

European Alliance Group

“European Union must deliver a vision for Europe” says Mr Stanisław Szwabski, European Alliance Group President



Mr Stanisław Szwabski, President of the EA group and Ms Nicola Sturgeon, First Minister of Scotland

In many of our regions, cities and rural areas we have taken the European Union for granted, but some of us remember why it was created and the great work it has done in ensuring solidarity, more prosperity and peace in our continent. The European Union needs to set out its vision and communicate it – we should not be speaking of different funds but more that it is the European Union who is delivering on agriculture, on cohesion,

on research in Universities, to name but a few areas. Local and regional authorities must be part of creating this vision and the CoR should be the bridge between the institutions and the regions.

This is also true when we speak of the current debate on ‘reflections on Europe’ and how we treat the Nations in the UK within the negotiations on BREXIT. I recently had the pleasure of meeting the Scottish First Minister and she has made a very strong case for Scotland’s voice to be taken on board in the negotiations. There are also regions across Europe, for example Flanders who will be affected and the CoR has a central role in bringing concerns of Nations, regions and local authorities to the EU negotiators.

Finally, during the July plenary session, we will warmly welcome our Secondary Schools competition winners to Brussels. We are very proud of the outstanding knowledge of the European Union these young students demonstrated during the competition and we hope they will enjoy the well-deserved opportunity to discover the EU institutions and meet members of the CoR.

The 12th edition of the EA/ CoR Secondary Schools Competition

Winners of the last edition of the EA/CoR Secondary Schools are joining the CoR plenary session on 12-13th July to experience one of the EU institutions in full action. The competition took place in eight member states, involving pupils with ages between 14-18 years. The competition’s first stage was a multiple choice test that assessed the pupils’ knowledge on the EU and the EU institutions, while the second one was to write an essay on the role of young people for the future success of the EU. Pupils from each participating school, with the best results in both stages will be participating in a three day study trip

to Brussels on the 11-13th July 2017. They will meet the current president and president-elect of the CoR, Mr Markku Markkula and Mr Karl-Heinz Lambertz, as well as members of the EA group. They will also have the opportunity to visit the European Parliament and learn about the history of the European Union at the European House of History. Lastly, on 13th July, a bus tour will take them around the city centre of Brussels.

This is the 12th time EA group has organized this competition which celebrates the diversity of Europe’s regions and gives young students a possibility to see first-hand how

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EU institutions work and meet their peers from across the continent.

"In many of our regions, cities and rural areas we have taken the European Union for granted, but some of us remember why it was created and the great work it has done in ensuring solidarity, prosperity and peace in our continent."

Mr Stanisław Szwabski, EA group president



European Alliance

Szwabski holds Citizens' debate in Gdynia

On 2 June 2017, EA group's President Mr Stanisław Szwabski, together with the City of Gdynia, hosted a European Committee of the Regions' citizens' debate "Europe – What Future?" as part of the European Committee of the Regions' Reflecting on Europe series.

Speakers in the debate included Members of the European Parliament, Mr Janusz Lewandowski and Mr Jan Olbrycht, Members of the European Committee of the Regions, EA members Mr Tadeusz Truskolaski and Mr Stanisław Szwabski, as well as the Deputy Head of the European Commission's

Representation Office in Poland – Ms Marzena Guz-Vetter.

Opening the debate, Mr Szwabski said: "This is an extremely important moment for the European Union, where nothing is yet decided. Europe is at a difficult point at the moment, and there are a number of crises. Solidarity, our beautiful Polish word, but also a wonderful concept of interpersonal cooperation, is an important element that must play a decisive role in the future of Europe because Europe is built on solidarity."

The debate, attended by around 200 people, and the Reflecting on Europe series aim to



"Europe – What Future?" debate in Gdynia

engage citizens into a dialogue about the future of the EU.



