



# CCRE-CEMR 2006-2009: THREE YEARS OF ACHIEVEMENTS IN EUROPE AND BEYOND

Malmö 2009  
General Assembly

Innsbruck 2006  
General Assembly

Conseil des Communes  
et Régions d'Europe  
Council of European  
Municipalities and Regions







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## CCRE-CMER 2006-2009: Three years of achievements in Europe and beyond

The three years between CEMR's general assembly in Innsbruck, in 2006, and our 2009 general assembly in Malmö, have seen many new developments - for Europe as a whole, and (almost by definition) for Europe's local and regional governments.

In recent months, the financial and economic crisis burst upon us – and it is at local and regional levels that the crisis impacts hardest, and it is our local and regional governments who are in the forefront in addressing its consequences.

Before that, the debate on the future of the European Union has continued, and the Treaty of Lisbon has been negotiated, agreed, and ratified by most Member States... For us, this Treaty is important for many reasons – not least because it gives formal recognition, for the first time, to the role of local and regional governments in the EU, e.g. in relation to the subsidiarity principle, and to the organisation and provision of our public services. From the short-lived Constitutional Treaty to the Lisbon Treaty, we have never ceased to campaign for a greater role for our towns and regions in tomorrow's European Union.

Other issues have moved up the European agenda, such as climate change, energy and water... CEMR has taken up each of these issues, as part of our commitment to a sustainable future. We are working, with others, to persuade the international community that the role our cities, municipalities and regions play in tackling climate change must be recognized in the new post-Kyoto treaty to be agreed (we hope) in December in Copenhagen. Another issue of paramount importance for us is the future of European regional, urban and rural policies.

During these three years, there has been a new focus on the role of local governments in international development co-operation. More and more cities, towns and regions are active in twinings

and partnerships, and the European Union has developed a new programme for non-state actors and local authorities. CEMR has set up a new Platform of associations and cities, with the European Commission's support, to take forward our contribution in this area.

The period 2006-2009 was also full of CEMR initiatives, such as the launch of our Charter for equality of women and men in local life (already signed up to by over 800 local authorities) and our new "100% twinning" website. The European side of this website is available in over 20 languages, the north south cooperation side is in four languages; and both feature something never attempted before in European local and regional circles: a partner search facility with instantaneous translation in every language! More recent initiatives include our Code of Good Practice in Consultation, and our new European Charter of Local and Regional Services of General Interest.

There is not space here to mention in detail the many position papers, draft amendments to legislation, or responses to consultations, which have been produced by CEMR with our members over these three years. The range of subjects covered is wide and impressive, and it demonstrates once again that most European legislation falls to be implemented by local and regional governments – which is why we need to be vigilant in ensuring that such legislation reflects the concerns and needs of our citizens.

The following pages give just a brief summary of three years of CEMR's activities. I am confident that they will also help us see how important this work is for all of us.

Michael Häupl  
CEMR President  
Mayor and Governor of Vienna

## The Innsbruck general assembly



10 May 2006, 15:00 : over 1,200 representatives of Europe's local and regional governments and of European institutions attend the opening ceremony of the CEMR's General Assembly, in Innsbruck. For three days, Innsbruck is the beating heart of Europe's towns, cities, provinces and regions. Three days dedicated to the future of public services, the role of local and regional government in tomorrow's Europe, equality of women and men in local life, town twinning and local democracy in South East Europe...

They hear the president of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso, state that services of general interest are at the core of our European model of society, one of the keys of solidarity, while also being a source of employment and investment. He stresses his commitment to the principle of subsidiarity, not only between the EU institutions and the member states, but also between the member states and their respective towns and regions.

The round table on the role of local and regional governments in Europe takes place in front of a packed audience and addresses many top issues: the future of the EU and its draft Constitution, the need for the EU's institutions to "feed" from the daily experience and expertise of our local and regional governments, the importance of learning from each other...

The theme of the General Assembly is the Future of Public Services, and six workshops and one plenary session are dedicated to this issue: how to adapt services to demographic changes, how to improve access to services, how to address the needs of the most vulnerable, how to finance our public services and, just as importantly, how to monitor and assess performance and cost-effectiveness...

But Innsbruck will also be specially remembered for the launch of CEMR's Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, a Charter today signed by nearly 900 European municipalities

and regions. The congress also featured special sessions on local governments in South-East Europe (since 2006, CEMR has been increasingly active on this issue), as well as on town twinning and on international perspectives.

