



Local & Regional
Europe

WHITE PAPER

For an active European citizenship

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FOREWORD

When the fathers of Europe called for the unification of the continent after the disasters of the Second World War, could they have imagined what Europe would look like several decades on? Could they foresee the reunification of the continent, of the peoples, from the Atlantic Ocean to the borders of Russia? The reality of what Europe is today?

Europe has not only been built to overcome a dark past of centuries of wars and conflicts, but has been brought forward in the spirit of our unique common history, responding to the aspiration of the citizens to live in peace and solidarity.

It is common today to hear criticism about the European institutions, the bureaucracy, the regulations and the lack of solidarity... but as we reflect and look back over our history, the building of Europe is probably the greatest gift our predecessors could offer to us. Europe's construction has been the only political project aiming to bring people together to build their future together.

The crisis we are going through is challenging Europe as a whole; it is challenging all of our nations, our cities, our towns and regions... but given all that has been accomplished since the first steps of our European unification, we can be confident that we will be able to build common and sustainable solutions.

Europe is a mosaic. Cities and regions are the reflection of this mosaic. When mayors met to create the Council of European Municipalities, 60 years ago, they expressed their wish that the future Europe should be based on local democracy. They called for the full participation of all citizens in the unifying process.

Our message is still vivid today and all the more so in such times of crisis: Europe will not advance without its citizens and those who are their most direct representatives - we, the local and regional leaders.

The Europe we are calling for is the Europe which knows how to build common solutions, to propose successful strategies for its citizens in solidarity. Europe is generous by nature, respectful of differences - as it is built in respect of all its diversity.

Europe is not simply another supranational organisation; it is the future of our citizens, and CEMR is their organisation, working to express the need for, and show the way toward, a true European citizenship. To build this citizenship, town-twinning has played a major role over these years and will continue to do so. CEMR has drawn up this White Paper on citizenship to bring new perspectives for involving the Europeans in this common project. It draws conclusions of the conference held in Rybnik (Poland), in Silesia, a few kilometres away from Auschwitz, an occasion for remembrance and express our shared wish to build Europe in peace and leave wars and massacres to the past.



Dr. Wolfgang Schuster
Mayor of Stuttgart
President
CEMR

As leaders, we must pay tribute to those who, before us, had the necessary vision to bring us to what we are now - the best tribute we can offer is to continue to build solutions for the integration of all citizens of Europe, be they immigrants or first generation European; to help also our neighbours to learn from our experience and pave the path for democracy on the other side of the Mediterranean or the eastern borders of Europe.

Because Europe is also a unique model of cooperation and partnership between nations, local and regional authorities and between peoples, we have a mission to help those who seek to live in democracy and prosperity, to build their own solutions for the future.

I would conclude with a quote from Jean Monnet, as he spoke about the European project: "*we are not uniting nations*" he said, "*we are bringing people together*".

May this be our motto for the years to come, and may this White Paper help make this vision become reality!

INTRODUCTION

WHY THIS WHITE PAPER?

Now that the end of the European Union's 2007-2013 financial framework is approaching, this *White Paper for an active European citizenship* is the result of CEMR's desire to make the voice of local and regional authorities heard on matters of European citizenship and twinning. In particular, this is in view of the future European programme which will be the follow-up to the current "Europe for citizens" programme, beginning in 2014.



Frédéric Vallier
Secretary General
CEMR

This paper is the result of the combined reflections of a large number of active stakeholders in the areas of citizenship and twinning (elected representatives of small and large municipalities, twinning officers, representatives of civil society, actors on the ground, experts, representatives of the European Institutions, etc.) who met together at several events organised by CEMR – with the European Commission's support – in order to identify the true needs and expectations of local and regional authorities and citizens; and thus be able to propose concrete courses of action.

CEMR and its national associations organised three regional seminars in 2010 in three different geographical zones – in Estonia, Malta and Germany – in order to take into account the different practices and cultural approaches relating to twinning and citizenship in Europe. Each seminar – which brought together a total of more than 150 participants from 29 countries – enabled the exchange of concrete examples of best practice in each geographical zone concerned, and debates on twinning and their role in the development of European citizenship.

In June 2011, CEMR launched a large-scale online consultation in order to open the debate with a larger public. The findings helped prepare the European Congress on Citizenship and Twinning which was organised by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions – on the occasion of its 60th anniversary – and the Association of Polish Cities, with the support of the European Commission, and took place from 29 September to 1st October in Rybnik (Poland).

This event, organised in the framework of the Polish Presidency of the European Union, met with great success and brought together more than 350 local and regional elected representatives, representatives of civil society and twinning officers from 28 countries.

This White Paper brings forward the fruit borne of these two years of exchanges and reflections.

We aim to share this message and mobilise all those who wish to act for a new European citizenship.

WHAT IS EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP?

"What does it mean to be a European?" - this question looks first at the principle of identity – whether it be local, regional, national or European. European citizenship is not a given. The feeling of belonging to Europe develops as a complementary identity as a result of travels made outside of Europe, encounters with people from other continents, through the sharing of the same currency, or of the position of one's country on the European stage. It is worth asking how one can feel European without a common language or a homogenous culture. Likewise, in light of the current crisis affecting Europe, how can we restore its citizens' confidence?

Whereas citizenship of the European Union is considered a political concept, European citizenship implies a more emotional dimension with roots in a body of shared values, the celebration of diversity, the respect of different identities and the protection of national heritages. Getting involved in joint projects as well as increased mobility help to develop this feeling of belonging. Town twinning is an example of this and a key instrument.

The following chapters are the outcome of the public consultation on citizenship and the sessions and round tables held during the European Congress on Citizenship and Twinning in Rybnik at which 350 participants gathered to debate the issues and tools of a new European citizenship.

A EUROPE WITHOUT BORDERS: WHAT REALITY(IES) FOR CITIZENS?

