



Local & Regional  
Europe

# CEMR Gender equality position paper and action plan

CEMR Position paper

June 2018

## Introduction

Prepared with the support and input of the CEMR Standing Committee for Equality and the expert group on gender equality, this position paper and action plan is addressed to CEMR's member associations, local, regional and central governments in Europe, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of the EU, the Committee of the Regions, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. It also outlines a number of actions to which CEMR commits itself in order to further gender equality.

Progress on gender equality is happening at a “snail’s pace”<sup>1</sup>. According to the 2017 World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report<sup>2</sup>, at the current rates of change it will be another 217 years before we close the gender gaps in education, employment and politics. In light of this stagnation and recent developments, such as the global #metoo movement that has shed light on widespread subordination, verbal abuse, sexual harassment and assault suffered by women in all spheres of life, CEMR is motivated to ramp up its commitment to gender equality and adopt this position paper and action plan.

Part I outlines the position and expectations of CEMR and its member associations as relates to gender equality. Part II lays out the commitments that CEMR and its national associations make to promote gender equality, within their own organisations, and in their lobbying and knowledge exchange activities in the coming years. Taken together, the position and the action plan aim to: strengthen gender equality and gender mainstreaming within CEMR and its national associations, consolidate CEMR’s advocacy position towards EU institutions, press for increased financial support for the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life and its online Observatory, and to increase awareness of and support for the European Charter for Equality and the pivotal role local and regional governments play in advancing gender equality.

**Ibon Uribe**  
CEMR Spokesperson on Equality  
Mayor of Galdakao, (Basque Country, Spain)



<sup>1</sup> EIGE Gender Equality Index 2017, <http://eige.europa.eu/news-and-events/news/gender-equality-index-2017-progress-snails-pace>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-gender-gap-report-2017>

## Part I – Position

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and its member associations play a pivotal role in advancing equality of women and men in local life. Numerous initiatives and projects have been undertaken. The most prominent among these is the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, launched in 2006, and its Observatory<sup>3</sup> which form the basis for endeavours to achieve gender equality in European municipalities and regions.

The Charter, signed by nearly 1,700 signatures in 35 countries, encourages local and regional governments to commit formally to the principle of equality of women and men in local life, and to draw up and implement equality action plans which set out priorities, actions and resources to this end, to promote gender equality in all spheres of life, as well as to counter gender-based stereotypes and combat related discrimination and disadvantages, including multiple discrimination.

CEMR notes that change is still needed today in several areas and wishes to contribute to the positive social transformation of Europe so that every girl, boy, woman and man can enjoy equal human rights and equal opportunities in all spheres of life.

### 1. Political Commitment

Gender equality needs to be at the centre of the political agenda and mainstreamed into all policies, legislation, services, activities, and budgets. A strong political commitment and high visibility—complemented by awareness-raising, capacity building, sex-disaggregated data and concrete actions with sufficient funding—are needed from the European Union, Member States, towns, cities and regions.

We recognise the essential and positive role played by the EU in advancing gender equality. However, there is still a shocking disparity between the *de jure* and *de facto* situation, and significant efforts are still needed to combat the gender discrimination and inequalities which persist in all spheres of life: political, economic, social and cultural.

#### *CEMR calls for*

- Local and regional governments to sign the European Charter for Equality, work for its implementation and monitor the results.
- Central governments to promote gender equality, take the necessary legal and “soft” measures to promote and mainstream gender equality, e.g., facilitate exchange of experiences, allocate resources to gender mainstreaming projects, etc.
- All European States to assume their responsibilities in relation to global treaties and frameworks, such as the Convention on the elimination of discrimination against women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Involvement of local and regional representatives in relevant European stakeholder platforms, including the European Commission’s Advisory Committee on equal opportunities for women and men.

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<sup>3</sup> Observatory of the European Charter for Equality, <http://www.charter-equality.eu>

- The European Union to demonstrate a concrete political commitment to gender equality by adopting a multiannual Strategy for Gender Equality that would serve as a framework for action for both Member States and the EU Institutions.

## 2. Equal participation

The equal representation and influence of women and men in political life, at all levels of governance, is a prerequisite for a democratic society. Women's full and effective political participation, both as citizens and in public office, is essential for gender equality and for effective decision-taking and policy-making.

Local institutions are vital in this regard, both as the level of governance responsible for service delivery that is closest to citizens but also as stepping stones to public office at regional and national level. Democracy is built from the local to national and European levels. It is at the local level, as mayors and councillors, that political profiles are shaped. Parity will not be reached in parliaments and governments without a significant presence of women at the local level.

