

## European Alliance Group

### The Urban 'Pact of Amsterdam' needs to be transformed into clear Actions says Stanisław Szwabski, President of the EA group



Mr Stanislaw Szwabski, President of EA Group with Prof. Jerzy Buzek, MEP, former Polish PM and President of Committee on Industry, Research and Energy at the European Parliament

The very successful CoR forum on the Urban agenda as well as the Pact of Amsterdam which our group very much welcomes, now needs to be transformed into clear actions which will improve the quality of life and create jobs in our towns and cities across Europe.

This has to be done in actions which reflect the real needs of a particular town or city

as there is no one policy which will provide all the answers and some of these solutions may come from cities cooperating and exchanging best practices. The European Alliance Group recognises this and it is one of the reasons that we hosted a very productive meeting on **Developing EU policy for the Regeneration of Port Cities**. The declaration we have adopted will now be forwarded to the European Parliament and the European Commission. More information is on pages 2 and 3.

We also do not forget our rural areas - as we have always said that there is a need for Urban-Rural balance in actions and we intend to focus on the Rural areas later in the year during the European Week of Regions and Cities.

Lastly, we have always embraced interacting with our young students across Europe and we welcome to this plenary session the winners of our annual CoR/EA Secondary schools competition. We hope that they learn about the EU, tell us of their hopes and aspirations and create lifelong friends while they are in Brussels.

### Winners of the 11th edition of the EA/ CoR Secondary Schools Competition participated in CoR plenary session

Winners of the 11th edition of the EA/ CoR Secondary Schools participated in the CoR plenary session 15-16 June 2016 to experience one of the EU institutions in full action. The competition took place in eight member states, involving pupils with ages between 14-18 years. The competition's first stage was a multiple choice test that assessed the pupils'

knowledge on the European Union and the EU institutions, while the second one was to write an essay on one of the topics reflecting efforts to reduce *food waste in the EU*.

Two pupils from each participating school, with the best results participat-

ed in a two day study trip to Brussels on the 15-16 June 2016. They met with Mr Markku Markkula, the president of the CoR, members of the EA group in the Committee of the Regions, visited the European Parliament's Parliamentarium and learned about the functioning of the European Union.



Students with Vice President of the European Commission Maroš Šefčovič and the CoR President Markku Markkula in July 2015

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I welcome the adoption of the Gdynia declaration: **Developing EU policy for the Regeneration of Port Cities** as a clear indication of how to take forward the Urban pact of Amsterdam in a very specific but crucial area, as ports are the economic hub of development of many regions, says **Stanisław Szwabski, President of the EA group**

## Pact of Amsterdam recognises key role of urban rural linkages and surrounding territory

On 30 May the CoR organised jointly with the Dutch presidency a Forum on the future Urban Agenda which followed the adoption of the “Pact of Amsterdam” by Ministers of the EU member States

The Urban Agenda for the EU aims to ensure an integrated approach to development and enhance coordination between urban authorities in order to achieve better regulation and funding and jointly find solutions to current challenges.

The Pact of Amsterdam recognises the role of the CoR in further developing the EU Agenda and acknowledges the diversity

of urban areas of all sizes across the EU, while underlining the importance for urban authorities to cooperate with the surrounding regions.

Mr Augusto Rollandin, President of the Valle D’Aosta region and political coordinator of the EA Group in the COTER commission who has repeatedly called for a greater integration between urban and rural areas welcomes the Pact.

“We are happy to see that EU ministers concur that solutions to urban challenges cannot only be found in cities. Cities have to be considered with their surrounding



*Mr Augusto Rollandin, President of the Valle D’Aosta region*

territory as there are many issues that are strictly interlinked. We hope this initiative will not remain a dead letter and that effective coordination, funding and action will follow within a reasonable time.

## Van Overmeire leads observation mission to assess local and provincial elections in Serbia



*Mr Karim Van Overmeire*

In April 2016 a 12-member delegation from the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and the Committee of the Regions concluded an Electoral Assessment Mission focussing on the local and provincial part of the vote organised in the Republic of Serbia. The delegation visited more than 120 polling stations throughout the country with a special

attention to the elections held in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and the vote organised for the municipal councils.

