

European Alliance Group

A new year with a wish for peace in Europe

by Karl Vanlouwe, president of the EA group



A new year always brings hope and resolutions, and this year is no different but there is an urgent need to bring hope and peace to Ukraine and insist the Russian federation stop its terrible war. Local and Regional government will also need to continue supporting refugees, help Ukrainian local and regional government and look towards rebuilding of their cities, towns and rural communities.

2023 is also the year we need to get the inflation and the energy crisis under control. This means that the EU and Governments need to look at the regional specifications and find solutions which

can make a difference. New forms of sustainable energy need to go hand in hand with energy efficiency such as retrofitting of houses and public buildings.

Our wish is also the European Commission works more our regional governments and that funding such as the Next-GenerationEU is directed to the regional level which is a request by CoR members since the funds were created.

The European Alliance group which I am proud to lead in the European Committee of the Regions will continue to push an EU agenda which is built from the

CONTENT

EA Members meet with EFA MEPs, Party and Youth movement to priorities actions for the forthcoming year

EA Group members highlight the need to continue supporting Ukraine in its hour of need

EA Group committed to contributing actively to the European Year of Skills

EA Bureau to hold a study visit to Antwerp city port

Gryffroy to suggest way forward on energy and climate initiatives for cities and regions

Strugała participates in the General Assembly of the association of Commune of Romania

Welcome to new European Alliance Group members

"The European Village – the basis of the cohesion and development of the European Union" will be the focus of the EA meeting in Romania

Artwork from the 2022 Primary Schools competition displayed in the CoR

bottom-up, a Europe where policies are respectful of the principle of subsidiarity and reflective of the real needs of citizens in our fabulous rich culturally and linguistically diverse regions.

Wishing you a successful 2023!

EA Group members participate in European Parliament Conference on Multilevel governance

On the 8th February the European Free Alliance have organised a conference on the importance of devolved and multi-level governance in the European Union. Bringing together experts and politicians across political parties it will demonstrate the reasons that proper implementation of multi-level governance is huge-

ly beneficial to the socio-economic and governance of regions. Speakers include Younous Omarjee chair of the REGI committee; Alain Lamassoure former French Minister and MEP as well as European Alliance members Nanette Maupertuis, President of the Corsican Assembly and Kieran McCarthy from Cork city council.



EA Members meet with EFA MEPs, Party and Youth movement to priorities actions for the forthcoming year

Joining forces to deliver an EU which respects the rights of regions, its languages and its cultures were to the forefront of discussions at the EA group meeting with Lorena Lopez de Lacalle, President of the European Free Alliance Party; Jordi Solé President of the EFA Group in the European Parliament and Valentina Servera Clavell, President of EFA youth.

EA Group President Karl Vanlouwe said that the cooperation between EU institutions politicians is hugely important to make sure that we deliver and influence policies which respect subsidiarity and there are a myriad of policy areas which we can work on over the coming year and in particular leading up to the European Parliament elections in 2024.

The EA group and EFA have already joined forces to push for a renewed policy for Islands with Nanette Maupertuis leading for

the CoR, current areas of work is focusing on cross-border cooperation and the Conference on the Future of Europe to name

but a few. Further information is available on www.ea.cor.europa.eu.



From left to right: Mr Kieran McCarthy, Mr Karl Vanlouwe, Mr Jordi Sole and Ms Lorena Lopez

EA Group members highlight the need to continue supporting Ukraine in its hour of need



EA Group members and their respective regions continue to help in a practical manner many of their twin cities and regions in

Ukraine and have committed to continuing this vital support. Our group also fully supports the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine as a joint effort to give assistance towards the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine.

Mr Dariusz Strugała, EA Member in the Working Group on Ukraine will participate in the meeting of the Working Group on

24th February 2023 in Gdansk in Poland marking a year since the beginning of the Russian aggression on Ukraine.

The members will discuss Ukraine's EU accession process – reforms agenda and current political context, Transparency and good governance on local level in times of war and Current emergency needs in Ukraine and beyond.

EA Group committed to contributing actively to the European Year of Skills

European Alliance Group wholeheartedly welcomes the decision to designate the year 2023 as the European Year of Skills (EYS). Our members have been particularly active in the domains of lifelong learning and upskilling and, as a group, we hope that the EYS will provide a fresh impetus to an overall change of mindset in our approach to lifelong learning and personal and professional development.

In its resolution adopted in late 2022, the Committee of the Regions called for a paradigm shift in skill sets and expressed hopes that the European Year of Skills would "the occasion to create, in cooperation with all levels of governance, a vibrant and creative ecosystem where people, and especially young people, can discuss and co-design education and training responses" to help the green and digital transition.



