

European Alliance Group

Strong Regions build a better European Union

by Karl Vanlouwe, EA Group President

Without the involvement of regional and local government the EU cannot work effectively.



Once again, with a limited mention of local and regional authorities in her State of the Union speech, the European Commission President overlooked the pivotal role of regions in the European Union. With over seventy percent of policies and legislation having an impact on regions and being implemented by regions, their role should be more recognised. In every crisis, it is the local and regional authorities that are at the forefront in reacting and helping, and if we wish to build a real communication link with citizens then the regions and local government

must be involved. It is time to have some real recognition and implementation of the principle of subsidiarity.

We are looking forward to the EU Regions Week, the largest open dialogue with regions and local government in the EU calendar and an event where we can outline the points made above but also have a real discussion on topics of fundamental importance to our regions.

This year, our group is focussing on the regional perspective in developing policies towards a new EU Blue Deal to combat drought and water shortages, which is a priority that affects more and more regions across the EU and the world.

As the terrible war in Ukraine continues, we need to continue our support to our friends in Ukraine and we need to thank the regions, cities and local authorities who are continuing to give daily practical support. It is also becoming very obvious that we need to enhance our cooperation in helping neighbourhood countries in their development. The role of CORLEAP and ARLEM is hugely important in this regard.

Finally, I would like to thank József Kóbor for showcasing the great work on the Green Deal in his city of Pécs. It is important to showcase success stories which may be replicated.

CONTENT

EA to join EFA Party congress to decide on Spitzenkandidaten and 2024 elections manifesto

COTER: Maupertuis' opinion proposes to intensify cross border cooperation with EU's neighbours

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

EA Group members taking active part in EWRC activities

Krzysztof Iwaniuk at the CORLEAP meeting in Batumi, Georgia

Recognition and use of regional languages in the EU build bridges with the citizens

Corsica: First step towards autonomy after historic visit of French president to the island

EA Group launches our annual CoR / EA Group primary school art competition

EWRC: EA Group to call for a new EU Blue Deal to combat drought and water shortages

On 10 October, EA Group is organising a seminar "Towards a new EU Blue Deal to combat drought and water shortages" in the context of the European Week of Regions and Cities.

Chaired by the EA President Karl Vanlouwe, the seminar will see the participation of high-level speakers, including the Flemish Minister for Environment and Energy Zuhail Demir, Executive Director at Water

Europe Durk Krol, as well as European Commission's DG Environment Director Ms Veronica Manfredi.

Regions across the EU 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.

The objective of the seminar is to provide regions with a platform to share their experiences 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.

"With a limited mention of local and regional authorities in her State of the Union speech, the European Commission President overlooked the pivotal role of regions in the European Union. If we wish to build a real communication link with citizens then the regions and local government must be involved."

Karl Vanlouwe, president of the EA group



European Alliance

EA to join EFA Party congress to decide on Spitzenkandidaten and 2024 elections manifesto



The European elections are approaching. From 6 to 9 June 2024, European citizens will cast

their ballots to decide the configuration of the new European Parliament. With the goal of deciding the party's strategy, message, and candidates, the European Free Alliance members are meeting on 13 and 14 October in the EFA Congress. It will be the first time in history that the European Political Party for self-determina-

tion holds an event of this type. It will take place in Strasbourg.

The European Alliance group will join the congress where all member parties will be invited to decide EFA's tandem of Spitzenkandidaten and the manifesto for the 2024 European elections.

COTER: Maupertuis' opinion proposes to intensify cross border cooperation with EU's neighbours



Ms Nanette Maupertuis

EA group's Vice President and President of the Assembly of Corsica, Ms Nanette Maupertuis has been appointed rapporteur on an opinion

in the COTER commission "Boosting lasting and effective cross-border cooperation with our neighbours."

During the 2021-2027 period cross-border cooperation (CBC) with partner countries has been reinforced and the CoR has recalled the important role that cross-border cooperation, and permanent cross-border structures can play in achieving sustainable development across external borders.

However, the current geopolitical context and instability both in EU's eastern (Russia's illegal invasion and war in Ukraine) and southern bor-

ders will have significant implications for the relevant cross-border cooperation programmes.

With this opinion, approved by unanimity at the COTER commission meeting on 26 September, Ms Maupertuis, calls on local and regional authorities along the EU's external land and maritime borders to intensify cooperation with their neighbours in non-EU countries by developing common infrastructure, strengthening socio-economic cooperation and intensifying cultural exchange in order to build mutual trust.

The opinion will be adopted at the CoR November Plenary Session.

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

On 12 September 2023 the EA Group held a study visit in Pécs, Hungary, upon the invitation of our member in the Green Deal Going Local working group and Pécs city green commissioner József Kóbor.

The EA group delegation, led by the President Karl Vanlouwe, discussed with local politicians, including city Mayor Mr Péterffy, deputy mayor Ruzsa and Member of National Parliament Mr. Kéresztes Lorant, the city's progress towards carbon neutrality and visited tangible projects related to electric transportation and hydrogen.

Mr Kóbor thanked the EA group for visiting the city and highlighted how important it is

for cities to share their experiences and challenges in order to get tailored technical and financial support.

Mr Kóbor also underlined that Pécs has already been included in two pilot projects for the energy efficiency renovation of buildings as further opportunities for local authorities to directly access EU funding may become available.

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. The city is committed to becoming a climate-neutral city by 2035 and has already

taken a number of steps in this framework and further important measures will follow in the coming years.



