

**59<sup>TH</sup> JOINT MEETING OF THE CEB**  
**16 MARCH 2026, SOFITEL HOTEL, WARSAW, POLAND**

**SPEAKING POINTS OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL**  
**“CEB: DELIVERING SOCIAL IMPACT LOCALLY”**

- Dear Minister, dear Governor, dear Chairpersons,
- Distinguished Members of the Governing Board and Administrative Council, Ladies and Gentlemen,
- It is my great honour, on behalf of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Alain Berset, to join **Minister Andrzej Domański and Governor Carlo Monticelli** in welcoming you to the 59th Joint Meeting of the Council of Europe Development Bank’s organs. Allow me also to thank the Polish authorities for hosting us here in Warsaw.
- As we gather under the theme **“CEB: Delivering Social Impact Locally,”** I am reminded of the words of **Nelson Mandela**, who once said, **“It always seems impossible until it’s done.”**
- This wisdom captures the very spirit of our work. The challenges we face - from supporting the reconstruction of Ukraine, responding to the evolving refugee crisis, and advancing environmental sustainability, to promoting social justice and inclusion, and bridging digital disparities - can sometimes appear insurmountable. Yet, perseverance and collective action can turn the seemingly impossible into lasting achievement.
- We heard the theme already several times **“Delivering Social Impact Locally”**. Empowering local authorities is the cornerstone

of our societies and is essential for building resilient, inclusive democracies.

- The **Council of Europe’s New Democratic Pact** for Europe recognises this truth. It seeks to restore citizens’ faith in democracy by reasserting social rights, equality, and responsiveness to people’s needs. These principles come alive through the work of the CEB, whose financing makes social rights concrete - from health and education to affordable housing and more - all in line with the standards of the Council of Europe, notably the **European Social Charter**.
- In just a few days, this commitment will be reaffirmed at the **High-Level Conference on the European Social Charter in Chişinău**, taking place on 18-19 March 2026. Building on the foundations set by the **Reykjavik Declaration**, the Conference will conclude in the adoption of a political Declaration, reaffirming our dedication to social justice and the effective implementation of the Charter – key factors for shaping more resilient and inclusive societies throughout our continent.
- Through this lens, by financing social infrastructure that benefits the most vulnerable, the **CEB advances social justice, solidarity, and resilience at the local level**. These investments underpin democratic life, foster cohesion, and directly support Europe’s “**democratic security**.” For peace and stability are sustained not only by treaties, but also by resilient institutions, equal access to rights, and inclusive civic space.

- Nowhere is this more evident than in our **joint support for Ukraine**. In alignment with the Council of Europe’s Action Plan for Ukraine, the CEB has provided urgent support through its loans in health and housing as well as microfinance, directly benefitting communities hosting refugees and aiding recovery. This support underlines the inseparable connection between local resilience and democratic stability, demonstrating in practical terms how international standards and targeted financial support combine to make a difference.
- The **CEB stands unique in the multilateral landscape**: the only development bank with an **exclusively social mandate**, proud to serve as the Council of Europe’s financial arm and as a proven success story for the Organisation. Since 1956, the Bank has transformed countless lives, strengthened communities, and broadened access to the essential services that dignify and empower people’s lives.
- This mandate is felt most keenly at the local level. The Bank’s projects - from affordable housing to integrative education - help **operationalise the European Social Charter**, ensuring that, for example, the rights to health, education, housing, and social security are accessible realities for vulnerable communities across our member States.
- I am personally delighted to witness the **growing cooperation between the CEB and the rest of the Council of Europe** - most recently through events like last year’s Joint Conference on Inclusive

and Sustainable Care for Older Persons and the side event at the COP-30.

- **Building strong and inclusive local communities is at the core of both the Council of Europe's and the CEB's missions.** By strengthening our collaboration - combining Council of Europe standards and expertise with the CEB's dedicated financing - we can **continue to deliver social impact where it matters most: for the benefit of every citizen, in every community across our member States.**
- Ladies and Gentlemen, if we ever doubt the scale of our ambitions or the obstacles before us, let us remember Mandela's message. Time and again, the Council of Europe and the CEB have proved that **progress is possible** - even when it seems beyond reach - **through collaboration, solidarity, and determination.**
- I wish you all a very successful meeting, and I look forward to continuing our vital work together. Thank you.