To consider the future of European integration in a context of financial crisis, it is necessary to return to the origins of European construction when the question was how to build Europe in the aftermath of World War II. Building trust between citizens was a key issue then. In that context, local authorities had an important role to play by bringing the women and men of Europe together and by preparing Europe's youth for this great project. Today, the question remains of how to strengthen Europe as a union and how to

It is necessary to return to the origins of European construction, when the question was how to build Europe in the aftermath of World War II.

respond to the expectations of the European citizens. Europe is a community in its own right: there is a very strong identification, in particular when 'Europe' is looked at from the outside.

"Europe without borders" appears as a reality especially from an economic point of view, through the free movement of goods and the single currency. But when it comes to political unity, free movement of all citizens and European citizenship, it gets complicated, as they imply not only national consensus, but also require people to acknowledge and integrate in their way of life European values and principles. In this moment, the fear of losing one's national identity appears, as Europeanization process is often seen as diminishing the importance of national history and traditions.

Without a common identity, based on common values where the economic, political, social Europe can be built, a "Europe without borders" causes fear and insecurity. EU external and security policies as well as internal market policies in the absence of

concrete and effective social policies could endanger our national identities and rise the feeling of insecurity with Europe. Political decisions need to be taken in order to combat social problems from their roots, so that people find again positive feelings and not alienation from Europe.

While the free movement of people is one of the main European Union's achievements, certain minorities are refused the right to move freely and stay in other European countries. As explained by Juan De Dios Ramirez Heredia, President of the Spanish Rromani Union, during the debates in Rybnik, for the Roma community, borders have always been artificial as these were created after conflicts and wars. For the Roma community – composed of 10 million people in Europe, the borders that matter are the mountains and the rivers. Romani have a real European identity due to their history and daily life; they belong to the essence of Europe.

It is fundamental to combat all forms of racism and intolerance which, in times of crisis, can find a fertile climate for their development.

In times of crisis, there is a growing fertile ground for racism, xenophobia and extreme right wing parties to flourish. Populism and racism thrive on fear. Fear is associated with crisis: fear for losing your job, fear for losing your house.

European identity is not exclusive, but it is added on to the layers of our own national or regional identity.

Fear leads to aggression. Nevertheless, human rights and the rule of law are the same for all. It is fundamental to fiercely oppose racism and intolerance as it is enshrined in the Treaty and in the Charter of Human rights.

The EU is facing a huge challenge and needs to go back to its founding principles. Europe is not just about distributing funds and needs to be redefined based on values such as tolerance and solidarity. Administrative borders exist today alongside the real mental borders that lie in the mentality, in ideology and in politics. It is essential to put tolerance and fight against racism at the forefront and meet as partners. The European identity exists even if we still have a long way to grow towards a common identity. The European identity is not exclusive, it is added on to the layers of our own national or regional identity.

It is important to facilitate meetings of people in a European context so that they have the opportunity to interact.

Most young people have the feeling to belong to Europe. Education, the opportunity to travel and meet other people and exchange are vital for young people.

To facilitate the emergence of this common identity, local authorities need to act in creating a common platform for action. There are grass root level actions in small projects that undertake action for tolerance and mutual recognition. European programs are important for capacity building and for supporting citizens' participation and civil society action and making the link with large scale policies such as the EU 2020 strategy. It is important to facilitate meetings of people in a European context so that they have the opportunity to interact. Mobility programs are important tools for contributing to a (European) identity.

Twinnings are a unique instrument answering to these conditions and need to be encouraged and strengthened to build a real European citizenship.

THE ACTIVE CITIZEN'S TOOLBOX

Which tools help develop a participatory citizenship and get European citizens involved in order to establish a democracy "of proximity"?

A link between citizens and their elected representatives is formed only if citizens feel implicated and that political decisions have a visible impact on their daily lives.

Priority needs to be given to developing new mechanisms which allow elected representatives to get closer to their citizens, and enable the latter to participate in the political debate and the decision-making process.

To remedy the citizens' lack of confidence in their political representatives, priority needs to be given to developing new mechanisms and using communication tools which allow elected representatives to keep in touch with their citizens, and enable the latter to participate in the political debate and the decision-making process. Local and regional authorities are best placed to launch these types of initiatives in order to have a new system of participation, underlined Keith Whitmore, President of the Congress of the Council of Europe and Municipal Councillor of Manchester (United Kingdom).

The use of electronic means (E-governance), enables, for example, the circulation of information in a top-down and bottom-up manner, encourages citizens' participation in the decision-making process and makes government more transparent. Online payments, internet voting, the availability of information 24/7, the facility of digitalised procedures are all services which foster better communication between users and administrations and re-establish citizens' confidence.

In today's digital culture of social networks and the Web 3.0, communicating through modern and customised means can be seen as a vital aspect to interacting with citizens. While Facebook and Twitter, for example, are not a substitute for local debates and public consultations, they are tools that public authorities can use to promote dialogue with their citizens and to disseminate information to as many people as possible.

Social networks are tools that local authorities can use to promote dialogue.

The website "Petities.nl" was set up to diminish the gap between citizens and their elected representatives. This site gives citizens the opportunity to get together and directly address their political representatives.

Eur@dioNantes, a local radio station with a European perspective, proposes a forum for exchanging opinions on European issues in order to bring citizens closer to their elected representatives. If citizens are given the chance to understand the impact of European decisions on their daily lives, and even participate in the decision-making process, they could rally to the European project.

These innovative initiatives can be widely publicised as part of projects initiated by twinned towns.

GENDER EQUALITY! BUT WHAT KIND OF EQUALITY?

European societies suffer from a multitude of inequalities involving gender, age, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disabilities, etc. Creating more opportunities, ensuring that all have access to quality public services, encouraging participation in the life of the community are all part of the role of local and regional authorities who perform a vital function in the area of equality.

The European Union's action regarding equal opportunities is one of the areas where the impact of Community decisions has been the strongest. A significant number of European legislative texts focuses on gender equality: equal pay, maternity protection, parental leave, etc.

