

European Alliance Group

EU budget must have a local and regional focus

by Nanette Maupertuis, President of the European Alliance Group

As we reflect on the mid term review of Cohesion and begin discussion on the new EU budget, we as elected representatives of Europe's Regional and Local governments must give a clear message that to achieve success in regions we need to invest in those regions. Bottom-up, place and people-based investments have a proven track record and this needs to continue for the future. The mid-term of Cohesion review must also abide with what is its core purpose for social and economic development in regions, so no centralisation by Member State.

The EU has incredible regional food and drink and as you will read further in this newsletter, we give you a 'taste' or our members regional products where we showcased and tasted these amazing local products. We need an agriculture and food policy to also help these amazing products.

Lastly, I am proud to be elected President of the CPMR Islands

Commission it is a role that I look forward to and hope that we can put forward policies which will help in a practical way those in Island, mountain and outermost regions. The EU needs balanced regional development which leaves no region behind.



President Nanette Maupertuis

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The penultimate week of April saw Vice-President of the CoR, Juanma Moreno, host the first Conference of Presidents to be held outside Brussels in this legislative term of the CoR. The meeting was held in Seville, the capital city of the Vice-President's native region of Andalusia, Spain. Tadeusz Truskolaski, Vice-President of the EA Group and Mayor of Bialystok, Poland, represented the EA Group by attending the meeting and contributing to discussions on the new CoR mandate's future direction.



EA Vice-President Tadeusz Truskolaski with the participants of the CoP in Seville

Dwane Stanley urges cautious cohesion policy reform

On the second day of the CoR's plenary session, Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms Raffaella Fitto led a debate on the cohesion policy reform. Mr. Fitto reaffirmed that cohesion policy remains 'at the heart of EU policy' and stressed the need to reflect Europe's regional diversity. He argued that modernising cohesion policy is vital to meet 'new and unprecedented challenges', presenting five new priorities: competitiveness, defence funding, affordable housing, water resilience, and energy transition. To support these, the Commission aims to offer co-financing and pre-financing incentives and simplify reg-

ulations to give regional authorities more flexibility.

Caroline Dwane Stanley welcomed the Commission's updated priority areas, especially those addressing housing, energy, and water. Nonetheless, Ms. Dwane cautioned that reform must not stray from cohesion policy's core aim of reducing regional disparities and ensuring no one is left behind. She stressed that cities and regions must retain control over planning, managing, and implementing cohesion policy so it reflects local needs. While agreeing on the need for modernisation, she urged Mr. Fitto to stay anchored in the

policy's foundational principles and to prioritise support where it is most urgently needed.



Ms Dwane Stanley

Banaszak advocates for bottom-up enlargement process



Mr Banaszak

At the April CoR Plenary session, Commissioner for Enlargement Marta Kos reaffirmed her commitment to EU enlargement and high-

lighted the vital role of LRAs in driving the process. "A larger Europe means a safer and more resilient Europe," she stated, presenting enlargement as essential in addressing geopolitical challenges. Emphasising a bottom-up approach, Kos praised LRAs as "essential architects in building the EU". She concluded by promoting enlargement as the "unification of Europe" rooted in local action.

"Democratic stability can only be built from the bottom up", stated Adam Banaszak in agreement with Commissioner Kos, echoing the importance of an enlarge-

ment process that strengthens multilevel governance and empowers candidate LRAs. Supporting LRAs to espouse European values and rule of law, he argued, will significantly enhance democratic reform and accelerate accession. Mr. Banaszak further stressed the need to foster cooperation among local level actors to overcome the intercommunal tensions and divisions inhibiting territorial integration and sustainable enlargement. Ultimately, he commended EU enlargement as an opportunity for growth, urging the plenary audience: "do not be afraid of enlargement but ambassadors of unification."

Truskolaski calls for balanced territorial development in debate with Enrico Letta

Enrico Letta, former Italian Prime Minister and author of the Report on the Single Market, addressed the CoR's 165th plenary session as keynote speaker in the debate on 'A Place-based Approach to Competitiveness'. A proponent of the place-based approach, Mr. Letta advocated for a bottom-up strategy that reflects local and regional strengths to reform the single market. He emphasised cohesion policy as key to sustainable and resilient competitiveness, arguing it should complement market reforms. Integrating cohesion and competitiveness, he noted, is vital to counter brain drain and support research and

innovation. Letta underlined the need to guarantee the 'freedom to stay', fostering a European market that nurtures talent and opportunity.

