



CEMR IN 2021

Annual report



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General



General

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) is proud to present its 2021 narrative Activity Report which provides an overview of CEMR's main actions in 2021. It will be completed and finalised in June 2022 with financial figures. It targets its members – the 60 national associations of local and regional governments in 41 European countries -, local and regional elected representatives as well as the general public as it will be published on CEMR's website.

The work of the CEMR is led by its 2021-2030 [multiannual strategy](#) and [2021-2022 work programme](#): all the actions are aiming at the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across Europe's territories. Structured around four main objectives, we have developed reflections and activities around:

1/ Policies & advocacy

2/ Knowledge sharing and capacity-building

3/ Pan-European campaigns & visibility

4/ Our internal organisation

1 Policy and advocacy



→ With the aim to influence the European agenda and alert our members on upcoming initiatives that can impact local and regional governments in the coming years, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions had been monitoring the different initiatives that the European institutions had in the pipeline in 2021.

→ More detailed information is presented per thematic area in the following pages of this report, on citizenship, territorial development, climate, energy and environment, and international partnerships.

What were our aims?

Shape in advance the direction that the European institutions will take with new initiatives, inform our members so that they are able to take part in the discussion, amplify their own advocacy towards their national government and anticipate the impacts on their territories in the future.

→ They were able to organise territorial dialogue with citizens on the future of Europe.

They approached their permanent representations in Brussels or their national governments back home on some specific policy areas such as Recovery and Resilience or international cooperation.

Political debates, panel discussions, expert group meetings and webinars were organised alongside participation in high-level events at European and international levels. It was complemented by evidence-based briefings, amendments to European Parliament's reports, position papers and resolution, legislative monitoring.

→ The OECD got inspiration from our publications on the impact of Covid-19 on local finances.

→ Council Conclusions were developed on public sector expertise exchange which highlights local and regional governments.

→ Our long term vision for rural areas is embedded in the European long term vision.

This work has been made possible by the work of CEMR member associations active in the expert groups calling upon members' experiences and knowledge, both in the EU and in non-EU countries.



→ Several position papers and resolutions were developed with our members on: gender equality, migration & asylum, Fit for 55 package on energy efficiency and renewable energy, digitalisation, water and many more.

We have also kept CEMR members informed about various policy developments in the many policy areas that we cover, and have been active in different European platforms and structured dialogues led by European institutions. It helped shape in advance the ideas of some European initiatives.

→ Policy forum on development, structured dialogue on cohesion policy, social dialogue, European network on rural development, Strategic Dialogue on the European Commission's Disability Rights Strategy, Urban Development Group & Territorial Development Group of Member States.

In addition, on a more international scale, cooperation with United Cities Local Governments (UCLG) and the Global Taskforce of local and regional governments, the OECD, the Congress of the Council of Europe was also maintained on various topics such as the recovery and the Covid-19, local democracy, as well as the localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

2 Knowledge sharing and capacity-building



As regards our 2nd objective to increase the knowledge of EU institutions on local and regional governments, and conversely of local and regional governments on the European context, CEMR had been working on various publications, organised webinars to inform its members, and gathered its members in groups of knowledge exchange. A workshop was organised to better inform members on how to participate at national levels in some processes influenced by Europe.

CEMR has also been working on a new edition of its publication on: "TERRI - Territorial Governance, Powers and Reforms" which gives an overview of decentralisation reforms in the last four years across Europe, and in particular in the area of health and in a context of Covid pandemic. This new edition will be released in January 2022 and will be presented in different fora including at the March session of the Congress of Local and Regional governments in

Strasbourg or at the Cohesion Forum in March.

It is crucial for CEMR to properly increase the capacity of its members to take part in European processes and projects. This also involves trainings and capacity-building activities, which is often provided through our externally funded activities, be it on EU funding, gender equality, climate adaptation and local action plans, environmental challenges, urban development, integration of migrants or on the SDGs.

3 Pan-European campaigns & visibility



The 3rd CEMR's objectives focused on becoming a highly visible and influential thought leader on issues related to local and regional governments. 2021 kick-started with the celebration of CEMR's 70th anniversary, an opportunity to shed more light on CEMR network's achievements and historical milestones since its creation, the online event gathered some 500 participants and was broadcast on Youtube.

This year's celebration also marked the 15th anniversary of the CEMR Charter for Equality. More generally, many articles, press releases, messages on social networks and videos were spread out through all our communication channels. To ensure a smooth flow of information between CEMR and its members, several newsletters and updates were released.

We also joined forces with members for pan-European campaigns around key dates such as

Europe Day on 9 May or SDG day on 25 September. Visibility was also given to spokespersons all along the year, be it in European or international events, or through social media, videos and interviews.

4 Our internal organisation

Our 4th objective was to become a more sustainable and inclusive organisation. This embedded several dimensions related to our governance bodies, to give the opportunities for our member associations to contribute, to the Secretariat itself and to the processes and opportunities for staff members.

First of all, we were able to adapt to the situation created by the Covid pandemic and two Policy Committee meetings gathering our 170 elected representatives met twice on line this year, the first one in the context of the celebration of our 70th anniversary, to adopt position papers in different areas, agree on expenses and budget, and approve our multiannual 2021-2022 work programme and the 2021-2030 multiannual strategy.

For each of the meetings, the aim was to give CEMR member associations the opportunity to discuss with European key players. Political debates in smaller format and concrete topics, were suggested and developed with members, such as the long term vision on rural development, human rights backlash in Europe, the Conference on the future of Europe. 2021 was also the year to launch the renewal of the mandate of the Secretary General which should be elected by the policy committee in January 2022.

The Secretariat was also audited on its internal processes and some recommendations that CEMR must now take into account on its way of working have been suggested: the timesheet system is being adapted to follow CEMR logical

framework for instance.

An internal Task Force of staff members have also worked all along the year to come up with recommendation in consultation with all staff, on CEMR 2020-2021 internal reorganisation and to better define the reporting to members and our evaluation system.

Working full time online, also made CEMR Secretariat aware that we were still too dependent on paper: the Secretariat had worked to become more paperless. The administrative team had created new templates, new systems for the approval of documents, for digital signatures, and had rewritten the administrative procedures for the approval of documents, the processes for travel/procurement/purchase orders/service contracts, etc.