In spite of significant improvements made in the area of respect for women's rights and equality between women and men, gender equality is not yet a reality and a great deal of progress still needs to be made: women's employment rate remains lower than that of men; women earn on average 17.8% less than men; they are still widely underrepresented in political and economic decision-making positions; they are the main victims of domestic and sexual violence, etc. In this time of financial crisis and budget cuts in the public sector, there is good reason to be concerned about the development of equality between women and men. Local and regional authorities, the levels of governance closest to citizens, have pertinent and effective levers to fight against the overrepresentation of women in situations of precariousness or even of exclusion.

In spite of significant improvements, equality between women and men is not yet a reality and a great deal of progress still needs to be made.

CEMR launched in 2006 the European Charter for equality of women and men in local life which has collected to date more than 1 100 signatures. To monitor its progress, CEMR decided to set up an Observatory.

CEMR has worked for many years to promote equality between women and men in the local community. With the support of the European Commission, CEMR launched in 2006 the European Charter for equality of women and men in local life. This Charter, which aimed to encourage local and regional authorities to politically commit to the equality of women and men in local life, has brought together, to date, more than 1 100 local and regional authorities in 27 European countries.

To respond to signatories' requests for support and guidance, particularly with regard to the drawing up of action plans, as well as exchange of examples of best practice and expertise in order to be able to go from the signing stage to the actual implementation of the Charter, CEMR's Executive Bureau, at its meeting on 28 September 2011 in Warsaw, took the decision to set up the Observatory of the European Charter for the equality of women and men in local life.

Twinning links are an effective and relevant tool for promoting the exchange of best practice. In this respect, the cities which have made a formal commitment to promote the equality of women and men in their territories by signing the Charter and by developing initiatives in this area could use the town twinning network already in place to disseminate best practice.

AN INTERGENERATIONAL SOCIETY FOR COHESIVE DEVELOPMENT

Europe is undergoing a significant aging of its population. However, the real and potential contribution of the elderly to a society's active life is rarely taken into account and appreciated at its true value. Given that 2011 is the European Year of Volunteering and 2012 is to be the European Year for Active Ageing and intergenerational solidarity, we need to think now about the precious role played by senior citizens – still active, and whose life expectancy is continually increasing – in society.

A gap exists between youth and their elders even though the intergenerational dialogue is clearly an essential factor in passing on knowledge, values and memory.

The flip side of this situation is that the younger generation is also suffering from stereotyping and a seemingly irrelevant status. A gap exists between youth and their elders even though the intergenerational dialogue is clearly an essential factor in passing on knowledge, values, and memory. Going well beyond the mere need to co-exist, the links must be re-established between these two age groups, whose voluntary contributions represent a huge potential – so far underused – for Europe's socio-economic development. Czeslawa Ostrowska, Undersecretary of State at the Polish Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, asserted in Rybnik that this issue was all the more relevant when considering the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Local and regional governments have an important role to play in promoting age diversity in order to encourage contacts between young people and seniors, motivate them to participate together in different social and cultural activities.

Local and regional governments have an important role to play in promoting age diversity in order to encourage contacts between young people and seniors, pool their skills, stimulate their autonomy, motivate them to participate in different social and cultural activities and increase their active participation in local life (e.g. discussion panels on topics affecting the quality of life of citizens of all ages, coaching sessions to give students practice with job interviews, etc.). Town twinning in particular can foster joint activities involving youth and seniors with their European counterparts, developing together innovative, public-minded actions beneficial to the local community.

Included here are two examples of best practice focusing on active ageing and intergenerational solidarity.

The Belgian project, "Jongleren: oud geleerd en jong gedaan", awarded a prize in the ELAC competition for migrant elders, gave elderly migrants, students and journalists an opportunity to work together to create an exhibition on the life of senior citizens in Brussels. Seniors played an active role in guiding the younger participants and giving them advice.

Another project, "Age-friendly Cities", is a worldwide initiative begun in 2006 which aims to help cities prepare for the onset of a rapidly ageing population and increased urbanisation. The programme targets environmental, social and economic factors which promote good health and the well-being of the elderly. All the services and sectors of the city (including the private sector) are involved. This work led to the creation of standards, labels, a website and the publication of a guide to age-friendly cities which provides a package of roadmaps which helps to evaluate to what extent a city offers an environment welcoming to the older people.

EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP AND THE TRANSMISSION OF MEMORY

The emergence of European citizenship is strongly linked to the wars of fratricide and totalitarian movements which took place in 20th century Europe.

Identifying oneself in relation to the Europe of today and taking on its fundamental values involves knowing the origins of European construction.

Preserving memorial sites and transmitting the memory of past events to future generations are essential to the future of Europe.



Commemorative ceremony at the Martyrdom of Nations Memorial at Auschwitz-Birkenau on 30 September 2011

Excerpt from the speech made by Dr. Wolfgang Schuster, President of CEMR

The Shoah represents, as the German Chancellor, Ms Merkel once said, "a break with civilisation", for which Germany must admit a perpetual responsibility. Assuming this responsibility means, in particular for the after-war generation, actively cooperating in the peaceful and humanist future of Europe. All of us here today, coming from a large number of European countries, are called upon to internalise and pass on the message of the survivors, "never again".

Today, the vision of peaceful coexistence for the peoples of Europe has become a reality. Never before has Europe known such a long period of peace. Let us never forget that our current European Union was born of the rubble and suffering of the Second World War and the Nazi dictatorship. Faced with the spectre of this horrifying experience, the European Union was founded on the principles of individual freedom, freedom of the State for democratic protection of human rights, but also on the basis of reciprocal solidarity.

Witness account presented by Tadeusz Sobolewicz, former prisoner of KL Auschwitz, during the commemorative ceremony held at the Martyrdom of Nations Memorial at Auschwitz-Birkenau on 30 September 2011.