The final Declaration called for the inclusion of a reference to the European charter of local self-government in the future European Constitution or equivalent treaty while insisting that, whatever the outcome of the ratification process of the Constitution, the gains achieved for local and regional government and for the democratic working of the Union must be maintained and strengthened. In relation to public services, It also stated that the principle of local and regional self-government gives each authority the right to chose how best, in the public interest, each service should be delivered and financed - and opposed all attempts, whether at national or European levels, to impose specific models of service delivery.

# Local and regional self-government and democracy



Since its foundation in 1951, one of CEMR's main *raison d'être* is the promotion of local and (later) regional self-government and democracy. A study on how central governments assess the performance and cost-effectiveness of local governments was launched at our General Assembly in Innsbruck, in 2006. This was followed, in 2008, by a study assessing the consultation systems between central governments and national associations of local and regional government. Between 2006 and 2008, CEMR also contributed towards and supported the new protocol to the Council of Europe's Charter of local self-government, and its younger sister, the draft Charter of regional self-government.

In October 2008, CEMR organised a seminar on the reforms in Europe's local and regional structures, with the support of Local Government Denmark and Danish Regions, in Copenhagen. The seminar focused on how to reconcile local democracy, local identity and efficiency. A study on recent and current changes in a number of European countries was released at the General Assembly in Malmö in 2009.

Over the years, more and more associations from south-east Europe have joined CEMR. Promoting local democracy and good governance through exchanges of experience has therefore

become one of CEMR's priorities. Over 100 representatives of local governments and associations from over 20 countries attended the "South-East Europe – Meeting the challenges" conference, on 6-7 November 2008 in Vienna, looking at key issues for the region such as local finances, waste and the environment, and urban development.

The future of the EU hung in the balance following the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty (2005). CEMR has constantly campaigned for a solution that preserve the advances for local and regional authorities contained in the Constitutional Treaty. Initiatives included a joint call from the Presidents of CEMR



and other European networks to the then German Presidency of the EU, as well as calls to the EU Member States and Institutions for those gains to be kept. The campaign was successful since the Lisbon Treaty from 19 October 2007 strengthens the role of local and regional government, e.g. the widening of the subsidiarity principle to include the local and regional levels (not just the relation between the EU and national governments) and the new Protocol on services of general interest, which affirms "the essential role and the wide discretion of national, regional and local authorities in providing, commissioning and organising services of general economic interest as closely as possible to the needs of the users." In addition, in March 2007, the Declaration of Berlin, adopted by the EU's Heads of State and Government to mark the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, for the first time officially recognized that "tasks are shared between the European Union, the Member States and their regions and local authorities."

In terms of town twinning and active European citizenship, CEMR organised, in Rhodes, in May 2007, its major conference, on "Twinning for tomorrow's world". The new 'Europe for Citizens' programme was launched simultaneously at the conference and in Brussels as EU Commissioner in charge of Education, Training

and Youth, Jan Figel spoke from Brussels by videolink to the 600 participants. As a tool to modernize twinning and to adapt it to the future, CEMR also launched its "100% twinning" interactive website in over 20 languages, in November 2008. The new website includes a partner search area, as well as a well of information on twinning (definition, who can help, funding...).

A true European citizenship cannot be achieved without gender equality in our towns and regions. After the launch of CEMR's Charter for equality of women and men in local life, at the Innsbruck General Assembly (see above), 450 participants attended the

final conference for CEMR's European Commission-funded project in Pisa, in February 2008. The final declaration called upon the European Union to promote pro-active measures for gender equality in order to ensure real progress on the ground. Following this conference, a short publication no guidance in drawing up equality action plans, has been drafted, as well as work on gender equality performance indicators. These were the subject of a seminar in Paris in December 2008.

The House of Cities, Municipalities and Regions was officially inaugurated on 6 June in Brussels by Margot Wallström, Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of institutional relations and communication strategy, and Danuta Hübner, European Commissioner for Regional Policy. The House, located at the heart of the EU quarter, is home to a wide range of organisations\* representing local and regional interests at European level, including CEMR and many Brussels offices of our national association members, as well as the Eurocities network. Some 400 guests, including Members of the European Parliament, Members of the Committee of the Regions, ministers, mayors and representatives from the European Commission attended the opening event of the House.