EA Bureau to hold a study visit to Antwerp city port

Upon invitation of EA President Karl Vanlouwe, the EA Group Bureau members will visit on 13 February, Antwerp city port to discuss its role within Flanders, Europe and beyond.

The Port of Antwerp which merged in 2021 with the port of Bruges, is Europe's second-largest port that connect Europe to over 800 destinations in the world and the largest export port. It is home to

hundreds of innovative companies and a major cluster of chemical industry.

Its central position in North-West Europe and its excellent connections to globally reputed industrial centers have led to Antwerp becoming a very important link in the chain of international trade.

With around 231 million tons of international maritime freight being handled annually, 74 000 direct and 90000 indi-

rect jobs provided and more than €20 billion added value, the Flemish Antwerp-Bruges port is the engine of Belgium economy.

The port and serves as hub for sustainable growth innovation, notably in the field of energy transition, digitalisation and mobility, thus making it a strategically important port for Flemish economy and Europe's gateway

Gryffroy to suggest way forward on energy and climate initiatives for cities and regions

On 8th of February the CoR Bureau has appointed EA member Andries Gryffroy as rapporteur on the opinion "Fostering the potential and synergies of EU energy and climate initiatives for regions and cities"

Cities and regions are key implementers for many EU policies, and many are the initiatives that have been launched to better support local and regional authorities in their climate transition and implementing the EU Green Deal. These include the "popular" ones such as the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and En-

ergy, the EU Cities Missions, the EU Climate Pact or the Green City Accord.

This opinion comes at a very critical moment since also the European Commission is reflecting on the functioning of these initiatives. The CoR opinion will contribute to the ongoing reflection as to how these initiatives are supporting implementation of the EU Green Deal on the ground and what improvements can be suggested to ensure cities and regions can make the most out of them.

A draft opinion is due to be adopted at ENVE commission meeting in May.



Strugała participates in the General Assembly of the association of Commune of Romania



On the invitation of Mr Emil Drăghici, President of the Association of Communes of Romania and the Member of the EA Group at the Committee of the Regions Mr Dariusz Strugała EA Group Vice President participated at the General Assembly of the Association in Bucharest on 6 February 2023.

The main debate concerned mainly the Rural areas and the local public administration as the European challenges. Mr Strugała said that the development

of the European Union depends on the dynamism and mobilisation of all of its constituent parts – urban and rural – each with their specific identities and specific strategies but interacting in a positive way. Finding a balanced relationship between rural and urban areas means implementing policies – specific or cross-cutting – that enable each area to fully exploit its potential. He also highlighted the subsidiarity principal as a priority in the main EU policies.

Welcome to new European Alliance Group members



Mr Karl Vanlouwe and Ms Meritxell Serret

The EA President and group would like to give a very warm welcome to our new members Meritxell Serret, Minister for Foreign Action and European Union of the Government of Catalonia and Alternate member Miquel ROYO VIDAL, Secretary for the Government's Foreign Action, Government of Catalonia.

Meritxell previously was head of the Representation of Catalonia to the

European Union where she had extensive contact with the European Institutions including the European Committee of the Regions and the EA Group. Prior to this she was Minister for Agriculture. We look forward to working closely to our Catalan friends over the course of the CoR mandate and beyond.

“The European Village – the basis of the cohesion and development of the European Union” will be the focus of the EA meeting in Romania

On the invitation of Gheorghe Dămian the EA group will hold our annual external meeting in Ciugud, Romania on the 8 – 9 June 2023. The subjects of smart villages and rural areas in general have long been a priority of the EA group with our members leading the way on opinions in the European Committee of the Regions. Villages are often forgotten but the reality is that they are the heart of Europe's rural communities and the cornerstone of co-

hesion and development in the European Union. We are looking forward to visiting Ciugud and discussing this key European policy area.

Ciugud has for several years now been the leading smart village in Romania and it has become source of inspiration for other small villages in the country to promote rural development and combat rural decline with EU funding.



Mr Gheorghe Dămian

Artwork from the 2022 Primary Schools competition displayed in the CoR



During the last plenary session in 2022, CoR members had an opportunity to see

the artwork produced by primary school students from across the EU who took part in the EA group's annual drawing competition. The topic for this year's edition was “My Region, My Family.”

This year, we received a number of fantastic drawings from twelve schools from across seven regions. As the 2022 edition comes to a close, the authors of the winning entries will receive their well-deserved prizes and we are looking

forward to the next edition which will be published in autumn this year.

