

## European Alliance Group

# New European Parliament and Commission need to put Regions and Cities to the centre of its actions

by Karl Vanlouwe, President of the European Alliance Group



Mr Karl Vanlouwe

We have just seen democracy in action where citizens across the EU have cast their votes in the European Parliament, Federal, Regional and Local elections. Over 50% of our citizens turned out to give their views as to the direction of the European Union. Now it's time for the European Parliament to take action and

really embrace the level of governance which implements seventy percent of EU legislation.

The same applies when the President of the European Commission is chosen and voted by the European Parliament. We need to ensure that the inclusion of regions is central to the Commissions priorities.

An example of one of these priorities is indeed a proposal that I am bringing to the CoR Plenary this month on creating a Blue Deal to combat flooding and drought across the EU. It is clearly the remit of the regional authorities but needs coordination as water crosses borders and has a pan European dimension. We need to take action to ensure we preserve this precious resource.

Our group are continuing to bring forward discussions of importance in regions and we are looking forward to our meeting on "Delivering Maritime Regional Growth" being hosted by the Mayor of Klaipėda District Municipality, Bronius Markauskas in September.

## EA Group to hold external meeting in Klaipėda, Lithuania

On 11 and 12 September 2024, the EA Group will hold its external meeting and seminar in the Klaipėda district, Lithuania, on the theme "Delivering Maritime Regional Growth," upon the invitation of the Mayor of Klaipėda District Municipality, Bronius Markauskas.

On the eve of a new legislative term, the Group will adopt a political declaration to highlight the potential of maritime regions in driving sustain-

able growth and tourism through innovation, while calling on EU institu-

tions to place maritime affairs at the core of their agenda.



Klaipėda

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## Maupertuis to lead COR position on new EU budget



Ms Marie-Antoinette Maupertuis

Nanette Maupertuis, EA Group Vice President and President of the Assembly of Corsi-

ca, has been appointed by the COTER commission as rapporteur on the opinion "EU budget and place-based policies: proposals for new design and delivery mechanisms."

This own-initiative opinion will provide substantial arguments to influence the European Commission, European Parliament, and Council well ahead of the presentation of the proposal for a post-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework by the European Commission.

As in previous funding periods, the continued existence of numerous funding instruments in the 2021-2027 period,

managed centrally at the EU level but investing in similar areas under different rules and conditions, has further contributed to fragmentation.

The design and delivery mechanisms of current 2021-2027 EU funding programmes need to be reviewed to ensure their impact aligns more closely with the needs of territories and considers their diversity. This will help ensure better access for all local and regional authorities (LRAs) to EU funding programmes.

A first discussion on the topic will be held at the next COTER meeting on 3 July.

## Karl Vanlouwe proposes an EU Blue Deal as a comprehensive water management strategy



Karl Vanlouwe at the Flemish Water Conference in March this year

At the upcoming plenary session in June 2024, the European Committee of the Re-

gions is set to adopt an opinion on the Blue Deal, proposed by our group's president Mr Karl Vanlouwe.

In the opinion, Mr Vanlouwe outlines a detailed and forward-thinking strategy for water management across the EU, recognising water as a critical strategic priority and fundamental resource. This comprehensive plan calls for the integration of water conservation and efficiency measures into all sectors of the economy, stressing the need for tailored approaches to address specific regional water challenges. The strategy underscores the importance of policy coherence across different sec-

tors to effectively manage water-related risks and advocates for the establishment of a European framework and platform on water. This initiative aims to enhance cooperation among local authorities and services, fostering a collaborative approach to water management.

"Key elements of the strategy include a strong emphasis on research, innovation, and the adoption of nature-based solutions. I would also highlight the necessity of incorporating actions against water scarcity into Horizon Europe missions, showcasing the EU's leadership in water-efficient technologies," said Mr Vanlouwe.

## CoR plenary adopts Kóbor's opinion on the defence of democracy

During the April plenary session, members of the Committee of the Regions adopted the opinion on the "Defence of Democracy" package, drafted by our CIVEX coordinator and member of the local assembly in Pécs, Hungary, József Kóbor.

The opinion responds to several initiatives proposed by the European Commission as part of its "Defence of Democracy" package. These include the eponymous Communication and proposals related to rules on interest representation carried out on behalf of third countries, the resilience and inclusivity of elections in

Europe, as well as the participation of citizens and civil society organizations in public policymaking processes.

In his opinion, Mr Kóbor called for collaboration between the European Commission and local governments to address real threats to democracy, ensuring that legislative measures are proportional and effectively targeted. He also underlined the pivotal role of local and regional authorities in safeguarding European democracy and advocated for the creation of citizen dialogue mechanisms to facilitate

communication between the public and EU institutions.