It was exactly 70 years ago that, bound with barbed wire to another prisoner, I was brought to KL Auschwitz. I was only 17 years old. There were many like me who underwent the same fate. I was a political prisoner, owing to my membership in the Union for Armed Struggle. It was November 1941. KL Auschwitz was still under construction, and we were there to expand the camp further. My number was 23053. We were "welcomed" by the head of the camp, Fritzsch, who, through an interpreter, told us, the new prisoners, that those among us who were Jewish had no more than 14 days to live, priests – 1 month, the rest – 3 months at best. Even then, the only way out for us was through the crematorium. I realised that this was practically a death sentence. After the SS man left we were beaten and made to obey soul-destroying orders: hats off, hats on, attention, lie down, knees bent, hands up and jump. Those who failed to carry out the orders properly were pulled out from the group and beaten. Some were choked with a baton forced against their necks.



Over the next few days, I was sent to a construction site, where I had to carry sacks of cement from the train to the warehouse, a distance of about 30 meters covered by running, while being pushed by kapos' and SS men's clubs. I thought I would not make it, but the fear of being beaten and losing my life somehow enabled me to find the strength to do this back-breaking work. Anyone who stumbled or whose sack slipped down to the ground was beaten unconscious. The never-ending cries, beatings and moans of people brutally killed by the Nazi sadists and kapos could break the strongest spirit. And we were starving. There were cases of cannibalism.

I continued to resist, but I knew that I could find myself among the dead at any moment. Crossing the guards in any way was unthinkable.

Later, our wooden clogs were exchanged for leather ones. I was assigned to the prisoners who extracted gravel and sand from the Sola River. I witnessed another group of prisoners surrounded by SS men who would knock hats off the heads of prisoners who worked too slowly, throwing the hats beyond the line of guards and telling the men to bring them back and report. When a prisoner crossed the line, an SS man would shoot him in the back, killing him. It was called: shot while trying to escape. The SS man would get two or three days of leave.

I could give more examples of this type but to what purpose? To reopen old wounds? No. We are discussing these events so that they never happen again. What I and my fellow prisoners experienced was unimaginable, inhuman and horrendous. I came down with typhus. After 10 days of lying unconscious with a high fever, I weighed 34 kg.

Once I slowly recovered in the camp hospital, I was sent to help get rid of the bodies of my fellow prisoners. Later, thanks to my knowledge of German, I began to work as a clerk in Birkenau where, beginning in mid-1942, thousands of Jewish citizens from

various occupied European countries were deported. I saw them with my own eyes – women, children, invalids, all were led to the still makeshift gas chambers. One time, as I was writing down the names of healthy, strong men for work selection, a Dutch Jew threw me a box in which I found a golden watch. I was not allowed to wear a watch. So I gave it to an older prisoner, who arranged for my transfer to the camp kitchen. Despite the hard work, my situation in Auschwitz improved considerably. I was not hungry anymore, so I could now help others. It was my moral duty. I joined those who helped other prisoners in the camp hospital. Solidarity in the fight for survival was neither easy nor safe.

Despite the terror, persecution and executions, the fight to survive was present in KL Auschwitz. It was a fight fought without weapons, a fight to preserve one's humanity and human dignity. Among those who fought, we might mention Cavalry Captain Witold Pilecki, founder of a military organisation in 1940; or St. Maximilian Kolbe, who gave his life for a fellow prisoner; or Maria Stromberger, a German nurse who, despite the risks, would bring medication to the sick prisoners. We should also be reminded of the mutiny of the prison guards in 1942 and the revolt of the Jewish prisoners from the Sonderkommando, who preferred to die from a bullet rather than continue to help the Nazis to gas and incinerate their fellow prisoners. There are many more such examples.

The history of Auschwitz is an example of a fight against inhuman terror, against human beings' slide into bestiality. For many years the former KL Auschwitz has been a constant warning and reminder: "Never again". Unfortunately, there are still systems and forces of evil today that threaten humanity. Terrorist attacks are an example of this. Every year, the Polish nation and the Jewish nation, which suffered such huge losses, pay tribute to the victims here through their representatives. The Roma people follow the same tradition. The ashes of people incinerated here include the ashes of my father and those of thousands of innocents, representatives of peoples from all over the world. Hate, racism and xenophobia should and must be eradicated from people's lives. If they are not, a new criminal massacre might again be carried out. Here in Birkenau, these traces of the past compel us, people living today, to constantly reiterate the message of remembrance and warning, and to act together, regardless of any divisions, to build peace.

I hope that, after so many efforts already made, the time has now come for the completion of the Mound of Remembrance and Peace in Oświęcim project. Today, 70 years after the death factory called KL Auschwitz-Birkenau was established, we need to build a lasting symbol in remembrance of all those who died here. We must also commemorate all those who died in the world wars. This is our moral duty. This is what our times demand. As much as Europe needs solidarity, Europe also needs to perpetuate remembrance! We need to unite to build a World in which People live and prosper in peace.

I stand before you here today, a survivor and former prisoner of the "hell" of KL Auschwitz. These words I speak, I also speak on behalf of my fellow prisoners. Those who survived are departing from this world. The future of the world therefore lies in your hands.

Thank you.

