



# THE EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR EQUALITY

of women and men in local life



Conseil des Communes  
et Régions d'Europe  
Council of European  
Municipalities and Regions

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for equality of women and men

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# THE EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND MEN IN LOCAL LIFE

A Charter for Europe's local and regional governments to commit themselves to use their powers and partnerships to achieve greater equality for their people

Drawn up and promoted by  
the Council of European Municipalities and Regions and its partners



# [ INTRODUCTION ]

The European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life is addressed to the local and regional governments of Europe, who are invited to sign it, to make a formal public commitment to the principle of equality of women and men, and to implement, within their territory, the commitments set out within the Charter.

To assist in the implementation of these commitments, each signatory authority undertakes to draw up an Equality Action Plan, which sets out its priorities, actions and resources to this end.

In addition, each signatory authority undertakes to engage with all of the institutions and organisations in its territory, in order to promote the achievement of real equality in practice.

The Charter was drawn up within the framework of a project (2005-2006) undertaken by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions together with many partners, listed below. The project was supported by the European Commission, through its 5<sup>th</sup> Community Action Programme for equality between men and women.

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Equality of women and men constitutes a fundamental right for all, and an essential value for every democracy. In order to be achieved, this right needs not only to be legally recognized, but to be effectively applied to all aspects of life: political, economic, social and cultural.

Despite numerous instances of formal recognition and progress made, equality of women and men in daily life is still not a reality. Women and men do not enjoy the same rights in practice. Social, political, economic and cultural inequalities persist – for example, salary disparities and political under-representation.

These inequalities are the results of social constructs built upon numerous stereotypes present in the family, education, culture, the media, the world of work, the organisation of society... So many domains in which it is possible to act, adopting a new approach and making structural changes.

As the spheres of governance closest to the people, local and regional authorities represent the levels best placed to combat the persistence and the reproduction of inequalities, and to promote a truly egalitarian society. They can, through their competences, and through co-operation with the whole range of local actors, undertake concrete actions in favour of equality of women and men.

Moreover, the principle of subsidiarity is of particular importance in relation to the practical implementation of the right to equality of women and men. This principle applies to all levels of governance – European, national, regional and local. Whilst Europe’s local and regional governments have a diverse range of responsibilities, all of them can and must play a positive role in promoting equality in practical ways that impact on the daily lives of their population.

Closely linked to the principle of subsidiarity are the principles of local and regional self-government. The Council of Europe’s Charter of Local Self-Government of 1985, signed and ratified by the large majority of European states, emphasizes *“the right and the ability of local authorities, within the limits of the law, to regulate and manage a substantial share of public affairs under their own responsibility and in the interests of the local population”*. Implementing and promoting the right to equality must be at the heart of this concept of local self-government.

Local or regional democracy must allow the most appropriate choices to be made concerning the most concrete aspects of daily life, such as housing, security, public transport, the world of work, or health.

Moreover, the full involvement of women in the development and implementation of local and regional

policies allows their life experiences, know-how and creativity to be taken into account.

If we are to achieve a society based on equality, it is essential that local and regional governments take the gender dimension fully into account, in their policies, their organisation and their practices. And in today’s and tomorrow’s world, the real equality of women and men is also key to our economic and social success – not just at European or national levels, but also in our regions, towns and local communities.

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The Council of European Municipalities and Regions, and its committee of women elected representatives of local and regional authorities, has for many years been active in promoting equality of women and men at local and regional levels. In 2005, CEMR launched a concrete tool for European local and regional authorities: the town for equality. By identifying good practices of certain European cities and municipalities, “the town for equality” provides a methodology for the implementation of policies for equality of women and men at the local and regional level. The present Charter builds on this work.

The role of local and regional governments in promoting gender equality was affirmed in the Worldwide Declaration of IULA (the International Union of Local Authorities) on “women in local government” adopted in 1998. The new world organisation, United Cities and Local Governments, maintains the equality of women and men as one of its principal objectives.

