

## European Alliance Group

### Energy Security, Neighbourhood Policy and an Investment Package for small scale projects are priorities for the next few months says Stanisław SZWABSKI, President of the European Alliance Group



Mr Szwabski with the CoR Conference of Presidents in Riga

During a recent visit of the Conference of Presidents and Bureau to Riga I highlighted the need to address with a sense of urgency the issue of Energy security. I am happy that this is one of the priorities of the Latvian Presidency and I believe it is fundamental that the EU acts quickly to reduce its dependence on one main external energy supplier and that all regions across the EU will benefit from the improvement of interconnection infrastructure and the diversification of energy sources.

We have previously welcomed the European Commission's investment

package and now we wish to see mechanisms put in place for small scale investment projects which can then have a real impact across local and regional governments in Europe. There also needs to be a balance which will address the deficit of investments in rural areas, towns and small cities. The focus should not only be on connectivity between the capital cities of Europe.

I am also very concerned about the continued uncertainty for the people of Ukraine. As CoR we too need to increase our level of activities and cooperation with Neighbourhood Countries Local and

Regional Authorities and ensure the EU, comes forward with initiatives to address this issue and concretely help the people of Ukraine. I believe that our added value in this regard can be huge but it requires stronger financial and institutional engagement from the European Union institutions.

Lastly the EA group will keep engaging with young people by organising our EA/CoR secondary schools competition. We hope to be able to bring them to the CoR Plenary in July.

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For the 10th consecutive year, the European Alliance group launched its highly acclaimed competition for secondary school students. The competition will give an opportunity to students from all across different

### EA group launched the 2015 edition of its Secondary Schools Competition

Europe Union regions to participate in a competition which will include an essay on a given EU related topic and a multiple choice questionnaire. Two most successful students from each participating school will visit Brussels and the Committee of the Regions on the occasion of its plenary session on 08th and 9th July 2015. They will have the opportunity to meet members of the

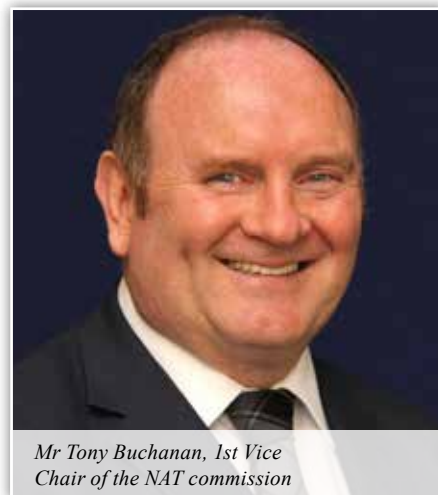
Committee of the Regions, present their schools and communities to them and discuss current EU matters. Winners of the competition will be known in the beginning of May.



## Rural areas are an integral part of our culture and our very way of life and have the real potential of dynamic economic growth says Mr Tony Buchanan, 1st Vice Chair of the NAT commission

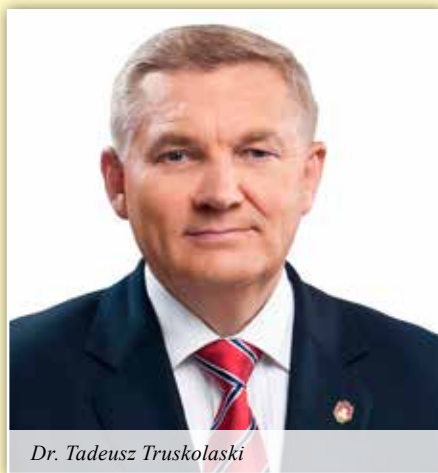
Newly elected 1st Vice Chair of the NAT commission Cllr Tony Buchanan stressed the importance of rural, agricultural and mountainous areas as crucial assets for local economic and social development and called on the European Institutions to take greater account of the needs of rural areas and to strike the right balance between urban and rural development policies. Rural areas have to cope with major complexities/concerns, which are due partly to internal factors and partly to external constraints, in particular agricultural. "I have no doubt that new