Se questo è un uomo

*Voi che vivete sicuri
Nelle vostre tiepide case
voi che trovate tornando a sera
Il cibo caldo e visi amici:
Considerate se questo è un uomo
Che lavora nel fango
Che non conosce pace
Che lotta per mezzo pane
Che muore per un sì o per un no.
Considerate se questa è una donna*

*Senza capelli e senza nome
Senza più forza di ricordare
Vuoti gli occhi e freddo il grembo
Come una rana d'inverno.
Meditate che questo è stato
Vi comando queste parole.
Scolpitele nel vostro cuore
in casa andando per via
Coricandovi alzandovi
Ripetetele ai vostri figli.
O vi si sfaccia la casa
La malattia vi impedisca
I vostri nati torcano il viso da voi.*

1947, Primo Levi

If this is a man

*You who live safe
In your warm houses,
You who find, returning in the
evening,
Hot food and friendly faces:
Consider if this is a man
Who works in the mud,
Who does not know peace,
Who fights for a scrap of bread,
Who dies because of a yes or a no.
Consider if this is a woman
Without hair and without name,
With no more strength to
remember,
Her eyes empty and her womb cold
Like a frog in winter.
Meditate that this came about.
I commend these words to you.
Carve them in your hearts,
At home, in the street,
Going to bed, rising;
Repeat them to your children.
Or may your house fall apart,
May illness impede you,
May your children turn their faces
from you.*

1947, Primo Levi

Text read during the commemorative ceremony held at the Martyrdom of Nations Memorial at Auschwitz-Birkenau on 30 September 2011.

DIVERSITY: AN OPPORTUNITY AND A CHALLENGE FOR EUROPE

Despite the apparent progress in affirming fundamental rights since the Treaty of Rome, we cannot but regret the progression of exclusion, the increase of insecurities and the breakdown of solidarity that have taken place in Europe throughout the last two decades, said Jan Robert Suesser, Vice-president of the European Civic Forum, in Rybnik.

Today's European cities are a multi-ethnic and multi-religious urban society, which represent a set of opportunities in terms of innovativeness and competitiveness, but also a challenge of developing appropriate policies for the integration of a highly heterogeneous population into the local community and ensuring social cohesion, observed Ayse Özbabacan, Coordinator of the Cities for Local Integration Policies for Migrants network of Stuttgart. Cities are not in a position of regulating immigration, but integration of immigrants takes place primarily at local level. Municipalities pay the price for failing national integration processes even though they are not in a position to regulate immigration flows themselves and depend on national and federal legislation in all immigration related issues. Therefore, there is a genuine interest in sharing experiences on successful integration policies and practices and learn from each other in order to avoid costs and to mobilise the potentials of their population with a migrant background.

Despite the apparent progress since the Treaty of Rome, the progression of exclusion and the breakdown of solidarity have taken place in Europe.

Diversity means acceptance, respect and celebrating what is specific to each individual.

Bashy Quraishy, Secretary General of the European Muslim Initiative for Social Cohesion, has underlined that diversity means acceptance and respect, understanding that each individual is unique, recognizing our individual differences, moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating what is specific to each individual.

As underlined by the Union of Cyprus Municipalities, local and regional authorities should find ways to bring people from different origins, religions and backgrounds together, eliminating to the least possible extent feelings of xenophobia. For example, they could provide immigrants the opportunity to learn the language of their country and also get them involved in different community activities.

Often initiated by people with immigrant backgrounds who contribute to the intercultural dialogue between their country of origin and the country in which they reside, twinning can be seen as an important tool for integration, an exercise in citizenship and as a political commitment, a means for international cooperation and development with the place of origin. Participation in twinning activities can help foster a sharing of the values and customs of the host community (as well as of that of the society of origin) of the migrants.

Twinning can help today with the integration of immigrants.

If the twinning movement contributed to the reconciliation of populations torn apart by war at the beginning of the European unification process, today it can help with the integration of immigrants and promote intercultural dialogue between populations with different mores and beliefs.

Towns should develop inclusive identity strategies and measures aiming at ensuring that everyone has a sense of belonging to the city. At a European level, local authorities, through their national associations and CEMR, wish to influence the European policy process by developing joint principles and a common framework for a European integration policy.

TWINNING: BRIDGES BRINGING EUROPEANS TOGETHER

Friendship and understanding between different peoples are the primary values embodied by town twinning, which was born in the aftermath of the Second World War under the impetus of mayors convinced that friendship amongst European citizens was the first step towards building a stable and peaceful Europe.

Local and regional authorities speak out and are heard on the European and international stage in many different ways, depending on their size, level and geographical location.

Supported by CEMR ever since its creation in 1951, town twinning has become widely diversified and has progressively integrated all the European countries as they underwent democratic changes and joined the European Union. Today, with nearly 40 000 links in Europe, twinning is the most visible and the most widespread form of cooperation amongst European local authorities. Twinning activities often represent the first actual contact of citizens with Europe. As a result of these encounters, a broadening in their outlook tends to filter through which increases their European awareness and changes their vision of Europe.

Today, Europe has evolved and Europeans have changed. Thus, individual mobility is catching up to collective mobility. Local and regional authorities speak out and are heard on the European and international stage in many different ways, depending on their size, level and geographical location. They also act according to their means, the interests of their local actors and the affinities that they wish to cultivate. In order to tackle problems concerning topics of common interest, local and regional authorities exchange experiences through networks of thematic cooperation, cross-border or interregional partnerships. Their approach consists of co-operating at international level in order to manage situations better locally. In fact, this form of "institutional" cooperation is not new but was for a long time overlooked. Today, there seems to be a "shift" from so-called "traditional" twinning activities towards more targeted forms of cooperation between cities. The Europe for Citizens programme encourages this development by promoting new areas of cooperation that are larger and more structured. It helps project leaders to structure their partnerships better, broaden their scope to include new themes and further develop the subject matter of their encounters.

Favouring an approach allowing for exchanges involving all components linked to local life.

These two visions of twinning – often wrongly seen as opposing views – are in fact complementary and can enhance each other, as illustrated by the example of the city of Cologne, which relies on a dynamic network of twinning associations in charge of exchanges, while the municipality is the one responsible for the institutional aspect of relations. Thus, initiatives have been taken regarding the prevention of crime, equality between women and men, emergency services and the fire department or the medical community.

*Toward more
focused
cooperation
between towns*

The French Section of CEMR proposes favouring an approach allowing for exchanges involving all components linked to local life: the political component, the educational component, the professional component and leisure time.