# [ PREAMBLE ]

**The Council of European Municipalities and Regions, representing European local and regional governments, in co-operation with the following partners:**

National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria (NAMRB)

Union of Cyprus Municipalities (UCM)

Union of Towns and Communities of the Czech Republic (SMO CR)

Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities (AFLRA)

French Section of CEMR (AFCCRE)

German Section of CEMR (RGRE)

Central Union of Municipalities and Communities of Greece (KEDKE)

Hungarian National Association of Local Authorities (TÖOSZ)

Italian Section of CEMR (AICCRE)

Tuscan Federation of AICCRE

Association of Luxembourg Towns and Municipalities (SYVICOL)

Association of Polish Cities (ZMP)

Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP)

Basque Association of Municipalities (EUDEL)

City of Vienna (Austria)

City of Saint Jean de la Ruelle (France)

City of Frankfurt am Main (Germany)

City of Cartagena (Spain)

City of Valencia (Spain)

House of Time and Mobility Belfort-Montbéliard (France)

Standing Committee Euro-Mediterranean Partnership of the Local and Regional Authorities (COPPEM)



**Recalling** that the European Community and Union are founded on fundamental rights and liberties including the promotion of the equality of women and men and that European legislation has been the basis for progress achieved in this domain in Europe;

**Recalling** the international legal framework of human rights of the United Nations, and in particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted in 1979;

**Emphasizing** the essential contribution of the Council of Europe in the promotion of equality of women and men and of local self-government;

**Considering** that equality of women and men implies the will to take action on the three complementary aspects of its achievement, namely the elimination of direct inequalities, the eradication of indirect inequalities, and the construction of a political, legal and social environment supportive to the proactive development of an egalitarian democracy;

**Deploring** the continuing discrepancy between the de jure recognition of the right to equality and its real and effective application;

**Considering** that in Europe local and regional governments play, and must play, a crucial role for their

citizens and inhabitants in the implementation of the right to equality, in particular of women and men, in all areas of their responsibilities;

**Considering** that a balanced participation and representation of women and men in decision-making and in leadership positions is essential for democracy;

**Taking inspiration** for our action in particular from the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of the United Nations, of 1995, and the Resolutions of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Special Session of the General Assembly of 2000 ( Beijing +5), the European Union's Charter of Fundamental Rights, the Council Recommendation of December 1996 on the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process, and the Worldwide Declaration of the International Union of Local Authorities of 1998 on women in local government;

**Wishing** to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force in September 1981, of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women of the United Nations;

**has drafted this European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, and invites the local and regional governments of Europe to sign and implement this Charter.**

# [ PART I ]

## *Principles*

The Signatories of this Charter for equality of women and men in local life recognise the following as fundamental principles of our actions:

### **1. Equality of women and men constitutes a fundamental right**

This right must be implemented by local and regional governments in all areas of their responsibilities, including their obligation to eliminate all forms of discrimination, whether these be direct or indirect.

### **2. To ensure the equality of women and men, multiple discrimination and disadvantage must be addressed**

Multiple discrimination and disadvantage based, in addition to gender, on race, colour, ethnic and social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age, sexual orientation or socio-economic status must be taken into account in addressing equality between women and men.

### **3. The balanced participation of women and men in decision making is a pre-requisite of a democratic society**

The right to equality of women and men requires that local and regional authorities take all the appropriate measures and adopt all appropriate strategies to promote a balanced representation and participation of women and men in all spheres of decision-making.

### **4. The elimination of gender stereotypes is fundamental to achieving equality of women and men**

Local and regional authorities must promote the elimination of the stereotypes and obstacles upon which the inequalities in status and condition of women are based, and which give rise to the unequal evaluation of the roles of women and men in political, economic, social and cultural terms.

**5. Integrating the gender perspective into all activities of local and regional government is necessary to advance equality of women and men**

The gender perspective must be taken into account in the drafting of policies, methods and instruments which affect the daily life of the local population – for example, through the use of “gender mainstreaming”<sup>1</sup> and “gender budgeting”<sup>2</sup> techniques. To this end, women’s experiences in local life, including their living and working conditions, must be analysed and taken into account.

**6. Properly resourced action plans and programmes are necessary tools to advance equality of women and men**

Local and regional governments must draw up equality action plans and programmes, with the financial and human means and resources necessary for their implementation.

These principles constitute the foundation of the Articles set out in Part III below.

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1 **Gender Mainstreaming:** In July 1997, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) defined the concept of gender mainstreaming as follows: “Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality.”

2 **Gender Budgeting:** “Gender budgeting is an application of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process. It means a gender-based assessment of budgets, incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality.”