*economic activities, innovation and modernisation are vital for rural areas. Such activities complement farming. The new activities must, however, be introduced with care in order to avoid harming the quality of rural areas. There is real potential for developing new production and jobs in rural areas in the field of non-food crops. I agree with those who think that only a strong political will on the European scale can lead to such forward-looking approach. It is why the success of a rural development policy depends on it being financed properly and managed under conditions conducive to its*



Mr Tony Buchanan, 1st Vice Chair of the NAT commission

*greatest efficiency. I regret that the amount of funding allocated to rural development has been significantly cut back compared to the 2007-2013 financial perspective."- said Mr Buchanan 1st Vice Chair of the NAT Commission*



Dr. Tadeusz Truskolaski

## Dr. Tadeusz Truskolaski nominated rapporteur on Capital Markets Union

During the last ECON meeting Dr. Tadeusz Truskolaski was nominated the Rapporteur on Capital Markets Union, the European Commission's flagship project to build a single market for capital. It is a key part of overall drive to boost jobs and growth. If the €315 billion Investment Plan is aimed at kick-starting investment, the Capital Markets Union is about encouraging investment for the long-term.

*"Capital Markets Union is a key issue which is highly relevant in the debate surrounding the financing of SMEs and growth, as well as in relation to the completion of the single market. Building this Union is a long-term project. It is important for the CoR to be in the center of the discussion since the beginning" - said Dr. Truskolaski*

## Thomas appointed rapporteur on "Developing the potential of Ocean Energy"

Mr Rhodri Glyn Thomas has been appointed ENVE rapporteur on "Developing the potential of Ocean Energy". The Seas, oceans and lagoons offer a promising future as they could provide unlimited clean energy. With this own-initiative opinion the rapporteur would like to draw attention to the huge potential of ocean energy in achieving climate change objectives and delivering sustainable growth and green jobs at local level.

The CoR opinion would aim to raise awareness on the economic and environmental benefits for local communities in coastal areas of exploiting and investing in ocean energy. It will look at how Ocean Energy is being considered in the Investment Plan and in the Operational Programmes of the new ESIFs for 2014-2020 and promote exchange of knowledge and projects to ensure a broader take up.



Mr Rhodri Glyn Thomas

There will be an exchange of views at the next ENVE meeting with adoption scheduled at the October CoR plenary.

## NAT: European Alliance coordinator calls for EU policy to address depopulation and focus on a better quality of life

Cllr Enda Stenson, Member of Leitrim County Council, EA coordinator for the NAT commission, underlined that the quality of life in rural areas is a significant factor in the decisions taken by farmers, their families, the other professionals who exploit, add value to and process other primary resources, and other non-farming residents of rural municipalities about whether they should continue to live and work in these areas. He says that there needs to be a focus on job-creation in rural areas and the provision of services. Cllr Stenson said that he believes in an agriculture policy which

covers from "farm to fork"; ensuring that high quality, traceable agriculture products are plentiful, while the natural and environmental resources across our regions are protected.

**Cllr Stenson** mentioned that *"the systematic monitoring of the development for the post-quota period is needed from the farmers' point of views. Dairy production provides a vital economic activity that is difficult to replace and that also plays an important social and environmental role. The EU has to be prudent to avoid the similar crises as few years ago. Therefore,*



Mr Enda Stenson

*monitoring production is important to ensure better market adjustment and to reduce the price volatility of farmgate milk prices which represents a major short-term challenge."*

## SEDEC: investing in people knowledge should be a top priority of the EU



Mr Pavilas Žagunis

**Mr Pavilas Žagunis**, EA coordinator for SEDEC commission will give highest priority to education, lifelong learning and training as key instruments to increase participation in the labour market and tackling Europe's chronic youth unemployment levels. *"Universal access to education must be a key priority of the European Union. By investing in our schools, universities and colleges we will enhance and protect the wealth through learning. Ageing*