EUROPE XXL – OPENING UP TO OUR NEIGHBOURS

Alongside exchanges between twinned towns within the European Union, local and regional authorities are increasingly forming ties with local or regional authorities in the European Union's neighbouring countries.

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Through the exchange of expertise and experiences, decentralised cooperation today plays a vital role in consolidating a climate of peace, development and modernisation in the western Balkan countries in view of their future European Union membership. "There can be no development, nor peace, nor democracy without decentralisation", declared Antonella Valmorbidia, Director of the Association of Local Democracy Agencies. Although keeping the peace falls strictly under the exclusive jurisdiction of the States and international institutions, the actions of local and regional authorities can be complementary since they are based on concrete initiatives and a grassroots approach. According to the concept of city diplomacy, cooperation at sub-state levels can be viewed as part of an approach designed to prevent conflicts or to achieve reconciliation.

Decentralisation, although a required and essential part of the European Union membership process, often becomes a source of instability since it brings about fundamental structural changes: it involves defining the responsibilities of new local authorities, specifying their autonomy in relation to the central State or strengthening their legitimacy in the eyes of the local population.

In this regard, cooperation at local level allows local and regional authorities from the Candidate States to benefit from the experience of their counterparts from Member States in the area of local administration (urbanism, sustainable development, public services...) and relating to their work with the European Institutions (implementation of directives, access to Community funds, networking on common problems). It can also provide benchmarks on self-government and local democracy which are likely to be adjusted to reflect local realities, all of which can contribute to the strengthening of democracy and the rule of law, a *sine qua non* condition for integrating the European Union. It seems obvious that decentralised cooperation, grouping together several European local and/or regional authorities, should be further developed so that the

candidate countries might benefit from the collective sharing of the experiences of member countries and become familiar with the most effective models with regard to European criteria.

The first stage in the process of integrating the European Union is to get the citizens from both member countries as well as those from candidate or potential candidate countries involved in order to combat any prejudice they might have regarding neighbouring countries who whom they are unfamiliar. Besides allowing for the discovery of a new culture and a foreign language, having exchanges is also essential in that it allows citizens to become aware of what binds them as well as shared values and priorities, all of which can foster the emergence of a European citizenship. With this in mind, local and regional authorities, through twinning and partnerships, can set up venues for encounters and promote exchanges. They are in fact the level the best suited to act as a link between the EU and its citizens.

The first stage in the process of integrating the European Union is to get the citizens from both member countries and candidate countries involved.

In order to raise the awareness of non-European citizens with regard to the realities of the European Union and to promote understanding between citizens from member countries and non-member countries as well as to encourage the development of an ambitious and lasting pre-accession policy, CEMR has worked for many years with partner associations from southeast Europe. Given the lack of means of most of the candidate countries, European Union financial support is needed for this programme. Albania, Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are already eligible to fully participate in all the actions of the European Union's programme "Europe for Citizens". Today however, we are advocating that candidate countries become automatically eligible for the Community programmes which encourage mobility and increase European awareness such as "Europe for Citizens", "Youth in Action" or "Lifelong Learning Programme" and that these same programmes be made more easily accessible to any signatory countries of association and stabilisation agreements with the EU.

For an ambitious neighbourhood policy

Town twinning is also an essential co-operation tool for the Central European countries which maintain links with the Ukraine, Moldavia and the Caucasus. These partnerships are thus in line with the thinking of the European neighbourhood policy which, in our opinion, should acknowledge the full potential of local and regional authorities in this area.

For a support to local governance and civil society

The neighbourhood policy concerns sixteen countries spread out over the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean as well as in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus.

At a time when citizens from the Mediterranean countries are mobilising and calling for democracy and social justice, the European Union needs to maintain strong links with its southern neighbours. Sami Adouani, Director of the Tunisian organisation "Relais pour l'Emergence d'une Jeunesse Sociale Organisée", recalled that "democracy cannot be decreed. Tunisians must be made aware of the democratic mechanisms available". Breaking away from the dictatorship mentality would enable the actors in civil society to become involved in decentralization. In this regard, the provisional committees in Tunisia can be seen as solid partners for supporting the construction of local governance.

At a time when the European Union’s political and financial framework for the 2014-2020 period is being negotiated and when the EU is calling for strong support for the Arab Spring, CEMR is arguing for an ambitious neighbourhood policy, one oriented towards democracy and local democracy in particular. Attaining these objectives calls for programmes tailored to supporting local governance, building the capacity of the proponents of democracy, providing strong backing of civil society, but also instruments of support suited to the international action of European local and regional authorities involving their counterparts from neighbouring countries. This approach is the key to Europe being able to conduct a peaceful and prosperous dialogue with its neighbours.

For a suitable support to the international action of local and regional authorities

A EUROPE OPEN TO THE WORLD

The development of globalisation has encouraged European local authorities to open up, looking beyond the European borders – and together with their national and continental associations – to build a world organisation: United Cities and Local Governments. The Council of European Municipalities and Regions is the European section of UCLG. It is home to the secretariat of PLATFORMA¹, the European voice of local and regional authorities for development, which promotes the international experience and expertise of local and regional authorities in development cooperation vis-à-vis the European Institutions. One of its priorities is to promote the commitment of local and regional

Promoting the experience and expertise of local and regional authorities in development cooperation.

authorities in the world to combat poverty, notably by supporting local development stakeholders through the strengthening of decentralisation and local governance in its partner countries, as explained Lucie Guillet, Project Manager of Platforma.

