to the Council when it became apparent that the approval of the programme for active citizenship – that covers the twinning programme - would require unanimous agreement on a new legal basis from the Council members. This delay meant that no twinning actions will be possible till April 2004. CEMR has kept its members informed of the development of the situation, mainly to communicate the new deadlines to respect in order to benefit from EU funding. Simultaneously, CEMR urged the Council to address the issue and unblock the situation as quickly as possible.



Active citizenship : a Europe for and by its citizens

Equal opportunity is a key-element of European citizenship

2003 ended on a high note for equal opportunity with the launch, mid December, of a new CEMR project: "Equality in European towns" that is funded by the EU in the framework of the 5th Equality programme.

The aim of the project is to define a methodology for gender equality in Europe's towns. The launch consisted in a three-day meeting in Brussels, at which representatives from CEMR's national associations, from the European Parliament and the Commission addressed the practical aspects of the project.

The committee of women elected representatives also met in Brussels on March 8 2003, on the occasion of International Women's Day. Representatives from the European Parliament and the Commission took part in the meeting.

In the same week, CEMR hosted the exhibition "Women, work and health" of the Swedish association of local authorities.

4. Sustainable development: the environment, transport and energy

The environment

CEMR and its national associations lobbied the European parliament and the Council to ensure that the directive on environmental liability takes full account of the “polluter pays” principle, and that local and regional authorities do not have to foot the bill for clean-up operations.

On 27 October and 17 November 2003, CEMR issued a position paper on the issue of waste shipment, in which it suggested several amendments aimed at reducing the possibility of sham recovery operations, at guaranteeing sufficient environmental benefit of recovery operations and at ensuring greater clarity in the legislation. On 19 November, the European parliament voted in favour of CEMR's suggested amendments.

CEMR also sought to influence the directive on bathing water. On 20 October, it issued a position paper following the Commission's proposal. Though it welcomed the overall thrust of the document, CEMR expressed its concern that it could prove onerous for local authorities to implement and result in a negative impact on local economies and communities that rely on tourism.

CEMR's environment committee met on 14 November. Members discussed the EU Commission's communication entitled Towards a thematic strategy on the urban environment; they heard representatives from several countries report on developments as regards Local Agenda 21 in their respective states, and discussed CEMR's first forum on sustainable development to be held in Brussels in 2004.

As a follow-up to the 6th environmental action programme, CEMR nominated five experts to take part in the EU Commission working groups and advisory forum set up to prepare the thematic strategy on soil protection. It also nominated the chair of the EU Commission working group on sustainable urban transport, and has contributed to the preparation of the thematic strategy on the urban environment. Similarly, CEMR, together with Eurocities, carried out a survey among local authorities of the preparation of thematic strategy on urban environment; the findings were presented at a European Commission event in June.

CEMR also contributed to a European project on sustainable consumption. CEMR has disseminated the results of the project: a toolkit for local government on waste management and consumption, and a guide on the management of waste of electric and electronic equipment.

CEMR contributed to the preparation of the draft directive on batteries by sending its initial position on this issue and participating in a Commission experts meeting. It also responded to the Commission's communication “Towards a thematic strategy on waste prevention and recycling”, stressing the need to take full account of producer responsibility and the subsidiarity principle when developing the strategy.

2003 was also the year CEMR participated actively in the Sustainable cities and towns campaign. It co-organised a “sustainable cities” award that was presented to the winners (Oslo, Ferrara and Heidelberg) in June.



photo: European Commission

Sustainable development: the environment, transport and energy

Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) : to enhance local and regional governments' environmental performance

CEMR actively supports EMAS, the management tool designed to help organisations to evaluate and improve their environmental performance.

In Spring, CEMR organised, with the help of its national associations and the support of the European Commission, a series of EMAS seminars in Finland, Belgium and Ireland. The objectives were to raise awareness and to promote implementation of EMAS within local and regional authorities, and to promote good governance by gathering representatives from local and regional authorities, central government and the Commission in the field of environmental management.

CEMR also promoted EMAS within its General Assembly in Poland in May this year. The aim was to introduce Central and Eastern European local and regional authorities within the scope of EMAS.

Aalborg +10 : Promoting sustainable urban development throughout Europe

In 2003, CEMR also started preparations for the 4th European conference on sustainable cities and towns (Aalborg + 10). CEMR is organising the conference with the support of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) and the City of Aalborg.

