

## European Alliance Group

# Time to 'spring' into action for the CoR to help the EU deliver results

■ Mr Jerzy Zajękała, President of the EA Group, Mayor of Łubianka



As we see the passing of another Spring Summit we need to see how we can actually deliver on increased growth and job creation in our local and regional authorities, communities and cities across the EU. The CoR and its members should be pivotal to ensuring that those bodies closest to our people have a role in the creation of conditions which could stimulate job creation and economic growth. The reality is that local and regional government are not usually given the resources, or adequate resources, to deliver on what could be achieved.

The situation across countries in North Africa is very worrying indeed and we hope that

coordinated EU efforts may reduce the effects on the local citizens. It is in all of our interest that democracy is fostered in all the Countries affected in a peaceful manner as quickly as possible. At a recent meeting I had with the President of Sicily Mr Lombardo, it was highlighted to me the effects of the flow of migration to some of the islands around Sicily, this is also indeed true for Malta and other Mediterranean islands. I believe that this is a European Union issue and should be dealt with as such. Regions such as Sicily should not be left isolated and should be assisted in dealing with the large numbers of migrants.

Lastly, as a group we always try and focus our meetings on developing EU policies and with this in mind we scheduled our group meeting in the Isle of Arran, Scotland, on the 21<sup>st</sup> March to focus on *developing an EU sustainable tourism policy*. The results of the meeting will be included in our next newsletter. In the meantime let's hope that the Spring Summit will finally 'sprout' some results for our regions and local authorities across the EU.

## EA group discusses developing an effective EU Sustainable Tourism policy in Scotland

In the beautiful surroundings on the Isle of Arran the European Alliance group on the 21 March discussed *developing an effective EU Sustainable Tourism policy*. Speakers included a Scottish Government minister, Members of the European Parliament as well as leading experts from Presov (Slovakia), Sicily, the Burren (Ireland) and Wrocław (Poland) and indeed from Scotland.

The meeting was held in the Island on the initiative of Stewart Maxwell MSP who highlighted tourism as one of the key instruments local areas have to create jobs in this current difficult economic climate. He said that the Isle of Arran is an example of where tourism can also embrace sustainability with a strong environmental factor. An island which rest on the Firth of Clyde between Ayrshire and Kintyre, Arran is 19 miles long by 10 miles wide but has



a remarkable diversity of landscapes and seascapes. This makes it ideal for a marriage of embracing scenery through walking and cycling tours to a leisure spa resort.

The EA group adopted its declaration on developing an effective EU sustainable tourism policy which will be forwarded to the EU institutions.

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*Francesco Musotto, member of the Sicilian Regional Assembly*



**European Alliance**

## EA 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-president Dr. Silberg presented Estonia's experience in tackling the crisis

During the 6<sup>th</sup> territorial dialogue which took place on 22 February in Brussels EA 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-president Dr Uno Silberg presented the view point of Estonia in fighting the economic crisis at the presence of the European Commissioner for employment and social affairs Laszlo Andor. Dr Silberg highlighted in his speech that Estonia responded well to the crisis, despite decrease of average income of population and increase of unemployment had been

registered, and that in 2010 the GDP of the country grew 3.1 % in comparison to 2009 figures.

With respect to the new challenges ahead, Dr Silberg, also underlined the importance of involving LRAs in the elaboration of the Estonia 2020 competitiveness plan and in the main National Reform Programme to ensure their effective implementation at local level. Finally, he added, the next step



is to empower the Estonia local government with financial autonomy ensuring a stable, comparable revenue base and resources to undertake their tasks and make investments at local level.



Mr Adam Banaszak speaking on behalf the EA group at the 5<sup>th</sup> Subsidiarity conference

## EA group welcomes the CoR focus on the Subsidiarity principle in Bilbao

in Bilbao recalled the importance of bringing decisions at the level closest to the citizens and thanked the Hungarian presidency for giving much attention to the prerogatives of local and regional governments. “It was a pleasure for me to present the CoR opinion on health at the Public Health working party in the Council and I hope, he said, that the commitment of the presidency will help promote a greater level of participation and dialogue between

LRAs and national governments over EU legislation. Mrs Saima Kalev, member of the Congress of local and regional authorities in the Council of Europe highlighted that local and regional authorities are responsible for the implementation of legislation in several matters and said that member states should adapt their legislative and administrative framework to allow for systematic institutional cooperation with subnational governments.

## EA group member to undertake opinion referral from Polish presidency

Mr Musotto *Member of the Sicilian Regional Assembly*, has been appointed rapporteur for the CoR opinion on the request of Polish Presidency on “complementarity of local, national and EU interventions aimed at reducing the regional economical and social disparities”. The future Polish Presidency in the Council of the European Union considers this subject one of the key issues to be approached in the form of the Committee of the Regions' outlook opinion. Instruments of the EU Cohesion Policy need to be used to contribute to targets of the

Europe 2020 strategy, which is deemed to be successful only if it involves regions of Europe. Most importantly, in the light of forthcoming EU budget negotiations an in-depth analysis of the appropriateness and effectiveness of the EU Cohesion Policy measures is indispensable in order to determine the most effective and efficient tools which will help to avoid the failure of the Lisbon strategy, which regions and cities of Europe cannot afford. Moreover the complementary implementation of the EU Cohesion Policy instruments at different



levels is crucial for reducing the disparities in economic and social growth as only in this condition the so-called leverage effect of the EU Cohesion Policy can be achieved. Since Polish presidency intend to put acceleration and progress in the EU negotiations at the prominent position in the EU agenda for second half of 2011, findings of this opinion can bring about significant contribution.