Local and regional authorities play a leverage role in the development of a territory as a result of the competencies assigned to them (water management, waste management, transport, civil registry, primary education, etc.). Through their experiences of local democracy, European local authorities are ideally placed to ensure that their partners can benefit from their experiences, regardless of whether they concern mechanisms of citizen participation, how to get civil society associated with the process of defining local policy or even raising awareness of the vital need for transparency and responsibility vis-à-vis their citizens. It was in order to strengthen their competencies that decentralised cooperation, based on exchange and reciprocity, has developed over the past twenty years between local and regional authorities from Europe and those from the partner countries. Although the economic crisis has made it more difficult for local and regional authorities to commit to development aid, decentralised cooperation offers a "win-win situation for everyone", emphasised Betty De Wachter, VVSG International Co-ordinator (Belgium). These actions work together to consolidate ties of friendship between populations and encourage their opening up to the world

¹ PLATFORMA groups together CEMR and its most active member national associations in the area of international cooperation as well as United Cities and Local Governments, the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions, the Assembly of European Regions, the Association of European Border Regions, the Association Internationale des Maires Francophones and cities actively involved in decentralized cooperation including Paris, Lyon and Bucharest (district 2).

through education for development. Moreover, certain national associations of local elected representatives, as is the case with several CEMR associations, have undertaken specific actions to build the capacities of their counterparts from non-European countries and promote the development of local democracy as well as advocate for associations of local elected representatives before their central government, announced Håkan Gustafsson, Managing Director of SKL International (Sweden).

The European Commission recognises the importance of the local dimension of development and the specific added value that local and regional authorities contribute to development processes, notably owing to “their expertise in providing essential services, setting up democratic institutions and more effective administrations, but also because they act as a driving force for change and for building relations of trust between different parties”. Moreover, local authorities from countries benefitting from EU development aid, responding to the consultation on the future of the European development policy, also called for a strengthening of decentralised cooperation to help them widen their capacities in order to be able to provide services to their communities. PLATFORMA will continue to work for this objective, reiterated Sandra Ceciari, CEMR Director of Citizenship and International Cooperation, and to work to strengthen the contribution of European local and regional authorities in combatting poverty and reinforcing democracy in the world.

Recognised expertise in the provision of basic services, setting up democratic institutions and more effective administrations.

THE EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP OF TOMORROW

Born out of a desire to maintain lasting peace, the idea of a unified Europe took shape in the aftermath of the Second World War. Sixty years after the launch of the European Community project, what has become of the hopes inspired by this European project? What has become of this Union, severely challenged by the crisis, high unemployment, poverty, feelings of insecurity, immigration issues, the fear of losing one's national

Europe cannot respond to the current crisis without political union.

identity and the tendency to withdraw provoked by fears unleashed by globalisation? As Enrique Baron Crespo², former President of the European Parliament, asserted, "Europe cannot respond to the current crisis without political union". But how can we achieve this political union and what contribution can local and regional authorities bring to the table?

Mr Wolfgang Schuster, President of CEMR and Mayor of Stuttgart, emphasised in his closing statement to the Rybnik Congress that it was necessary to bring Europe closer to the people and to use the tools, such as twinning, at our disposal in order to attain this goal. Europe needs to rediscover its ideals and to reunite in order to overcome the crisis. This crisis must be utilised as an opportunity to move forward on the path to European integration.

The future of the European integration process will depend on the participation of citizens, particularly the younger generation, recalled Ylva Tiveus, Director Citizens, DG Communication (European Commission). Without them, Europe will have to overcome a serious democratic deficit. Too often overlooked in debates on the future of the European Union even though they are the ones who will be leading the Europe of tomorrow, young people must be able to speak out on vital issues which concern them in order to become aware of the European stakes involved and the choices that they will be called on to make, and thus reshaping the European project to reflect their own aspirations. In order to give them the means and desire to participate in European construction, young people must have the chance to travel, to see the different faces of Europe, to acquire knowledge and skills and be included in democratic life. As emphasised by Sophie Beernaerts, Head of Europe for Citizens Unit, DG Communication (European Commission), it is also crucial that, in light of the socio-economic context in which one out of five young people is unemployed, they be given tangible hope by showing them a genuine political will to find together a solution to the financial, economic and social crises currently facing Europe.

The future of the European integration process will depend on the participation of citizens, particularly the younger generation.

Town twinning, with the support of the "Europe for Citizens" programme, is an excellent tool for bringing citizens – including youth – closer to their elected representatives and to Europe, rebuilding their trust and giving them an active role to play in the European project.

² President of the European Foundation for Information Society

TWINNING: TOOLS FOR A NEW EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP

Ever since its structural beginnings in the 1950s, the twinning movement has been a tool for intercultural exchanges, encounters, fighting prejudice, discovering new cultures, strengthening civic participation and promoting European identity. Twinning has also allowed local authorities to exchange best practice, knowledge and expertise on subjects of shared interest, promote the cultural as well as economic development of a territory and often acts as a stepping stone towards other forms of more flexible and more pragmatic partnerships (e.g. capacity building, thematic networks, multilateral partnerships, international cooperation, development aid).

Thus, town twinning will be playing a major role both as an advocate of European citizenship and in the area of more targeted thematic cooperation. Far from being contrary in nature, these two visions of twinning correspond to the needs of local authorities from both the north and south of Europe, are in fact complementary and enhance each other. Between a so-called "traditional" concept focused around citizens and an "institutional" one designed to improve local management, twinning links – whatever the form – remain an essential form of cooperation with strong potential and capable of real impact.

Town twinning can also be seen as an especially important tool for the EU's neighbouring countries. They can exchange expertise and best practice with experienced European municipalities, particularly in view of these countries later joining the European Union.

Over the course of geographical seminars, organised by CEMR in 2010, which gathered twinning actors from northern Europe (Tallinn), southern Europe (Malta), and central Europe (Cologne), the following points were put forward, to:

- keep a "twinning" component in the follow-up to the current "Europe for Citizens" programme during the 2014-2020 period;
- enlarge the programme to the neighbouring countries and give special attention to the western Balkan countries and Turkey by encouraging their formal integration into the programme;
- simplify the programme's annual and standing priorities;
- promote a transversal approach in relation to other European programmes;
- support exchanges of best practice between twinned towns;
- grant supplementary means to actions targeting a public with fewer opportunities;
- maintain the support for new actors and for small and medium-sized municipalities;
- increase the programme's budget in 2014-2020, particularly the specific twinning measure that is only allocated – under the current programme – 45% of the overall budget even though it represents 85% of the total number of participants.

