

European Alliance Group



Taking CoR steps towards innovative regions

■ By EA Group President

A number of weeks ago the European Commission launched the Innovation Union Flagship Communication

which as it is stated will be a bold move in the right direction for European economic recovery and renewed competitiveness. Our group supports the view that the EU, its Member States, its Regions and local authorities must be more innovative and take steps to ensuring a culture of innovation is embedded in our regions. Innovation does not necessarily mean 'new' but maybe better ways of doing things, we have to start strategically thinking, of how we can make sure our regions, cities and communities are to the forefront of new jobs creation in the future.

Our members are and have undertaken a number of key opinions where innovation is and will be key, the Public Health opinion is to be discussed in the December plenary is of vital importance to all our citizens. Our

biodiversity opinion is key, in this UN year of Biodiversity and of course Biomass is a major issue for the future.

The Commission is advocating a strong CAP which ensures 'food security', quality and diversity of food and creating local employment, and we welcome these aims. It is vitally important that the EU has a very strong Common Agriculture policy and we will contribute to developing ideas to ensure this is the case. As a Group, we are in favour of assuring sufficient resources are available for the development of rural areas.

Lastly, the most innovative people are often our youth, the real leaders of the future, and to this end I have the huge pleasure of launching our second Primary Schools art competition where young children are depicting "My Region, My Christmas". I hope that you take time to view the results of their artistic impressions of Christmas in their regions and may we wish you all a very **Happy Christmas and all our best wishes for a successful 2011.**

Christmas in our regions - in the eyes of a child

How does the celebration of Christmas look like in areas such as Łubianka (Poland), Mechelen (Belgium), Vulcana - Băi (Romania) or Musselburgh (Scotland)? As the result of the EA drawing competition show traditions are 'different' across our regions.

Christmas is celebrated in most of European regions. The way it is celebrated differs from region to region. To highlight the importance of cultural heritage and to identify the role of Christmas traditions in their regions but also to engage children in a creative exercise, to support their creativity and in-

novative ideas expressed through art, members of the EA group decided to organize a drawing competition for children between ages 7 - 14.

Fourteen primary schools from eight different member states have been involved in the project launched end of September.

The best three art works from each school have been awarded by the EA group in the Committee of the Regions.

A booklet including the best drawings has been published, winners' art works being converted into postcards. The best drawings are exposed and can be seen in the Committee of the Regions building in Brussels during the month of December 2010.

Members of the EA group consider the competition a great success, imaginative and colourful drawings have been received,

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which show the regional diversity of Europe through the eyes of a child.

The EA group congratulates the children for their efforts as well as coordinating teachers for the support shown in organizing the competition.

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Adam Banaszak, EA Rapporteur on Health Strategy

EDUC Commission to hold meeting in Edinburgh during 2011

On the proposal of Mr Roger Knox, Member of East Lothian Council, EA Group coordinator, EDUC Commission will organize the meeting of the Commission and the seminar in Edinburgh on: "Social inclusion in education and sport" late May/early June 2011. Sport has become a new competence of the EU with the Treaty of Lisbon, and therefore sport has also become a new priority for the CoR and the EDUC Commission. The objective of the meeting is to prepare future EU and CoR actions in this field in view of implementing the Lisbon Treaty after ratification, on the basis of priorities set for the sport. Future EU initiatives in the field of sport include education and training in sport; volunteering in sport; informal working groups and the fight against doping.

"The aim of this conference is also to reflect on the new competences in the field of sport on EU level and the issue raised by the

Belgian Presidency regarding the relation between formal and informal structures for sport and the societal role of sport, including fair play. It is also to show how the sport was transformed into reality and has become an activity throughout many parts of Scotland, involving many young men and women who would otherwise not been involved in physical activity or in social life

and to show how sport can help in a number of ways in the education and training of children, young people and adults. It is also to help young people reach their potential and inspire them through the sport" Mr Knox said. He also warmly welcomed the opportunity this meeting could give for the exchange of best practices concerning sport and looks forward to the European Year of Volunteering 2011 and asks for appropriate attention for volunteering in the sport sector.