Finally, the entire staff received training on the new way of working and on how to further improve the team spirit and capacity, through regular learning sessions. The staff also received trainings on Excel, on public speaking, and on project development, management, reporting, monitoring and budget.

Territories



Flagship success

Recovery and resilience



The COVID-19 crisis hit hard local and regional governments, given their frontline role in protecting citizens and supporting businesses. Yet the implementation of the safety measures were often imposed by the national tier without proper consultation.

Nevertheless the national associations representing local and regional governments were mobilised to provide insights, tools and expertise to address needs on the ground. For CEMR our role was to ensure that LRGs were recognised in the solutions and strategies for the future recovery at national and European levels.

Thanks to our [joint survey with the Committee of the Regions](#) on the involvement of local and regional government associations in the national Recovery and Resilience Plans, CEMR has achieved notable visibility for our efforts and credibility with the European institutions. This has helped strengthen our relationship with the European Parliament, in particular as concerns inputting to future reports.

It also provided food for thought to our members to spur engagement with the national governments in addressing the recovery at different levels of governance and providing support in their advocacy efforts at national level.

This work on how to more effectively achieve recovery provides a sound foundation for CEMR's advocacy in related areas, such as the economic governance reforms, the EU

semester and how it might evolve in the future, the coherence with cohesion policy, green local investments. For instance the 2nd CEMR analysis on COVID-19 impact on local and regional finance contributes to raise awareness on existing barriers to LRGs investments in a context where investments for sustainable recovery is more important than ever. These messages were shared with OECD and Commissioners Dombrovskis and Gentiloni.

This theme also feeds into our vision for the future of Europe. In addition, charting the progress of delivering the national Plans on the ground will allow CEMR to feed into the preparation of a draft report planned by the European Parliament on the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

In addition, thanks to the tools we have developed, such as the [Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities](#), the recovery plans have made it possible to consider how to use them to achieve sustainable development in cities. The RFSC is a valid tool for localising the SDGs and achieving sustainable urban development to be more resilient and sustainable. We have 2212 registered users at the end of 2021 with just over 840 projects or public policies that have been assessed using the tool.

The Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities (RFSC)

→ website | rfsc.eu

→ twitter | [rfsc_eu](https://twitter.com/rfsc_eu)





Milestone achievements

→ **Milestone achievements:** thanks to our advocacy, local and regional governments and their associations will no longer be considered lobbyists by the EU. The EU institutions have agreed to no longer require local governments and their associations to be included in the official lobby register.

The EU is thus recognising their legitimacy in policy-making and that they should not be put on the same level as the private sector. Local governments and their associations from outside the EU may still be required to enter their details in the register.

→ **Council of Europe's Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG):** CEMR's Secretary General was several times invited to speak on democratic governance in the time of COVID-19 in 2021. The Secretaries-General of CEMR and the Congress also met several times, and reflections for common work in 2022 have been initiated.

→ **Urban development:** EU Ministers responsible for Urban Development adopted the Ljubljana Agreement on 26 November

2021. By doing so, EU Member States and the European Commission commit to the continuation of the Urban Agenda for the EU and set new modalities for its implementation. CEMR has been closely associated with the preparation of this agreement. In this document some key aspects for CEMR are included.

The role of smaller and medium sized cities is clearly stated with the willingness to involve them in thematic partnerships. It is also worth noting that the role of national associations of municipalities and regions in supporting municipalities, but also to participate in thematic partnerships is recognised. New thematic partnership will be launched as of 2022 on greening cities, sustainable tourism, cities of equality (proposed by CEMR) and urban food.

→ **Rural development:** CEMR and its members submitted [recommendations to the public consultation](#) on the long-term vision for rural areas and met Vice-President Commissioner Suica's Cabinet. We also organised an online event in which the main European stakeholders were present (MEPs, Commissioners Ferreira and Suica's Cabinets, OECD). All this work was supported by strong communication, with articles on CEMR's website and promotion on social media. As a result a number of our recommendations were included in the Communication "[A long term vision for the EU's rural areas](#)" such as the Rural Pact to involve all stakeholders including LRGs, an online platform with good practices and toolkits on how to combine EU funds in rural areas, and the rural proofing of EU legislations.

→ **Digitalisation:** CEMR and its members developed a common vision on the digital principles which should guide the digital transition in local and regional governments in the coming decade. The CEMR position paper states that local and regional governments are at the forefront of the digital transition and represent a key player to facilitate the spreading of digital solutions for citizens, both as facilitators for local businesses and as providers of public services.

Moreover European initiatives to support digital transition should never come at the expense of local and regional governments and create unnecessary economic and administrative burdens. Finally, it is essential to support the digitalisation of local and regional public administrations with appropriate funding opportunities, legislative measures, and policy tools: we need strategic thinking and actual coordination across Member States

→ **Third-party violence and harassment:**

An important subject in different industry sectors that has made it possible to establish cooperation between the social partner organisations – employers and trade unions – representing local and regional governments, education, hospitals,

public transport, telecommunications, national governments. The multisectoral guidelines on preventing third-party violence and harassment at work were signed in 2010 and the current project aims at assessing how they could possibly be updated and aligned with the ILO convention 190 on Violence and Harassment Convention. This action also allows CEMR and the other project partners to position themselves in relation to the upcoming Commission proposal for a directive on gender-based violence.

→ CEMR's focus on topical economic and territorial concerns that feature high up the EU agenda provided valuable opportunities to **strengthen our relationship with key policy and decision-makers**. Interviews conducted with Commissioner Dubravka Šuica on rural development, Dragoş Pîslaru MEP on the Recovery and Resilience Facility and Joachim Schuster MEP on the European Semester, were important opportunities to engage on issues that have significant implications for local and regional governments and their citizens.

In progress

→ **SDGs:** ongoing reflection on indicators with the Joint Research Centre or the OECD. We also collect experience from members and gauge what would be useful for them, on the topic of the localisation of the SDGs, such as subnational reviews. We also discuss the state of play and exchange knowledge in this area.

→ The preparation of CEMR's study on territorial reforms, governance and powers (**TERRI report**) got underway at the beginning of 2021 and will be unveiled at the beginning of 2022. This report will have a special focus on the management of the COVID-19 pandemic given the differing territorial arrangements across CEMR's membership.