Women are still under-represented in decision-making and leadership positions in all spheres of life, but the situation in local and regional government is especially dire. In the European Union, only 15% of mayors are women and approximately 35% of local and regional council members.

### *CEMR calls for*

- Local, regional and central governments, political groups, and civil society organisations to encourage more women to stand for office, through measures such as awareness raising, mentoring, training and quotas. Relevant positions in political assemblies such as Committee Chairs, Ministers, Group Leaders, etc. ought to be filled equally by men and women.
- Political parties to commit to achieving balanced representation by the year 2030 and revise the processes of recruitment, selection and nomination accordingly.
- Central governments to enter into a political dialogue with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe to follow up on the recommendations of its Resolution 404(2016) and Recommendation 390(2016)<sup>4</sup>.
- Respect for the principle of equality in the candidacy lists for the 2019 European Parliament elections. The Parliament should lead the way with a balanced representation of women and men and not accept a Commission that is not gender-equal.
- EIGE to improve and harmonise national analysis and data collection on women and men's participation in political decision-making positions, in particular at the regional and local level, to monitor the progress both quantitatively and qualitatively.

## 3. Ending violence against girls and women

Urgent action must be taken at all levels of governance to prevent violence against women and girls, assist victims and survivors, hold perpetrators accountable, and raise awareness about all forms of violence against women, with a view to changing attitudes and behaviours.

Violence against women remains a serious blight on our societies. Every year approximately 3,500 women are killed by their partners in the EU and one in three have experienced physical and/or sexual

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<sup>4</sup> "Women's political participation and representation at local and regional levels", Rapporteur: Inger LINGE, 2016

violence. Street harassment is increasingly recognised as a form of violence against women. This scourge needs to be uprooted as it prevents girls and women from moving about freely in their communities.

The #metoo campaign, a global movement of women giving their testimonies, demonstrated the shocking prevalence of subordination, verbal abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault suffered by women in all spheres of life. This campaign has created fresh momentum to condemn all forms of sexual, psychological, physical violence and harassment and calls for stronger measures to prevent, protect, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and girls at all levels of government and all spheres of society.

#### **CEMR calls for**

- All of society to condemn all forms of sexual violence, physical and psychological harassment.
- All levels of government to take action to prosecute and punish these violations of fundamental human rights.
- Local and regional authorities, within the remit of their competences, to cooperate with other local actors to provide services for survivors as well as for the penalisation and rehabilitation of perpetrators (e.g. psychosocial support, shelters, education and training).
- Gender-sensitive urban planning that guarantees the safety and wellbeing of women in the public space.
- A comprehensive European policy and legal framework to end all forms of male violence against women, including the ratification and implementation by the EU and all Member States of CoE Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention).
- Central governments and the EU to take action to tackle violence and harassment online (social media, etc.).

#### **4. Strengthening women's participation in the labour market and economic empowerment**

Further steps are needed in particular to close the gender pay and pension gaps and to eliminate occupational segregation, starting with educational and occupational choices made in young adulthood.

In 2016, women's employment rate in the EU28 was 65.3%. This figure falls short of the Europe 2020 strategy target to raise the employment rate for women and men (aged 20-64) to 75% by 2020. In 2015, women's gross hourly earnings were on average 16.3% below those of men in the European Union (EU-28) and 16.8% in the euro area (EA-19). Across Member States, the gender pay gap varied by 21 percentage points, ranging from 5.5% in Italy and Luxembourg to 26.9% in Estonia.

A multifaceted approach is needed to empower women economically and increase their participation in the labour market. Vital measures and actions include accessible, affordable, quality childcare; non-discriminatory recruitment and promotion procedures; mentoring; better work-life balance and greater participation of men in household and care duties.

#### **CEMR calls for**

- Measures by local, regional, central governments and the EU institutions to decrease occupational segregation, e.g., increase the share of women in science, technology,

engineering, mathematics (STEM) fields and non-traditional employment and increase the share of men in education, health and care professions.

- The achievement of the Europe 2020 target of 75% employment rate for women and men, in decent, non-exploitative work.
- The European Commission to continue to address the availability and affordability of quality childcare as an important issue impacting labour market participation in the European Semester Process and that this issue be highlighted as relevant to working parents.
- Reduction in gender pay and pension gaps.