Local and regional authorities more actively involved in shaping EU policy in this field – says the EA Rapporteur on Health Strategy



For adoption in the December CoR Plenary, the opinion on "The role of the local and re-

gional authorities in the implementation of the Health Strategy 2008-2013" of Mr Adam Banaszak, Member of Kujawsko -Pomorskie Regional Council and EA group coordinator in the NAT commission, highlights the need to show the importance of the regional and local health players in the planning, management, operation and development of the health sector and the role they are playing in preventive medicine and health promotion programmes.

The economic crisis should not be used to reduce finance or measures promoting healthy lifestyles and health promotion programmes. The opinion has been drafted as part of the CoR's participation in the discussion on the future Strategy after 2013 and suggests a number of ways in which local and regional authorities can become more effective partners in the development of EU health strategy.

Mr Banaszak is also supportive of initiatives geared towards introducing new technolo-

gies, for example an electronic health card, containing a basic package of information about the patient, or other solutions, which make individual patients' information more easily accessible across the EU. In this opinion the Rapporteur proposes making it easier for EU funds to be used for health-related programmes, the creation of a one-stop-shop for information on potential funding opportunities and a greater contribution from EU funds for cross-border cooperation in this field. The rapporteur argues that it is vital to continue allocating European resources to cohesion funds and to monitor their effectiveness, including through the use of social health indicators. The continued application of cohesion policy at European level will have a direct impact on the health of the people of Europe.

EU strategy for the Baltic Sea Region – present and future

The year which has passed since the adoption of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) is sufficient to confirm the importance of the European Council's 2007 initiative. This is our assessment, not just because eight of the nine Baltic countries are now EU Member States. Nor even because this region was so painfully divided and for so long by the Iron Curtain, forming the front line of the Cold War.

I believe that the key to the success of European integration, and therefore to the prosperity of the whole Community, lies in the BSR. This is a region with very great contrasts and problems. We are conscious of the scale of the disparities, of the seriousness of the region's problems – mainly environmental but also in the political, energy, communication and economic areas (maritime industries – primarily shipbuilding).

In this we differ for example, from the Central European region which is fairly uniform in terms of its standard of living and accessibility.

Belief in the success of the BSR Strategy is not based on the belief that the BSR will be the "European Region of the 21st century". We do not need a league table, because if there is a leader there always has to be a laggard.

I shall therefore assess the importance of the Baltic Strategy from a different perspective.

The decision of the European Parliament,

the European Council, the Commission and the Swedish Presidency a year ago to recommend a public consultation gave us an innovative method for integration and cooperation – "high-tech" integration, an integrated and functional approach. And an integrated approach means cohesion and solidarity, which in turn implies the absolute primacy of the regions and cities, the public and their organisations, universities and colleges, and cultural institutions. This involvement – at least in the Pomeranian region – manifested itself during the consultative stage of the Action Plan. Both the regional government and the associations of towns and non-governmental organisations strove actively – and successfully – for the addition to the list of 70 flagship projects of projects of priority importance for the European Union, Poland and the Pomeranian region.

This is the first EU Strategy to be so socially inclusive and it is therefore potentially the most effective to date. This Strategy also allows for crucial interventions in the whole structure of cooperation – and in particular fills a gap between the national and the Community levels in the system of development planning.

Poland has adopted modern principles of development planning, introducing the principle of multilevel governance – i.e. at the local, regional and national levels.

The principles of subsidiarity and complementarity are applied in the National Regional Development Strategy 2010-2020,



adopted by the Polish government in July of this year. It introduces a new instrument of territorial cooperation – principally for local and regional authorities – in the form of a "territorial contract". This Strategy will form the basis for the allocation of the next round of European funding for the period 2014-2020.

A pre-condition for the effectiveness of the Strategy – the coordination of activities carried out in the context of all policies with a territorial impact – has already been implemented in the Pomeranian region – and in various dimensions.

The work of the Pomeranian region – and in particular of the Greater Gdańsk Metropolitan Area, with its population of 1.2 million, in jointly accomplishing the goals of the Baltic Strategy will, of course, be gradually stepped up – especially in the period after 2013. In the coming year we intend to organise a public consultation aimed at popularising the Baltic Strategy during the Polish EU Presidency. We therefore expect greater commitment on the part of the European Commission and the governments to developing the subsidiarity principle – in connection with the implementation of the Baltic Strategy Action Plan.