# [ PART II ]

## *Implementation of the charter and its commitments*

The Signatory undertakes to carry out the following specific steps in order to implement the provisions of this Charter:

- (1) Each Signatory to this Charter will, within a reasonable timescale (not to exceed two years) following the date of its signature, develop and adopt its Equality Action Plan, and thereafter implement it.
- (2) The Equality Action Plan will set out the Signatory's objectives and priorities, the measures it plans to take, and the resources to be allocated, in order to give effect to the Charter and its commitments. The Plan will also set out the proposed timescales for implementation. Where a Signatory already has an Equality Action Plan, it will review the Plan to ensure that it addresses all of the relevant issues under this Charter.
- (3) Each Signatory will consult widely before adopting its Equality Action Plan, and will also disseminate the Plan widely once adopted. It will also, on a regular basis, report publicly on progress made in implementing the Plan.
- (4) Each Signatory will revise its Equality Action Plan as circumstances require, and will draw up a further Plan for each following period.
- (5) Each Signatory undertakes in principle to co-operate with an appropriate system of evaluation to be established to enable progress in implementing this Charter to be assessed, and to assist local and regional governments across Europe to learn from each other on effective means of realising greater equality of women and men. It will make its Equality Action Plans and other relevant public materials available for these purposes.
- (6) Each Signatory will inform the Council of European Municipalities and Regions in writing of the fact that it has signed the Charter, with the date thereof, together with a contact point for future co-operation in relation to the Charter.

# [ PART III ]

## *Democratic accountability*

### Article 1

- (1) The Signatory recognizes that the right to equality of women and men is a fundamental prerequisite of democracy, and that a democratic society cannot afford to ignore the skills, knowledge, experience and creativity of women. To this end, it must ensure, on a basis of equality, the inclusion, representation and involvement of women from different backgrounds and of different age groups in all spheres of political and public decision-making.
- (2) The Signatory, as the democratically elected body responsible for promoting the well-being of its population and area, therefore commits itself to promote and advance the practical application of this right in all of its spheres of activity – as democratic leader of the local community, provider and commissioner of services, planner and regulator, and as employer.

## *The political role*

### Article 2 – Political Representation

- (1) The Signatory recognizes the equal rights of women and men to vote, to be a candidate for and to hold elected office.
- (2) The Signatory recognises the equal rights of women and men to participate in the formulation and implementation of policy, to hold public office and to perform all public functions at all levels of government.
- (3) The Signatory recognizes the principle of balanced representation on all elected and public decision-making bodies.
- (4) The Signatory commits itself to take all reasonable measures in support of the above rights and principle, including:
  - to encourage women to register to vote, to exercise their individual voting rights and to be a candidate for public office
  - to encourage political parties and groups to adopt and implement the principle of balanced representation of women and men

- to this end, to encourage the political parties and groups to take all lawful steps, including by adopting quotas where deemed appropriate, to increase the number of women selected as candidates and thereafter elected
  - to regulate its own procedures and standards of conduct, so that potential candidates and elected representatives are not discouraged by stereotypical forms of behaviour and language, or by harassment
  - to adopt measures to enable elected representatives to reconcile their private, work and public life, for example by ensuring that timetables, working methods and availability of dependent care allow all elected representatives to participate fully.
- (5) The Signatory commits itself to promote and apply the principle of balanced representation to its own decision-making and consultative bodies, and in its appointments to external bodies.

However, where the authority does not currently enjoy a balanced representation of women and men, it will implement the above on a basis no less favourable to the minority gender than its current gender balance.

- (6) It furthermore commits itself to ensure that no public or political post to which it appoints or elects a representative is, in principle or in practice, restricted to or seen as the normal role of one gender, due to stereotypical attitudes.

Article 3 – Participation in Political and Civic Life

- (1) The Signatory recognizes that the right of citizens to participate in the conduct of public affairs is a fundamental democratic principle, and that women and men have the right to participate equally in the governance and public life of their region, municipality, and local community.
- (2) In relation to the different forms of public participation in its own affairs, for example via advisory committees, neighbourhood councils, e-participation or participatory planning exercises, the Signatory commits itself to ensure that women and men are able to participate equally in practice. Where existing means of participation do not lead to such equality, it undertakes to develop and test new methods.
- (3) The Signatory undertakes to promote the active participation in its political and civic life of women and men from all sections of the community, in particular of women and men from minority groups who may otherwise be excluded.

#### Article 4 – The Public Commitment for Equality

(1) The Signatory shall, as the democratic leader and representative for its community and territory, make a formal public commitment to the principle of equality of women and men in local life, including:

- the announcement of the signing of this Charter by the Signatory, following debate in and adoption by its highest representative body
- an undertaking to fulfil its commitments under this Charter, and to report publicly, on a regular basis, on progress in implementing its Equality Action Plan
- an undertaking that the Signatory, and its elected members, will adhere to and uphold good standards of behaviour, in relation to gender equality

(2) The Signatory will use its democratic mandate to encourage other political and public institutions and private bodies, and civil society organisations, to take actions to ensure, in practice, the right to equality of women and men.

