

## European Alliance Group

### *“Promoting ‘Cohesion’ is vital for the citizens of Europe” says Mr Stanisław Szwabski, European Alliance Group President*



*Mr Stanisław Szwabski, President of the European Alliance Group*

In May the European Committee of the Regions focusses on the future of Cohesion policy and investment at local and regional level. Our group has been very active in contributing to these policies and indeed the discussion comes only a few weeks after the adoption of our European Alliance Aiacciu (Corsica) declaration on ‘EU policies for island, mountain and rural areas’. Indeed our group meeting demonstrated a clear passion for the need of Cohesion poli-

cy to pay more attention to these areas. The opinion I have undertaken on regeneration of Port cities as well as Mikel Irujo’s on ‘Smart Specialisation Strategies (RIS3)’ that highlighted the impact for regions and cities and the importance on inter-regional cooperation have also contributed to the debate. Ms Marie-Antoinette Maupertuis’s opinion on entrepreneurship and territorial cohesion in Islands will also be discussed at this plenary.

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This is an occasion for us as local and regional representatives to reiterate the point that the Juncker plan should complement and not replace Structural and Cohesion policy.

I was very happy to see the European Committee of the Regions adopt a resolution in March on the ‘Rule of Law in the EU from a local and regional perspective’. I think that this is a fundamental pillar of our democracy and needs to be respected across all Member States of the EU.

Lastly, I welcome the efforts of the CoR to reach out to citizens via a series of city debates. We have a huge opportunity via local and regional authorities to engage with our people and discuss the future of Europe. I look forward to organising a debate in my city of Gdynia.

## CoR to adopt Ms Maupertuis opinion on entrepreneurship on islands



Ms Marie Antoinette Maupertuis with MEP Tonino Picula

On 12 May the CoR will adopt the opinion of Ms Marie Antoinette Maupertuis, EA member from the Executive Council of Corsica, on entrepreneurship in islands.

In her opinion, Ms Maupertuis argues that cohesion policy is essential for the development of islands and that most challenges for SMEs and entrepreneurs can be tackled by adequate public sup-

port policies.

*"Entrepreneurs in island regions and island citizens in general have to cope with structural constraints, which lead to additional costs that severely impact the islands' growth and development prospects as well as their fair integration in the single market.*

*We demand that in cohesion policy post 2020 special attention be given to islands in order to compensate for the economic effects of natural constraints and that the complete territorial integration of island*

*populations in single market be ensured so that they are given the same opportunities in production, innovation and trade as those living on the mainland", said Ms Maupertuis.*

She further called on EU institutions and Member States to extend business incentives, to ease public procurement and state-aid rules (particularly for transport and energy), and to give more concerted financial, technical and policy support to help entrepreneurs diversify economic activities on islands.



EA group members with Dr Ian Borg, Malta's Parliamentary Secretary for EU Presidency 2017 and EU Funds, during the ECON seminar "Developing entrepreneurship in insular areas: Challenges, opportunities and policy responses"

## Cllr Stenson calls on the European Commission BREXIT negotiator to make a special case for the Border

On 22<sup>nd</sup> March, European Commission BREXIT negotiator Michel Barnier participated in a debate at the European Committee of the Regions, where he outlined the process for Article 50 negotiations with the UK.

Leitrim County Councillor Enda Stenson had an opportunity to meet Mr Barnier and also put the case for special treatment of the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland. Cllr Stenson said during the debate: "coming from a border county in Ireland I can tell you that citizens on both sides are very worried on the impact that the UK leaving the EU will have on their daily lives. For our farming community it will be devastating and we need to find a solution which reflects what currently

exists for the 'island of Ireland'".

Cllr Stenson also said: "The European Union has been good for its Member States and in particular for Ireland. And I would like to reiterate that I believe that Ireland must and will remain in the European Union. We need to work together not apart."

Mr Barnier responded that, having been previously Commissioner for Regional policy and with responsibility for the PEACE programme, he was fully aware of the difficulties in Ireland.

The Committee also adopted a resolution which calls for action to limit the impact on on-going European Union programmes and projects. Among its requests, the CoR calls for "special attention" to fisheries, a deal that addresses

the "potentially significant" impact – in particular on the island of Ireland – on the EU's farmers, rural areas and biodiversity, as well as "temporary arrangements so as to minimise disruption to the current long-standing R&D projects, and by extension to local economies".



