

## **Closing Speech by the President of ECCAR General Assembly – Zurich, 23–24 October 2025**

Dear colleagues, dear friends,

As we come to the end of these two days, I want to start by saying how heartening it has been to witness such massive participation from so many cities.

In times as difficult as these, your presence does us all good — it reminds us that there is a community that wants to stay together, to go deeper into complex issues, and above all, to be a living sign of positive determination in fighting racism and discrimination, in the name of an idea of equality that is essential for building inclusive societies.

Throughout these days we have kept our smiles alive, and I sincerely hope this spirit will continue. May it be contagious — in our work, in our administrations, and in our cities — starting with our colleagues and reaching our citizens.

The City Report system is growing alongside ECCAR, and this is a source of pride. It supports member cities first and foremost, but it also strengthens the coalition as a whole, providing a reservoir of shared knowledge that becomes the foundation for new proposals and a stronger, clearer voice to bring our cities' needs and perspectives to higher levels.

I am also very glad that we had, for the first time, a meeting among political representatives. This does not mean that there is a “higher” class within ECCAR — quite the opposite. It means that elected officials feel the need to be part of this journey, to share a sense of belonging and responsibility. As our new Vice President, Sara, said in her message this morning, they want to bring a message that is not only technical but also political: a message about building our communities on anti-racist and inclusive foundations.

I will make it my goal — with the support of the ECCAR Office — to structure better communication among elected representatives. As I said last night to the Mayor of Zurich, we want them to feel like ambassadors of ECCAR in every context where they speak and act.

Because while the President and the Board formally represent the network, you — as active members, as elected representatives of your cities — are the ones who truly embody it, who make ECCAR real through your actions, your choices, and your

daily work.

We must begin to say it loudly: this way of cooperation among cities benefits our communities. It shows that there is a way of doing politics that is not afraid to speak up — that helps build effective, positive narratives for the good of a wider community, the European one.

This is a crucial point. Action within our local communities reaches its full meaning when politics — beyond the nuances of party affiliation — finds common ground on which to build a shared horizon of meaning for our societies.

That is what we do within ECCAR: we serve our communities, but we also serve politics when it seeks dialogue, courage, and a more effective way to connect with citizens.

My warmest thanks go to the City of Zurich for its hospitality, professionalism, and warmth — not only for hosting this Assembly, but also for being an active and engaged ECCAR member.

And to the ECCAR Office, my sincere gratitude. Each and every one of you, in your role and as a team, makes this network what it is.

In Heidelberg last year, I said that while the Board and the cities steer the coalition and decide the direction of our shared journey, you are our headlights — helping us see clearly where we are going.

Your daily work, keeping communication alive among all of us, is essential and deeply precious. But not only that — as Stanislava also reminded us, you have become a reference point for content, for professionalism, and for expertise within our coalition. Thank you for your service and for your dedication.

At the same time, let me underline the importance of continuing to nurture our communication with UNESCO and to strengthen our global action.

Our relationship with UNESCO, and with the other networks of cities around the world — starting with our six sister coalitions within ICCAR — is essential.

Through our work in ICCAR, these partnerships allow us to grow together, to exchange knowledge, to build stronger and more coherent global action, and to make our collective voice heard within UNESCO and among Member States.

We do this because we are fully aware that many of the situations we seek to address and manage do not begin or end in Europe. They are historically, politically, and socially connected to the entire world.

These relationships prevent us from closing in on ourselves and open the way to collaborations that are meaningful and effective — collaborations that help us grow in knowledge, create new opportunities, and spread what I like to call the “ECCAR

way”: a way of thinking, a way to be practical with concrete actions, and a way of being together.

Finally, I want to welcome the new cities joining the Steering Committee and wish you all the best in your work.

To all of you — old and new members — my thanks for your trust, commitment, and energy.

We will see each other soon: with the new Steering Committee in Vienna, and with all ECCAR cities in the many occasions that await us.

Thank you all, and safe travels home.