Cllr Mrs Gillham welcomes UN agreement on biodiversity conservation and recognition to the key role of Local and regional authorities (LRAs)

On 29 October during the tenth Conference of Parties (COP 10) 193 nations meeting in Nagoya (Japan) came to an ambitious agreement on biodiversity conservation.

With the Nagoya Protocol, parties are committed to putting in place concrete actions to stop biodiversity loss by 2020 and agree that developing countries get equitable access and benefits of their genetic resources. By 2020, the adopted declaration states, "at least 17 percent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 percent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, must be preserved".

Linda Gillham, Runnymede Councillor and CoR rapporteur on biodiversity, welcomes this breakthrough agreement, which defines a realistic world wide commitment to stop biodiversity loss, and expresses her deep satisfaction over the adoption of the Plan of Action on Sub-national Governments, Cities and other Local Authorities and Biodiversity (2011-2020).

"I am glad that the international community has finally given LRAs the right place in shaping International biodiversity policy and recognition to their key role in biodiversity conservation, Mrs Linda Gillham said. LRAs are crucial to attain the biodiversity objectives as conservation is primarily done



at local level and not negligible is their role when adopting new policies. I hope that LRA will now be more supported and equipped of adequate means to implement the Convention on Biological Biodiversity and to mainstream biodiversity in other sectors, she added.

Cllr Brian Meaney participated in election observation team in Ukraine



Clare County Cllr Brian Meaney participated in a Council of Europe - CoR joint delegation to observe local elections in Ukraine on 31 October 2010.

Prior to the Election Day, the CoR delegation, composed by one representative for each of the four CoR political groups, met with

representatives of Ukraine government and the opposition as well as of NGO's and Media.

The members of the observation delegation expressed concern over the electoral law for local and regional elections that had been passed by the Ukrainian Parliament just some weeks prior to the elections. They stated that as a consequence of this hastily drafted law, there were shortcomings with regard to the preparation phase, in particular, the registration of candidates and the composition of electoral commissions, the organisational framework and the counting of votes on election night. The latter was marked by a lack of training in some polling stations and, in general, by overly long counting procedures.

Cllr Brian Meaney said that the new rules imposed were not helpful, hindered the



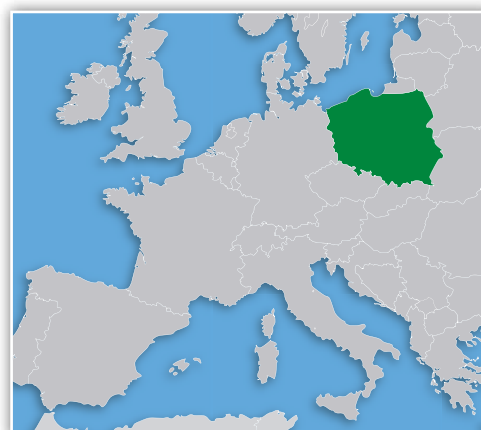
election process and led to confusion. He said many improvements were needed in the Ukrainian election procedure. He also added that the turnout was unfortunately low. However he highlighted the importance of the CoR in being involved with the Council of Europe in promoting democracy and the rights of people to vote.

Mr Witold Krochmal bestowed with the honour of the "Knight's cross" in Poland



Mr Witold Krochmal received the Knight's cross from the President of the Republic of Poland for his remarkable achievements in the fields of the development of the local democracy in Poland.

In general this decoration can be conferred for the different achievements in the fields of the education, sciences, of sport, of the culture, arts, of the economy, of the defence of the country, of social or civil works, or for the maintenance of good relations between the countries. It was created on 4 February



1921 and can be allocated both to civilians and to soldiers and to foreigners. European Alliance group members warmly congratulated Mr Krochmal on receiving this honour at the October group meeting.

Upcoming meetings:

December 2010

- 1** EA Group meeting
- 1** EA Group announcement of Primary Schools Art Competition
- 1-2** CoR Plenary session
- 9** Croatia Joint Consultative Committee
- 9** Ad-hoc working group on the future of EU budget

- 10** ENVE commission meeting
- 13** CIVEX commission meeting
- 14** NAT commission meeting
- 14** FYROM Joint Consultative Committee meeting

January 2011

- 26** EA bureau meeting
- 26** Conference of Presidents
- 26** CoR bureau meeting
- 27** EA Group meeting
- 27-28** CoR plenary session
- 29** ARLEM Plenary

EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions

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