→ **CEMR, representing LRGs as employers,** is participating in the process of review of the EU sectoral social dialogue organised by the European Commission. As a result, the DG EMPL will publish in Q3-2022 a new Communication and a Recommendation presenting the results of this review and the new setting of the EU social dialogue committees - also including a decision regarding the creation of a dedicated committee for social services.

→ CEMR will explore with its members the possibility to agree a common vision on the development of policies supporting the creation of **more affordable and decent housing in Europe**. This position will take into consideration the most recent opinions of the European Parliament as well as the evolution of the short-term rental and housing market across Europe.



Climate and environment



Flagship success

Climate neutrality by 2050: from global ambitions to local actions

This year, in the world as in the European continent, everyone is mobilised to fight not only the economic and social crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, but also to tackle the climate crisis. The year 2021 was a decisive year to translate ambitions into concrete actions and to highlight the leadership of municipalities and regions in a sustainable recovery.

In the European Union, the long-awaited **Fit for 55 package** revealed the Commission's proposals to achieve a 55% reduction of CO2 emissions by 2030 and make the European Green Deal a reality. CEMR greatly contributed to the advocacy work before the package was published, with responses to public consultations on energy efficiency, renewable energy, energy performance of building and the EU taxonomy for sustainable activities.

Throughout the year, CEMR and its members worked relentlessly to strike the right balance between keeping a high level of ambition and ensuring that local and regional governments are adequately supported in the process. We will carry on this work in 2022.

CEMR also takes part in the implementation of the **Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (CoM)**, a flagship initiative in the field. In 2021 the Covenant stepped up its ambitions for a fair and climate-neutral Europe by 2050 reflecting local leaders' commitment to a climate and energy transition that is fair, inclusive and respectful of us citizens of the world and of our planet's resources.

Covenant of
Mayors for
Climate and
Energy



→ [website | eumayors.eu](https://eumayors.eu)

→ [twitter | eumayors](https://twitter.com/eumayors)

To accompany this transition, CEMR offered members tools to communicate and promote the new phase of the initiative to their local governments, support to organise awareness raising and capacity building events at national level, and thematic webinars. We also showcased the work done by the Covenant, but also several associations on reinforcing multi-level governance and the role of local governments in national climate and energy policies.

Milestone achievements



→ Local and regional governments were visible and vocal at the United Nations' **COP26 conference** on climate change in Glasgow. As part of the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities constituency (LGMA) and in cooperation with our member associations in the United Kingdom (COSLA, LGA, WLGA and NILGA), CEMR, PLATFORMA coordinated the presence of a delegation of European local and regional leaders, organised several debates and events and managed to include references to the importance of municipalities, regions and “multilevel and cooperative action” to achieving objectives in the Conference’s final agreement: the Glasgow Climate Pact.

Covenant of Mayors for Sub-Saharan Africa (CoM SSA)



- website | comssa.org
- twitter | [comossafrica](https://twitter.com/comossafrica)

→ Still at the international level, CEMR activities in the framework of the **Covenant of Mayors for Sub-Saharan Africa (CoM SSA)** focused this year on building alliances with African local government associations to improve the support to cities in every region of Sub-Saharan Africa. CoM SSA also enhanced its cooperation with key climate funding institutions such as the [Green Climate Fund](#). This cooperation was instrumental to extending the network to a wider range of stakeholders, providing increased support to signatories.

→ The negotiations on 8th **Environment Action Programme** are now coming to an end. [The main messages](#) put forward in our advocacy towards the European Parliament appears in the final compromise proposed by the Council Presidency. It addresses the issue of better implementation of environmental legislation, rather than announcing new policy actions, as well as empowering and supporting regional and local governments to take action.

→ As the Commission prepares **the revision of the legislation for water management**, CEMR has on the one hand provided technical recommendations to the Commission (public

consultation, stakeholder consultation workshop). We were selected to contribute in the [Zero Pollution Stakeholder Platform](#). On the other hand, we co-organised with Eurocities a high-level conference during the Green Week, a key event on the European agenda. Thanks to these two complementary actions, CEMR has strengthened its links with the European Commission, in particular DG Environment, and is now a key player in the negotiations on the reform expected for 2022.

→ CEMR contributed to the implementation of the [Green City Accord](#), a new initiative to make cities greener and healthier. Together with Eurocities and ICLEI, we promoted the initiative through European and national sessions and reached 85 signatories committing for ambitious implementation of the EU legislation in the field of environment (air, water, waste, nature and biodiversity, noise)

Green City Accord

- website | greencityaccord.eu

Climate and Environment

→ Local and regional governments need more technical and financial support to close the loop of a circular economy, this is one of the recommendations of the Urban Agenda Circular Economy Partnership, which closed its work in 2021. The European Commission (DG RTD) is therefore launching a platform for exchange on the **implementation of local and regional circular economy strategies**, the [CCRI](#). With the expertise of its group of experts, CEMR has been selected among a group of partners to accompany the development of this platform.

→ This year, the climate and environment team focused on improving its communication strategy. While maintaining a **continuous flow of information for CEMR members** on EU news and funding related to climate and environment through the Green Update (bi-monthly internal newsletter), a dashboard of EU legislation has been set up to provide a state of play of expected or ongoing reforms. Several summary notes on proposed legislation or European strategies were also distributed.

In terms of external communication, we have also continued to **increase CEMR's visibility and its activities in the field of climate and environment**. We have been able, notably through the participation of Belinda Gottardi, CEMR's spokesperson for the climate in the Political Bureau of the Covenant of Mayors, to dialogue with the Commissioners for energy Kadri Simson or for the environment Virginijus Sinkevičius, and to count on the support of Ursula von der Leyen, who wrote to all mayors of Europe backing the new phase of the Covenant and inviting local governments across to join in the effort needed to implement the European Green Deal.

→ An [infographic](#) on the contribution of local

and regional governments to the fight against climate change was widely disseminated at the occasion of the COP26, and many articles were published on CEMR's website and newsletter: Fit for 55 package, renewal of the Covenant of Mayors' ambitions and related activities, interview with Sari Rautio, CEMR's spokesperson on the environment etc.