Cllr Enda Stenson with Mr Michel Barnier





## EA Group adopts Ajaccio declaration on 'EU policies for island, mountain and rural areas'

On 3 April 2017, on the invitation of Marie Antoinette Maupertuis, member of the executive Council of Corsica, and in the presence of Gilles Simeoni, its President, the European Alliance Group held its extraordinary meeting in Ajaccio and adopted a declaration on 'EU policies for island, mountain and rural areas'.

The European Alliance Group calls for EU policies and funding instruments to recognise the specific needs of island re-

gions such as Corsica and that insularity clauses should be inserted in relevant EU programmes after 2020, notably in initiatives to improve accessibility, transport connections, renewable energy production and innovation.

Marie Antoinette Maupertuis, who is also the CoR rapporteur on the opinion "Entrepreneurship on islands", highlighted the difficulty of island entrepreneurs to compete with their peers from

the mainland, as they face higher costs that are eventually passed on to the consumer due to remoteness, lack of economy of scale and higher costs for energy, transport and services.

Stanisław Szwabski, President of the European Alliance Group added: *"the EA Group will continue advocating for a balanced and harmonious development across all EU regions and for adequate support to islands and peripheral regions and will pursue a change, via the EU institutions, in future policies and funding so that they are more reflective of island, mountain and rural areas"*.



Mr Stanisław Szwabski

## EA Group President welcomes adoption of the CoR's resolution "Rule of Law in the EU from a local and regional perspective"

The March plenary of the European Committee of the Regions adopted a substantial resolution on rule of law in the EU from a local and regional perspective. The resolution supports the European Parliament's initiative, launched towards the end of 2016, advocating for the single EU mechanism on democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights and promotes the active role of civil society organisations and NGOs in democratic processes. The resolution also calls for a

proper separation of powers as an essential element of the checks and balances characterising a rule-of-law structure.

Mr Stanisław Szwabski welcomed the resolution as a strong message that National and Sub-National governments must respect the fundamental freedoms of the European Union and that there cannot be any move towards undermining democracy across the European Union.

## Mr Tadeusz Truskolaski leads the CoR mission of the EER jury delegation to Lombardy

On 5 April 2017, Mr Tadeusz Truskolaski, President of Białystok and EA Rapporteur on Start-up and Scale-up initiative, chaired the CoR mission of the European Entrepreneurial Region (EER) jury delegation to Lombardy. The EER Award is an initiative of the European Committee of the Regions that identifies and rewards EU regions and cities with outstanding, future-oriented entrepreneurial strategies. The territories with the most credible, visible, forward-looking and promising political strategy are granted the EER label for a specific year. Twenty-one EU regions and cities have been awarded the EER label

so far. Lombardy is one of the three EER winners of the year 2016, together with Małopolska (PL) and Glasgow (UK).

*“Through the EER award, the European Committee of the Regions supports the implementation of SME-focused policies in Europe’s regions and cities. The local and regional levels are those who provide the framework for productive, innovative investments, speed up the creation of employment and are able to raise the level of education and training. Local and regional authorities play a key role in achieving the Europe 2020 objectives and in stimulating growth and jobs”,* said Mr Truskolaski.



Mr Tadeusz Truskolaski

## Energy, environment and climate change: “Local government must play bigger role in achieving targets”, says Cllr Andrew Cooper

On 24 April the ENVE commission held a debate on the Environment Implementation Review and discussed the Energy Package in the presence of the European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu Vella.

The EA Group coordinator in the ENVE commission and CoR rapporteur on EIR, Cllr Andrew Cooper (Member of Kirklees Council, UK) called upon the Commission to extend the scope of EIR to climate change.

*“Establishing locally determined contributions could be an important step*



Cllr Andrew Cooper with Commissioner Karmenu Vella

*in bridging the emissions gap to deliver Paris Agreement targets. Implementation happens at local level and LRAs must play a bigger role in the political dialogues between the Commission and the member States.*

*Local authorities are not always consulted by their central government while*

*they are the one that put in place effective measures and initiatives to protect the environment and achieve the energy transition.*

*In this respect, we would like to see the role of local government to be reflected in the Energy Union governance”,* Cllr Cooper said.