Mr Tony Buchanan, member of the East Renfrewshire Council

CoR Plenary set to adopt Tony Buchanan's opinion on International Ocean Governance

At its July Plenary session, the European Committee of the Regions is set to adopt an opinion on International Ocean Governance, prepared by Cllr **Tony Buchanan**, member of the East Renfrewshire Council, Scotland. In the opinion, Cllr Buchanan highlighted the need for the EU to be a strong global player able to set out an agenda for better ocean governance based on a cross-sectoral, rules-based international approach.

He has also stressed that many issues related to ocean governance are inevitably local due to resource extraction, economic benefit for coastal areas, fishing communities and ports or their environmental impact on Europe's coasts and seas, concluding that "Crucially, the wellbeing, safety and prosperity of our oceans are not just a matter for international institutions or large countries but our common responsibilities of countries regions and local communities have a stake in the future of our seas."

Dariusz Wróbel in Minsk to discuss energy efficiency and job creation with Eastern Partnership local authorities

On 22 May 2017, the Bureau of European Committee of the Regions' Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP) held its meeting in Belarus. The EA group was

represented at the meeting by **Mr Dariusz Wróbel**, CORLEAP Bureau Member and Mayor of Opole Lubelskie, Poland.

The meeting, which gathered representatives of local and regional administrations from

the EU and Eastern Partnership countries (Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) this time focused on energy efficiency, job creation and the development of tourism. It also provided an opportunity for a strategic debate on CORLEAP activities and recommendations to the 5th Eastern Partnership (EaP) Summit which will take place in November this year, against the background of developments which can bring a new impetus to the Eastern Dimension of the reviewed European Neighborhood policy.

At the end of the meeting, Mr Wróbel presented good practices from the town of Opole Lubelskie where the municipality installed 2000 rooftop photovoltaic panels and added that "sharing good practices with the neighbors is very important and protecting the climate and energy efficiency is our duty now as we live in times when we have to protect environment and use energy in a modern way".



Members of the CoR's CORLEAP delegation in Belarus

Szwabski meets Scottish First Minister and Convener of European Affairs committee in Edinburgh



Left to right: Ms Mairi Evans MSP and member CoR; Mr Stanisław Szwabski, President of the EA Group; Ms Joan McAlpine MSP, Convener of the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee; Mr Micheál Ó Conchuir, Secretary-General of the EA group

During a visit of the Conference of Presidents to the Scottish Parliament, the European Alliance Group President Mr Stanisław Szwabski met with the Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon as well as a number of key members of the Scottish Parliament and Joan McAlpine MSP, Convener of the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee.

The purpose of the visit was to hear from members the worrying consequences that BREXIT will have for Scotland with a risk for many job losses as well as severe consequences to EU citizens living in Scotland.

Members of the delegation have undertaken to report back the findings of the visit to the European Commission chief negotiator Michel Barnier.

CoR Plenary set to adopt Tadeusz Truskolaski's opinion on start-ups and scale-ups

The European Committee of the Regions' July Plenary Session is set to adopt the opinion on "Boosting start-ups and scale-ups in Europe", prepared by Mr **Tadeusz Truskolaski**, Mayor of Białystok and EA coordinator for the ECON Commission.

In the opinion, Mr Truskolaski welcomed the European Commission's communication and agreed with the concerns that the continuing excessive fragmentation of the single market (including the digital single market) might constrain the growth potential of start-ups and scale-ups.

"I particularly welcome the Commission's idea of creating a European venture capital fund of funds, which might reduce the market

fragmentation of venture capital funds in the EU. In the opinion I also suggest that the Commission consider creating a separate instrument dedicated to networking projects that support business development in less-developed regions", said Mr Truskolaski.

"I also think that EEN regional offices should be more open to cooperating with local business incubators, accelerators and science and technology parks, because these institutions are in daily and close contact with start-ups and are thus well aware of their real problems and needs. There is also the need for the European Commission to work towards laying the groundwork for a start-up visa and a catalogue of conditions enabling safe and beneficial use to be made



Mr Tadeusz Truskolaski, Mayor of Białystok

of qualified intellectual and financial capital from third countries that is able to contribute to the development of the EU economy".