In progress

In 2021, we prepared the ground for 5 areas of action for 2022:

- Negotiations on the Fit for 55 package in the European Parliament and Council.
- Legislative proposals on water management (UWWTD) and air quality, notably through the Zero Pollution Stakeholder.
- Drawing lessons from the state of local finances and green investments to issue policy recommendations to foster local green transitions and adapt European and national financial support to current challenges.
- Increase capacity building of municipalities and regions in the green transition, including in the field of circular economy.



Citizenship



Flagship success

Bringing equality closer to home

The European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, the reference tool for Europe's towns and regions to promote gender equality in their territories, celebrated 15 years of advancing gender equality in 2021 (see also: [interview](#) about the charter) and guiding local action in favour of more equitable societies.

CEMR carried out an extensive programme during the year to reflect on the Charter's successes and to generate ideas to solidify its position as a reference text for Europe and to revitalise it to keep pace with new realities and policy developments. Activities began with a webinar on the Charter's "birthday" in May, followed by six thematic workshops covering themes such as multiple discrimination, climate and sustainable development, and violence against women and girls.

In total, throughout the year, 75 participants from national associations of local and regional governments, European institutions and civil society across 21 countries shared their experiences with the Charter, promoting gender equality at local level, and contributed their ideas to ensure the continued success of the Charter. The series of workshops culminated in a final report with recommendations for follow-up actions to take in 2022–2023.

The observatory of the charter

→ [website | charter-equality.eu/](https://www.charter-equality.eu/)

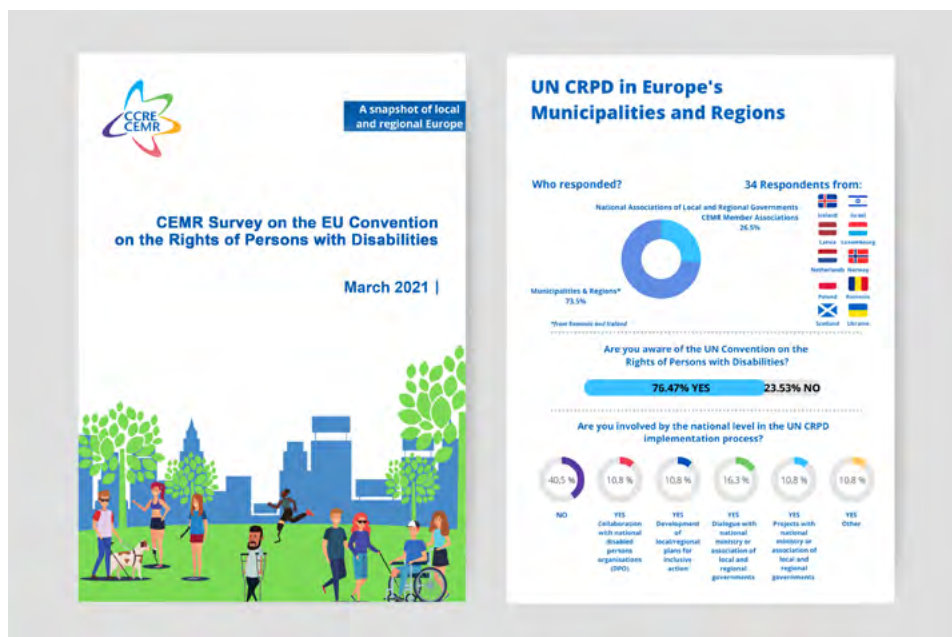
→ [twitter | cemr_equality](https://twitter.com/cemr_equality)

The reach of the Charter continued to expand throughout 2021, with 57 new signatories joining the nearly 2,000 strong community

active in 36 countries; 4 new action plans were uploaded to the online Observatory of the Charter.

Moreover the CEMR Standing Committee for Equality (representing local and regional elected representatives of all Europe) and the Commission on Human Rights and Equal Treatment of the Association of Polish Cities joined forces to boost awareness of and support for the Charter in Poland. A moment of political and historical significance took place in October when the Association of Polish Cities organised a **collective Charter signing ceremony in Poznan** where 16 Polish cities covering over 4 million inhabitants formalised their desire to make their territories friendly places for all, where women and men have equal rights and responsibilities. The event received extensive media coverage in Poland. CEMR and the APC combined their efforts to bring additional visibility to the Charter on social media with the hashtag [#LocalEquality](#).





Milestone achievements

CEMR has been calling for a common and impactful European asylum policy at all levels of government since 2015. In response to the long-expected New Pact on Migration and Asylum, published by the European Commission in September 2020, CEMR set about raising awareness and advocating for renewed attention to the challenges and issues linked to migrant and refugee integration at the local level.

CEMR's Policy Committee met with the EU Commission vice-president responsible for migration, Margaritis Schinas, to discuss the local realities of immigration, how this phenomenon can best be managed and how EU policies can be most supportive. Two members of the European Parliament responsible for these files, [MEPs Fabienne Keller and Birgit Sippel](#), also participated in the discussions, agreeing on the crucial role of local governments for newcomers, especially in setting up humane reception facilities during

the processing of asylum requests.

The Policy Committee's discussion marked the starting point to develop a **political resolution** on the role of local and regional governments in the new EU Migration and Asylum framework with the CEMR Task Force on Migration. The final resolution, which will be adopted in January 2022 by the CEMR Policy Committee, will serve as a basis for continued dialogue with the European institutions.

→ Building on inputs to a targeted consultation with the EU Commissioner for Equality's cabinet in late 2020 and with a view to better understanding local governments' implication in the area of disabilities, CEMR published a [survey on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(UN CRPD\)](#).

Citizenship

The survey gathered 34 responses from 10 countries. The majority of respondents are aware of the UN Convention and are involved to varying degrees by the national level in the implementation process (ex: dialogues, projects, action plans). Among the main challenges faced by local and regional governments and their national associations in the implementation of the rights of disabled people are the lack of funds and capacity for the development of targeted services; lack of clear guidelines and information; shortage of facilities and structures and excessive bureaucracy. 91% of the respondents are interested in opportunities for peer-exchange and capacity building with other European local/regional governments and their associations on the implementation of UN CRPD.

