

Prague Declaration of CEMR Policy Committee

Prague 7 December 2023



More Trust in and Stronger Voice for Local and Regional Governments

§1 We, the Members of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, representing one million democratically elected European politicians from 60 different Associations in 40 countries, emphasise the crucial role of local and regional governments in addressing the significant challenges our municipalities and regions are facing. It is essential that the EU policymakers and national governments consult and engage with local and regional governments when drafting new legislation.

§2 Local and regional governments are the first to respond to the multitude of today's societal challenges with concrete measures. However, the current design and development of EU policies do not always enable LRGs to effectively take action in the territory. Particularly, we highlight:

§3 Inadequate local government participation in decision-making: Local governments are the most informed territorial entities regarding the needs of their citizens. It is essential that they have the opportunity to actively participate in EU policy-making and be included in the decision-making process. Lack of participation and consultation with local in the design and implementation of European policies can lead to inefficient decisions and unfair burden sharing between regions.

§4 Insufficient long-term funding for the transition to sustainability: The lack of financial support and territorial cohesion funding for local and regional governments in Europe and the high administrative burden on existing funds may slow down the transition to sustainable technologies and infrastructure, making it impossible to achieve the Green Deal objectives and threatening the economic stability of local communities.

§5 Negative social impacts and inequalities of the transition process: Implementation of policies favouring the green transition can have negative social impacts and lead to rural-urban divide, especially in regions with a high dependence on industry and fossil fuels. This can lead to inequalities and social conflicts that need to be actively prevented.

§6 Requirements that do not reflect the real capacity and situation of individual countries: these demands and the setting of criteria according to the one-size-fits-all rule is problematic. Failing to reflect the given conditions on the ground could lead to low acceptance of the targets and possible disincentives to implement the ambitious goals that Europe has set for itself.

§7 To enable local governments to fulfil their responsibilities to citizens and their strategic role in implementing European and national policies, we urge EU policy makers and national governments to:

1. **§8** Integrate local and regional governments more structurally and strategically in the policy-making process, especially where decentralised competences are central to effective policy outcomes.
2. **§9** Further strengthen the involvement of children which has been widely recognised as a fundamental right. Children's participation encompasses various dimensions of their engagement, with a strong connection to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and make this a cornerstone of vital discussions affecting children both in the present and the future.
3. **§10** Simplify European regulations, remove bureaucratic burdens, and apply the "one in, one out" principle also to new European requirements relevant to local authorities.
4. **§11** Consistently apply the requirement for genuine partnership cooperation between national and local or regional levels, in line with the principle of partnership successfully established in the implementation of cohesion policy.
5. **§12** Set feasible and flexible percentage targets for EU regulations and measures, that takes into account the different needs of individual municipalities and regions
6. **§13** To provide for a regulatory framework with milestones that combine municipal design and implementation corridors as well as provide incentives for investments in sustainable networks, without endangering security. The municipalities particularly need financial resources in addition to structural support.
7. **§14** Boost support to transnational infrastructure and more intensively promote cross-border cooperation, e.g. by supporting the European cross border mechanism 2.0
8. **§15** Improve and simplify the extensive and demanding administration and barriers for applicants in accessing funds from directly managed EU programmes.

§16 With CEMR's Prague declaration, we stress the need for cooperation and a stronger governance-in partnership. Only in this way can we achieve the common goals of climate and social sustainability, preserve our planet for future generations and ensure prosperity and well-being for the citizens of our towns and cities, municipalities and regions.

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