

European Alliance Group



EA members welcome the priorities of the Polish Presidency

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

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, on the eve of the Polish Presidency of the EU, we can see a number of new challenges, demands and opportunities on the horizon. We need to learn the lessons from this crisis and examine its causes to prevent such situations from occurring in the future. The debates on the future Cohesion Policy and Common Agricultural Policy will represent a significant challenge for the Polish Presidency.

We feel it is particularly important in this context to ensure greater synergy between these policies. Moreover, the CAP must finally become a fair and just policy, which means a policy that is the same for all EU countries. We should aim to level out the standard of living of all farmers throughout the European Union. It is important to stress that the rural population is made up of more than farmers alone, something which is particularly evident on the outskirts of towns and cities or in tourist regions. By recognising the importance of rural areas, we can help ensure the vitality of such regions, which often harbour significant potential for local economic and social development. We also need to address the challenge of modernising living environments in the Member States, which is absolutely vital if we want to maintain our traditionally high standard of living in Europe. The European Union must show that it is genuinely committed to the process of stepping up innovation and research, which can be decisive for achieving a competitive advantage vis à vis other markets and

economies. Solidarity within the European Union must continue to be the EU's defining feature.

Our group's main priority and concern as local and regional representatives is to ensure that all those who live in our communities, whatever their age, can enjoy the highest possible standards of living. Tackling the adverse effects of climate change is becoming one of the European Union's main priorities. This issue presents a serious challenge, which we have to face. Climate change has a global dimension; this means that all levels of government and the public need to be actively involved in combating it. Yet the measures taken to date have not gone far enough. The initiatives of the European Commission, the EU Member States and of the local and regional authorities, including the *Covenant of Mayors*, are therefore of particular importance. The signatories of the Covenant agree to include a series of

ambitious projects to tackle climate change in their plans, which should receive the necessary financial support from the EU budget. Łubianka, which I represent as a member of the Committee of the Regions, is a good case in point. As a signatory of the Covenant of Mayors, my local authority has already drawn up a Sustainable Energy Plan, and has begun implementing it in the local area. The significant efforts being made by those local and regional authorities in combatting the adverse effects of climate change justify providing these authorities with appropriate financing.

We would also like to focus on ensuring the economic prosperity of our regions, to



Jerzy Zajękała, President of the EA group with the CoR Delegation discusses the European Council agenda with President Herman Van Rompuy

the benefit of all who live there. Current demographic trends, which show a fall in population numbers, are putting our system of social security, pension systems and the future of Europe at risk. On the other hand, finding employment is a serious problem for young people. It is an absolute priority for us to be in close touch with young people. It is part of our work to build a future for young people today and to ensure they have the best possible opportunities. Young people can play a vital role in the future European Union. That is why this year we are continuing with our main project, our secondary school competition, which promotes and develops knowledge of the EU and showcases the youth work of politicians in Europe's local and regional authorities.

Ever since it was first set up back in 1994, the EU's Committee of the Regions has been visibly active in the area of improving people's standard of living. The CoR's members have significant scope to serve the interests of local people by helping to shape European legislation and presenting their opinions and views to EU politicians and decision-making bodies. By taking on leading roles and acting as rapporteurs for numerous Committee opinions, Poland's local and regional representatives who are members of the European Alliance have been particularly active and effective in this area.



“ Europe needs an ambitious and integrated cohesion policy ”

Cohesion policy is one of the main priorities of the Polish presidency of the EU. This is due to our firm belief that Europe's cohesion policy still provides significant development potential for all of Europe's cities and regions and has a direct impact on EU citizens' standard of living and quality of life. From my perspective, as the Council leader of a large Polish city, cohesion policy provides a genuine opportunity to develop the key parts of our social and technical infrastructure. Without support from EU programmes, many projects would have to wait many years for their completion. In addition, Europe's cohesion policy also underpins and complements national-level policies aimed at evening out the differences in development among the Poland's various regions. One issue that is currently the subject of much heated debate is the question of how we should measure these differences. An increasing number of people feel that measurement based on GDP is insufficient. A variety of additional indicators are currently being considered to help provide a clearer view of levels of