Further, thanks to our advocacy efforts, CEMR is cited as a relevant stakeholder in the new **EU Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021–2030** and is a member of the Strategic Dialogue on the Disability Rights Strategy, organised by the European Commission's DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

→ The Citizenship Team mobilised and participated in two major campaigns around key dates to promote the rights of migrants and refugees: World Refugee Day (20 June) and International Migrants Day (18 December).

For **World Refugee Day**, CEMR and [IncluCities project](#) were active and organised activities as part of the weeklong Refugee Week campaign '[We cannot walk alone](#)'. To shed light on three important aspects of migrant and refugee integration, CEMR organised three online events to showcase the contributions of diverse and inclusive cities in the EU, moreover to offer inspiration and open space for exchange within the framework of the IncluCities project.

In a series of Facebook Live discussion sessions, we covered: refugee women in the political arena, ICT and digitalisation for better integration, and the experiences of second-generation migrants. The Facebook Live events reached over 2,000 people and had 1,030 views.

On the occasion of International Migrants Day, CEMR also campaigned to showcase its activities and best practice on migration related topics, including organising a Facebook Live exchange on "Shifting the way we frame migration" featuring partners of the IncluCities project: Mechelen and Fuenlabrada. A video interview with the CEMR spokesperson on migration Pietro Puccio was published online (see also written text in EN and FR), where the role of towns and regions in migration management is emphasised and a political vision proposed for a future where European municipalities lead with human dignity and respect for human rights.

→ CEMR's relationship and cooperation were enhanced with the first EU Commissioner for Equality, Helena Dalli, who met with local leaders of the CEMR Standing Committee for Equality in January (see [wrap-up](#)). The potential for local and regional action to **build equality from the ground up**, as well as areas for multi-level cooperation were discussed. The exchange also addressed the backlash against women's rights currently seen in some Member States, the links between the recently released EU's external gender action plan III (GAP III) and strategy for gender equality, promotion of women's political participation in the Eastern Partnership countries and, last but not least, the impacts of COVID-19 on gender equality.

IncluCities

→ [website](#) | includities.eu

→ [twitter](#) | [includitieseu](https://twitter.com/includitieseu)



→ Gender-balance in decision-making and leadership continues to be a priority area for action within CEMR and its member associations. CEMR's 2019 study on women in politics illustrated that women's representation in decision-making is increasing at all levels, although very slowly, particularly at local/regional level and in top leadership positions such as Mayor.

In 2021, CEMR published results of a questionnaire on the **gender composition of member associations' top leadership**. Responses were collected from 29 member associations in 27 countries and showed that in the highest level executive decision-making bodies of the associations (equivalent to the CEMR Executive Bureau), there are less than 25% of women (24%) on average. The average proportion of women members in the highest level deliberative decision-making bodies (equivalent to the CEMR Policy Committee) was 22%.

This questionnaire enabled CEMR to raise awareness about gender gaps in our own leadership structures and reflect on their underlying causes. The findings constitute a baseline against which progress can be measured during the next years, as mainstreaming gender within the organisation is a dedicated objective in CEMR's multi-annual strategy.



In progress

→ Members of CEMR's Task Force on Migration have been involved in the regional consultation process on the draft text of the UCLG Lampedusa Charter. The Lampedusa Charter will be an expression of the common values that the UCLG sections in the world have regarding migration and its management nowadays. This renewed global commitment on migration and displacement, which aims to "shift the narrative on human mobility" and "highlight the responsibilities assumed by the territories to ensure the dignity and coexistence of all people", is expected to be launched by UCLG in early 2022 for promotion and adoption by the regional sections.

→ As mentioned in the Territories Team section, the [Ljubljana Agreement](#), adopted EU Ministers responsible for Urban Development under the Slovenian Presidency, includes the proposals of CEMR and Eurocities for four new thematic partnerships for the Urban Agenda of the EU: Cities of equalities; greening cities; sustainable tourism; and urban food. While the greening cities and sustainable tourism partnerships will be launched from early 2022, a new partnership on **Cities of Equalities** could be developed from early 2023.



International Partnership



Flagship success

Increased support to CEMR members in the EU Eastern Neighbourhood

CEMR-PLATFORMA's [Eastern Partnership programme](#) is coordinated by a working group EU Neighbourhood East, with the participation of national associations of local and regional governments from countries signatories of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTAs) and Association Agreements (AAs), **Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine**. They are supported by their EU peers from the [PLATFORMA coalition](#).

Principal goal of the programme is increasing the autonomy and competences of local governments through strengthening of their national associations—[NALAG \(National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia\)](#), [CALM \(Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova\)](#), and [AUC \(Association of Ukrainian Cities\)](#)—with the aim to build a solid cooperation framework on the local level which would support institutional reforms in [Eastern Partnership \(EaP\)](#) countries, strengthen the competences of local public servants, and the role of national associations in the national decision-making processes.



→ [site web](#) | platforma-dev.eu

→ [twitter](#) | [Platforma4Dev](https://twitter.com/Platforma4Dev)



Examples of our activities include a **peer exchange session** between CALM and national associations from South and Eastern Europe in April, a **gender equality training** for national associations and Charter signatories in Georgia (NALAG), Moldova (CALM) and Ukraine (AUC) in June 2021, or the EU-[EaP Local Leaders Forum](#) in December. Additionally, the [Bridges of Trust](#) project was launched in April to support the establishment of 10 new municipal partnerships between Ukraine and the EU (Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Estonia), which were presented at an **international forum** “Strengthening Municipal Cooperation between Ukraine and the EU” in December, together with the launch of a dedicated [publication](#) on partnerships between Ukrainian and EU municipalities.

Milestone achievements

→ **CEMR International Strategy** was adopted during the statutory session of the Policy Committee on 28 January 2021. The strategy aims to shape our future international action as a European association of local and regional governments, and our involvement in international initiatives and programmes. The strategy envisages 3 main objectives:

1. CEMR is a key partner of the European Union and should also become a key interlocutor for international organisations to convey European local and regional governments' messages and values – especially to organisations such as the United Nations (and all its bodies) and the OECD;
2. Positioning CEMR as one of the main contributors within local and regional governments' international networks – especially in regards to [United Cities and Local Governments](#) (UCLG) and the [Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments](#) (GTF). UCLG's positioning within the international arena is continuing to develop. This global organisation's views are being more and more taken into account by the United Nations and its bodies. Being active and contributing to UCLG can help to promote our views on the international stage;
3. Strengthening our involvement and our leadership through international initiatives and programmes such as [PLATFORMA](#), [Global Covenant of Mayors](#) (GCoM), and [Covenant of Mayors in Sub-Saharan Africa](#) (CoM SSA).