#### Article 5 – Working with partners to promote equality

(1) The Signatory undertakes to co-operate with all of its partners, from the public and private sectors as

well as the organisations of civil society, in order to promote greater equality of women and men in all aspects of life within its area. It will in particular seek to co-operate with its social partners to this end.

(2) The Signatory will consult with its partner bodies and organisations, including its social partners, in developing and reviewing its Equality Action Plans, and on other major issues related to equality.

#### Article 6 – Countering Stereotypes

(1) The Signatory commits itself to counter and, so far as possible, prevent prejudices, practices and use of language and images which are based on the idea of the superiority or inferiority of either of the sexes, or on stereotyped roles for women and men.

(2) To this end, the Signatory will ensure that its own public and internal communications are fully in accordance with this commitment, and that they promote positive gender images and examples.

(3) The Signatory will also help its staff, by training and other means, to identify and eliminate stereotypical attitudes and behaviour, and will also regulate standards of behaviour in this regard.

(4) The Signatory will conduct activities and campaigns to raise awareness of the detrimental role played by gender stereotypes to the achievement of equality of women and men.

Article 7 – Good Administration and Consultation

(1) The Signatory recognizes the right of women and men to have their affairs handled equally, impartially, fairly and within a reasonable time, including:

- The right to be heard before any individual decision which might affect them adversely is taken
- The duty of the authority to give reasons for its decisions
- The right to relevant information on matters affecting them.

(2) The Signatory recognizes that, across the range of its competences, the quality of its policies and decision-making are likely to be enhanced if all those who may be affected have an opportunity, at a formative stage, to be consulted, and that it is essential that women and men are given in practice equal access to relevant information, and equal opportunity to respond.

(3) The Signatory therefore commits itself to take the following steps as appropriate:

- Ensuring that arrangements for providing information take into account the needs of women and men, including their respective access to information and communication technologies
- Ensuring that where consultation takes place, those whose views are otherwise least likely to be heard are able to participate equally in the consultation process, and that lawful positive actions are taken to ensure that this happens
- Conducting, where appropriate, separate consultation activities for women.



## *General framework for equality*

### Article 8 – General Commitment

- (1) The Signatory will, in relation to all its competences, recognize, respect and promote the relevant rights and principles of equality of women and men, and combat disadvantage and discrimination related to gender.
- (2) The commitments set out in this Charter apply to a Signatory only where they, or relevant aspects of them, fall within its legal powers.

### Article 9 – Gender Assessment

- (1) The Signatory undertakes, in relation to each of its areas of competence, to undertake gender assessments, as set out in this Article.
- (2) To this end, the Signatory undertakes to draw up a programme for implementation of its gender assessments, in accordance with its own priorities, resources and timescales, to be included or taken into account in its Equality Action Plan.

- (3) Gender assessments shall include, as relevant, the following steps:

- Reviewing existing policies, procedures, practices and patterns and volumes of usage, in order to assess whether they disclose any unfair discrimination, whether they are based on gender stereotypes, and whether they adequately take into account any specific needs of women and men
- Reviewing the allocation of resources, financial and other, for the above purposes
- Identifying the priorities and, as appropriate, targets in order to tackle the relevant issues arising from these reviews, and to bring about identifiable improvements in service delivery
- Undertaking, at an early stage, an assessment of all significant proposals for new or amended policies, procedures and changes in resource allocation, to identify their potential impact on women and men, and to make final decisions in the light of this assessment
- Taking account of the needs or interests of those experiencing multiple discrimination or disadvantage.

Article 10 – Multiple Discrimination or Disadvantage

- (1) The Signatory recognizes that discrimination on any grounds such as sex, race, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation is prohibited.
- (2) The Signatory further recognizes that despite this prohibition, many women and men suffer from multiple discrimination or disadvantage, including socio-economic disadvantage, which has a direct impact on their ability to exercise the other rights set out and referred to in this Charter.
- (3) The Signatory commits itself, across the range of its competences, to take all reasonable actions to combat the effects of multiple discrimination or disadvantage including:
- ensuring that the issues of multiple discrimination or disadvantage are addressed in its Equality Action Plan and gender assessments
  - ensuring that issues arising from multiple discrimination or disadvantage are taken into account when undertaking actions or measures under the other articles in this Charter
- undertaking public information campaigns to combat stereotypes and to promote equal treatment for those women and men who may suffer multiple discrimination or disadvantage
  - taking specific measures to address the particular needs of migrant women and men.