“Apart from individual irregularities observed by our teams, Elections Day was organised in a calm and orderly manner, largely in line with the regulations”, stated the Head of the Delegation, Congress’ member Karim Van Overmeire. “However, there is room for improvement of the practical side of the elections, notably regards protection of the secrecy of the vote, and substantial reform is required to complement the legal framework of elections including the monitoring of campaign and party financing, misuse of administrative resources and the quality of the voters’ lists. Furthermore, during our preparatory meetings with different stakeholders, we have noticed that Serbia should look into the question of better regulating the minority status of political parties which caused inconsistencies for the registration”, he added.

Specific concern was mentioned by the Head of the Congress’ delegation with regard to the situation of the media at national and local level. “Action is needed in respect of the legislative framework, the financial situation and ownership of the media, the professional skills of journalists and ethical standards of journalism. There is no genuine democracy without the proper functioning of the media sector”, Van Overmeire stressed.

In addition, he underlined that, from the perspective of the election observers, the concurring organisation of elections at national level and local level should be reconsidered by the Serbian authorities. “We noticed some confusion among voters about the early elections held for Parliament and the vote for the municipal councils and the Vojvodina Assembly respectively. In the interest of an efficient local and regional tier of government, elections at the grassroots’ level should be held separately from general elections”, Van Overmeire concluded. Irish member of the CoR and EA Group Member Declan McDonnell also participated in the Election.

## EA group adopt Gdynia Declaration: Development of the EU policy for the regeneration of port cities

On 6th of June 2016 the European Alliance group held its extraordinary meeting in Gdynia in Poland to discuss the **Development of the EU policy for the regeneration of port cities**. Gdynia is an important seaport on the Baltic Sea. It is a young and vibrant city, considered a Polish symbol of

modernity. The development processes of the city make it an ideal place for discussing urban transformations and celebrating urbanity.

Participating delegates reaffirmed the need for the further collaborative nature of European Union policy on revitalizing

port cities. The theme of the debate was also the development of shipbuilding and maritime transport in Poland. Chairman of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy in the European Parliament, Jerzy Buzek, participated in the discussion and stressed that the port cities offer great op-



## European Alliance group seminar Developing EU policy for the Regeneration of Port Cities



6 June 2016  
Gdynia, Poland

portunities in areas such as infrastructure, assets, culture and recreation. The former Polish Prime Minister encouraged local and regional authorities to strengthen cooperation with the port authorities, so that economic activity, logistics and industrial port was in line with the strategy of spatial planning in municipalities and cities.

The other speakers included representatives from: Strategic Planning & Economic Development at the Cork City Council, Gdańsk Institute for Market Economics - Gdańsk Academy of Banking, Klaipėda port city municipality administration and Shetland Islands Council. Following the presentations the fruitful discussion with local business leaders took place.

After the meeting the Members of EA Group adopted a Declaration on this issue and

calling for more recognition of ports they expressed their commitment to the development of a European Union policy for the regeneration of port cities. They agreed that regenerating ports and cities is crucial to address the post-crisis stagnation and global industrial restructuring. In this sense, ports and companies related to the maritime economy and also their various functions are a strong asset which should be enhanced in all their economic, cultural and environmental dimensions to the benefit to all its citizens and local communities. The Members also urged the EU and Member States in partnership with local governments to prioritise funding for investments in ports cities or towns.

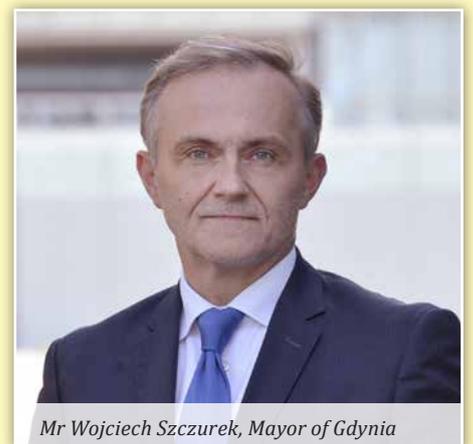
“From my long political experience as the President of the Gdynia City Council I think that the port cities have a particular devel-

opment potential and they may take on a key role in launching a smart sustainable development model, starting from local cultural resources, combining the port’s economic, logistic and industrial activities and regeneration and translated into better quality of life, greater prosperity, possibilities and aspirations of its inhabitants. Port cities are key places where economic strength, competitiveness, human capital and global appeal, population and migration processes are increasingly concentrated. Port cities are laboratories of creativity, stimulated by their specific historic landscapes. I am sure that Europe’s port cities and maritime regions are the hub of investment, resources and innovation. Europe as a whole would reap the benefits of such local political investment.” – said Mr Stanisław Szwabski, EA President.

