



Rat der Gemeinden und Regionen Europas  
Council of European Municipalities and Regions  
Europæiske kommuners og regioners råd  
Συμβούλιο των Ευρωπαϊκών Δήμων και Περιφερειών  
Consejo de municipios y regiones de Europa  
Consiglio dei comuni e delle regioni d'Europa  
Raad der Europese gemeenten en regio's  
Conselho dos municípios e regiões da Europa

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## **The role and importance of cities and towns in the process of European integration**

*Adopted by the CEMR Executive Bureau on 21 March 2000 in Sintra*

Cities and towns have always played a central role in European civilisation. They have been the centres of cultural, social, political and economic development in European society. Cities and towns have always given momentum to the development of modern society and have had a large and sustainable influence on the evolution of modern Europe.

Almost 80 % of Europeans live in cities, towns and conurbations. In our globalised world, their wealth and prosperity attracts people from the poorest countries and from conflict areas. European cities and towns are therefore the very first whose task it is to integrate people from different cultural backgrounds and to promote peace and solidarity within a multicultural society.

Acknowledging these facts, CEMR is committed to the European social model whose main pillars are solidarity and equal opportunities in an open, social and dynamic market economy. Equal opportunities between women and men and between people from different ethnic backgrounds are a fundamental value of this European social model.

CEMR therefore rejects every form of xenophobia and racism and all policies which endanger the peaceful co-existence of diverse cultures in Europe and underlines the importance of twinning as a means of dialogue for citizens on the European values which they have in common.

Facing the fact that politics in Europe are devoted to European enlightenment and integration and to the value of tolerance, CEMR invites all associations of European local and regional authorities to take active measures which promote the integration of people from different cultural backgrounds.

CEMR is aware that cities and towns should offer a high standard of living (with regard to security, infrastructure and a functioning economy) as this is one of the most important requirements for peaceful co-existence. Integration in cities and towns must therefore never be looked at as an isolated issue but must be considered as part of a general local policy concept. Integration in this context stands for a comprehensive local policy tailored to the citizens' well-being.

CEMR therefore condemns with regret all policies trying to isolate Europe which have recently been introduced in some EU member countries. In contrast to this is the model of a Europe which adheres to the values of European enlightenment and which we must therefore vehemently defend.

CEMR supports the EU's efforts to draw up a Charter of Fundamental Rights and, at the same time, asks the EU that rejection of all forms of xenophobia and racism be included in this Charter in accordance with the European fundamental values of solidarity, tolerance and equal opportunities.