The conference (9-11 June 2004) will offer the opportunity to

- Encourage as many cities and towns as possible to sign up to the Aalborg Commitments and thus move from agenda to action
- Encourage especially cities and towns from Central and Eastern Europe to implement LA21
- Facilitate revival and re-motivation in areas where LA21 has been active for several years
- Exchange good practices and to develop future strategies for sustainable urban development

Transport

CEMR organised the 5th edition of the European public transport award. Its theme was "Unpopular measures for more sustainable mobility". European commissioner for the environment, Margot Wallström, presented the awards to the winners at a ceremony on 6 June 2003. The winners were the municipality of Bursa, the county of Cambridgeshire and the Emilia-Romagna region and the city of Bologna.

A brochure explaining the 11 nominees' initiatives in public transport and outlining a roadmap for decision-makers was produced.

In cooperation with POLIS, CEMR also organised a seminar in the framework of the European public transport award. It consisted of an exchange of experience between local and regional representatives.

The CEMR Transport committee met in Nantes, in November. It adopted a resolution in the follow-up to the debate on services of general interest; in it, CEMR called on the EU institutions to take into account the need for decisions on local and regional transport services to remain in the hands of local and regional decision-makers.

CEMR created a PC/Mac compatible interactive game (Carville) aimed at showing the difficult choices involved in improving urban mobility. The game was exhibited during the Green week, at the Commission, in June. Commissioner Wallström made a special visit to the exhibition in order to try her hand at the game.

On 24 April, CEMR organised in cooperation with Polis a workshop on congestion charging and related measures. Representatives from municipalities having developed such schemes explained the difficulties and benefits of their respective initiatives.

There was a well-attended round table on "market entry in the public transport sector" at CEMR's general assembly in Poznan (May 2003). This theme was also at the centre of the Transport committee's work during the year.

Energy

In 2003, CEMR established an Energy network. Its aims are to develop cooperation and dialogue with the Commission EU energy policy, and to promote exchange of experience between CEMR members on the promotion of energy efficiency and use of renewables.

The first meeting of the Energy network took place last October.

CEMR also participated in the Commission's Managenergy conference on local energy action, on 26/27 November. The Conference was covered by a full two day Internet streaming (voice and picture) and by three interactive multilingual Internet Chats, which allowed anybody to follow the conference on Internet in real time. All presentations and speeches will be available on Internet until the end of November 2004.



5. Cohesion and territorial policy

The highlight of 2003 in this field was the workshop on the future of cohesion policy, at the Poznan general assembly. Over two hundred delegates attended. The workshop ended with a massive “no” to re-nationalisation of cohesion policy.

CEMR also participated in the organisation of the Committee of the Regions Leipzig conference on the future of structural policy after 2006. CEMR contributed to the Leipzig declaration that was adopted at the meeting, and disseminated the information to its members.

In the second half of 2003, CEMR also started elaborating a position paper on the legislative proposals of the European Commission concerning the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. Entitled “What future for the development of less favoured rural areas in Europe?” it should be available early 2004.

On 25 February and 1-2 July 2003, CEMR’s working group on cohesion policy met. Among other issues, participants discussed state aids and the future of regional policy, focusing on public-private partnership, and the relationship between regional policy and cohesion policy, as well as between regional policy and services of general interest.

On the rural development front, CEMR was actively involved in the EU Commission’s Salzburg conference, in November. CEMR participants including vice-president Jan Olbrycht, urged the European Commission to increase coherence between the Common Agricultural policy and the Structural funds, and to broaden the support to rural economies.

CEMR secretariat and its member associations had their first discussions on the preparations of the first CEMR cohesion policy forum due to be held early 2004.



photo: European Commission

6. Employment, social affairs and knowledge society

Social affairs : the key role of local authorities

The working group on employment and social affairs met on 26 June 2003 and on 30 October 2003. Participants agreed to develop a CEMR position on the Commission's Communication on immigration, integration and employment. They also participated in a panel discussion on the challenges for local authorities in preparing for the ageing society. First discussions were also held on the future direction of this working group.

CEMR co-organised a European public social platform (EPSP) seminar in Turin, Italy, on 14-15 October 2003. The meeting comprised three sessions focusing on the contribution of local and regional government in combating social exclusion, and the role of the Platform in the EU strategy for social inclusion. It culminated in a debate on various aspects of the National Action Plans on Social Inclusion. This was also the occasion for the first Annual General Meeting of the EPSP.

CEMR also participated in the second European round table on poverty and social exclusion, again in Turin, organised by the Italian presidency of the Council.