→ **Policy and advocacy on NDICI - Global Europe.** The new [Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument - Global Europe](#) was adopted in June 2021. LRGs are mainstreamed throughout the text and decentralised cooperation is mentioned. EU Delegations have to consult with LRGs in the policy dialogue, and a recital under the geographic programmes commits to support the empowerment of LRGs in partner countries for a minimum amount of €500 million. The stronger focus on the geographic programmes in the new financial instruments implies a bigger role for the EU Delegations for the present programming of the EU funds (2021–2027). Support to LRG associations will be provided through the signature of a Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA). A [PLATFORMA note](#) explains the instrument and presents our key messages.

→ **Policy Forum on Development (PFD).**

As co-chair of the PFD, CEMR Secretary General participated, together with PLATFORMA Director and PLATFORMA Secretariat, to several consultations organised throughout summer and autumn 2021. These consultations sessions are useful to share our inputs and contributions to action plans or programmes that are being shaped (Youth action plan, Global challenges programme, implementation of the Multilateralism strategy, EU-AU summit's preparation, Sub-Saharan African regional programme, Latin America regional programme, Asia regional programme), or to comment on the implementation of ongoing action plans (Gender Action Plan III - [final agenda](#)).

International Partnerships

→ **Publications:** PLATFORMA, in cooperation with partners, developed and disseminated several publications on the relationship between the EU and LRGs in the development context (see in Annex - (for more publications, see Annex. CEMR papers and publications 2021).

→ CEMR with UCLG Africa and PLATFORMA organised the event “**Connecting young local leaders!**” in June 2021 aiming at advancing the work started at conferences in Abidjan and Marrakesh in 2017. The objective was to suggest ways of bringing Africa and Europe closer in a win-win partnership and to explore how local leaders can structure their future dialogue and provide input to major events such as the African Union - European Union summits and Africities.

→ **European Days of Local Solidarity 2021** (EDLS) campaign: The 6th edition of the [European Days of Local Solidarity](#) in November 2021 exceeded the symbolic bar of 100 events around Europe organised by cities, regions, and their associations to raise awareness about their international cooperation actions, bring decentralised cooperation closer to citizens and provide visibility to signatories of the [EDLS Charter](#). The annual 2-week campaign coordinated by PLATFORMA is run by European cities and regions, and their associations, committed to inform and mobilise their citizens on global solidarity and sustainable development issues. Discover what happened in 2021 in the EDLS 2021 video clip.

→ **SDG Training Module #4 [Sustainable Development Goals and Decentralised Cooperation](#)** was developed jointly with [UCLG Learning](#). The module explores the application of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a universal development policy framework applied in decentralised cooperation practice. The module #4 complements a series of UCLG training modules on the localisation of SDGs ([#1 Introduction to SDGs](#), [#2 SDGs and Territorial Planning](#), and [#3 SDG Monitoring and Reporting](#)). The PLATFORMA Secretariat was engaged in a pilot training of trainers (ToT) to become trainers for the module, and we have participated as trainers or speakers in pilot trainings organised by UCLG Learning for other UCLG sections ([UCLG Africa](#), [Mercociudades](#), [UCLG Asia-Pacific](#)). A dedicated training for members of CEMR and PLATFORMA partners is in planning for 2022.



In progress

→ The 3rd edition of [PLATFORMAwards](#) – A reward for excellence in international action of cities and regions – is in its first preparatory steps, and will be launched in the first half of 2022 to invite European cities and regions to submit their decentralised cooperation projects to an independent jury for selection of this edition's laureates, which will be announced in the second half of the year.

→ CEMR and PLATFORMA will be organising, participating at, or contributing to relevant events in 2022, such as the **AU-EU Summit and Local Leaders' Forum** in February, **9th CoR Summit of regions and cities** in March, **9th Africities Summit** in May, **11th World Urban Forum** in June, **10th UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development** in July, or the **7th World Congress of [United Cities and Local Governments](#) (UCLG)**, our umbrella international organisation for cities, local and regional governments, and municipal associations throughout the world, in October 2022.



Alliances and partnerships

→ **Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM): A Memorandum of Understanding** was signed between PAM and PLATFORMA. The agreement reaffirms the partnership between the PAM and PLATFORMA, and underscores the two organisations' shared efforts to advance an open, inclusive, prosperous, and secure Euro-Mediterranean region, with an immediate focus on Human Rights, health security and economic recovery from the pandemic of COVID-19. (February 2021)

→ **Global Education Network Europe (GENE):** Building alliances is crucial for quality global citizenship education. In this context PLATFORMA had several meetings with GENE throughout 2021 resulting in the first draft version of a **Memorandum of Understanding** between PLATFORMA and GENE.

Externally-funded Activities



Manage reasonably and diversify sources of financing for long-term sustainability

Following the discussion within the CEMR membership it was recommended to elaborate a strategic approach to external funding. Therefore, we have developed in 2021 the strategy for externally-funded activities (EFAs) to respond to, and complement the CEMR systematic approach, based on adopted strategic documents: the multi-annual strategy 2020–2030, the biannual work programme, and the reorganisation of the Secretariat in 2020–2021. At the same time, new external factors, such as the EU programming period 2021–2027, require strategic tools and processes to be put in place.

The strategy developed by the CEMR secretariat in close cooperation with the members of the platform on EFAs is aiming at setting up a well-defined process for

planning identifying and developing proposals, and implementing activities together with interested members, including for the indirect benefit of members not directly involved in the implementation of EFA activities.

Thanks to the strategy, we will ensure an improved information flow with members and higher transparency when it comes to the engagement in future projects. The strategy will come into force and be implemented after its approval in January 2022.

Milestone achievements

We have organised the two first meetings with the members of the platform on external funded activities composed by CEMR members. Both meetings were mainly focused on the elaboration of the external funded activities strategy, dissemination of funding opportunities amongst members and future external funded activities.