# Energy, sustainable development, transport, water...



Though environmental issues have always featured high in our towns and regions, factors such as global warming and the fluctuations of energy prices have brought them at the top of the local and regional agenda over the last years. In a "post-Kyoto" world, it is essential that local and regional authorities be recognised as crucial partners alongside national governments and international bodies. This is what CEMR's work in this field has focused over the last three years: to ensure that the new post-

Kyoto legal instrument recognizes our essential role, and proposes to involve cities, regions and municipalities as partners. We took part in the local government session in Poznan (December 2008) during the inter-governmental conference in that city, which formed part of the preparation for the major Copenhagen UN Conference in December 2009, when it is hoped that a new climate change agreement will be reached.

CEMR is a partner in the Covenant of mayors that encourages local city leaders to commit themselves to go beyond the objectives of EU energy policy in terms of reduction in CO2 emissions through enhanced energy efficiency and cleaner energy production and use. We also organised a seminar on climate change, in Brussels in January 2007, and a workshop aimed at local authorities in the framework of the World Water Congress in Vienna, in October 2008. CEMR also contributed to the conference on sustainable cities and towns in Seville (March 2007) and to the Poznan conference on climate change (December 2008), as well as the World Water Forum in Istanbul (March 2009).

There can be no sustainable towns and regions without better and cleaner transport. Therefore, CEMR's Policy Committee adopted the Stuttgart declaration on sustainable mobility in December 2007. Amongst other things, the declaration proposes that the structural funds take into account the principles of sustainable mobility and that the European Union mobilises its financial instruments, especially with the help of the European Investment Bank, to support local and regional authorities with their investments in public transport. This was followed by a seminar on urban

road pricing (Berlin Sept 2008) where representatives of local authorities who have set up congestion charging schemes shared their experiences with the participants.

Besides these initiatives, CEMR and its member associations had to react to and influence a large number of draft EU legislative and policy texts. These included responses to and position papers on the draft waste directive, the Green Papers on climate change and on urban transport, the draft directives on air quality and on clean and energy-efficient road transport vehicles.

CEMR has also been active in issues concerning the management of water. We organised a local government day in Vienna on 9th September 2008 during the World Water Congress, a large gathering of water managers and experts. Speakers included the Mayor of Bonn, Bärbel Dieckmann, who is also chair of the World Mayors Council on Climate Change, Singapore Environment Minister, Jaacob Ibrahim, and other public and private sector representatives. We also took part in the World Water Forum in Istanbul in March 2009. CEMR's concerns include the availability and quality of water, but also ensuring that the very important role of local governments in local water management is respected.



## Public services and procurement



Providing reliable, efficient and affordable public services to their citizens is the core activity of every town, city and region. More than that, local and regional Services of General Interest (SGIs, the European Union's name for public services) are an essential element of our European model of society, which should seek to find a fair balance between the market and the need for social protection and regulation.

Seeking this fair balance has been at the heart of CEMR's work on public services over the last 3 years – and indeed for longer than that.

In our Malmö General Assembly, the final Declaration underlined the need for the European institutions – including the European Court of Justice - to respect the principles of local and regional self-



government in this field. For example, the European Commission has sought to argue – wrongly, we believe – that a local authority cannot assign a service task to an inter-communal company without first tendering the service on the open market. And likewise in relation to services assigned to in-house companies controlled by a local authority.

Another key debate in recent years has been over what legal rules should exist at EU level for PPPs (public private partnerships), especially for local authority companies with a private partner, and for “concessions” (contracts let where the private company charges the user directly). CEMR has in general argued against new EU regulation in these fields.

In 2006 and 2007, CEMR lobbied the European Parliament in the course of two debates – the first on the Commission’s White Paper on SGIs, the second on PPPs and concessions. The results were mixed – the Parliament took on board some of the arguments for a greater freedom of choice and manoeuvre on the part of local authorities, e.g. in relation to inter-communal companies, but a lot of ambiguities remain, which led CEMR’s secretary-General to comment:

“The Parliament misunderstands the relationship between the internal market and local public services. It has followed an excessively ideological approach at some points. The issue is not about “exempting” municipalities from the competition principles as alleged by the EP, it is about finding a sensible understanding, in the light of subsidiarity, of where the competition principles need to apply, at European level.

