



SUMMARY 2021 REPORT

CEMR'S CHARTER15 REFLECTION PROCESS

BRINGING EQUALITY CLOSER TO HOME

#LocalEquality

“The aim of this exercise is not to transform the Charter document too much: the current text is a well-thought out product of many years of exchange, expertise and negotiation. The goal is to strengthen the Charter and its effective implementation. (...) Beyond chapters and clauses lies a common goal, what really matters at the end of the day: bringing equality closer to home.”



Silvia Baraldi

Councillor of Legnago
CEMR Spokesperson on Gender Equality

The European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life is a tool for municipalities and regions to integrate the gender equality perspective into all policies and activities. It is both a **political document** and a **practical instrument**, covering all aspects of municipal and regional activities, based on the strategy and approach of gender mainstreaming. It was developed by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and its member associations and opened for signatures in 2006. What started with a handful of local governments declaring their intention to act to promote gender equality in their territories has developed into a European community of nearly **2,000 signatories in 36 countries**.

2021 was a milestone year for the Charter, it marked 15 years of commitment and action in favour of gender equality and women’s rights at local and regional level across Europe. For this occasion, CEMR organised a number of activities aimed at reflecting on the Charter as a living document and, therefore, at revitalising and adapting it to current times and society. An updated version of the Charter will be delivered by the CEMR Secretariat and CEMR members in 2022, thanks to support from the EU’s Citizenship, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme.

Six online workshops from June to November 2021 and **five interviews** with national gender focal points nourished a fruitful reflection process that laid the foundations for the Charter’s revitalisation this year. 75 participants from 21 countries - coming from the national associations of local and regional government, municipalities, regions, and civil society - joined the discussion, shared ideas and inputs, which have been collected in a [detailed report](#) of interest to existing and potential Charter signatories, national associations of local and regional governments, EU institutions and civil society organisations.

2021 WORKSHOPS | MAIN FINDINGS

Please note that while specific themes were proposed for each workshop, the discussions sometimes took a different direction than anticipated and this is reflected in the short summaries below.

Communication, countering stereotypes, international cooperation | June 2021

How to include an intersectional perspective, without weakening the principal aim of the Charter, and without making women simply a group among others? The Charter should emphasise the benefits of gender equality for men and boys, too.

Multiple discrimination and intersectionality | September 2021

How to include the intersectional perspective and be as inclusive as possible, in a context where the various countries have different perceptions in relation to discrimination and inequalities? The Swedish expression “always gender, but never gender alone” is highlighted as a possible approach to guide work and revitalise the Charter.

Public services and administration | September 2021

How to communicate the content of the Charter in a way it can be translated into action? Given the negative effects of COVID-19 pandemic on women, how to get prepared to future crises without leaving gender equality behind?

Employment and economic development | September 2021

In Europe, women are still less involved in the labour market than men, they work more part-time, take higher responsibility for parental leave and they do not receive equal pay for work of equal value. The issue of gender differences in part-time work and the take up of parental leave are of particular concern for local and regional governments as employers and should be addressed in the update.

Climate, urban space and sustainable development | October 2021

There is a shared desire to strengthen the text of Article 25 – Urban and Local Planning, by adding evaluation and monitoring. The Charter and its indicator toolkit can be used to complement work on localising the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG5.

Violence against women and girls | November 2021

Since children are often victims of domestic violence, articles on the topic should refer to girls, too. Moreover, what can be done to prevent the emergence of violence? How to include honour-based violence in the document, considering the sensitivity of the topic and different perceptions throughout Europe?

INTERVIEWS

The interviewees were asked about the status of the Charter in terms of its content and language, its strengths and weaknesses, and their expectations of CEMR. They identified some important factors for a successful implementation: political support and commitment, both locally and nationally; resources in the form of staff and budget; links with other international documents; accessible communication; peer reviews and dissemination of good practices. In general the document is considered a good tool, but the feeling that the language needs to be made more accessible and adapt to changing times is shared.

The resistance of some countries to sign and to adopt action plans because of a lack of resources, and the negative consequences of COVID-19 on gender equality, emerged as the main challenges to face. Finally, CEMR is expected to support signatories with resources and to work more with networks, dissemination and exchange of good practices, through webinars and regular meetings between the national gender focal points/coordinators and the Secretariat.

RECOMMANDATIONS

The recommendations coming from the workshops and interviews are proposed by the CEMR Secretariat for endorsement by the CEMR Standing Committee for Equality. In following up the recommendations, it is advised that CEMR and its member associations consult academia and other relevant experts in the area of gender equality.

- Review the **language** of the Charter: it should be made easier, more accessible and adapted to current times and societal realities. Moreover, translated versions should be adapted where gender-sensitive words and orthography are relevant. The possibility to draft a more accessible and communicative “Charter-lite” version may be discussed.
- Review the Charter to identify any texts that may reinforce **stereotypes** (for example, women described as having a larger responsibility for more nurturing tasks).
- Review CEMR’s strategies of **communication** of the Charter, and improve and update translations.
- Clarify and reinforce the **intersectional perspective** in the Charter, either through an introductory text, a review of all text or a supplementary support alongside the Charter. The expression “always gender, never gender alone” can be a guide.
- Clarify the **benefits and responsibilities** of gender equality on men and boys, by adding some relevant articles in the Charter or a text in the “Charter-lite” version.
- Tackle the new challenges and opportunities offered by the internet and the increasing **digitalisation**, adding an introductory text in the Charter, or modifying some articles.
- Regarding **violence** against women and girls, highlight the consequences for children and emphasise the possible connection between human trafficking and prostitution. CEMR is called to continue to organise targeted workshops, aimed at understanding how to address the causes behind the emergence of men’s violence against women through local initiatives, and how to formulate the text of the Charter so that it recognises digitalisation and its impact on violence against women.

- Given the negative impact of COVID-19 on gender equality, address how to manage **future crises** with a gender-sensitive lens.
- Clarify the relationship between the Charter and **other policy frameworks** (for example, the 2030 Agenda and SDGs), ensuring that these documents may act as leverages for each other: organisation of exchanges of experiences with signatories of the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Equality and the African Charter for Local Equality, and inclusion of an introductory text referencing the existence of complementary tools and policies, or of a text in the Charter-lite version.
- CEMR should facilitate a peer-to-peer **exchange** between signatories (on the basis of SALAR's [model municipalities](#) project), to organise a network for signatories and to arrange a biennial conference serving as a meeting place. CEMR is expected to provide regular information on funding available to support signatories, and to continue to develop the Observatory to make it more focused on the practical implementation of the Charter and more easily accessible.
- Clarify the **signatories' responsibilities**, making it clear that they are expected to work with the articles within their competence and they should prioritise some of them. A new introductory text in the Charter or a text in the "Charter-lite" version may be added.
- Evaluate the **legal implications** for existing signatories of modernising the language and modifying the content. An introductory paragraph may be added to an updated version making clear that existing signatories can choose to reconfirm their commitment according to the changes made; or, that their previous commitment remains valid and recognised.



Observatory

The European Charter for
Equality of Women and Men in Local Life



With the support
of the European Union

Jaimie Just
Tel. +32 2 500 05 49
jaimie.just@ccre-cemr.org
charter-equality.eu