## 5. Work-life balance

Measures should be taken to achieve improved work-life balance for both women and men, for example, through introducing flexible work arrangements, non-transferable paternity leave and the provision of high quality, affordable care services. Unpaid care and domestic work must be shared equally between women and men.

Social infrastructure is necessary to enable more women to participate in the labour market, to gain economic independence and receive equal pay, income and pensions. The 2017 proposal for a Directive on work-life balance for parents and carers, repealing the Council Directive 2010/18/EU is an important step.

### *CEMR calls for*

- Local and regional governments – also in their role as employers – to be more involved in the implementation of work-life balance measures.
- The European Union and the Member States to promote work-life balance for both women and men through appropriate tools and incentives.
- Efforts at all levels, by government, civil society, and the media to change traditional attitudes and challenge gender stereotypes tied to care and domestic work.

## 6. Social awareness and engagement

The awareness, engagement and inclusion of girls and boys, women and men, in gender equality will be necessary in all spheres of society to achieve real equality in Europe and globally.

Gender stereotypes and toxic norms can have a negative impact on girls and boys, women and men. Education, culture and even advertising can serve counter negative stereotypes and promote positive models and tolerance.

### *CEMR calls for*

- Awareness-raising about the multiple and structural causes of gender discrimination and the societal benefits of gender equality by all levels of government, civil society organisations and institutions of higher education.
- The engagement of boys and men in achieving gender equality.

## 7. Equal access to and control of services and resources

Local and regional authorities provide a significant share of public services. Services and resources (for example: health, sports and recreation, social care) of the same quality should be accessible to girls and boys, women and men, and adapted to their needs and preferences.

Equity, efficiency and transparency in administration and governance can be improved through the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data, gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting. These tools and methods reveal gender inequalities and ensure better allocation of resources according to the needs and preferences of women and men.

### *CEMR calls for*

- The application of gender-responsive budgeting at all levels.
- Investments and programmes by the EU and Member States to reach the Barcelona targets (childcare places for at least 33% of children under 3; and 90% of children age 3 to mandatory school age). The European Council to raise the childcare targets as part of the European Semester process.
- Improvement in gender-sensitive public administration and provision of services locally, for example, in hospitals, police, care services, etc.

## 8. Equality as a core European value at international level

Equality between women and men is a fundamental right and a core value of the European Union enshrined in the Treaties and Article 8 of the TFEU lays down the principle of gender mainstreaming. Europe should integrate the core value of equality between women and men in its actions at the global level such as in trade policy, development cooperation, and humanitarian work.

In the spirit of solidarity, it is hoped that the European Charter for Equality can serve as a tool for equality beyond Europe, e.g., via the world organisation United Cities and Local Governments, of which CEMR constitutes the European section. As gender equality is one of the Sustainable Development Goals, it is also hoped that the Charter can support the implementation of the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda.

### *CEMR calls for*

- Synergies across the Europe 2020 Strategy and the Strategy that will succeed it, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the EU's Gender Action Plan 2016-2020 that promote gender equality and women's empowerment in external relations.
- Gender-sensitive decentralised cooperation for development by local and regional governments.
- Increased cooperation with United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and UN Women to ensure the successful implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda.

## 9. Gender perspective in refugee and migration policy

Europe should raise awareness of the differing, specific needs that women and men migrants, refugees and asylum seekers face. Long term, gender-sensitive responses must be designed and implemented at all levels of government.

The number of women and children refugees and migrants arriving in Europe increased from 27% in 2015 to 55% in 2016. It should be highlighted that female and male migrants, refugees and asylum seekers may have very different needs. For instance, the employment rate for refugee women in the EU is on average 45% - 17 percentage points lower - than that of refugee men, and 6 percentage points lower than that of other non-EU born women.

### *CEMR calls for*

- Increased access for refugee and migrant women to language courses and professional training as well as subsidised childcare at local and regional levels.
- Coordinated actions by local and regional governments, supported by the EU and central governments, to promote diversity and greater social cohesion in municipal life through outreach to refugee and migrant women and men; including by persons with a migration background.
- Provision of female interpreters in reception and integration services.

## 10. Funding for local action to promote equality

Appropriate funding and programmes are necessary to support efforts to advance gender equality; in particular for local and regional equality initiatives such as the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life and its online Observatory.

As demonstrated above, action is needed! Gender equality calls for significant, specific national and EU programmes and budget lines which place emphasis on local and regional government.

Local and regional governments are generally the administrative level that is closest to citizens and, therefore, crucial partners in all gender equality work. They are in an ideal position to support the implementation of objectives outlined in European and global frameworks (the Commission's Strategic Engagement for Equality 2016-2019, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Beijing Platform for Action, etc.).

