

European Alliance Group

In times of turmoil regions and cities are to the forefront of helping its citizens

says Karl Vanlouwe, President of the EA group



We live in volatile times: a raging war in Ukraine we reiterate our call for support to the people of Ukraine, we have an energy crisis and we have very high inflation. Yet it is the regional and local authorities who are there to help their citizens and this role needs to be recognised in the EU decision making process.

In October we held a really fascinating seminar on delivering the Green Deal at a local and regional level where we looked at EU, regional policy on the green deal objectives but more so how this policy is being implemented in Flanders and Navarra. Matching the policy with the key

delivery is important in achieving the objectives and this is why COP27 conclusions need to take into consideration locally and regionally determined contributions.

At the beginning of November our group focussed on the importance of culture and heritage and we heard fascinating examples of unused churches and historical buildings brought back for community use. We also had a presentation from Bastia in its bid to be European Capital of Culture 2028. We wish Bastia the very best.

We come to a conclusion of our CoR/EA Primary schools art competition My re-

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gion, My family and once again we will host an exhibition in the CoR with these amazing art pieces.

We wish all of our readers a restful and merry Christmas and the very best wishes for 2021

Mr Žagunis meets Vladimir Klitschko, Mayor of Kyiv during the CoR Bureau in Prague

During the September 2022 meeting of the CoR Bureau during Czech Presidency in Prague Mr Povilas Žagunis, Member of Panevėžys District Municipal Council met Vladimir Klitschko, Mayor of Kyiv, who was invited as the honour guest of the Bureau. In

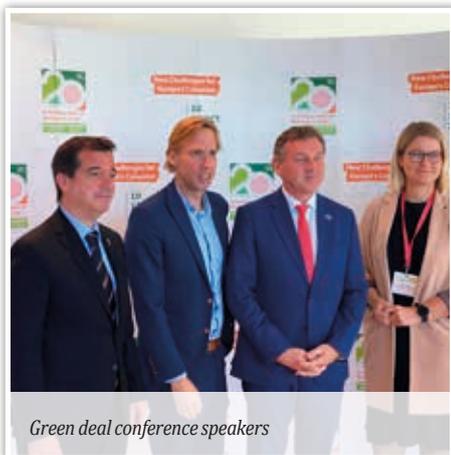
a previous lifetime Mr. Klitschko's parents used to live in Panevėžys.

Mr Žagunis expressed the need to support Ukraine and reiterated the CoR's call for an end to the terrible and unprovoked war by the Russian Federation in Ukraine.



Povilas Žagunis and Vladimir Klitschko, Mayor of Kyiv

Delivering the Green deal at a local and regional level



Green deal conference speakers

On 11 October, in the context of the 2022 edition of the European Week of Regions and Cities, the European Alliance Group (EA) organized a seminar on Delivering the Green Deal at the local and regional levels focusing in particular on ways regions and cities can implement the objectives of the EU flagship initiative, by using regionally and locally determined contributions.

The seminar, which was attended by more than 100 guests was moderated

by EA President Karl Vanlouwe and saw the participation of high-level speakers: Seán Kelly, Member of the European Parliament, Bert Wollants, Member of the Federal Parliament of Belgium, alderman of Lier, Eglė Stonké, Director of the Association of Klaipėda Region, as well as Mikel Irujo, Regional Minister of Economic and Business Development of Navarra.

Seán Kelly, MEP, focussed on the necessity to reduce energy consumption in buildings (also through digitalisation) and to support the development of renewable energy (such as solar, biogas, offshore wind, and green hydrogen) in order to reduce dependence on Russian energy sources.

Bert Wollants, Member of the Federal Parliament of Belgium, while presenting Flanders' "Renovation Wave", underlined Flanders' commitment to renovate almost 3 million homes (equating to almost 97% of the housing stock) and highlighted energy efficiency improvements in Flanders building

stock leading to lower emissions, lower energy expenditure, and lower pollution-related sickness among citizens.

Eglė Stonké presented the Klaipėda region's smart specialisation strategy and outlined the vision for 2030. A smart specialisation strategy presentation was also carried out by Minister Mikel Irujo, who outlined Navarra's green transition efforts and Navarra's "S4 Model".



Seán Kelly MEP with Karl Vanlouwe

"Cultural heritage is where our past, present and future meet" – key message from the EA group seminar held in early November



On 7 November, the European Committee of the Regions hosted a very interesting meeting looking at the protection and promotion of cultural heritage, with a particular focus on immovable heritage such as historical buildings and religious monuments, and how these can be preserved and transformed for the modern use in the community while respecting their rich heritage values.

The keynote speakers, Flemish Minister for Finance, Budget, Housing and Cultural Heritage Matthias Diependaele and Vice chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Petitions Ana Miranda outlined how Flanders and Galicia respectively repurpose and maintain the

relevance of old heritage buildings and towns with a focus on sustainability.