In order to modernise the twinning movement and respond to the crisis, CEMR and its national associations recommend to local and regional authorities that they:

- explore new issues such as employment, climate change, urbanisation, diversity;
- involve all local authority stakeholders including youth and civil society;
- use modern and suitable communication tools;
- rely on innovative financing (particularly in the private sector);
- establish partnerships with municipalities in the Mediterranean zone.

KEY MESSAGES

Final declaration of the European Congress on Citizenship and Twinning (Rybnik, 29 September-1st October 2011)

In 1951, local elected representatives, mayors and councillors from six European countries launched the Council of European Municipalities with the aim of creating a Union of European peoples founded on autonomous local authorities dedicated to furthering peace, harmony and prosperity in Europe by bringing citizens from all countries closer together. This movement has resulted in a spectacular development of city and town twinnings – 40,000 links as of today – in Europe that has accompanied every step of the unification process of Europe. This has contributed in a fundamental way to the reconciliation between former enemies, particularly France and Germany after the Second World War, and to the reunification of Europe following the fall of the Berlin Wall. This twinning movement continues to be the best way of bringing Europeans together, enhancing the feeling of European citizenship.

In 2011, we are facing challenges brought on by the financial, economic, political and social crisis. Rising nationalism in Europe will give no answers, and bring no solutions. Europe once again seems to be the only possible response, through the necessary evolution of the European Union towards greater political and economic integration and solidarity. Will we be able, like the founders of the European Union, to seize the opportunity of the current crisis as a chance to advance Europe's development toward greater solidarity, or will we let the European project wither away? Citizens have a decisive role to play in this debate. What responses can the European Union bring to address their doubts and expectations? How do we bring the citizens back to the heart of the European project?

We, women and men holding local office, dedicated actors of the twinning movement and European citizens, assembled together in Rybnik from 29 September to 1st October 2011 during the Polish Presidency of the European Union:

- Reaffirm our commitment to the European project and highlight the progress made in European construction and note with satisfaction that, since its creation, the European Union has had a fundamental impact on the lives of European citizens. We recall, however, that while the EU has been successful in many areas, there still remains much work to be done, particularly in political, social and economic terms;
- Call for a unified Europe, politically united and capable of responding to the challenges facing society today, such as social cohesion, youth employment, demographic change, climate change, energy supply... To respond to these challenges, we call for a new model of governance in Europe – Governing in Partnership, which will bring together all spheres of governance – local, regional, national and European – as well as the civil society, economic actors and the academic world;
- Emphasise that to overcome the crisis of confidence overtaking our societies, including with respect to political representatives, Europe must empower itself with the means to strengthen an active and participatory citizenship;
- Believe that the European Union of tomorrow will be stronger if it returns to the values which formed the basis for its construction and recall that an education in European citizenship and the transmission of memory must be at the heart of the European project;
- Call for a Europe that is tolerant, multicultural and respectful of diversity and call on the European Union to continue to strengthen policies and actions which fight all forms of discrimination, and to support all actions of integration and participation of non-member State citizens in Europe;

- Call for a Europe of dialogue and exchange with its neighbours and ask the European Union to extend its support for twinning to the neighbouring countries to the East and South of Europe in order to promote mutual awareness and understanding between peoples;
- Seek a Europe that is unified and open, conveying a strong message to the rest of the world, and recall that local and regional authorities play an important role in the struggle against poverty, for peace and justice and the construction of better democratic governance in the world;
- Underline the role that twinning and partnerships have played in strengthening dialogue and friendship between peoples as well as in raising awareness of other cultures, and invite the European Union to further promote this achievement;
- As we celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of its creation, CEMR, and its National Associations wish to recall that twinning, launched by its founders, played a fundamental role in restoring peace and dialogue between the peoples of Europe. We emphasise the impact of the community support for twinning launched by the European Union in 1989, particularly on the construction of an enlarged Europe after the fall of the totalitarian regimes in Central Europe, and ask that this programme be strengthened and given the financial means necessary to promote the emergence of a citizen's Europe. In view of this, we suggest that the next programme be based on a symbolic budget of 1€ per European, or 495 million €;
- We commit to making our exchanges spaces for European learning, for dialogue and open conviviality for all our citizens in order that each one, in particular those of the younger generations, can exercise or develop their knowledge and competencies, be it in an educational or professional framework, or in their free time;
- Welcome with interest the proposal to create a European Academy for local and regional governance, to share knowledge and help capacity-building for our elected representatives and civil servants to improve local and regional services and democratic development and better citizen participation;
- Observe that despite the significant progress that the European Union helped to bring about, substantial inequalities persist between women and men in European society today. Following the success of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life launched by CEMR, we call for the setting up of an Observatory, at European level, on the implementation of this Charter so as to support and to follow its application on the ground;
- Remain convinced that the intergenerational dialogue forms an essential tool in building an inclusive society mindful of the importance of transmitting values and knowledge, and hope that the European Year for Active Ageing and intergenerational solidarity proclaimed for 2012 will help to give more resonance to this message;
- Highlight the effectiveness of multi-lateral cooperation, involving multiple European local and regional authorities and request the European Union to encourage the mutualisation of cooperation conducted at local level;
- Call for better recognition by national authorities and the European Union of the role that twinning and partnerships play due to their proximity to the citizens, and suggest, in view of this, that the new European External Action Service include if not a full Unit, then at least a specific expert for local and regional authorities.

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) is the broadest association of local and regional authorities in Europe; its members are over 50 national associations of towns and regions from 40 countries. CEMR promotes local democracy, twinning (www.twinning.org) and exchanges of experiences, and endeavours to influence European legislation on behalf of local and regional authorities.



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