### *CEMR calls for*

- Local, regional, central governments, as well as the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Committee of Regions, the Council of Europe to recognise and support the European Charter for Equality.
- The European Commission to design a specific programme to follow-up activity for the implementation of the European Charter for Equality and the sustainability of the Observatory.

## Part II – Action plan

This action plan covers the period from June 2018 to December 2020. Many important events will take place during this time: the European Parliament elections, the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, and CEMR's Congress in Innsbruck. The terms of the EU Work-life balance Directive and the European Pillar of Social Rights will be negotiated and it is hoped that an EU Strategy for gender equality will be adopted to follow the 2016-2019 Strategic engagement.

Monitoring and follow up of the action plan will be assured by the CEMR Secretariat, the CEMR Standing Committee for Equality and expert group. A report evaluating the implementation of the action plan should be produced in 2020 as part of the preparation of a subsequent action plan.

*Please see pages 10-11 to consult the action plan.*

## CEMR

<b>2018 - 2020</b>		
<p>Promotion of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life as <b>the</b> tool to achieve gender equality at local and regional levels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase number of signatories to 2,000 by 2020 (campaign)</li> <li>• Increase the share of signatories with equality action plans</li> <li>• Disseminate data and good practices to facilitate and foster actions at local and regional level</li> <li>• Update text of the Charter; collaborate with other regional sections of UCLG to adapt it to local contexts</li> <li>• Further development of indicator monitoring tool (addition language support materials/information; user-friendly interface)</li> <li>• Promote Indicator Toolkit as an instrument to implement and monitor SDG 5</li> </ul>		
<p>Active lobbying for the local and regional levels' importance for gender equality in practice to EC, EP, CoR, EIGE, CoE.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply for membership in the European Commission's Advisory committee on equal opportunities for women and men.</li> </ul>		
<p>Cooperate with CEMR expert group of LRGs as employers on relevant initiatives such as to the Work-life balance Directive.</p>		
<p>Promote and apply Revised CEMR-EPSU guidelines to drawing up gender equality action plans in local and regional government.</p>		
<p>Disseminate CEMR Code of Conduct to members and encourage other organisations to adopt it and/or adapt it for their own use.</p>		
<p>Improve Observatory support for gender equality work at local and regional level.</p>		
<p>Explore possible long-term financial plan to ensure sustainability of the Observatory.</p>		
<p>Cooperate with relevant civil society organisations to promote gender equality and highlight role of local and regional governments in achieving gender equality objectives (campaigns, studies, etc.).</p>		
<p>Explore cooperation with EIGE and European Commission on sex-disaggregated local/regional statistics.</p>		
<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
URBACT capitalisation work programme - Gender Equal Cities		
Consider Updating CEMR study on women in local government (2008)	European elections (May) – campaign to get more women elected	
	Consider organising seminar on men, masculinities and gender equality with member associations	CEMR Congress @Innsbruck
		25 <sup>th</sup> anniversary Beijing Platform for Action / 64 <sup>th</sup> UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) – cooperation with UCLG

## CEMR national member associations

2018 - 2020
<p>Promotion of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life as <b>the</b> tool to achieve gender equality at local and regional levels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Organise national seminars, conferences, webinars on the European Charter for Equality and the indicator toolkit.</li><li>• Inform Observatory about good practices and published equality action plans from local signatories.</li></ul>
<p>Undertake actions to promote the effective gender equality within the association:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nominate elected representatives to the CEMR Standing Committee for Equality</li><li>• Consider proactive measures in favour of gender equality within the associations<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Adhere to the European Charter for Equality</li><li>○ Adopt clauses on gender-equal representation in association governance statutes</li><li>○ Draft and implement an equality action plan</li><li>○ Adopt a Code of Conduct</li></ul></li></ul>
<p>Active lobbying for the local and regional levels' importance for gender equality in practice towards central governments.</p>

## Contact

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## About CEMR

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) is the broadest organisation of local and regional authorities in Europe. Its members are over 50 national associations of municipalities and regions from 41 European countries. Together these associations represent some 150 000 local and regional authorities.

CEMR's objectives are twofold: to influence European legislation on behalf of local and regional authorities and to provide a platform for exchange between its member associations and their elected officials and experts.

Moreover, CEMR is the European section of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the worldwide organisation of local government.

[www.ccre.org](http://www.ccre.org)