→ We have organised two info sessions on EU programmes on the Horizon Europe and the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV). The aim of the info sessions was to foster CEMR members' awareness of Horizon Europe and CERV programmes, present the European Commission priorities and identify how local and regional governments (LRGs), and their associations (LRGAs) can benefit from and access the fundings opportunities.

→ We have successfully submitted the following EFAs

- + We have submitted a proposal named "Local and Citizens European Dialogues" (LACED) and expect the response from the DG HOME in January 2022

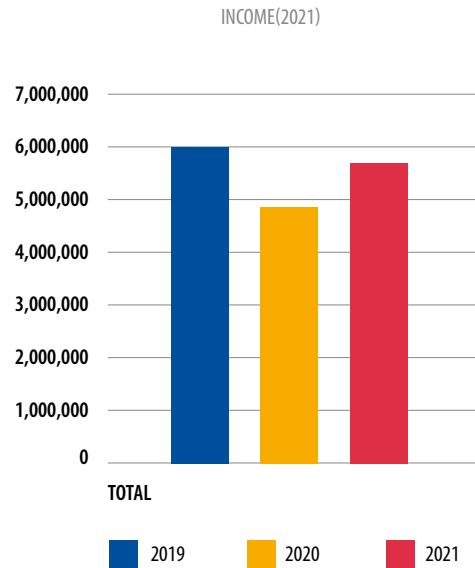
- + We are in the negotiation/signature phase of the "Circular Cities and Regions Initiative's Coordination and Support Office" (CCRI-CSO) with DG RTD

- + We are in the negotiations/signature phase of the second "Framework Partnership Agreement" (FPA2) and the third "Specific Grant Agreement" (SGA3) for PLATFORMA with DG INTPA

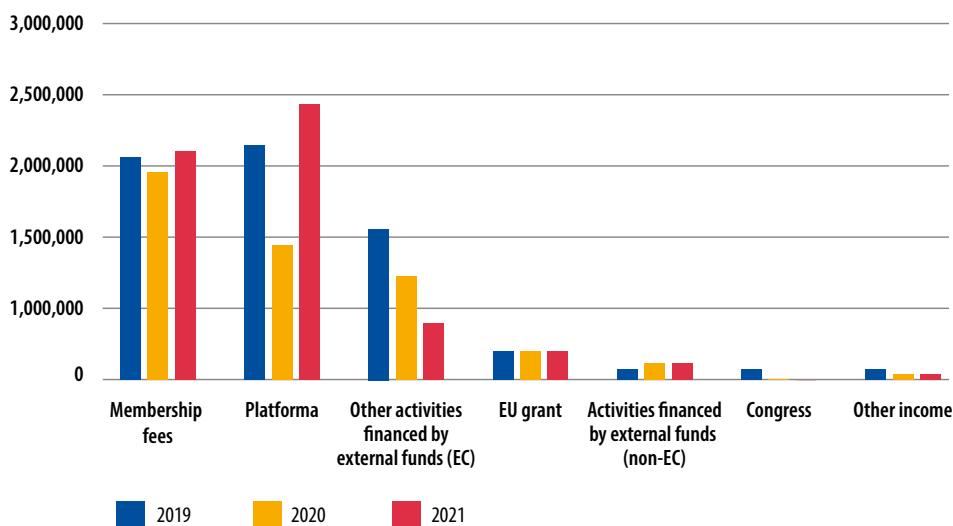
- + We are in the negotiations phase of the "Operating Grants Framework Partnership" and waiting the response for the "Specific Operating Grant" accompanying the "Operating Grants Framework Partnership" with DG HOME

In progress

→ CEMR was invited to join the consortium of cities led by EUROCITIES and organisations that animate the activities of the “Living in EU” movement. We will jointly respond to the call for proposals launched by the EC under the Digital Europe Programme by February 2022. CEMR will take a facilitator role, thus allowing the exchange of experiences between the CEMR member organisations part of the movement (for the time being: VNG, VVSG, KT) and other associations active in the CEMR expert group on digitalisation. This would increase the awareness and understanding of CEMR members about the opportunities and the expertise developed within the “Living in EU” movement.



SPLIT INCOME (2021)* — BY FUNDS



*Due to the pandemic, several external funded activities from 2020 were postponed to 2021.

Communication and outreach





Flagship success

500 mayors and local and regional leaders from 50 countries were united in sending their best wishes to CEMR at the online celebration of our **70th anniversary**. On the agenda: lively discussions, a live musical performance, studio moderation and animated videos. You can relive the recorded event with this [online video](#) and discover the interventions and upcoming anniversary activities on Twitter with the hashtag [#CEMR70](#). We also cast light on our history and achievements with our [in-depth historical article](#) and a richly [illustrated timeline](#) of CEMR's milestones and leaders.

Milestone achievement

In numbers and throughout 2021, we published over 120 articles in English and French, and posted 650 tweets reaching over a million views ([CEMR Twitter handle](#) only). Fourteen newsletters and updates (LOCAL INSIGHT and IN BRIEF) have been sent to the wide network of contacts. These newsletters included regular information and updates of interest for local and regional governments and collected information by the CEMR Secretariat.

Throughout the year, several **campaigns** have been launched with the goal of promoting and strengthening the role of local and regional governments and their associations on the European stage.

→ Together with the Committee of the Regions and CEMR member associations, we warned against local governments being side-lined and kept in the dark during the programming of post-COVID **recovery plans** (see [here](#)). CEMR also took an active part in an [EU-wide coalition](#) urging EU institutions and national governments to promote synergies between the recovery instruments and the structural funds to maximise the impact of European action (see [#cohesionalliance](#)).

→ On the occasion of **Europe Day** in 2021, local and regional leaders shared their views on the Conference on the Future of Europe. CEMR spokespersons were invited to share video messages and to join the conversations on social media with the hashtags [#TheFutureisYours](#) and [#EuropeDay](#). 21 videos and dozens of social media posts were shared on the day, boosting our presence online and contributing towards disseminating the main messages of our member associations (also available in the following [Twitter thread](#)).

→ Building on the [#Power2Her](#) and [#LocalEquality](#) campaigns, we kept on advocating for equal representation of women and men in decision making. These gave visibility to **women in politics** and provided recommendations and data on women's presence in decision-making at local, national and European level.