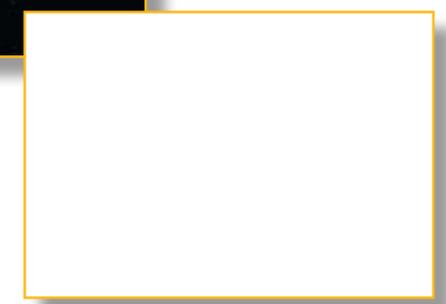
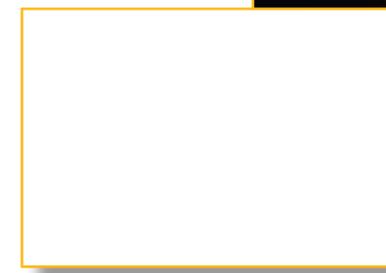
Moreover, it is for elected local governments to decide whether to provide a service in-house, by outsourcing or by PPP. It is not the role of the European Parliament to tell democratic local governments what choice to make, as this resolution seeks to do.”

Also in 2007, the Commission published a communication on Social Services of General Interest. CEMR criticized in particular one part of this document, which claimed that the “vast majority of services can be considered as ‘economic activities’,” which brings them under EU competition and state aid rules; in our view, local services of a purely social purpose should not be defined as economic, market services.

In addition to seeking to change the legislative framework for local and regional public services, CEMR has worked with its members to exchange practice on ways of enhancing the quality of local and regional public services. We have organised two seminars on Bench-marking Performance Management, the first in November 2006, the second in June 2008.

CEMR’s work in this field has culminated in the drawing up of a new European Charter of Local and Regional Services of General Interest, which will be launched at the General assembly in Malmö, and will be used to campaign for changes in the European legal framework.

# Regional policy and territorial cohesion



2006 was crucial for regional policy since the European Parliament had to give its green light to the structural funds package for 2007-2013. CEMR’s work has therefore focused on ensuring that the new legal framework for the structural funds met the needs of local and regional government for this 7 year period.

But in addition, we have to look to the future. What sort of cohesion policy do we want for the 2014-2020 period? This was the main question from the consultation launched by the European Commission on the future of cohesion policy, in late 2007. CEMR has always campaigned for an ambitious EU regional and cohesion policy which involves all regions, and which includes a local and

urban dimension and takes into consideration the interaction between rural and urban areas. We stressed this in our response to the consultation on the future of cohesion policy, while adding that the funding is not sufficient, and that it is time to move beyond purely economic data as the way to decide which regions can benefit from what funding in the framework of cohesion policy. Across Europe there is a growing consensus that there should be a better way to address this. Measuring the level of “regional well-being” can be done by combining a number of criteria such as quality of employment, decentralisation, quality of transport as well as other socio-cultural, socio-demographic and socio-environmental factors.



In October 2008, the future of cohesion policy was also the theme of a meeting of CEMR's working group on cohesion and territorial policy, in Ajaccio, organised in cooperation with its French association AFCCRE.

Cohesion is also about adopting a European integrated approach about urban and rural areas. CEMR was active in this field, especially in a series of meetings, some of them co-organised with various partners, such as

- the congress on local partnership in urban development (April 2007), in Leipzig, with the German Association of Cities,
- the conference in Brussels on urban-rural dynamics, (June 2007), co-organised with the European Parliament's Urban-Housing Intergroup
- the conference in Reims (September 2008) on new forms of territorial governance, organised by the European Parliament's Urban-Housing Intergroup

In addition, CEMR has actively participated in EU ministerial conferences on the urban agenda and on territorial policies.

As the European Parliament prepared a report on the "health check of the Common Agriculture Policy", in 2008, CEMR and its member associations sought to convince MEPs that any EU funding towards rural development did not necessarily need to be directly targeted to farmers; instead investments could be made in job creation and infrastructure to help end rural depopulation. These views had been expressed at CEMR's conference on the future of rural communities, in Brussels, in November 2006.

## Employment and social affairs



Europe's local and regional governments employ millions of staff to deliver essential public services, and as employers face common challenges and share many common interests.

CEMR's Employers' Platform acts as the employers' side of the European social dialogue committee for local administrations, where employers and trade unions discuss relevant employment policies and trends.

As part of its ongoing cooperation with EPSU (European federation of public services unions), CEMR published in 2006 a study on

social dialogue in local and regional government focusing on new Member States and candidate countries. It also issues a joint declaration with EPSU calling on national governments to promote social dialogue at local and regional levels, in May 2007), established with EPSU a set of guidelines on promotion of gender equality (February 2008), and organised a joint conference with EPSU on social dialogue and reform of public services, in June 2008.

