

## European Alliance Group

# Local and regional authorities working together can help rebuild Ukraine

by Karl Vanlouwe, President of the EA Group after his visit to Kyiv



EA President Karl Vanlouwe in Kyiv as part of the CoR Conference of Presidents delegation

As part of the European Committee of the Regions Conference of Presidents on the 19 and 20th April I visited Kyiv and I can honestly say that there are no words to describe the devastation in loss of life and property that I saw during this visit. My heart broke when I saw the damage and heard from the people affected. I also saw the courage and sheer determination of the Ukrainian people in how they will rebuild their

nation, and this is why the European Committee of the Regions and local and regional governments need to help with the rebuilding process. I would also encourage local governments and cities to get involved with twinning programmes and I know many of our members are already doing this. Let's make a difference for the sake of safeguarding democracy in Europe.

There are many issues the EU needs to cooperate on to be self-sufficient and to guarantee supply, and this is why it was important for the CoR under the Swedish Presidency of the European Council to look at sustainable development and the needs of remote areas in Kiruna at the Arctic circle. It was great to meet the Sami and Tornedalian people while there and hear their concerns.

We are hugely looking forward to our European Alliance Group meeting in Ciugud, Romania, invited by George Damian, which will focus on the

## EA Group extraordinary meeting in Ciugud in Romania

Upon the invitation of Mr Gheorghe Damian, the Mayor of Ciugud in Romania, the EA Group will be organising a meeting and seminar. The main focus of the event will be on the The EU Village – a basis for cohesion and development in the EU. The seminar will take place in Ciugud on 9 June 2023.

The Ciugud commune in Alba county is undoubtedly the best example of a “smart village” in Romania. It has even become an example of good practice for villages in the Prignitz District of Germa-

ny, following a visit of officials from the Brandenburg district at the end of August. Ciugud's mayor, Gheorghe Damian has so far invested more than €32 million in the commune's infrastructure, tourism, green energy, and cultural projects.

With the help of EU funds, the commune now ranks among the top five richest communes in Alba County in terms of budget revenue. EU membership has given local authorities the ability to receive EU funding which has been vital for its development.



Ciugud

## CONTENT

*Cllr Stenson participates in the European Parliament's 25-year commemoration of the Good Friday Agreement*

*Maupertuis and Serret participate at the launch of "Friends of the Mediterranean Macroregion"*

*Vanlouwe participates in the high-level delegation from European Committee of the Regions in Kyiv*

*ARLEM: Drăghici promotes stronger ties between Romania's and Morocco's associations of local leaders*

*Green deal: Kóbor organises climate workshop in Pecs*

*Gryffroy and McCarthy participate in high level meetings of the Covenant of Mayors*

*8th Enlargement Days marked by debates on skills and first-time participation of new candidates*

European Village, a basis for cohesion and development in the EU. It provides an opportunity to discuss this important issue and share experiences and best practices.

"I can honestly say that there are no words to describe the devastation in loss of life and property that I saw during this visit to Ukraine".

Karl Vanlouwe, president of the EA Group

## Cllr Stenson participates in the European Parliament's 25-year commemoration of the Good Friday Agreement

Recently the European Parliament held a commemorative ceremony of the 25 year anniversary of the historic Good Friday Agreement where EU leaders – including European Parliament President Roberta Metsola, European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen – all reflected on the agreement and the peace it brought to the Island of Ireland.

European Alliance member Cllr Enda Stenson participated in the ceremony as part of the European Committee of the

Regions delegation, who are also members of the contact group with the UK. He said it was an incredible honour for him to be in the Parliament and he expressed his gratitude to the European Union not only for the funding in PEACE and PEACEPLUS but for the sheer determination and support in ensuring there would be no hard border ever on the Island of Ireland. Cllr Stenson also reiterated this point to European Commissioner Mairead McGuinness who participated in the event.



## Maupertuis and Serret participate at the launch of "Friends of the Mediterranean Macroregion"



On 24 April, Nanette Maupertuis, President of the Corsican Assembly, and Meritxell Serret, Minister of the Catalan Government for foreign action and EU, took part in the launching event for the creation of the group "Friends of the Mediterranean Macro-Region". During their opening speeches the EA members reaffirmed the importance of boosting

cooperation across the three shores of the Mediterranean in order to address shared challenges while involving all levels of governance.

Nanette Maupertuis, taking the floor on behalf of the CoR COTER commission, restated the main messages of the CoR opinion which calls on the EU Member

States and Spanish Presidency to adopt a Macroregional Strategy for the Mediterranean.

Macro-regions play an essential role in strengthening the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the European Union and its close neighbourhood by giving the cross-border geographical areas means to face common challenges through exchange and cooperation.

Minister Serret stressed that Europe and the Mediterranean are the cornerstones of Catalonia foreign action and a Mediterranean macro-region would make it possible to address key challenges – such as climate change and effects of droughts – in a coordinated manner. The meeting, which was attended by MEPs, key representatives of European institutions, stakeholders from networks, and regional/local authorities, finished with a signing ceremony of the declaration.

