

European Alliance Group

The next State of the EU needs to ensure that Regions and Cities are at the heart of developing a local Europe

by Karl Vanlouwe, president of the EA group

Over the coming months we will see the crafting of the next State of the European Union by the European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen and on this occasion, it is incumbent upon us as members of the European Committee of the Regions to remind her of the vital role of regions in implementing 70% of EU legislation. Last year we were forgotten and this is a timely reminder given that we are less than one year away from the European elections.

At every meeting of our group since the illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine began, we have discussed how our member regions help their twin regions, cities, local communities in Ukraine. We need to ensure that we continue this support and contribute to the Alliance for the rebuilding of Ukraine on an ongoing basis. We also strongly support and encourage local and regional governments in organising summer camps for Ukrainian children.



Mr Karl Vanlouwe and Mr Gheorghe Dămian at the EA group meeting in Ciugud, Romania

Finally, we would like to thank Gheorghe Dămian, Mayor of Ciugud for hosting an extremely fruitful meeting where we visited fascinating smart village projects and held a highly productive group session during which we agreed the *Ciugud declaration: The EU Village as a basis of cohesion and development in the EU.*

Why not host summer camps for Ukrainian children in your community

The Summer Camp for Ukrainian children is a joint flagship initiative of the European Committee of the Regions and the Association of Ukrainian cities that was launched in 2022 in the aftermath of the war in Ukraine.

The initiative is aimed at welcoming Ukrainian children in cities and regions

across Europe and providing them with a safe place to play, learn, and interact with their European peers.

We encourage regions, cities and communities to get involved. More information on: www.cor.europa.eu



Logo of the Summer Camp for Ukrainian Children initiative

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EU local leaders call for action to promote smart villages and cohesion at Rural summit in Ciugud, Romania

On 9 June the European Alliance Group met in Ciugud, Romania to discuss EU policies for rural development and cohesion in the EU, upon invitation of Gheorghe Dămian, Mayor of Ciugud.

Members adopted the Ciugud declaration which calls on the EU to promote smart villages and more ambitious rural development policies in order to achieve balanced territorial development and greater cohesion across the EU. Delegates also visited smart schools which were the envy of many participants and also local business.

President of the EA Group Karl Vanlouwe praised Mayor Dămian for his outstanding

leadership in transforming Ciugud into a truly smart and modern village with the support of EU funds.

Ciugud is certainly an example of best practice of the European Smart Village and illustrates the benefits EU funding can bring to rural communities in improving the quality of life of the citizens. The EU should continue to support them and make sure they remain attractive places to live and work.

Mayor Dămian said: "We were honoured to host these days members of the European Alliance Group, mayors and elected politicians, representing rural



Mr Gheorghe Dămian, Mayor of Ciugud

communities across the European Union. The future of the European Union cannot exist without the European village, and the future of the European village depends on the measures and public policies of the Council, the Commission and the European Parliament. In everything we do, no matter what decision-making level we are at, we must remain united. As Jean Monnet said: 'Go on, go on, there is no future for the peoples of Europe except in union.'"



EA group members and guests in Ciugud

EA Group welcomes back former CoR members

The European Alliance Group welcomed back some former members for a discussion on the evolution of EU policies and also the negative impact of Brexit which was outlined by former Scottish and English members. The EA President Karl Vanlouwe said that we

also wanted to recognise the impact of the former members on the development of EU policies from a regional and local perspective. Former members included: Tony Buchanan; Gillian Ford; Linda Gillham; Marc Hendrickx; Witold Krochmal, Gary Robinson, Uno Silberg.



Former EA member Cllr Linda Gillham

Congratulations Cllr Kieran McCarthy, the new Lord Mayor of Cork



The European Alliance Group would like to congratulate our first vice president Kieran McCarthy on his election as Lord Mayor of Cork. A member of the Cork City Council since 2009, Kieran is very passionate about the history of his hometown and region, which is the topic of his long-standing and well-known column in the Cork Independent

newspaper. He has also written a number of books on Cork, initiated a number of projects promoting local cultural heritage and organized weekly walking tours dedicated to Cork's history.

We wish Kieran the very best in this new role.