Contributing to the debate, Tadeusz Truskolaski affirmed Mr. Letta's core message that Europe's competitiveness must be built from the ground up and driven by cohesion policy. 'Bolstering Europe's economic competitiveness requires strengthening of its weakest links', Mr. Truskolaski asserted, calling for greater support of peripheral and less-developed regions to achieve balanced territorial development.

By highlighting the specific challenges faced by Europe's outermost and disadvantaged regions, he reinforced Mr. Letta's call to align territorial integration with economic growth.



Mr Truskolaski

EA Group showcases cultural diversity through local and regional food exchange



Following a productive group meeting during the April Plenary session of the CoR, members of the EA Group took part in a vibrant exchange of local and regional foods in an initiative envisioned by Group President, Nanette Maupertuis. To celebrate and showcase the EA Group's cultural diversity, members were encouraged to present typical cuisine and specialities from their respective localities and regions and enjoy those shared by others. All members in attendance contributed to a rich spread of regional products, including delicacies from Corsica, Flanders, Ostbelgien, Brabant, Ireland, Poland, Lithuania and Romania.

In an increasingly globalised world, it remains important to highlight our local cultures and honour our diversity. Many thanks to all who contributed and to President Maupertuis for this wonderful idea!

Czarzyńska-Jachim defends decentralisation and cohesion policy in debate with Polish Presidency

"Europe will only be secure when all its regions are cohesive and developed," stated Jan Szyszko, State Secretary in Poland's Ministry of Development, at the CoR's 165th plenary. He stressed cohesion policy's vital role in the Polish Presidency's 'Security Europe' motto, linking territorial cohesion to defence, economic, and energy security. Szyszko called for stronger, more flexible policies to meet geo-political challenges and welcomed the Commission's mid-term review, supporting shared management and performance-based approaches to keep cohesion policy inclusive and aligned with Europe's security goals.

Magdalena Czarzyńska-Jachim acknowledged the need to prepare for emerging geo-political challenges but cautioned that this must not come at the expense of decentralisation or cohesion funding. She emphasised that Europe draws strength from the diversity and resilience of its local communities, warning that centralisation could ultimately undermine security. On cohesion

funding, she proposed three key recommendations for the Polish Presidency: first, that reallocation of funds must not weaken the core objectives of cohesion policy; second, that new funding sources should be explored to support dual-use infrastructure benefit-

ing both civilians and defence; and third, that simplifying regulations is vital to increase competitiveness and growth. She concluded that cohesion policy reform must engage cities and communities, affirming, "Europe gets stronger on our streets."



Ms Czarzyńska-Jachim

Maupertuis elected President of the CPMR Islands Commission

Congratulations to EA Group President, Nanette Maupertuis, for her recent election as President of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions Islands Commission. President Maupertuis will now direct the Island Commission's work for a two-year term. As incumbent President of the Corsican Assembly and a passionate advocate for cohesive development of island territories in the EU, we wish President Maupertuis the best of luck in this exciting new role!

The Islands Commission represents and promotes the interests of Europe's regional island authorities, advocating for EU-level recognition of geographical vulnerabilities faced by insular territories and calling for a long-term EU Strategy for Islands that integrates insular perspectives and concerns into EU legislative processes. Policy areas targeted by the Island's Commission therefore include cohesion, transport, maritime affairs, energy and climate.



Ms Maupertuis after her election as President of the CPMR Islands Commission

CoR-UK Contact Group to Hold Constitutive Meeting on 15 May



Mr Vanlouwe, incoming chair of the CoR-UK Contact Group

The CoR will hold the constitutive meeting of its UK Contact Group on 15 May at 14:30, following a debate in Plenary on UK-EU relations featuring the co-chairs of the EU-UK Parliamentary Partnership Assembly. This meeting marks a key step in reinforcing dialogue and cooperation between local and regional authorities from the EU and the UK in the post-Brexit context with common challenges ahead.

Incoming chair of the CoR UK contact group Karl Vanlouwe underlines the CoR's ongoing commitment to maintaining a close relationship with UK Nations through structured dialogue and practical cooperation.

CoR Enlargement Days to Focus on New Working Groups and Partnerships

The Committee of the Regions will host its 2025 Enlargement Days on 27-28 May in Brussels. This key event will highlight the EU's commitment to the enlargement with Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership

countries by launching new platforms for cooperation.

Among the main developments will be the creation of new working groups and joint consultative committees: the Working Group on Moldova, the Working Group on

Kosovo, the Working Group on Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the new Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) with Albania. These bodies will strengthen dialogue and support reforms on the path towards EU integration for the regions involved.