## European Alliance delegation in Sicily met with the President of the Region Raffaele Lombardo and top representatives of the regional parliament



Upon the invitation of the EA member, Mr Francesco Musotto, a delegation of EA members, composed by Jerzy Zająkła, Uno Silberg, Marc Hendrickx, Roger Knox and Stewart Maxwell, met on 17 February with the President of Sicily and leader of the MPA party, Raffaele Lombardo, the President of the Regional Parliament, Mr. Francesco Cascio as well as with members of the Committee for EU affairs.

During the meetings members were briefed about the priorities which are top in the Sicily Region's agenda, notably immigration and cohesion policy. With respect to the current situation in North Africa following the recent uprisings, the President of the Region called for EU support to address this unprecedented migratory pressure. He recalled that this is a European issue and that Italy should not bear the burden alone.

Moreover, the visit served as an occasion to uphold the links between the MPA party and the EA group, especially from the perspective of parties such as the Flemish N-VA and the Scottish SNP.



## Cllr Brian Meaney reports Congress on election observation mission in Ukraine

EA member and member of Clare County Council in Ireland, Brian Meaney was invited to Strasbourg on 24 March to participate in the plenary session of the Congress of local and regional authorities of the Council of Europe (CoE) to report on the CoE-CoR joint election observation mission in Ukraine which took place in October 2010. Cllr Meaney presented a report containing a number of points and recommendations. Despite voting procedures were followed in a peaceful way, difficulties to access voting centres for the elderly and disable people, confusion lead by new legislation adopted before elections and inconsistent standards have been reported.

## EA group's 6<sup>th</sup> Secondary Schools Competition has started

The EA group has launched the sixth edition of its *Secondary Schools Competition*. The competition's aim is to encourage young people to learn more about the European Union, the Committee of the Regions, and other EU institutions as well as each other's regions. This year's "Competition" will involve pupils aged between 14 and 18 years. The two stage competition will consist in a multiple choice quiz on the European Union and an essay competition on "How would I increase participation in volunteering in my region? Two winners from each

participating school will be awarded with a two days trip to Brussels in June, to meet members of the CoR, representatives of the

European Institutions, having the chance to discover Brussels, the capital city, its history and present.



# Impact assessment consultation on the LIFE+ instrument for Daiva Matoniene's opinion



The Committee of the Regions, in cooperation with DG ENV of the European Commission, is undertaking a consultation of EU local and regional authorities aimed at assessing the territorial impact of the future LIFE+ instrument. The outcome of this consultation will feed into the impact assessment of the future LIFE+ programme, currently being prepared by the European Commission. The questionnaire, in all

official languages of the European Union, is available from the CoR website. The consultation runs until 11 March 2011. To participate in the consultation log on to [www.cor.europa.eu](http://www.cor.europa.eu)

This consultation will also assist the European Alliance group Rapporteur on LIFE +, Ms Daiva Matoniene's.

## Banaszak: following up his opinion on implementing a EU health strategy



Mr Adam Banaszak, EA Rapporteur for the CoR opinion on the "The role of local and regional authorities in the implementation of the Health Strategy 2008-2013" participated in the Working Party on Public Health at Senior Level at the Council, which was held in Brussels on 18 March 2011. He provided a brief summary of the CoR recent opinion. The outcome of the agenda contributed to the preparation of the informal meeting of Ministers of Health which will be held on 4-5 April 2011 in Gödölö.

## European Alliance First-Vice President Dr Uno Silberg to observe local elections in Albania

EA 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Dr Uno Silberg will take part on behalf of the EA group in a Council of Europe - CoR joint delegation to observe local elections in Albania in May 2011. More details and report on the outcome of the elections will be available in our later newsletter.



## Wrobel emphasis the need for cooperation between CoR and CLRAE

Mr Dariusz Wrobel, *Mayor of Opole Lubelskie* participated in the CoR/CLARE meeting in Paris on 7 February 2011. Both institutions cooperate in various forms and on different levels. The 2009 revised co-operation agreement reaffirmed the principle of complementarity between the Congress and the Committee of the Regions and respect for each other's competences and nature. It

stipulates that any decision on the lead role within joint projects will be taken on the basis of the specific remits and experiences of both parties. The agreement also promotes a coordinated approach to the same issues of concern between respective committees, commissions and working groups.



### Upcoming meetings:

#### April

- 1 CoR plenary session
- 8 CIVEX Commission meeting
- 11-12 ECOS Commission meeting, Venice, Italy
- 29 COTER Commission seminar, Perugia, Italy

#### May

- 4 NAT Commission meeting
- 5 ENVE Commission meeting
- 11-12 CoR plenary session

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