



**COUNCIL OF EUROPEAN MUNICIPALITIES AND REGIONS
CONSEIL DES COMMUNES ET REGIONS D'EUROPE**

CEMR Response

to the European Territorial Agenda
and the Leipzig Charter on
Sustainable European Cities

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Key Points of CEMR's response

1. CEMR welcomes the adoption of the European Territorial Agenda (ETA) and the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities. CEMR calls on ministers to follow their adoption with a concrete action programme and a roadmap, including clear evaluation criteria and targets.
2. For CEMR, fostering territorial cohesion in the EU – including an explicit inclusion of territorial cohesion as an objective and competence of the Union – is an essential prerequisite for meeting the challenges Europe faces today.
3. In the context of the importance of mobilising Europe's territorial potential, CEMR calls on ministers to develop and articulate a much clearer vision for Europe's small and medium-sized towns.
4. CEMR calls for an approach to governance based on the principles of local and regional self-government, that places emphasis on partnership and offers appropriate incentives to encourage stakeholders to cooperate.
5. The diverse forms of inter-municipal cooperation should be accepted as a legitimate way of delivering services. CEMR sees a need for enhanced complementarity in this context between the EU's internal market policies and the objectives of sustainable urban and regional planning.
6. CEMR emphasises the crucial role of local political leadership and democratically elected local governments in developing sustainable European cities. Bottom-up initiatives and local partnerships for urban development – as promoted by the Aalborg Commitments – need to be supported.
7. CEMR particularly welcomes the Leipzig Charter's approach focusing on policies for neighbourhoods in deprivation, policies for the city as a whole and policies highlighting the urban-rural dynamics in a regional context.
8. We emphasise the importance of explicitly recognising the broad range of urban realities, including the diverse effects of demographic change and the need to foster strategies to manage both urban growth and urban shrinkage.
9. CEMR calls on all Member States to ensure that the resources allocated to urban actions through the EU Structural Funds are fully in line with the ambitious aspirations and commitments of the Leipzig Charter.
10. A more cohesive and coordinated approach to urban policy at European level is needed; continuous cooperation with national and European associations, representing local and regional authorities, should be established. This approach should also include a structured and systematic exchange of experience and knowledge in the field of sustainable urban development.

I. The European Territorial Agenda

Introduction

1. The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) welcomes the adoption of the European Territorial Agenda at the meeting of the ministers responsible for urban and spatial development policy in Leipzig on 24-25 May 2007. We also welcome the open and constructive stakeholder dialogue that the German presidency held prior to the adoption of the Territorial Agenda and recommend that this should be upheld in the future implementation of the Agenda.
2. From our perspective, the European Territorial Agenda has identified the key challenges that Europe faces today: from global economic competition to the impact of climate change, from energy security to social cohesion and demographic change, from the growing traffic problems of congested corridors to the dangers of an overexploitation of our ecological resources and the loss of biodiversity.
3. We share the ministers' conviction that the territorial cohesion of the EU is an essential prerequisite in responding to these challenges. We welcome the ministers' commitment to develop the preconditions that offer equal opportunities for Europe's citizens and development perspectives for its entrepreneurs in all our regions.
4. We maintain that the inclusion of territorial cohesion, both as an objective of the Union (Article I-3) and as a competence, in any future EU Treaty is an indispensable step towards a better territorial coherence of EU policies.
5. The CEMR notes that from the experience in our regions and localities, many of our citizens no longer identify with the direction in which they see the EU developing, and often feel that the Union is not responding sufficiently to their day-to-day concerns. By utilizing Europe's territorial diversity in a better and more innovative way, Europe should be brought closer to its citizens.
6. We consider it essential that the Union makes greater efforts to communicate the added value of its policies, principles and values – including the benefits of intensified territorial cooperation – effectively to the public.¹

Territory Matters

7. We welcome the ministers' emphasis on the fact that 'Territory Matters'. We need to build on the diversity and territorial specificities of Europe's towns, cities, localities and regions to mobilise our territorial potential. This requires a continuous process of cooperation of all stakeholders, including local and regional authorities and the associations that represent them at national and European level.

¹ For CEMR's response to the White Paper on Communication, see: http://www.ccre.org/docs/cemr_response_white_paper_on_communication.pdf

8. In this context, the CEMR believes that it is particularly important to pay increasing attention to strategies boosting the development potential of those regions having experienced economic decline and outmigration, including for example peripheral rural areas. From our perspective, one prerequisite to this is adequate connectivity and access to public services.
9. We highlight that whilst policies are needed to support metropolitan growth regions in a context of increased global competition, this must not be to the detriment of small and medium-sized towns and rural areas. Europe is a continent of small and medium-sized towns (SMESTOs) - 72% of Europe's population lives in communities with populations of less than 100,000. SMESTOs are important for Europe's competitiveness and cohesion. They play a vital role both in terms of economic development and as central nodes for the provision of public services.² We therefore call on Ministers to develop and articulate a much clearer vision for Europe's SMESTOs, which link with the vision being developed for larger urban and metropolitan areas.
10. In this context, we welcome the balanced approach to development promoted by the European Territorial Agenda and highlight its potential for ensuring that European policies contribute to a polycentric development, encompassing towns of all sizes, across all member states of the EU.