Klaas Fokkinga, Regional Minister of the Province of Fryslân and Hester Simons director of the Old Frisian Churches Foundation presented the work done in Frisia and stressed the importance of offering new content and activities in the old heritage buildings adapted to younger generations.

The participants could also hear a thorough presentation of Bastia, Corsica's candidacy to become the European Capital of Culture 2028 given by Mr Pierre Lungheretti, Commissioner General of the initiative as well as a thorough overview of the relevant policies and programmes of the European Commission offered by Marta Jiménez Pumares from the Commission's Directorate General for Education and Culture.

Finally, the participants included EA group members Kieran McCarthy,

who spoke about the ways to harness the potential of the New European Bauhaus in the protection and promotion of cultural heritage, and Dariusz Strugała, who talked about the renovation of cultural heritage buildings in rural areas of Poland, emphasising the restoration of the synagogue in

Jaraczewo as an example of revitalisation of multicultural and multiconfessional heritage of the area.

The EA President concluded "for the EA Group, the protection of cultural heritage and diversity remains a top priority. It is a place where our past, present and future meet."



From left to right: Marta Jiménez Pumares, European Commission; Matthias Diependaele, Minister for Finance, Budget, Housing and Cultural Heritage, Flanders; Karl Vanlouwe, EA Group President; Ana Miranda, MEP

Maupertuis opinion on cohesion in territories with geographical and demographic handicaps to be adopted at plenary



Nanette Maupertuis and Younous Omarjee MEP and Chair of the REGI committee

On 1 December the CoR Plenary will adopt the draft opinion of Nanette Maupertuis, President of the Corsican assembly and EA Group Vice-president on "Enhancing cohesion policy support for regions with geographic and demographic handicaps", i.e., territories covered by art.174 TFEU,

such as islands, mountain and rural areas. The Chair of the REGI committee in the EP, Younous Omarjee is also expected to take part in the debate.

Article 174 TFEU instructs the European Union and its Member States to ensure that the objective of territo-

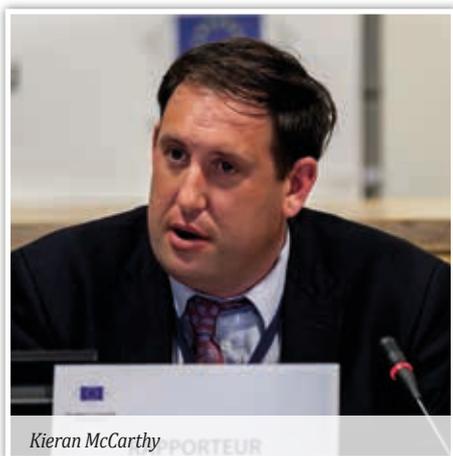
rial cohesion of the Union is specifically implemented in those regions.

However, the application of this article is far from satisfactory, points out Ms Maupertuis in the draft opinion. Very often, the needs of these regions are taken into account at the final stage of the policy-making process, rather than at the outset

Ms Maupertuis also calls for a truly integrated approach to ensure better synergies between different funding tools and interventions as well as "geographically" targeted measures with specific budget allocation. Territorial Cohesion is not just Cohesion Policy, also all other policies should do no harm to cohesion, she added.

The draft opinion also calls on the EU institution to follow up on the request to create an Island Pact.

The important role of small cities highlighted in McCarthy opinion to be adopted at the CoR Plenary



On 1 December the CoR Plenary will debate and adopt the opinion of Kieran McCarthy, Cork city councillor, on small urban areas.

Small urban areas are key actors to achieve the green and digital transition and McCarthy, who is also EA Group 1st Vice-president, said that “they need to be put at the forefront in the cohesion policy debate and be provided with more technical support on the ground to deal with current challenges”.

McCarthy opinion, while calling for a clear, accepted and recognised definition of small urban areas, calls for administrative capacity to shape their multidimensional transitions and develop long-term perspectives. Small urban areas need knowledge, policy coordination and empowerment to mobilise people, resources and EU funding programmes, states the opinion.

It is pivotal to empower regions and cities to strengthen their capacity to build resilient communities in order to limit the EU’s dependency on fossil fuels. Similarly, the CoR recommends Member States to invest in smart village projects, implementing digital solutions to optimise connectivity, in small urban areas.

Fantastic artwork submitted for the CoR/EA group primary schools’ competition “My region, My family”

We hope Members of the European Committee of the regions and guests will enjoy the display of beautiful artwork submitted by students across the EU in the latest edition of our CoR/EA Group primary schools art competition. The theme for 2022 was ‘My region, My family’.

Finally twelve schools from across seven regions submitted artwork and it will be displayed in the European Committee of the Regions. Enjoy the beautiful art.



An example of artwork from Poland



One of our entries from a school in Romania