



Welcome to **Resonance!**

The monthly news **bulletin** from across CEMR and its member associations.

The process started by the Commissioner for Regional Development, Elisa Ferreira, to assess the performance of Cohesion Policy is now complete. In the **"Impact Goals - Cohesion"** section, you will find CEMR's reaction to the High-Level Specialists report on the Future of Cohesion presented on the 20th of February. The analysis - [Finally, a Cohesion Policy that \(truly\) leaves no one behind?](#) - has been crafted by our Policy Adviser on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion **Marine Gaudron**. Additionally, **Alina Apostol**, CEMR's Spokesperson on Rural Development and Mayor of Ciortesti in Iasi County, shares her perspectives on the importance of cohesion policy in shaping the future of our communities.

As you navigate through Resonance, ensure you take the opportunity to [register](#) for the **Women in Politics webinars scheduled to be streamed on March 6th and 7th**. During these online events you will hear from the experiences of two locally elected women who have generously decided to share their testimonies, providing valuable insights into the discrimination women face on their political journeys.

Finally, don't miss the news about the **Bridges of Trust initiative** as CEMR, the Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC), and U-LEAD reaffirmed their long-term commitment to the joint development of the project.

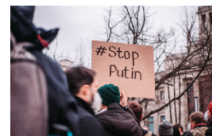
communications@ccre-cemr.org



CEMR Co-President - Europe Can Succeed Only With Municipalities

Highlighting the crucial role of Europe's municipalities, Dr. Schnaudigel presents a compelling call to action for the upcoming elections to the European Parliament scheduled for June 6 to 9.

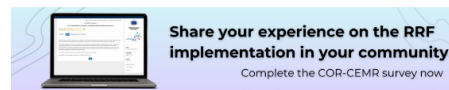
[Read more —](#)



Second Year of War Against Ukraine - CEMR Declaration

European local and regional leaders mark the second anniversary of the unwarranted invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation with a resounding declaration of support for Ukraine and its people.

[Read more —](#)



Migration - Ministerial Conference on Integration of Newcomers

CEMR engaged in the High-Level Policy Forum and Ministerial Conference on the Integration of Newcomers by EU Member States. Through collaborative discussions, CEMR strives to contribute to informed policy decisions and inclusive approaches that benefit both newcomers and the EU.

[Read more —](#)



CEMR's reaction - European Commission's 2040 Targets

CEMR welcomes the Commission's recommendation for a 90% net reduction in greenhouse emissions by 2040 - a decisive move providing predictability to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. As key enablers of EU's climate policies, LRGs call for inclusive exchanges with decision-makers on the target's implementation.

[Read more —](#)





Tallinn Conference - A Second Edition of "Local Social, Digital"

As representative of local and regional employers, CEMR organised debates on navigating the digital transition and strengthening social dialogue. In Tallinn, CEMR emphasised the importance of EU initiatives, such as the European Pillar of Social Rights, to enhance the well-being of the workforce employed in the sector.

[Read more —](#)



Expert Group on Governance and Local Democracy - Strategy

The Expert Group on Governance and Local Democracy met to discuss with the EU Commission and OECD representatives key European governance themes at the CEMR Secretariat. Insightful talks covered Multilevel Governance and Territorial Reforms, recognising their vital role in policy-making, service delivery, and cohesive leadership.

[Read more —](#)



Discover the key findings of the representation and **violence on women in politics**



Finally, a Cohesion Policy that (truly) leaves no one behind?

by Marine Gaudron

Two years after the process was launched by European Commissioner for Regional Development Elisa Ferreira, and a year-long series of meetings and exchanges with academics and experts, the Group of High-Level Specialists on Future of Cohesion Policy has released their long-awaited report [*"Forging a Sustainable Future Together: cohesion for a competitive and inclusive Europe"*](#).

The fifty plus page-long document is a reflection on what has been Cohesion Policy so far, why it is needed at all and how it should improve in the next programming period – according to the experts.

This is an important report on the road to post-2027 and at a moment when Commission services are already starting internal reflection on what should the Cohesion Policy look like in the future, and how its funds should evolve.

The expert analysis starts with a useful reminder:

Why is Cohesion important in the first place?

[Read Marine's full analysis on the report here](#)



Marine Gaudron

Advisor - Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion, Local Finances

marine.gaudron@ccre-cemr.org



Alina Apostol
Mayor of Ciorleşti, Romania

CEMR Spokesperson on Rural Development



Alina you are one of CEMR's spokespersons on Rural Development. Can you introduce yourself to the readers, and what you want to achieve as a CEMR spokesperson?