The employer's platform: local authorities as employers

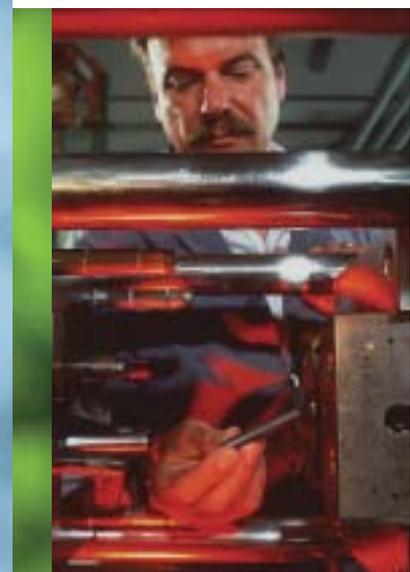
The main achievement of 2003 in this field was the long-awaited recognition from the European Commission for a local/regional sectoral social dialogue committee with CEMR's Employers' Platform, and the European federation of public services unions (EPSU). The platform made a first response to the EU working time directive, expression concern over two recent rulings of the European Court of Justice, and their consequences for European municipalities, in particular their management of public safety and health, and their ability to continue to deliver high quality services in these areas.

Moreover, cooperation with EPSU improved in 2003. A joint statement on telework was adopted within the local/regional sectoral social dialogue committee. This statement sets a framework to help local and regional government and their civil servants agree on issues related to telework.

Lastly, towards the end of 2003, a survey was made of what exists in terms of collective bargaining among platform members in the current EU 15 and of existing social dialogue structures in the acceding countries.

ELANET/Information society

The biggest achievement of 2003 in this field was the implementation of the Three Roses project (*Three Regional Operating networks working on Strategic Electronic Scenarios*). The objective of the project is to develop a relevant roadmap for future research work under the 6th Framework Programme of Research and Technological Development of the European Commission. It concentrates on state of the art of research and the use of Open Source Software in e-government and related e-business and learning processes.



Employment, social affairs and knowledge society

The project included two well-attended workshops in Brussels, gathering representatives from local and regional governments, academics, representatives from the open source community...

Similarly the Keelan project was successfully completed. Keelan consists of a roadmap on how to implement e-government strategies at local and regional level.

On 19,20 and 21 November 2003, CEMR's IT network ELANET organised the 4th European information society conference (EISCO) in Aalborg, Denmark. Over 300 representatives from local and regional government and EU institutions attended. The main theme was "integrated services in the networking society at local and regional levels".

ELANET's chairman, Javier Ossandon presented the conference's conclusions to the Lyon World summit of cities and local authorities on the information society, in December.

Regional competence : a project to boost employment at regional level

The Regional Competence project is an EU funded research project (5th framework programme), which develops tools for identifying existing skills among job seekers and organisations in order to target human resource developments within regions.

The project was presented in the CEMR working group on employment and social policy meeting in Brussels on 26 June 2003.

It also featured at the CEMR General Assembly in Poznan, Poland, via a stand and documents on display to help delegates familiarize themselves with the concept.

7. An enlarged Europe, open to the world

North-South local cooperation, a must

In 2003, CEMR set up a network for North South local government cooperation. The network brings together the heads of development cooperation of CEMR's associations involved in this field. It held its first meeting on 13 March in Brussels. Representatives from the European Commission and its technical agencies like the Asia-Urbs office took part in that first meeting.

A first meeting took place with a representative of the Commission's DG Development in October. It was followed by meetings with representatives of the European Parliament in order to press for a more coherent European policy concerning local and regional authorities and development.

LOGON :The local and regional enlargement of Europe

The Poznan general assembly included a special session on enlargement and its consequences at the local and regional level. Representatives from municipalities and regions from Member States and candidate countries debated several issues including the impact on structural funds .

The LOGON network co-organised a meeting on Services of General interest and the European Constitution, in Vienna on 3 and 4 November. CEMR secretary general Jeremy Smith chaired two of the three sessions while the executive director of the National Association of Municipalities in Bulgaria, Ginka Tchavdarova, chaired another session. CEMR's first vice-president Heinrich Hoffschulte spoke on the position and role of municipalities in the future European Constitution.

Representatives of the Commission and the European Parliament as well as numerous representatives attended the conference from candidate countries.



COPPEM, the Euro-Mediterranean partnership

CEMR is involved in the COPPEM network that aims at bringing together local and regional representatives from both sides of the Mediterranean. CEMR secretary general Jeremy Smith spoke at a conference on Euro Mediterranean Welfare systems (25/26 Sept) in Caserta, Italy. His speech focused on the local contribution to promoting UN millennium development goals.

United Cities and Local Governments

2003 saw the final preparations for the formation of United Cities and Local Governments, the new worldwide local government organisation, which is based in Barcelona. UCLG results from the merger of IULA (International Union of Local Authorities) and FMCU (Fédération Mondiale des Cités Unies), and aims to provide a strong united voice towards the UN and international community.

