

European Alliance Group

Rome Summit is time to reflect on the positive achievements of the European Union



The EA Group President Mr Szwabski with the President of the European Council Mr Tusk

As leaders gather for the 60 year anniversary of the Rome treaty it is time for all of us to reflect on the hugely positive achievements of the European Union since its inception. The greatest peace project that Europe has known, a Union where social and economic cohesion has been a priority and we have seen the results in our regions, where our young peo-

ple know more freedom to live work and study across the EU, a possibility which did not exist for some of the newer Member States a short few decades ago. Let us use this reflection on Rome to see where the European Committee of the Regions can add to the better understanding of Europe, where we can positively engage to take the 'next steps' for the EU.

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Our group will hold a meeting in Corsica on EU policies for island, mountain and rural areas on the 3rd April. This is a huge opportunity for us to take forward the very clear priority of the Maltese Presidency and the great work being undertaken by our member Mrs Marie Antoinette Maupertuis. It's a crucial time for the formulation of the next Cohesion Policy and we intend to be very active in the debate.

I would like to personally welcome the re-election of the President of the European Council Mr Donald Tusk, he has done huge work in the last few years, has fully engaged with the CoR in asking us to be part of the work on *reflecting the EU*, and I know that we have so much more which can be achieved with him as President of one of the pillar EU institutions.



EA Group launches Secondary Schools Competition 2017

The European Alliance group has launched its popular Secondary Schools Competition for the 12th year in a row. Young people from around 10 member states will compete to have the opportunity to visit the Committee of the Regions and present their schools and Regions to EA Group members. They will also observe a CoR Plenary Meeting in action on the 12 July

2017. The competition will consist of a multiple choice Quiz and a very topical essay question which asks for discussions of how young people can contribute to the future success of the European Union. In previous years we have found the event to be a richly rewarding learning experience for all involved and we look forward to welcoming the winners to Brussels.

Without a European Cohesion Policy territorial divide will increase

On 2-3 March the COTER commission met in Warsaw to discuss the future of Cohesion policy in the presence of Commissioner Crețu and ministers from 8 Member States including the Visegrad countries.

The publication of the White Paper on the future of Europe provided members with the opportunity to reaffirm the key role of Cohesion policy in the European project and in addressing regional disparities.

The EA Member, and mayor of Bialystok, Mr Tadeusz Truskolaski said during the meeting that the EU should get back to its roots and show the spirit of solidarity it is based upon. He called for continuous support for less developed regions "in order to avert the risk of depopulation and loss of human capital".

The less developed regions face increasing budgetary constraints and without the European support the disparities among regions would only grow. Hence, a strong cohesion policy, equipped with sufficient funds, is needed to provide internal stability and reassure all European citizens about the positive effects of European integration.

In his speech he also called for a rethinking of the implementation systems. "Local and regional authorities as well as project promoters have to cope with complex procedures and numerous requirements, many of which are of limited added value. This results in significant delays in the implementation of the projects and impact of the effectiveness of the policy as a whole".



Mr Tadeusz Truskolaski

During the meeting COTER also approved unanimously the draft on entrepreneurship in islands drafted by the EA member Mrs Marie-Antoinette Maupertuis.

EA Members call for a strong Common Agriculture Policy post 2020



Mr Tony Buchanan

On 8 March Mr Tony Buchanan, 1st Vice Chair of NAT Commission chaired the Conference on how the future CAP can cope with goals set out in the Juncker investment plan to relaunch growth and jobs in Europe. This conference had a double objective. First of all it was to launch a political momentum for debating all aspects of the future CAP from local and regional perspective. Second objective was to serve as a basis for the preparation of an outlook opinion of the CoR on the future of the CAP after 2020 which was requested by the European Commission's Vice-President Frans Timmermans. "The preservation of agricultural activity across the Union and a vibrant rural fab-

ric in order to meet the objective of territorial cohesion set out in the Treaty of Lisbon is one of our main priorities." – he said.

During the debate Mr Enda Stenson, EA coordinator for NAT commission called for better education for young farmers. They should be encouraged to continue their hard work because our future food safety and food independence is in their hands. "I believe that there has not been enough done for the rural agenda across Europe. We need to encourage and educate young farmers. The tools are also necessary to facilitate jobs in rural communities. There has got to be some incentive for young farmers. We need them."



Mr Czesław Adam Siekerski, MEP, Mr Enda Stenson and Mr Dariusz Strugała

Mr Dariusz Strugała, Member of the Board of Rural Communes of Poland said that “speaking about CAP we should also have in mind the whole infrastructure in the rural communes. We can observe the movement of the people from the cities to the rural areas for the better quality of life but with a lot of expectations too from their communes. It is why it the cohesion policy is so important to help the rural areas develop”.

European Alliance Group to adopt Aiacciu declaration on island, mountain and rural areas

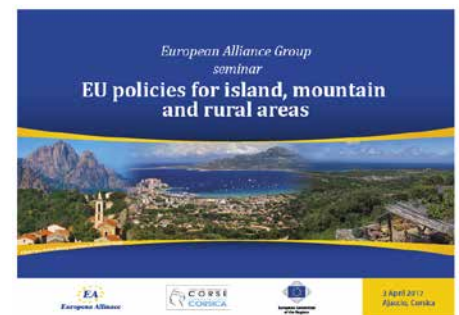
On 2-3 April, the European Alliance Group will hold its external meeting in Aiacciu, Corsica, upon the invitation of the President of the Executive Council of Corsica, Mr Gilles Simeoni.