## *The employer role*

### Article 11

- (1) The Signatory in its role as employer recognises the right to equality of women and men in regard to all aspects of employment, including work organisation and working conditions.
- (2) The Signatory recognises the right to the reconciliation of professional, social and private life and the right to dignity and security in the workplace.
- (3) The Signatory commits itself to take all reasonable measures, including positive action within its legal powers, in support of the above rights.
- (4) The measures referred to in (3) include the following:
- (a) a review of relevant policies and procedures relating to employment within its organisation, and the development and implementation of the employment part of its Equality Action Plan to address inequalities over a reasonable period of time, and inter alia covering:
- Equal pay, including equal pay for work of equal value
  - Arrangements for reviewing pay, remuneration, pay systems and pensions
  - Measures to ensure fair and transparent promotion and career development opportunities
  - Measures to ensure a balanced representation of women and men at all levels, in particular to address any imbalance at senior management levels
  - Measures to tackle any sex-based job segregation, and to encourage employees to take on non-traditional employment
  - Measures to ensure fair recruitment
  - Measures to ensure appropriate, healthy and safe working conditions
  - Procedures for consultation with employees and their trade unions ensuring a balanced participation of women and men on any consultation or negotiating body
- (b) Opposing sexual harassment in the workplace by making a clear statement that such behaviour is unacceptable, by supporting victims, by introducing and implementing transparent policies to deal

with perpetrators, and by raising awareness of the issue;

(c) Moving towards a workforce at all levels of the organisation which reflects the social, economic and cultural diversity of their local population;

(d) Supporting the reconciliation of professional, social and private life by:

- introducing policies which allow, where appropriate, adjustments of working time and arrangements for care for dependants for employees
- encouraging men to take up their entitlement to leave to care for dependants.

## *Public procurement and contracts*

### Article 12

- (1) The Signatory recognizes that, in carrying out its tasks and obligations in relation to public procurement, including contracts for the supply of products, the provision of services, or the execution of works, it has a responsibility to promote equality of women and men.
- (2) The Signatory recognizes that this responsibility is of particular significance where it proposes to contract out to another legal entity the provision of an important service to the public, for which the Signatory is by law responsible. In such cases, the Signatory will ensure that the legal entity that wins the contract (whatever its type of ownership) has the same responsibilities to ensure or promote equality of women and men as the Signatory would have had if it had provided the service directly.
- (3) The Signatory further undertakes to implement, wherever it considers appropriate, the following steps:
- (a) for each significant contract it proposes to enter into, to consider the relevant gender implications and the opportunities for lawfully promoting equality;
  - (b) to ensure that contractual specifications take into account the gender equality objectives for the contract;
  - (c) to ensure that the other contractual terms and conditions for the relevant contract take into account and reflect those objectives;
  - (d) to use the power under European Union public procurement legislation to lay down performance conditions concerning social considerations;
  - (e) to make its staff or advisers responsible for public procurement tasks and the letting of contracts aware of the gender equality dimension of their work, including via training for this purpose;
  - (f) to ensure that the terms of a main contract include the requirement that sub-contractors should also comply with the relevant obligations to promote gender equality.

## *The service delivery role*

### Article 13 – Education and Lifelong Learning

(1) The Signatory recognises the right to education for everyone, and further recognizes the right of access for all to vocational and continuing training. The Signatory recognises the vital role of education, at all stages of life, in delivering true equality of opportunity, in providing essential life and employment skills, and in opening up new possibilities for professional and vocational development.

(2) The Signatory undertakes, within the range of its competences, to secure or promote equal access to education and vocational and continuing training for women and men, girls and boys.

(3) The Signatory recognises the need to eliminate any stereotyped concept of the roles of women and men in all forms of education. In order to do this it undertakes to carry out or promote, as appropriate, the following measures:

- The revision of educational materials, of school and other educational programmes and teaching methods, to ensure that they combat stereotypical attitudes and practices
- The undertaking of specific actions to encourage non-traditional career choices

- The specific inclusion, within courses of civic education and education for citizenship, of elements that emphasize the importance of the equal participation of women and men in the democratic processes.

(4) The Signatory recognises that the ways in which schools and other educational establishments are governed represents important models for children and young people. It therefore undertakes to promote the balanced representation of women and men at all levels of school management and governance.

### Article 14 – Health

(1) The Signatory recognizes the right of everyone to the enjoyment of a high standard of physical and mental health, and affirms that access to good quality health care and medical treatment and preventative health care for women and men is essential for the realization of this right.

(2) The Signatory recognizes that in securing equal opportunities for women and men to enjoy good health, medical and health services must take account of their different needs. They further recognise that these needs arise not only from biological differences, but also from differences in living and working conditions and from stereotypical attitudes and assumptions.