Mr Mikel Irujo Amezaga, Delegate of the Government of Navarra in Brussels

Mikel Irujo organises "Erasmus: building together the future of the EU" citizens' debate in Pamplona

As part of the European Committee of the Regions' "Reflecting on Europe" series of debates with citizens, EA group member Mr **Mikel Irujo Amezaga**, Delegate of the Government of Navarra in Brussels organised an event on the 30th anniversary of the Erasmus Programme.

The event, held on 9 May in Pamplona, saw participation by representatives of the local government in Navarra, including the President Ms Uxue Barkos, representatives of the Universidad Pública de Navarra (UPNA), members of the European Committee of the Regions, as well as former Erasmus exchange

students who talked about their experiences and the positive impact the programme had on their personal and professional development. Particular attention was also given to the impact of Erasmus on Europe's regions.

Erasmus was initiated in 1987 as an exchange programme that gave higher education students a taste of life and learning abroad. After several modifications over the past years, it is currently part of the Erasmus+, the EU's overarching programme for education, training, youth and sport.

7th Cohesion Forum: Nanette Maupertuis calls for more attention to island territories and more support for innovative projects

On 26-27 June 2017 Brussels hosted the 7th Cohesion Forum, a large scale political event bringing together high level representatives from EU institutions, national governments, regional and local authorities. Speakers included President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Parliament, Antonio Tajani, Prime Minister of Malta, Joseph Muscat as well as EU Commissioners, national ministers and presidents of regions.

During the forum, **Ms Marie-Antoinette Maupertuis**, member of the Executive Council of the Corsica Regional authority called for future cohesion policy to particularly take into account the constraints of island and mountainous areas. She highlighted that “the future Cohesion policy should allow for



Ms Marie-Antoinette Maupertuis, member of the Executive Council of the Corsica Regional authority

greater combination between Structural and Investment Funds and the European Fund for Strategic Investments so as to enable the financing of innovative projects and smart solutions supported by the use of ICT and targeting the management of infrastructures, natural resources and environment.”

Participants highlighted the crucial role of cohesion policy in promoting solidarity, convergence and investments across all EU regions. At the same time, different options have been discussed in the light of the scenarios outlined in the European Commission's White paper on the future of the EU, particularly regarding the need to fill gaps resulting from UK exit and to ensure an added value of EU policies.

“Education above everything”, Marek Tramś praises EU-financed education projects in Polkowice district

PLN 34 154 387.62 — this is the amount the Polkowice district has received from the European Union in the past ten years. The largest proportion - more than 38% - was obtained by the district for scholarship projects, work placements abroad, refitting of workshops, and recently for the thermal modernisation of the School Complex in Polkowice. More than PLN 11 million was received for land surveying and reparcelling in Koźlice and Szklary Dolne. “We have used EU money to finance investments in environmental protection, as well as projects to promote employment and combat social

exclusion, and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the local authority”, said Marek Tramś, head of Polkowice district.

Mr Tramś added that “as a highly developed district, with the lowest unemployment rate in the country, we were not eligible to benefit from many funds for the development and modernisation of infrastructure, but we still obtained substantial amounts, especially now in the framework of EU regional programme funds”.

Read the full article about current EU-financed education projects in Polkowice district on www.ea.cor.europa.eu



Mr Marek Tramś, Head of Polkowice district



Mr Stanisław Szwabski, President of the EA group and Steffan Lewis AM, member of the National Assembly for Wales

Szwabski meets Welsh Assembly external affairs committee and Plaid Cymru member Steffan Lewis

On 27 June, a delegation from the Welsh Assembly's external affairs committee visited the European Committee of the Regions to present their views on the implications UK withdrawal from the EU will have on Wales. On that occasion, President of the EA group Mr Stanisław Szwabski welcomed Plaid Cymru member Steffan Lewis AM and outlined the excellent work of Plaid Cymru members in the CoR.