The draft directive on working time has been in gestation since 2005. It is of utmost importance to CEMR and its member



associations as employers. For over three years, one of the main hurdles towards its completion has been the definition of working time. In June 2008, the Council of Minister agreed, in line with CEMR's arguments, that time spent resting or sleeping while on call cannot to be considered as working time – a key issue for employers of firefighters and medical staff, for example.

By nature, migration issues directly – and more and more intensively - affect local authorities. It is therefore no surprise that, at its meeting in Sevilla, in 2006, CEMR Policy Committee called on the EU institutions to adopt a positive European migration policy. The Sevilla declaration highlighted the key role local and regional governments play in terms of housing and integrating migrants.

Integration is but one aspect of social inclusion, which itself is one of local authorities' main tasks. Therefore, CEMR responded to the consultation on active inclusion and on active inclusion of people furthest from the labour market (both in February 2008). In November 2007, with a view to help draft these responses, CEMR co-organised a seminar on the integration of migrants a local level, in The Hague; Speakers included EU Commissioner Employment, Social Affairs and Equal opportunities, Vladimir Spidla.. The final

declaration In The Hague recognises the need to adopt integrated policies to ensure full participation and equal access for all to high quality services. Promoting equal opportunities for all can only be achieved through policies aimed to recognise all residents as active and full citizens.

In 2007 and 2008, CEMR co-organised the EISCO (European Information Society Conference) conference. The 2007 Conference adopted a new "Digital Local Agenda" to promote Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) at local level. The final declaration of the EISCO 2008 conference, in Naples, developed this theme, and also called for local and regional authorities to make better use of ICT to provide services and as a way towards a more inclusive Europe.

CEMR also co-organised, with its French Association AFCCRE, a seminar on demographic change, in December 2008 in Lille. It built on CEMR's publication on "the impact of demographic change", in May 2006. This publication examined the challenges facing municipalities in four countries, namely the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany and Spain and the measures taken in response to demographic changes.

# Local and regional governments on the international stage



The highlights of CEMR's work on international issues over the last three years are probably the creation of the European Platform of local and regional government for development and the launch of its interactive website partly dedicated to decentralised north-south cooperation.

In 2007, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) brought together a wide range of local and regional government associations to form a new Platform for development which was formally launched in November 2008. Besides

CEMR, the platform includes ten national associations of local / regional authorities from all across Europe, three large European associations of regions, two major international associations, including United Cities and Local Governments, and four cities. The Platform will receive financial support for 2009-2010 from the European Commission.

The Platform's objectives are to facilitate the flow of information, the exchange of experience and best practice, and to prepare common positions; to facilitate dialogue between local and

regional authorities and the other partners of the EU's thematic programme for non state actors and local authorities (mainly NGO's); and to enable European and national associations of local and regional authorities as to speak with one voice to the European Institutions.

In late 2008, CEMR launched its "100% twinning" website ([www.twinnings.org](http://www.twinnings.org)). One part is dedicated to European town twinning while the second focuses on north-south twinings and partnerships for development. This "international" part is in four languages. Partly funded by the European Commission, it provides local authorities from the north and the south with a well of information on development cooperation, and also includes a partner search facility. Within two months, over 30 local authorities from Europe, Africa and Latin America had posted a "seek partner" ad on the new website.

CEMR has continued to promote the role of local authorities towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals, which aim to liberate people everywhere from the most extreme forms of poverty and hardship. CEMR's Secretary-General represented CEMR at the conference organised by the City of Rome in June 2006, at which former Kofi Annan told the audience that "without solidarity, no one's prosperity can be secure." CEMR also co-organised the "8 Ways to Change the World" Conference on the MDGs in October 2006 in Lisbon, together with the National Association of Portuguese Municipalities.

CEMR is the European region of the world organisation, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and its members play a full part in its work, including its major Congress in Jeju, South Korea, in late 2007, and its regular world council and Executive Bureau meetings. The European Vice-President in UCLG is Dr Schuster, Mayor of Stuttgart.

**The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)** is the broadest association of local and regional in Europe.

Its members are national associations of local and regional governments from over thirty European countries.

The main aim of CEMR is to promote a strong, united Europe based on local and regional self-government and democracy; a Europe in which decisions are taken as closely as possible to its citizens, in line with the principle of subsidiarity.

CEMR's work covers a wide range of themes, including public services, transport, regional policy, the environment, equal opportunities...

CEMR is also active on the international stage. It is the European section of the world organisation of cities and municipalities, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).

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