(3) The Signatory commits itself to take all reasonable actions, within the range of its responsibilities, to promote and secure the highest levels of good health of its citizens. To this end, the Signatory undertakes to carry out or promote, as appropriate, the following measures:

- Incorporating a gender based approach to the planning, resourcing and delivery of health and medical services
- Ensuring that health promotion activities, including those aimed at encouraging a healthy diet and the importance of exercise, include a recognition of the different needs and attitudes of women and men
- Ensuring that health workers, including those involved in health promotion, recognise the ways in which gender affects medical and health care, and take into account women's and men's different experience of that care
- Ensuring that women and men have access to appropriate health information.

#### Article 15 – Social Care and Services

(1) The Signatory recognises that everyone has the right to necessary social services and to benefit from social assistance in the event of need.

(2) The Signatory recognises that women and men have different needs which may arise from differences in their social and economic conditions and other factors. Therefore in order to ensure that women and men have equal access to social care and social services the Signatory will take all reasonable measures to:

- Incorporate a gender based approach to the planning, resourcing and delivery of social care and social services
- Ensure that those involved in the delivery of social care and social services recognise the ways in which gender affects those services, and take into account women's and men's different experience of that care.

#### Article 16 – Childcare

- (1) The Signatory recognizes the essential role that good quality, affordable childcare, available to all parents and carers, whatever their financial situation, plays in promoting true equality between women and men, and in enabling them to reconcile their work, public and private lives. The Signatory further recognizes the contribution that such childcare makes to the economic and social life and fabric of the local community and of society at large.
- (2) The Signatory commits itself to make the provision and promotion of such childcare, directly or through other providers, one of its priorities. It further undertakes to encourage the provision of such child care by others, including the provision of, or support for, child care by local employers.
- (3) The Signatory further recognizes that the upbringing of children requires a sharing of responsibility between men and women and society as a whole, and undertakes to counter the gender stereotype according to which child care is seen as being mainly the task or responsibility of women.

#### Article 17 – Care of other Dependants

- (1) The Signatory recognises that women and men have responsibilities to care for dependants other than children and that this responsibility may affect their ability to play a full role in economic and social life.
- (2) The Signatory further recognises that such caring responsibilities fall disproportionately on women and are therefore a barrier to equality of women and men.
- (3) The Signatory commits itself to counter this inequality by, as appropriate:
  - Making the provision and promotion of high quality, affordable care for dependants, directly or through other providers, one of its priorities
  - Providing support and promoting opportunities for those suffering social isolation as a result of their caring responsibilities
  - Campaigning against the stereotype which assumes that caring for dependants is primarily the responsibility of women.



### Article 18 – Social Inclusion

- (1) The Signatory recognises that everyone has the right to protection against poverty and social exclusion and furthermore that women, in general, are more likely to suffer from social exclusion because they have less access to resources, goods, services and opportunities than men.
- (2) The Signatory therefore undertakes, across the full range of its services and activities, and working with social partners, to take measures within the framework of an overall co-ordinated approach to:
  - Promote the effective access of all of those who live or risk living in a situation of social exclusion or poverty, to employment, housing, training, education, culture, information and communication technologies, social and medical assistance
  - Recognise the particular needs and situation of women experiencing social exclusion
  - Promote the integration of migrant women and men, taking into account their specific needs.

### Article 19 – Housing

- (1) The Signatory recognizes the right to housing, and affirms that access to good quality housing represents one of the most essential human needs, vital to the well-being of the individual and his or her family.
- (2) The Signatory recognizes further that women and men often have specific and distinct needs in relation to housing which must be taken fully into account, including the fact that:
  - (a) On average, women have less income and resources than men, and therefore require housing that is affordable for them;
  - (b) Women are the head of household in most single parent families, with consequent needs for access to social housing;
  - (c) Vulnerable men are often over-represented amongst the homeless.
- (3) The Signatory therefore commits itself, as appropriate:
  - (a) To provide or promote access to housing of an adequate size and standard and with a decent living environment for all, and accessible to essential services;