## Vanlouwe participates in the high-level delegation from European Committee of the Regions in Kyiv

EA Group President and the Member of Flemish Parliament, Mr Karl Vanlouwe, participated on 20 April 2023 in the

high-level delegation from European Committee of the Regions in Kyiv to step up cooperation between the EU's and



Ukraine's cities and regions on reconstruction.

The Conference of Presidents of the European Committee of the Regions identified housing, energy, transport, social services, and humanitarian aid among the principal areas where the experience of international partners could help municipal and regional administrations in Ukraine. CoR members spoke about the reconstruction management system, synergies between stakeholders, planning for sustainable development, investment and the development of public-private partnerships, and culture as a means of supporting the post-war recovery of human capital.



On 19 April, the CoR delegation visited the towns of Irpin and Bucha, and the villages of Hostomel, Borodyanka, Andriivka, Makariv, and Dmytrivka, where they had an opportunity to see first-hand the damage wreaked in the region by the Russian invasion.

EA President said "there are no words which can describe the sheer devastation and loss of life caused by the Russian Federation's illegal war in Ukraine. We must continue helping our Ukrainian friends liberate and rebuild their country for a better future".

## ARLEM: Drăghici promotes stronger ties between Romania's and Morocco's associations of local leaders

On 25 April, the ARLEM commission met in Rabat, the capital of Morocco, hosted by Abdelaziz Derouiche, president of the Moroccan Association of Presidents of the Councils of the Prefectures and Provinces.

During the meeting, members discussed draft reports on civil protection mechanisms and sustainable urban development in the Mediterranean drafted by Mr Derouiche himself, which focus specifically on urban health and sustainable transport.

EA member Emil Drăghici took part in the meeting and was accompanied by a delegation Romanian Association of Communes representatives. On behalf of the association he signed a memorandum of understanding with the Moroccan association, which aims to enhance institutional cooperation, promote decentralization, and foster exchange of knowledge and best practices.



Mr Drăghici and Mr Derouiche at the meeting in Rabat

## Green deal: Kóbor organises climate workshop in Pecs

On 14 March, EA member József Kóbor organized a climate workshop in Pecs, Hungary, to discuss the city's priorities and measures to achieve climate neutrality. The workshops served as an opportunity to discuss the city climate adaptation plan and state of play of cooperation between the city and local actors including businesses in order to reduce emissions. Pecs has committed to become carbon

neutral by 2030 as part of the European Commission's 100 Climate Neutral and Smart Cities mission.

Dr Kóbor, who is also member of the CoR Green Deal working group and green commissioner of Pecs city, is committed to leading the climate agenda of the city and to showcase its best practices at EU level.



Mr Kóbor speaking at the workshop

## Gryffroy and McCarthy participate in high level meetings of the Covenant of Mayors



Andries Gryffroy with Commissioner Vălean

On 30 March, EA members Andries Gryffroy and Kieran McCarthy, CoR national ambassadors of the Covenant of Mayors, participated in the 2023 high-level conference and meeting of the second chamber of the Covenant political board.

The conference provided an opportunity to reflect on how local authorities are

responding to the energy crisis and protecting citizens and local business from soaring energy prices.

Andries Gryffroy, member of the Flemish parliament and rapporteur on the CoR opinion 'Fostering the potential and synergies of EU Green Deal initiatives for regions and cities,' said that "the Covenant of Mayors has proved to be a robust and powerful initiative to mobilize local actors in order to reduce emissions and meet climate goals. In the current challenging context, it becomes even more important to find ways to better support cities and municipalities as they are the ones that make the transition a reality on the ground. We would like to see the Covenant grow stronger and focus on the implementation of locally tangible objectives set out by the municipalities based on their different needs and contexts.

The Flanders Climate and Energy Pact, comprising many Flemish municipalities who are also signatories of the Covenant, is a case of best practice which we would like to see become an inspiration for other local authorities in Europe".

In the margin of the meeting, EA members met also with European Commissioner for Transport Adina Vălean and EU mayors of the European Commission 100 Climate Neutral and Smart Cities mission.

Kieran McCarthy, who is the first Vice-President of EA and also a City Councillor from Cork, which is one of the selected cities, underlined that the city is in the final stages of completing its climate contract as part of its commitment to the programme. At the same time, he emphasized that more support is needed from the EU to address funding gaps.

## 8th Enlargement Days marked by debates on skills and first-time participation of new candidates

On 4 and 5 May, Committee of the Regions hosted a series of meetings between its members and representatives of local and regional authorities from enlargement countries which, for the first time this year, included representatives of new candidate countries Ukraine and Moldova, and the potential candidate Georgia.

Meetings were focused on new developments in the enlargement process over the past year, as well as on skills and measures to counter brain drain in enlargement countries, in the light of 2023 as the European Year of Skills.

Enlargement Day is an annual event organised by the CoR to provide a platform for debate on the implications of the EU enlargement process on local and regional authorities in accession countries.

EA group members in the CoR's enlargement bodies are Bronius Markauskas (Joint Consultative Committee with Montenegro), Andries Gryffroy (Joint Consultative Committee with North Macedonia), Declan McDonnell (Joint Con-

sultative Committee with Serbia), József Kóbor (Working Group on Turkey), Dariusz Strugała (Working Group on Ukraine) and Miloslav Repaský (Working Group on the Western Balkans).



8th CoR Enlargement Days