## Mayor of Gdynia Wojciech Szczurek welcomes the European Alliance Extraordinary Group meeting dedicated to the topic of regeneration port cities

Mr Szczurek said that *Gdynia has for some years been carrying out a strategy that aims to restore to the city by incorporating in its body- in terms of urban planning, economic*

*and social terms — located in its center the post-industrial areas, previously belonging to the port facilities of the yard and railway infrastructure. The broad outlines of this*



Mr Wojciech Szczurek, Mayor of Gdynia



Mr Stanisław Szwabski, EA President, Prof. Jerzy Buzek, Former Polish PM, Chair of the Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) Committee at the EP, Mr Marek Stępa, Deputy Mayor of Gdynia and Ms Nijole Lauzikiene, Klaipėda Municipality Culture Division, Lithuania

project are based on a strong basis, namely: Excellent human potential, innovative economy and excellent integration into the transport routes. I am convinced that regeneration processes taking place in Gdynia will be completed in the short term as an example of successful solutions to promote the city as a place to live, work and visit - he added.

## Karl Vanlouwe appointed rapporteur for the EU Action Plan on integration of third country nationals

The EA Group coordinator in the CIVEX commission and member of the Flemish parliament has been appointed rapporteur on the Action Plan on integration of third country nationals.

In its draft opinion, Karl Vanlouwe will have a chance to draw inspiration from

Flanders policy in the integration of third country nationals while analysing the findings of the study the CoR has commissioned on "Regulatory Framework on Employment and Funding for Migration and Integration Policies in the EU".



Mr Karl Vanlouwe



Cllr Kieran McCarthy

## Kieran McCarthy appointed rapporteur on Digitising European Industry

Member of Cork City Council Cllr Kieran McCarthy has been appointed rapporteur on Digitising European Industry. The opinion will be discussed at the next SEDEC commission meeting which will take place

on the 22nd June 2016. Cllr McCarthy said that he was looking forward to developing the potential of regions and their role in fostering and promoting this enormous European Industry.

## Mr. Dariusz Wróbel Mayor of Opole Lubelskie on CORLEAP: Financial independence of local government a key factor in financial decentralization

During the seminar organized by the Bureau of the Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP), the European Committee of the Regions on fiscal decentralization Dariusz Wróbel, Mayor of Opole Lubelskie and member of the of the CORLEAP Bureau spoke of the need for financial decentralisation.

Mayor Dariusz Wróbel stressed that "the financial independence of local government units is a key in the special role played for financial decentralization."

"In Poland, the government shares in state income taxes are currently the source of approx. 21% of total revenue and approx. 42% of own revenues of local government in Poland. This definitely is a strategic category of income, and dysfunction associated with it has a significant impact on the whole system of local finance. In this context, considerations require any ideas on rationalization of this source of

funding including no doubt the concept of fiscal federalism. It contains demands fiscal decentralization and model features tax decentralized provide arguments for the transfer of a specific part of the tax base related to the income tax from individuals the scope of the taxation powers of local government units. " - Added the Mayor.

Mayor Dariusz Wróbel said: "The shares in receipts from state taxes, for example the personal income tax (PIT) and corporate income tax (CIT), do not have the characteristics of own revenues and do not meet at the same time the parameters of the model tax decentralized."

According to him "interesting idea seems to be the concept of change in Polish tax system by assigning a greater range of decision-making to local authorities in this area. Local government units would have the right to impose supplements to income taxes, which could push a certain part of the



Mr Dariusz Wróbel Mayor of Opole Lubelskie with Mr Donald Tusk, President of the European Council

income of state taxes and handed it within the scope of local governance tax. It applies more to income tax from individuals than from the corporation.

## Upcoming Events:

June		
20-21/06	ECON commission external meeting and conference	Poland
22/06	SEDEC commission Meeting	Brussels

23/06	CIVEX commission meeting	Brussels
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July		
4/07	COTER commission meeting	Brussels
8-9/07	7th European Summit of Regions and Cities	Bratislava, Slovakia