*population and low birth rates puts our social security and pension systems at stake and poses serious challenges for young people to have access to the labour market. Particular attention should be paid to the recognition of qualifications and any policy aimed at encouraging mobility and investments in entrepreneurial culture. I also believe that Europe's strength lies in its cultural heritage as well as in its diversity" said the EA group coordinator.*

## CIVEX: Subsidiarity must be at the core of the EU policy agenda



Mr Karl Vanlouwe

In the new mandate the CIVEX commission will deal with key priorities of high relevance for local and regional authorities such as the new Agenda for Migration and Security and the new Neighbourhood Policy. CIVEX members also concurred that Subsidiarity should be given prominence in the work of the commission.

**Mr Karl Vanlouwe**, EA Group political coordinator in the CIVEX commission and member of the Flemish Parliament

*added: "We don't have to look only at the relations between the EU and the Member States but also between the EU and national/regional parliaments". The mechanism of "early warning" to the European Commission needs to be adjusted in order to give regional parliaments a greater role in overseeing the implementation of the principle of subsidiarity. The EU initiatives should be closely monitored to make sure that EU legislation benefits the citizens and meets their expectations."*

## COTER: Urban- rural balanced development remains a top priority for our group



Mr Augusto Rollandin

The COTER commission will be following up on key files for local and regional authorities and the EU as a whole, such as the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the implementation of Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes. Special attention will also be devoted to new financial instruments in support of territorial development, and discussions will begin on the future cohesion policy post 2020 as well as on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) mid-term review.

**Mr Augusto Rollandin**, EA coordinator in the COTER commission and President of Valle D' Aosta Region, added: "Urban-rural balance and targeted policies to address depopulation in mountainous areas are important priorities for the EA group. Small and middle size cities play a fundamental in the implementation of balanced territorial development policies as they ensure linkages between urban and rural areas and help diversify rural economies. We have to make sure new investments are spread across all regions to avoid a further widening of the development gap between urban and rural areas.

## ENVE: Energy union should put citizens first says Cllr Andrew Cooper, EA Group coordinator

The ENVE commission will soon get down to business and hold discussions on fundamental issues such as the recently adopted package for an Energy Union with a forward looking climate change policy and the new proposal on a Circular Economy package which hopefully will be published before the end of the year, including recycling and waste targets.

**Cllr Andrew Cooper**, EA Group coordinator in the ENVE commission and Kirklees Councillor, stressed that the Energy Union must put the citizens first

*in order to be effective. The new strategy should be designed in such a way that it will bring affordable and cleaner energy to consumers and support local communities in building up their own renewable energy production systems. LRAs play a key role when it comes to making green public investment in local infrastructure, buildings, waste recycling plants and transport systems and help driving changes in the citizens' behaviour. We call for a coherent long-term vision for the renovation of the entire existing building stock and for more*



Mr Andrew Cooper

*funding opportunities to promote energy efficiency solutions at the local level.*

## ECON : European Alliance coordinator calls for new policies to spur enduring growth and create jobs at local level.

All new policies will have to be shaped to spur enduring growth and promote real job creation in local areas. The EU must invest more in education, innovation and research which are keys to attaining competitiveness advantages. The EU should mobilise private and public investments to revive economic growth and boost EU competitiveness in key high

*technologies sectors while ensuring a balanced development across all regions. "At local and regional authorities level we should use available resources and innovative financial instruments to mobilise additional funding and make ambitious long-term investments in education, lifelong learning, research and innovation, quality infrastructures, sustainable public transport and in*

*energy efficient technologies. I believe that supporting entrepreneurship, SMEs and social enterprises at a local and regional level are keys to facilitating a sustainable economic recovery" - underlines Dr. Tadeusz Truskolaski, EA coordinator for ECON Commission and Mayor of Białystok.*