Under the transitional arrangements up till 2007, CEMR will act as the European regional section of UCLG. A meeting was held in December in Paris between CEMR and FMCU (Europe) representatives to discuss working together, and to prepare for the elections to the European seats on the governing bodies of UCLG.

In 2003, CEMR's secretariat provided significant logistical support to the setting up of UCLG. At political level, a joint executive session between IULA and FMCU was held in Rome in June, with a strong CEMR participation in the IULA delegation.

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions in a nutshell

The Council of European Municipalities was founded in Geneva in 1951 by a group of European mayors; later, it opened its ranks to the regions and became the Council of European Municipalities and Regions.

Today, it is the largest organisation of local and regional government in Europe; its members are national associations of towns, municipalities and regions from over 30 countries. Together these associations represent some 100,000 local and regional authorities.

At the head of its political structure is its President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. It has a staff of about 20 headed by its secretary general Jeremy Smith.

CEMR's budget is about 2.5 million Euros, the main part of which comes from the membership fees of its national associations. The rest (about 15%) consists of an annual grant from the EC Commission.



CEMR's activities

CEMR works to promote a united Europe that is based on local and regional self government and democracy. To achieve this goal it endeavours to shape the future of Europe by enhancing the local and regional contribution, to influence European law and policy, to exchange experience at local and regional levels and to cooperate with partners in other parts of the world.

CEMR works in many fields of activity such as regional policy, transport, the environment, equal opportunities, governance... Its committees and working groups seek to influence draft EU legislation to make sure the interests and concerns of local and regional authorities are taken into account from the earliest stages of the EU legislative process.

They organise seminars and conferences on a wide range of issues to promote the exchange and dissemination of experience at the local and regional level.

CEMR is particularly proud of its unique town twinning network. Today, there are over 26,000 twinning projects linking towns from all over Europe. On this issue, CEMR works closely with the DG Education and Culture of the European Commission.

Lastly, CEMR is the European section of the new worldwide organisation "United Cities and Local Governments".

President



Valéry Giscard d'Estaing
CEMR President

First vice-president



Heinrich Hoffschulte
First vice-president

Executive Presidents



Dr Michael Häupl
Mayor and Governor of Vienna; President of the Austrian Association of cities and towns



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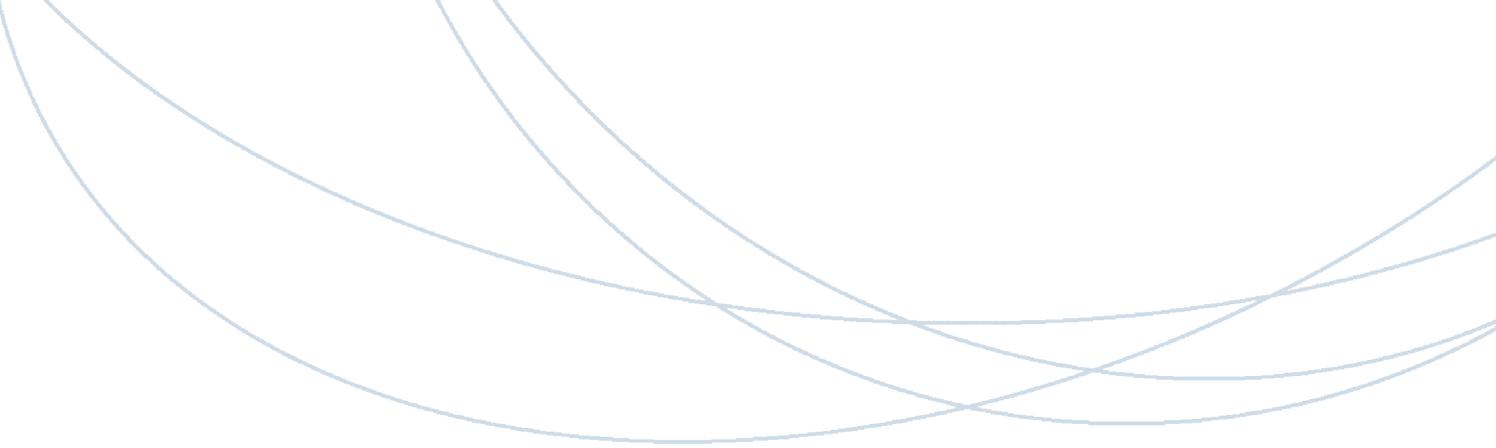
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CEMR thanks the European Commission for its financial support



CEMR's partner