A new approach to governance

11. For the CEMR, mobilising the assets of both urban and rural areas requires a new approach to governance: one that promotes the principles of local and regional self-governance and recognises that EU policies are ultimately delivered through regional and local authorities closest to the citizen; one that places greater emphasis on partnership and offers appropriate incentives to encourage stakeholders with different agendas to work together.
12. Municipalities throughout Europe have developed different forms of organisation, management, partnership and inter-municipal cooperation to provide citizens with efficient public services and to capitalise on local development potentials. These diverse forms of inter-municipal cooperation should be accepted as a legitimate way of delivering services internally, without compulsory tendering. CEMR sees a need for enhanced complementarity in this context between the EU's internal market policies and the objectives of sustainable urban and regional development.
13. For the CEMR, integrated urban and spatial development is a key element of a territorial cohesion policy. Even if the European Union has no regulatory competence in the field of urban and spatial development,

² See also: 'Territory Matters for competitiveness and cohesion.' ESPON Synthesis Report III. October 2006:

http://www.espon.eu/mmp/online/website/content/publications/98/1229/file_2471/final-synthesis-reportiii_web.pdf

we welcome the increased attention to the territorial impact of the Union's policies.

14. We welcome the priorities and implementation actions suggested in the Territorial Agenda. We would like to reiterate the important role of regional policy at EU level, and of territorial cooperation in particular, as an appropriate delivery tool to help regions to tackle common challenges.
15. We also call on the ministers responsible for urban and spatial development to follow the adoption of the European Territorial Agenda with a concrete Action Programme and a Roadmap. The action plan and road map should cover implementation of the ETA, including information concerning the added value of ETA, clear evaluation criteria, identifying targets, and coordinating policy and funding. This is of particular relevance in relation to the EU key dossiers identified in the agenda (point 38). It should be developed in close cooperation with local and regional authorities and their representative associations.

II. The Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities

Local authorities – key actors for integrated urban development

16. Local authorities with their experience of self-government, their in-depth understanding of the challenges and opportunities in their territory as well as their immediate responsibility to their citizens are indispensable partners and key actors in attaining a sustainable territorial development in Europe.
17. CEMR would like to emphasise the crucial role of local political leadership and democratically elected local governments with a mandate given by their citizens in the context of delivering integrated urban development. We welcome that the Charter recognizes the importance of bottom-up initiatives and local partnerships for urban development and that it refers specifically to the Aalborg Commitments, which CEMR, together with other organisations, developed and promotes actively.³
18. The principle of local and regional self-government, subsidiarity and multi-level European governance have been explicitly recognised in the Constitutional Treaty (Article I-5). It marks an important achievement that must be upheld in any future Treaty. We would like to invite the European Union and its Member States to apply these principles even prior to the adoption of a further Treaty, especially on policy areas that have a territorial dimension.

The importance of an integrated approach to urban development

19. CEMR welcomes the Leipzig Charter for Sustainable European Cities and supports its strategic focus on integrated urban development policies for

³See: <http://www.aalborgplus10.dk/>

targeted deprived neighbourhoods, cities as a whole and in the city-regional context.

20. We welcome the Charter's emphasis on the following key elements of such an integrated approach:
 - Coordination of sectoral policies in and for urban areas
 - Coordination of public and private investments
 - Coordination at local and city-regional level
 - Involving citizens
 - Balancing economic, social and environmental interests
 - Taking demographic change and migration into account
21. CEMR particularly welcomes the fact that the Leipzig Charter explicitly recognises the broad range of urban realities. An integrated approach must take into account the fact that Europe is a continent of small- and medium-sized cities and consider the towns, second-tier towns and market towns which link to the dominant urban centres.
22. European policies in support of urban development must also take into account the diverse effects of demographic change on Europe's towns and cities and foster proactive strategies to manage both urban growth and urban shrinkage.
23. As CEMR has continually emphasised, cities, municipalities and regions are interdependent. We welcome the Charter's acknowledgement of the importance of paying more attention to this dynamic. Novel forms of cooperation across administrative boundaries – between cities and their surrounding towns and regions, but also between small- and medium-sized towns – are needed to respond to this changed reality.
24. We believe that the Charter presents a useful framework concerning the strategies for action needed in Europe's towns and cities. One aspect that could be emphasised more strongly is the important role of public services for integrated urban development. Delivering and ensuring high quality public services is at the heart of the mission of every local and regional government.
25. However, local and regional governments face increasing difficulties in organising and providing these services in the context of the European single market. We call on the European Union to look for a pragmatic solution that takes into account the specificities of locally provided public services that do not infringe the internal market.⁴

Political requirements

26. We welcome the Charter's recognition that one of the fundamental prerequisites for sustainable urban development is a sound financial basis, which provides long-term stability. The European Structural

⁴ See CEMR Declaration on 'The Future of Public Services in Europe' (12 May 2006)
http://www.ccre.org/docs/innsbruck_declaration_finale_en.doc

Funds should form an integral part of public funding for urban development. CEMR calls on all Member States to ensure that the resources allocated to urban actions are fully in line with the ambitious aspirations and commitments of the Leipzig Charter.

27. There is a need for continuous and structured monitoring – involving local and regional authorities and their associations – to assess the extent to which member states take into account urban issues in their operational programmes and to assess the impact of European funding on the development of Europe’s towns and cities.
28. In a context of tighter EU budgets, the creation of innovative financial instruments such as JESSICA and the potential of public-private-partnerships become increasingly more relevant. However, attention needs to be paid to the fact that local authorities are fully aware of the possibilities that exist at European level.
29. We note that EU action in urban areas as a whole falls short of a coherent EU urban policy. A better coordination of the different policies, initiatives and legislative proposals of the EU that concern local authorities is needed to move towards a more effective overall strategy. This should also include more explicit attention and encouragement of local authorities to access other EU funding streams.
30. Another important added value of the European level is the promotion of a structured and systematic exchange of experience and knowledge in the field of sustainable urban development. A range of initiatives exists, including the Regions for Economic Change initiative and the European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN). However, more attention needs to be paid to coordinate the different initiatives and to create links to the networks of local authorities and their associations that exists already. This would lead to a substantial improvement in the sharing of policy, research and best practice on sustainable urban development in Europe.