- (b) To take steps to prevent homelessness, and in particular to provide assistance to the homeless, based on criteria of need, vulnerability and non-discrimination;
- (c) To assist, according to their powers, in making the price of housing accessible to those without adequate resources.
- (4) The Signatory also undertakes to ensure or to promote the equal right of women and men to be the tenant, owner, or other form of property-holder, of their home, and also, to that end, to use its powers or influence to ensure that women have equal access to mortgages and other forms of financial assistance and credit for housing purposes.
- Article 20 – Culture, Sport and Recreation*
- (1) The Signatory recognizes the right of everyone to take part in cultural life and to enjoy the arts.
- (2) The Signatory furthermore recognizes the role that sport plays in contributing to the life of the community and to securing the rights to health as outlined in Article 14. It also recognises that women and men have the right to equal access to cultural, recreational and sporting activities and facilities.
- (3) The Signatory recognizes that women and men may have different experiences and interests in relation to culture, sport and recreation and that these may be the result of gender-stereotyped attitudes and actions, and therefore commits itself to carry out or promote measures including, as appropriate:
- Ensuring as far as is reasonable that women and men, boys and girls have equal provision and access to sporting, recreation and cultural facilities and activities
  - Encouraging women and men, boys and girls to take part equally in sports and cultural activities, including those traditionally seen as predominantly "female" or "male"
  - Encouraging artists and cultural and sporting associations to promote cultural and sporting activities which challenge stereotypical views of women and men
  - Encouraging public library services to challenge gender stereotypes in their stock of books and other materials and in their promotional activities.

Article 21 – Safety and Security

- (1) The Signatory recognizes the right of each woman and man to security of the person, and to liberty of movement, and that these rights cannot be freely or equally exercised if women or men are unsafe or insecure, whether in the private or public domain, or if they feel unsafe or insecure.
- (2) The Signatory further recognizes that women and men, in part due to different obligations or lifestyles, often face differing problems of safety and security, which need to be addressed.
- (3) The Signatory therefore commits itself:
  - (a) to analyse from a gender perspective the statistics concerning the volume and patterns of incidents (including serious crime against the individual) that affect the security or safety of women and men, and if appropriate to measure the level and nature of fear of crime or other sources of insecurity;
  - (b) to develop and implement strategies, policies and actions, including specific improvements to the state or design of the local environment (for example, transport interchanges, car parks, street lighting), or to policing and related services, to

enhance the practical security and safety of women and men, and to seek to reduce their respective perceptions of lack of safety and security.

Article 22 – Gender-Based Violence

- (1) The Signatory recognizes that gender-based violence, which disproportionately affects women, constitutes a violation of fundamental human rights and is an offence to the dignity and to the physical and emotional integrity of human beings.
- (2) The Signatory recognises that gender-based violence arises from the idea, on the part of the perpetrator, of the superiority of one sex over the other in the context of an unequal relationship of power.
- (3) The Signatory therefore commits itself to establish and strengthen policies and actions against gender-based violence, including:
  - Providing or assisting specific support structures for victims
  - Providing public information, in each of the mainly-used local languages, on the assistance available in the area

- Ensuring that professional staff have training in identifying and supporting victims
- Ensuring that there is effective co-ordination between the relevant services such as the police, health and housing authorities
- Promoting awareness-raising campaigns and educational programmes aimed at potential and actual victims and perpetrators.
- Measures to discourage demand
- Appropriate measures to assist victims including access to medical treatment, adequate and secure housing and language translation.

#### Article 23 – Human Trafficking

(1) The Signatory recognizes that the crime of human trafficking, which disproportionately affects women and girls, constitutes a violation of fundamental human rights and an offence to the dignity and to the physical and emotional integrity of human beings.

(2) The Signatory undertakes to establish and strengthen policies and actions to prevent human trafficking including as appropriate:

- Information and awareness-raising campaigns
- Training programmes for professional staff responsible for identifying and supporting victims

## *Planning and Sustainable Development*

### Article 24 – Sustainable Development

- (1) The Signatory recognizes that, in planning and developing strategies for the future of its area, the principles of sustainable development must be fully respected, involving the balanced integration of the economic, social, environmental and cultural dimensions, and also, in particular, including the need to promote and achieve equality of women and men.
- (2) The Signatory therefore commits itself to take into account the principle of equality of women and men as a fundamental dimension of all its planning, or development of strategies, for the sustainable development of its area.

### Article 25 – Urban and Local Planning

- (1) The Signatory recognizes the importance of its spatial, transport, economic development and land use policies and plans in creating the conditions within which the right to equality of women and men in local life may be more fully achieved.
- (2) The Signatory commits itself to ensure that, in drawing up, adopting and implementing such policies and plans.

- the need to promote effective equality in all aspects of local life is fully taken into account,
- the specific needs of women and men, in relation for example to employment, access to services and cultural life, education and family responsibilities, based on relevant local and other data, including the signatory's own gender assessments, are properly taken into account
- high quality design solutions are adopted which take into account the specific needs of women and men.

### Article 26 – Mobility and Transport

- (1) The Signatory recognizes that mobility and access to means of transport are essential conditions for women and men to be able to exercise many of their rights, tasks and activities, including access to work, education, culture and essential services. It also recognizes that the sustainability and success of a municipality or region depends to a significant degree on the development of an effective, high quality transport infrastructure and public transport service.