I wish to begin with congratulations for all the good initiatives of CEMR for making our rural voice heard. I entered politics because in my commune time had seemingly stopped, and during my upbringing it felt like nothing positive could happen for me and my family. The school was on the verge of closure, and we lacked a proper water system; furthermore, the roads were barely accessible. It is crucial for my generation to be heard at all levels. My experience motivates my active participation in the decision-making processes both in my country and abroad. Currently, I hold the position of Vice President for External Relations at ACoR Romania, Secretary of the Board of Directors at ACoR Iași County Branch, Spokesperson on Rural Development issues for 2023-2026 at CEMR, and alternate member of the Network of Associations of Local Authorities in South-East Europe (NALAS). I want to create opportunities and supporting the development of each individual in my commune. I strive to address all needs, including good education, infrastructure, waste management and so on. With the help of my government and EU funds I have

management, and so on. With the help of my government and its funds, I have successfully implemented projects amounting to over 15 million euros in the last 7 years. It is imperative to persist in these efforts as there is a significant gap between rural and urban development in Romania, and ensuring a good quality of life is mandatory.

What do you consider to be the best achievements of cohesion policy? Additionally, what are its weaknesses?

There are numerous achievements of cohesion policy that have positively impacted my county, contributing to development across various domains. To provide a comprehensive overview, I recommend visiting the platform [Kohesio](#) to explore Romania's accomplishments through Cohesion Policy funds.

But to improve cohesion policy we should also acknowledge its weaknesses. The EU is made by people for its people and requires programs and funds that are easily accessible and implementable to meet the diverse needs of its citizens. Unfortunately, administrative complexity persists, exacerbated by frequent rule changes and the constant introduction of new instruments and funds. I believe it is essential to establish a unified set of rules for beneficiaries across different EU funds and a flexible legal framework.

Can you talk about the impact of Cohesion Policy in Iași County?

Improving road infrastructure in Iași County is crucial for better connectivity and development. Currently, there are two investments in roads funded by Cohesion Funds, but more are needed. One of these projects is the "North-East Region – Strategic Road Axis 1: Iași-Suceava," with a total budget of €61 million. The main goal of this project is to enhance accessibility and mobility for the local population, goods, and services by modernizing almost 170 km of county roads in Iași and Suceava, connecting 22 urban and rural areas to the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T).

Implementing this project will have several benefits, from reducing transport and promoting access to regional markets to the improvement of road safety. It aligns with the strategic objectives outlined in the Regional Operational Program (ROP) 2014-2020, emphasizing the importance of road infrastructure for economic growth and improving the quality of life for local communities.

The Recovery and Resilience Fund (RRF) seems to be as a more efficient and rapid spending mechanism under the control of national governments. In light of this, what challenges or complexities justify the continued reliance on the Cohesion Policy?

Several joint surveys conducted by CEMR and the European Committee of the Regions reveal that, in most countries, representatives of LRGs were not adequately consulted during the development and implementation of recovery and resilience plans. In Romania, although associative structures were consulted, their proposals were often disregarded, violating the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. This lack of consultation has led to issues with accepted programs under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP).

Reforming and improving cohesion policy is imperative, and a territorial approach is essential to ensure funds align with the real needs of municipalities and regions. But decisions cannot be made solely at central or European levels without considering the unique needs and priorities of individual municipalities. The Association of Communes of Romania advocates for this cause, presenting a Manifesto against territorial reorganization at its General Assembly in February 2024. This manifesto opposes the forced amalgamation of communes, emphasizing the importance of preserving local identity.

During the General Assembly, the Romanian delegation to the European Committee of the Regions, alongside foreign CoR members, supported the voice of communes against forced amalgamation. This event also marked the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the European Committee of the Regions (1994-2024), celebrated through discussions within the panel titled "Romanian Village - European Village."

How can CEMR ensure the voice of Local and Regional Governments will be heard, and the next European Parliament and Commission design a Cohesion Policy that fits the local and regional needs?

This year presents a significant opportunity for CEMR member associations and LRGs to make their voices heard, particularly at events like the Summit of Regions and Cities in Mons. The Cohesion Alliance will play a crucial role in issuing a joint call for a renewed cohesion policy that prioritises inclusivity.

The Association of Communes of Romania (ACoR) actively engages in European discussions, with President Emil DRĂGHICI and fellow Mayors involved in international organizations such as CEMR, UCLG, CoR, NALAS, etc. They advocate for preserving national and local identity while supporting the harmonious development of the EU. ACoR is dedicated to enhancing ties between the Congress of Local Authorities of Moldova and European structures, aiming to combat Euroscepticism in Romania and Moldova. Additionally, ACoR anticipates being consulted and involved in CEMR activities to contribute to future fund approaches, conveying the genuine needs of municipalities and regions where these funds are invested.