Mr József Kóbor with EA members in Pécs

EA Group members taking active part in EWRC activities

The 21st edition of the European Week of Regions and Cities will take place from 9 to 12 October in Brussels. In addition to the seminar “Towards a new EU Blue Deal to combat drought and water shortages” which our group will organise on 10 October morning, our members will participate as speakers at a number of other workshops and seminars.

On 10 October afternoon, Lord Mayor of Cork **Kieran McCarthy** will participate in the workshop “Innovative practices in participatory politics” where he will discuss citizen engagement, its role in local and EU policymaking, and innovative ways to develop participatory practices with the participants of the Committee of the Regions’ Young Elected Politicians programme.

On 11 October morning, chair of the Corsican Assembly **Marie-Antoinette Maupertuis** will try to identify key elements and solutions to shape an EU Strategy for islands as one of the speakers at the seminar “After the European Parliament’s resolution on island regions: what’s next?”

Later that morning, Lord Mayor **McCarthy** will speak at the workshop “Lifelong learning for local sustainable growth: policy and practices for the green transition” where he will discuss a roadmap for building capacity in adult learning education and share Cork’s experience in building public-private partnerships.

On 11 October afternoon, our member of the CoR’s Green Deal Going Local working group

and the Green Commissioner of the city of Pécs, Hungary **József Kóbor** will speak at the panel “Regions in post-industrial transition” representing his city, which was selected to join the EU mission: 100 climate-neutral and smart cities.

On the same afternoon, in his capacity as the CoR’s rapporteur on the New European Bauhaus Lord Mayor **McCarthy** will speak at the workshop “Stimulating Local and Regional New European Bauhaus Grassroots Projects” where, together with the MEP Marcos Ros

Sempere, he will present the European Parliament’s Pilot Project to establish a New European Bauhaus voucher scheme, which was first proposed in his opinion.

At the same time, as part of the Cohesion Alliance campaign, guests will be able to see a poster exhibition of ‘Cohesion Local Stories’, including an example of how Catalonia goes digital with the help of its citizens and business. The posters will be displayed on the 5th floor of the Committee of the Regions’ JDE building.



Krzysztof Iwaniuk at the CORLEAP meeting in Batumi, Georgia



At the invitation of the co-chair of the Conference of Regional and Local Authorities

for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP), Mr Krzysztof Iwaniuk joined other CORLEAP members for the meeting held on 7-8 September 2023 in Batumi, Georgia.

The meeting brought together politicians from the European Committee of the Regions and from the Eastern Partnership countries at a point when the war in Ukraine has transformed the geopolitics of the region and when the possible expansion of the EU is rising up the political agenda. The EA Group reiterated its engagement to encourage and help the Eastern Partnership countries towards their way to the European Union.

In Batumi members discussed the CORLEAP Action Plan for 2021–2024, as well as adopted two reports: one on “What can we do with our partners” and the second on the “E-services for citizens at the local level: what good came out from COVID 19 pandemic?”.

Ukraine will take over the co-chairmanship of CORLEAP from Georgia as of 1 October. Sergii Chernov, member of the Kharkiv Regional Council and president of the Ukrainian Association of District and Regional Councils, will co-chair the Conference on behalf of the Eastern Partnership members in 2023-24.

Recognition and use of regional languages in the EU build bridges with the citizens

The recent request by the Spanish government for full EU working language status for Catalan, Basque and Galician is very welcome. We hope that Member States will find agreement on this matter in the coming months.

Since 2007, the European Committee of the Regions has allowed the possibility to interpret the three languages as part of the co-official language status. This has been a very positive experience and the EA group members have

availed of this on a regular basis. If the EU wishes to build communication with regions the best way to undertake this is in their language.

Corsica: First step towards autonomy after historic visit of French president to the island



President Maupertuis and President Simeoni welcoming French President Macron in Ajaccio

On 28 September, French President Emmanuel Macron, in a visit to Ajaccio, Corsica, addressed

the Corsican Assembly chaired by the EA Vice President, Nanette Maupertuis.

In what is considered a historic move, in his speech he opened the door to an autonomy for Corsica within the French Republic in view of a possible revision of the constitution in 2024.

This visit took place after the Assembly of Corsica, during an extraordinary session held in July, backed the report entitled "Autonomia", presented by the President of the Executive Council of Corsica Gilles Simeoni, which sets out the main orientations of the autonomous status desired by the Collectivity of Corsica.

This deliberation solemnly called for Corsica to be granted autonomous status, like most of the Mediterranean islands.

The Assembly of Corsica is the driving force behind all debates on the island's institutional framework, and has seen a succession of special statutes over the course of its history.

In July 2022, Corsica's elected representatives initiated a new process of discussion with the French Government aimed at enabling institutional evolution towards a status of autonomy, in a context marked on the one hand by an unprecedented political crisis, and on the other by a historic political demand legitimized three times by the ballot box.

EA Group launches our annual CoR / EA Group primary school art competition



Detail from last year's exhibition

EA group has officially launched our annual primary schools' art competition, My region, Our EU Region. As every year, the competition will see school children from across the EU's regions and cities submit drawings and paintings which illustrate the link between their local area and the wider European Union.

The best submissions will be chosen later this year and converted into postcards,

while all submissions will be exhibited in the European Committee of the Regions' building in Brussels. The children are also asked to include a brief description of their dreams for their regions within the wider European context, which will be published in a booklet highlighting the diversity of children's perceptions of the EU.