Mr József Kóbor

## ENVE to adopt Gryffroy's opinion on Wind Power Action Plan



Mr Andries Gryffroy

On 25 June, the ENVE commission will adopt the opinion of Andries Gryffroy, a

member of the Flemish parliament and EA group coordinator in the commission.

Wind power has significant potential to contribute to EU renewable energy targets and deliver energy independence for local and regional authorities. However, the sector is facing challenges related to slow permitting, litigation procedures, and a lack of general public acceptance.

In the draft opinion, the rapporteur welcomes the European Wind Charter, signed by 26 Member States and companies, to tackle barriers and ensure a faster uptake of this technology.

Moreover, he makes several recommendations to improve the acceptance of projects among citizens, who should receive a fair financial return. He invites the European Commission to take action to avoid litigation procedures while considering the diversity of each region.

Mr. Gryffroy also underlines that wind energy needs to be transported from the point of production to the point of consumption or stored locally. Hence, he calls for more investment in energy storage and grid development, which should be accounted for when calculating the cost of wind projects.

## Iwaniuk: Rural policies must be comprehensive, focus on sustainability

During the Committee of the Regions' April plenary session, members held a debate on the future of the EU's rural policies an agriculture.

During the debate, our member and mayor of Terespol (Poland), Krzysztof Iwaniuk pointed out that rural policies must not focus only on agriculture but on a wider social context. "CAP and Cohesion policy are mostly focusing on farmers. But even in the most agricultural areas of the EU, the number of peo-

ple who live solely from agriculture is less than 10%", Mr. Iwaniuk said.

The lack of services in rural areas is causing depopulation and, in Mr Iwaniuk's words "in 20 years the situation will be even worse because 30 million people will disappear from the European landscape." Therefore, he added, we need a massive effort focused on repopulation of rural areas to ensure the sustained continuity of these regions which are essential to the EU.



Mr Krzysztof Iwaniuk

## Cork City celebrated Europe Day with educational festival

On May 5, 2024, Cork City Council, in collaboration with the European Commission-funded Hub in Active European Citizenship at Univer-



Mr Kieran McCarthy

sity College Cork and with support from Kieran McCarthy, the EA group's First Vice President and Lord Mayor of Cork, hosted a Europe Day Festival. The event provided a range of fun and educational activities designed to engage primary school children with the European Union's core values of democracy, equality, peace, inclusivity, and multilingualism.

Children participated in activities like making smoothies to learn about EU shared sovereignty and listening to books in multiple European languages. They also engaged in an EU-themed Treasure Hunt across the campus and interacted with a multilingual Chatbot to learn about the EU and Ireland's membership.

The festival was open to children aged 7 to 12 involved in the Hub's outreach programmes, offering them a first-hand experience of Europe's cultural diversity and democratic values.



## CoR Enlargement Day 2024: EA members discuss relations with accession and neighbouring countries



Mr Miroslav Repaský and Mr Dariusz Strugała

On 30 April, the Committee of the Regions (CoR) organised its annual Enlargement Day, which was preceded by meetings of the Joint Consultative Committees and Working Groups for relations with individual countries. EA Group members took an active part in these discussions.

Miroslav Repaský addressed public administration reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the deepening of CoR's relations with

local authorities in Albania. Józef Kóbor focused on empowering local authorities in Türkiye for natural disaster recovery and preparedness. Meanwhile, Dariusz Strugała engaged in debates over capacity building and recovery efforts in Ukraine.

The next round of discussions with local and regional authorities from the enlargement countries will take part in the autumn.

## EU Regions Week 2024: EA Group to showcase best practices in regional innovation

The 2024 edition of EU Regions Week (formerly known as the European Week of Regions and Cities) will take place during the second week of October. As in previous years, the EA Group will actively participate in the event.

On the morning of October 8th, we will organize a workshop titled "Driving Regional Growth through Innovation." The agenda is still under development, but it

is confirmed that participants from the Committee of the Regions, European Parliament, European Commission, and local governments across Europe will outline the policy framework and best practices in the field.

Registration will open soon, so follow our social media profiles for more information.



European Week of Regions and Cities 2024

## EA group took part in the EU institutions' Open Day



EA stand during the Open Day

On 4 May, the EA group took part in the EU institutions' Open Day. We set up an interactive stand in the Committee of the Regions where visitors of all ages could

engage in quizzes to test their knowledge about the group and the CoR. This provided an excellent opportunity for the public to learn more about the EA group and the work of our members.

As part of the programme, vice president of the EA group and president of the Assembly of Corsica Nanette Maupertuis met the visitors, talked about her role as a CoR member, and answered their questions. During the event, Ms Maupertuis spoke about her work on territorial cohesion, particularly her role as rapporteur on the COTER opinion on cross-border cooperation. She also

addressed her ongoing initiatives to improve living conditions for populations in EU island regions.



Ms Nanette Maupertuis at the Open Day