[Learn more about ACOR](#)



WOMEN IN POLITICS - WEBINARS





A Private Life, A Public Violence The Story of an Elected Woman

In an effort to spotlight the harsh realities faced by women entering the political arena, CEMR is proud to announce **two webinars** under the "Women in Politics" project that will be streamed during the International Woman Day's week on 5 and 7 March.

These talks will draw on the experiences of two locally elected representatives who offered to share their testimonies on the heinous discrimination women endure in their political journeys.

The Imperative Role of Women in Politics for Gender Equality

Beyond mere representation, the presence of women in politics is an essential catalyst for achieving genuine gender equality. While progress has been made in various spheres, women continue to grapple with profound discrimination, both online and offline, when engaging in politics. The violence directed at politically active women not only hinders their individual progress but also poses a formidable obstacle to the broader goal of gender parity.

A Private Life, A Public Violence -The Story of an Elected Woman - [Please register to participate](#)

"Physical, Economical and Psychological Violence" - moderated by **Annelies Coessens**

- **Date:** March 5, 2024
- **Time:** 11:30 AM (GMT)

"Cyber and verbal violence" - moderated by **Fiorella Lavorgna**

- **Date:** March 7, 2024 "
- **Time:** 11:30 AM (GMT)

These webinars want to offer a safe platform for open dialogue, where the experiences of elected representatives will be shared to address the barriers hindering women's active participation in politics.

Participants can expect an insightful discussion on strategies to overcome discrimination and foster a more inclusive political landscape. Your presence and engagement are crucial to making these sessions impactful.

For further inquiries, please get in touch with [Annelies Coessens](#) or [Fiorella Lavorgna](#)

Together, let's shape a future where women discrimination has no place in politics.

[Register here to participate](#)

BRIDGES OF TRUST

In a strategic workshop held on February 5 and 6, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), the Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC), and U-LEAD reaffirmed their long-term commitment to the joint development of Bridges of Trust initiative. These two days showcased the project's achievements and set the stage for future endeavours in supporting Ukrainian municipalities. Looking ahead, the organisations are gearing up for the Ukraine Recovery Conference scheduled for June 11-12, 2024, in Berlin.



National Associations of Local Self-Governments Unite for Ukraine's Recovery

Since March 2021, the Bridges of Trust initiative has brought together several regional organisations, including the:

- Associations of Polish Cities
- French Association of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions
- Hungarian National Association of Local Authorities
- Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments
- Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic
- Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia
- Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces
- Association of Basque Municipalities, German Association of CEMR (RGRE)
- Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania
- Association of Towns and Communities of Slovakia
- Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities,
- SALAR International

This collective effort fostered partnerships between Ukrainian municipalities and their peers in the EU member states. Originally focused on strengthening local self-government through decentralisation reform in Ukraine, the program's scope expanded in response to the widespread destruction [faced by Ukrainian municipalities](#). Recognising the urgent need for increased cooperation, the project shifted gears to play a central role in Ukraine's recovery process leveraging on [city-to-city cooperation](#).



Making the voice of municipalities heard in the Reconstruction phase

The results of the Strategic Workshop were presented at the Working-Level meeting of the [European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine](#), which took place on February 23, 2024. CEMR has also contributed to the Alliance recommendations in the view of 2024 Ukraine Recovery Conference. CEMR highlighted the importance of empowering sub-national authorities in reconstruction and recovery efforts and underlines the need to encourage international donors to support Ukraine's local economic development and green reconstruction.

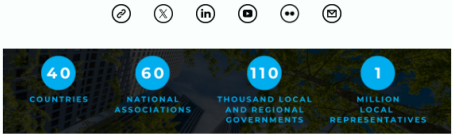
COMING UP



- 05 & 07 - CEMR Women in Politics webinars [\[Register here →\]](#)
- 08 - International Women's Day
- 11 - 22 - 68th Commission on the Status of Women (UN CSW-68 2024) [\[Read more →\]](#)
- 12 - Publication of the 9th EC Report on Cohesion Policy
- 12 & 13 - PLATFORMA Climate Academy Online training on Adaptation and Mitigation for Locally Elected Representatives [\[Read more →\]](#)
- 15 - Conference for Mayors "Translating the EU Green Deal into local action" [\[Read more →\]](#)
- 18 - 19 - European Summit of Regions and Cities in Mons [\[Read more →\]](#)

DATA

In the EU about 5.8 million tonnes of textiles are discarded yearly which is equivalent to 11.3 kg per person.
[\[→ Read more about our proposal on textile waste management ←\]](#)



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