CoR Plenary to adopt Gryffroy's opinion on improving synergies on Green Deal initiatives

On 6 July the CoR Plenary will adopt the opinion of Andries Gryffroy on *Fostering the potential and synergies of EU Green Deal initiatives for regions and cities*. The opinion aims to provide recommendations to address an increasing sense of general fatigue among local and regional authorities due to the multitude of initiatives and the complexity of the overall framework.

"The road towards climate neutrality will require a deep transformation of regions and cities. However, access to funding and initiatives remains a barrier for many

local and regional authorities. It is therefore important to reflect on the potential and added value of these initiatives, and to take action to simplify their frameworks, address overlaps and improve synergies, in order to maximize their impact and contribution to Green Deal objectives," Mr Gryffroy said.

The opinion also calls for a general shift of focus from planning to implementation of concrete projects and for the use of smart monitoring. Additionally, it suggests establishing an EU-level hub for local author-



ities, serving as a single-entry point where they can access relevant information in a user-friendly and demand-based manner.

EA Group to organise EU Regions Week seminar: Towards a new EU Blue Deal to combat drought and water shortages – the regional perspective



Regions across the European Union have been experiencing recurring droughts and water shortages which are becoming more regular and severe, causing huge socio-economic problems and increasing the probability of natural disasters, such as forest fires. The objective of this EU Regions Week seminar is to provide regions with a platform for sharing their ex-

periences in addressing challenges such as minimizing the impact of water scarcity, increasing water supply, and collaborating with EU institutions to create a new Blue Deal that effectively tackles water shortages and drought.

This important event will take place on the 10th October 2023 at 09h30. To register go to www.cor.europa.eu

Maupertuis appointed to the EU Rural Pact Coordination group

EA group Vice-president and President of the Assembly of Corsica, Nanette Maupertuis, has been appointed as CoR member representing the COTER commission to the European Commission's Rural Pact Coordination Group. The Rural Pact Coordination Group serves as the primary governance body of the Rural Pact, responsible for guiding the activities conducted under the Pact during its three-year mandate. Its main objectives are to enhance the representation of rural communities, foster knowledge sharing, and facilitate initiatives aimed at addressing the needs and challenges of rural areas.

The group, composed of representatives



from EU institutions and bodies, NGO, business representatives, researchers and academia and citizens representatives met for the first time on 21 June. At the margin of the kick off meeting, President Maupertuis, who was also rapporteur on

enhancing cohesion in territories with specific constraints, such as rural areas, said: "Rurality is a source of wealth, a vector of our attachment to the land, our cultural and nurturing matrix. Corsica defends a long-term vision for Europe's rural areas."

Green Deal Going Local: EA Group to visit Pécs, the green city



Mr József Kóbor

On 12 September 2023 the EA Group will hold a study visit in Pécs, Hungary, upon the invitation of EA member and Pécs city councillor József Kóbor.

The EA group will discuss with local politicians the progress of the city towards carbon neutrality and will have the chance to visit concrete projects

related to electric transportation and hydrogen.

Pécs is a signatory of the Covenant of Mayors and has been selected as one of the 100 cities participating in the EU Climate Neutral and Smart Cities mission under Horizon Europe.

Sergio Pérez takes part in Knowledge Exchange Platform seminar on Open Science



Mr Sergio Pérez García

On 15 June, our SEDEC coordinator and Director-General for Foreign Affairs in the Government of Navarre, Sergio Pérez García, took part in the seminar “Open Science for higher quality, more efficient and impactful research – Opportunities for regions & cities” organised in the framework of the Committee of

the Regions’ Knowledge Exchange Platform 2.0.

During his presentation, Mr Pérez showcased Navarre’s innovative practices in the field of Open Science, its innovation system and in particular its Science, Technology & Innovation Plan 2021-2025.

Annabel Tavernier and Kieran McCarthy participating in EuroPCom’s Ideas Labs

The 14th edition of EuroPCom, the European Public Communication Conference took place on 26 and 27 June 2023 in Brussels and online.

EuroPCom is Europe’s largest annual gathering of experts in the field of public communication and is jointly organised by several EU institutions. This year’s edition was focused on democracy, disinformation and voter engagement ahead of

next year’s European elections.

On behalf of the EA group, our first vice president Kieran McCarthy participated in the Ideas Lab “Participatory campaigns are a two-way street! Citizen engagement initiatives ahead of elections” while Annabel Tavernier took part in the “Building resilience to election-related information manipulation” lab.



Ms Annabel Tavernier