The EA Group members will adopt a declaration looking to EU policies for island, mountain and rural areas.

In the context of the EU objective of ensuring territorial economic and social cohesion and balanced development across all EU regions, the treaties recognise special attention to territories

with structural geographic and demographic handicaps such as island, mountain and rural areas. However, regional disparities are increasing and current support mechanisms do not fully take into account their specificities. The objective of the meeting will be to provide a better understanding of constraints faced by island, mountain and rural areas and will seek to put forward recommendations for future EU policies to improve the state of cohesion in these areas.

Mrs Marie Antoinette Maupertuis, member of the executive Council of Corsica and CoR rapporteur



on the draft opinion” entrepreneurship (and cohesion policy) in islands”, adopted unanimously by the COTER commission, will also present the case of Corsica” as mountainous islands.

The CoR Assembly to approve Mikel Irujo Amezaga opinion on Smart Specialisation

During the March 2017 Plenary Session the CoR Members will discuss the opinion of Mr Mikel Irujo Amezaga, Member of EA Group from Navarra. In the opinion the Rapporteur considers that RIS3 offer added value to regional and local governments, generating cross-sectoral and interregion-

al joint projects and investments which are particularly beneficial in terms of industrial renewal. “Navarra is a good example for RIS3, it is why I’ve undertook this opinion from my initiative. I consider that RIS3 should not be restricted to matters of research, innovation and business development but should focus on more aspects of the economy. In the opinion I also recommend close coordination with the monitoring of regional ERDF OPs and the use of harmonised regional criteria developed in this regard, which according to the EC can be divided into “resource indicators”, “output indicators” and “result indicators” (qualitative and quantitative).” -he said.

The Rapporteur pointed out that promoting synergies between the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIFs) and Horizon 2020 is one of the priorities for the 2014-2020 period. He believes that regional S3s should be taken into account effectively in all European policies, including when

implementing cohesion policy and not only when implementing the ERDF.

“With our experience in Navarra I would like to recommend the reform of the current regulatory framework, before the end of the 2014-2020 period, giving new impetus both to synergies between the European Structural and Investment Funds and programmes and to interregional cooperation. It is also necessary to strengthen the S3 objectives on inclusive and sustainable growth and job creation. A new RIS3 legal act fills the current gap and the lack of harmonisation in the design, drafting, implementation, monitoring and follow-up of RIS3. It is important to make urgent provision for appropriate ad hoc financing instruments to foster interregional cooperation. In my opinion in the future, Horizon 2020 should propose a territorial approach linking European research and innovation policy to RIS3”. - he added.



Mr Mikel Irujo

ARLEM: local leaders commit to work jointly to help stabilize North Africa and Middle East

The conflict in Libya and the challenges of migration and climate change were particular concerns for the mayors, governors and regional representatives at the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM), which met in Malta on 23 February.

Members of ARLEM, who are drawn from the European Committee of the Regions (EA Group) was represented by Mrs Marie Antoinette Maupertuis

and Mr Emil Draghici) and from non-EU states in the Mediterranean region, pointed to recent cooperation with Libyan cities as evidence that, even in difficult circumstances, cities can forge partnerships that contribute to stabilization.

During the meeting ARLEM also adopted a report on cross-border cooperation in the Mediterranean. The EA member Mrs Maupertuis highlighted



Ms Marie Antoinette Maupertuis

the need for major cross border programmes to share local based knowledge and innovation potential across the Mediterranean.

Karl Vanlouwe to attend conference on EU funding for the integration of migrants



Mr Karl Vanlouwe

On 29 March in Brussels, Mr Karl Vanlouwe, member of the Flemish Parliament and Vice President of the Senate, will attend the conference on EU funding instruments supporting LRAs efforts in the integration of third country nationals

Given the central role played by local and regional authorities in the implementation of integration measures, Mr Vanlouwe, who was also the COR rapporteur on the opinion on the EU action plan will highlight the need for the European Commission to rely more heavily on the use of partnership arrangements so as to ensure the needs

and priorities of regions are taken into account by the Member States when defining the programmes.

Under the current Multi-annual Financial Framework 2014-2020, EUR 765 million has been earmarked by Member States for integration under their the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund national programmes. Significant amounts are available to Member States for the current programming period under the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds), and there is considerable scope for these funds to support integration measures.

Gilles Simeoni elected President of CPMR Island commission

The European Alliance Group would like to congratulate Mr Gilles Simeoni, President of the Executive Council of Corsica for his election as Chair of the Island Commission of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR).

We look forward to working with him not only as member of the Group but also as President of CPMR to ensure islands needs and specificities are duly

taken into account in the EU post 2020 Cohesion Policy.

The Island commission is one of the geographic commissions of CPMR, representing Island Regional Authorities. The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions brings together 160 Regions in 25 States from the European Union and beyond. It campaigns in favour of a more balanced development of the European territory.



Mr Gilles Simeoni