→ In joint cooperation with our associations and other local government networks, we campaigned and achieved to get the "multilevel cooperative model" included in the **Glasgow final agreement** as a way forward to achieve the Paris Agreement objectives (see [here](#) and have a look at our [infographic](#) on "Local green recovery in Europe").

In progress

→ Hot off the press is CEMR's new presentation brochure providing an overview of our network of local and regional government's associations, as well as our history, activities and achievements. The publication will be released early 2022.

→ **With the assessment of CEMR's communication tools and practices**, we want to make sure our communication goals are aligned with the network's needs and expectations. In 2021, we carried out a survey among our member associations (38 responses from 33 associations in 25 countries), delved into the analysis of web statistics (website, extranet, newsletters, social media...) and conducted a series of interviews and exchanges among the CEMR staff, member associations' staff, elected representatives and journalists.

→ In 2022, we will strive to upgrade our communication tools and practises, and further strengthen coordination between associations on communication, including by leading the network of communications professionals from our member associations.

Council of European Municipalities and regions (CEMR)

→ **website** | cemr.eu

→ **twitter** | [ccreccemr](https://twitter.com/ccreccemr)

+ **120** articles

+ **650** tweets

+ **1** million views on Twitter

+ **14** newsletters

CEMR papers and publications 2021

Position papers and resolutions

- Long-term vision for rural areas Making “no one left behind” a reality ([EN](#))
- The European Charter for Equality: Open, Inclusive, Local / Poznań Declaration ([EN](#), [FR](#), [PL](#))
- Moving towards a greener and healthier future: For an 8th Environment Action Programme empowering local governments to take ambitious actions ([EN](#))
- Ready for COP26: Key messages for local-led implementation of the Paris Agreement, September 2021 ([EN](#), [FR](#))

Publications

January

→ Raising citizens' awareness through development education, by PLATFORMA ([EN](#), [FR](#), [ES](#))

February

→ The work of EU delegations with local and regional governments for development, by PLATFORMA ([EN](#), [FR](#), [ES](#))

March

- Gender balance in top leadership of European LRG associations, CEMR survey
- Survey on local implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), CEMR (8 pages)

May

- Municipalities and regions take action on Global Citizenship Education – The road towards 2030, by PLATFORMA ([EN](#), [FR](#), [ES](#))
- [Climate change and Decentralised cooperation](#) (thematic note by PLATFORMA and CEMR)

June

→ European Territories Localise the SDGs | Continuity and Change in Times of Covid-19, by PLATFORMA and CEMR ([EN](#), [FR](#))

September

→ NALAS and PLATFORMA [Handbook on decentralised cooperation](#) showcasing the contribution of decentralised cooperation to development cooperation

October

→ [Ensuring a Local Green Recovery in Europe](#) (infographics, 2 pages)

November

→ [Outcomes for CEMR and PLATFORMA at COP26](#) (report, 25 pages)

December

→ Partnerships between Ukrainian and EU municipalities: Key success and failure factors for sustainable international municipal cooperation, by Bridges of Trust (16 pages, [EN](#), [UA](#))

Medias

→ [5 key facts for local implementation of the Paris Agreement](#) by CEMR-PLATFORMA

Video clips

→ [70 years of achievements](#) (EN, FR, DE, ES, IT) By CEMR (video animation, 04:12)

→ [What is Decentralised Cooperation? by PLATFORMA](#) (video clip, 02:10)

→ [PLATFORMAwards 2020 winners DIBA-IMADEL](#) by PLATFORMA (trailer 02:20 EN FR ES, movie 27:47 EN FR ES)

→ [European Days of Local Solidarity 2021](#) by PLATFORMA (video clip, 00:58)

→ [How can we ensure gender equality at the workplace in local and regional governments?](#) by CEMR and EPSU (video clip 02:10)

→ Europe Day, celebration Europe's achievements by CEMR (21 video messages from CEMR spokespersons)

→ [Meet the IncluCities mentoring pairs](#) by IncluCities (YouTube channel)

→ [Discover PLATFORMA-CEMR latest study on SDGs!](#) by CEMR-PLATFORMA (video clip, 01:04)

→ [EDD21: Join us at the "The Global Village Online City Hall"!](#) by AIMF, CLGF, CEMR-PLATFORMA, UCLG, and UCLG-Africa (video clip, 01:27)

This report was written jointly by the members of secretariat of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions of Europe (CEMR). It was adopted by the members of the CEMR Policy Committee on 27 January 2022.

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Local & Regional Europe

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions is the united voice of Europe's local and regional governments federated through 60 national associations. CEMR is the European section of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), through which it represents European local and regional governments at international level.

Founded in
1951

60
associations

40
countries

115 000
local & regional
governments

CEMR member associations*

Albania
SHBSH

Austria
GEMEINDEBUND
STÄDTEBUND

Belgium
BRULOCALIS
VVSG
UVCW

Bosnia and Herzegovina
SOGFBiH
ALVRS

Bulgaria
NAMRB

Croatia
HRVZZ

Cyprus
UCM

Czech Republic
SMO
ČR

Denmark
KL
REGIONER

Estonia
AECM

Finland
AFLRA

France
AFCCRE

Georgia
NALAG

Germany

RGRE
DST
DStGB
DLT

Greece
KEDE

Hungary
TÖOSZ-MÖSZ
KÖOESZ

Iceland
SAMBAND

Ireland
LGMA*

Israël
MASHAM

Italie
AICCRE

Kosovo
AKM*

Latvia
LPS

Lithuania
LSA

Luxembourg
SYVICOL

Malta
LCA

Moldova
CALM

Montenegro
UOM

Netherlands
VNG
IPO

North Macedonia
NALAS
ZELS

Norway
KS

Poland
ZMP
ZPP

Portugal
ANMP

Romania
ACoR
UNCJR
AMR

Serbia
SKGO

Slovakia
ZMOS-SK

Slovenia
SOS
ZMOS-SI

Spain
FEMP
EUDEL

Sweden
SKR

Turkey
TBB

Ukraine
AUC
YAPOP

United Kingdom
LGA
WLGA
COSLA
NILGA

* Organisation invited to participate in CEMR's work.

CCRE-CEMR

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