(2) The Signatory further recognizes that women and men often have, in practice, different needs, as well as patterns of usage, in relation to mobility and transport, based on factors such as income, caring responsibilities or hours of work, and that consequently, women frequently form a greater proportion of users of public transport than men.

(3) The Signatory therefore commits itself:

(a) to take into account the relevant mobility needs, and the patterns of transport usage, of women and men respectively, including those from urban and rural communities;

(b) to ensure that the transport services available to citizens in the area of the authority assist in meeting the specific as well as common needs of women and men, and in realising the real equality of women and men in local life.

(4) The Signatory further commits itself to promote the progressive improvement of the public transport services in and for its area, including intermodal connections, in order to address the specific and common needs of women and men for regular, affordable, safe and accessible transport, and to contribute to its sustainable development.

#### Article 27 – Economic Development

(1) The Signatory recognizes that the achievement of a balanced and sustainable economic development is a vital component of a successful municipality or region, and that its activities and services in this field can contribute significantly to the advancement of equality of women and men.

(2) The Signatory recognises the need to increase the rate and quality of employment of women, and further recognises that the risk of poverty linked to long term unemployment and unpaid work is particularly high for women.

(3) The Signatory commits itself, in relation to its activities and services in the field of economic development, to take fully into account the needs and interests of women and men, and the opportunities to advance equality between them, and to take the appropriate actions to this end. Such actions may include:

- Assistance to women entrepreneurs
- Ensuring that financial and other support to enterprises promote gender equality

- Encouragement to women trainees to learn skills and achieve qualifications for jobs traditionally seen as “male” and vice versa
  - Encouragement to employers to recruit women apprentices and trainees in relation to skills, qualifications and positions traditionally seen as “male”, and vice versa.
- (3) The Signatory accordingly commits itself, in developing its environmental policies and services, to have full and equal regard to the specific needs and lifestyles of women and men respectively, and to the principle of solidarity between the generations.

Article 28 – Environment

- (1) The Signatory recognizes its responsibility to work towards a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment in its area, including local policies in relation to waste, noise, air quality, biodiversity and the impact of climate change. It recognizes the equal right of women and men to benefit from its services and policies in relation to the environment.
- (2) The Signatory recognizes that in many places the lifestyles of women and men differ, and that women and men may tend to differ in their use of local services and public or open spaces, or confront different environmental problems.

## *The Regulator Role*

### Article 29 – Local Government as Regulator

- (1) The Signatory, in carrying out its tasks and competences as regulator of relevant activities within its area, recognizes the important role that effective regulation and consumer protection plays in ensuring the safety and well-being of its local population, and that women and men may be differentially affected by the relevant regulated activities.
  
- (2) The Signatory commits itself, in carrying out its regulatory tasks, to take into account the specific needs, interests and circumstances of women and men.



## *Twining and international co-operation*

### Article 30

(1) The Signatory recognizes the value of twinning and of European and international co-operation by local and regional governments, in bringing citizens closer together, and in promoting mutual learning and understanding across national frontiers.

(2) The Signatory commits itself, in its activities in the fields of twinning and European and international co-operation:

- to involve women and men, from different backgrounds, on an equal basis in these activities
- to use its twinning relationships and European and international partnerships as a platform for exchange of experience and mutual learning on issues relating to equality of women and men
- to integrate a gender equality dimension into its decentralised co-operation actions.

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) is the broadest association of local and regional in Europe.

Its members are national associations of local and regional governments from over thirty European countries. The main aim of CEMR is to promote a strong, united Europe based on local and regional self-government and democracy; a Europe in which decisions are taken as closely as possible to its citizens, in line with the principle of subsidiarity.

CEMR's work covers a wide range of themes, including public services, transport, regional policy, the environment, equal opportunities...

CEMR is also active on the international stage. It is the European section of the world organisation of cities and municipalities, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).



# THE EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND MEN IN LOCAL LIFE

A Charter for Europe's local and regional governments to commit themselves to use their powers and partnerships to achieve greater equality for their people

I the under-signed ..... (name of signatory)  
holding the office of .....  
in ..... (name of local / regional government)

by this my signature confirm that the above-mentioned authority has formally agreed to adhere to the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, and to comply with its provisions, and that I am duly authorized to act on its behalf in this matter.

Signed .....  
Dated .....

I agree to send a signed and completed copy of this form to the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, as promoter of the Charter, at the following address :



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and Regions  
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