development, prosperity, standards of living and quality of life in our regions. This is both important when assessing the eligibility of individual regions for cohesion-policy programmes as well as when assessing the impact of cohesion policy. In many cases, national policies to even out the differences between regions come up against a lack of funding, a hurdle which is overcome thanks to the EU's cohesion policy. Only the EU's cohesion policy – in tandem with national policies – is capable of providing a real solution to the problem of the evident lack of cohesion within Europe's regions. Hence the vital importance of complementarity of national policies and the EU's cohesion policy. This issue will be addressed by a CoR opinion requested by the Polish presidency, which will be drawn up by a colleague from my political group with my full support and cooperation. I should like to express my concern at the current trend towards the fragmentation of cohesion policy, which should essentially be an integrated instrument (e.g. the separation of the European Social Fund from the Structural Funds). An integrated approach, which cuts across many different areas, represents the very essence of EU policy. At the Committee of the Regions, we are convinced that no other measure is capable of replacing cohesion policy as the main instrument for achieving the development goals of the whole European Union. The Polish presidency can count on our full support as CoR members in order to ensure an effective cohesion policy.



Mr Zająkła with the President of Sicily and leader of the MPA party, Raffaele Lombardo



Marek Tramś "Starosta" of Polkowice Powiat

“ I would like to draw attention to the importance of democracy at grassroots level and to the key role played by local and regional authorities in implementing its principles ”

The Working Group on Turkey, which includes Marek Tramś, *Starosta* of Polkowice as the EA Group representative, monitors the political and institutional action taken at European, national and regional level in order to provide CoR members with regular assessments of the process begun with the launch of accession negotiations with Turkey in October 2005. With the help of the working group, Mr Tramś plans to support lasting dialogue with Turkey's political representatives and to promote the development of democracy in the country. Moreover, the working group will encourage and promote information campaigns on the enlargement process in cities and regions across both Turkey and the EU.



Witold Krochmal, Councillor of Wołow

“Transport is fundamental to our economy and society. There can be no development without mobility. We should concentrate on making optimal use of all available means of transport. Our efforts should focus on making European rail transport more effective and increasing its competitiveness by addressing the existing problems as soon as possible”

Witold Krochmal welcomed the European Commission's response to the CoR opinion on A European rail network for competitive freight, for which he was the rapporteur. Mr Krochmal noted that “the creation of a European rail network for competitive freight transport will achieve the goals set provided that there is close cooperation with the local and regional authorities through which the rail network corridors will pass and provided that there are links to other forms of transport through appropriate land and sea terminals, including inland ports, and through the development of logistical centres involving local and regional authorities.” Mr Krochmal emphasised that, in his view, “it is important to establish an international structure for

managing European rail transport networks which can improve their operation and boost coordination between Member States and infrastructure managers within the framework of individual transport corridors. It is essential for this structure to be equipped by the relevant EU bodies or Member States with the power to continue work on eliminating current restrictions which lower effectiveness and thus the competitiveness of rail transport.” “The EU must adopt a more effective transport model than the one currently in place if we are to be more competitive against the Asia and the US” stressed Mr Krochmal. The European Commission welcomed the proposals tabled by the Committee of the Regions and agreed with the need to take account of the impact of legislation on local and regional communities. A whole series of issues raised by the CoR in its opinion have been incorporated into the final version of the Regulation. The “international structure” for managing rail freight corridors, which was called for by the CoR, has been created, as has the “one-stop shop” system for processing applications for infrastructure capacity. This will help reduce the administrative burden – as proposed by the CoR opinion. Furthermore, the Regulation acknowledges the importance of taking account of other modes of transport when identifying infrastructure capacity. This point was also stressed by the rapporteur in his opinion. The importance of multi-modality and more integrated transport terminals was highlighted during the current debate on the future of future of transport 2050 (White Paper on the Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area of 28 March 2011).



Mr John Dalli, Commissioner for health and consumer policy, with Mr Adam Banaszak, alternate member of the EA group

“I see the continuation of the work on my opinion as an opportunity to strengthen the voice of local and regional authorities on the future EU health policy in the international arena”

Adam Banaszak, Member of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Regional Assembly, EA Group political coordinator in the NAT commission (Natural Resources) and CoR rapporteur for the opinion on the *Role of local and regional authorities in the implementation of the Health Strategy 2008-2013* told Commissioner Dalli that the UE should place more emphasis on the issue of preventive medicine and health promotion. He added that there were still significant differences and inequalities between the various regions in the area of healthcare, and that this was even the case for different regions within the same country. As the rapporteur on this topic, Mr Banaszak also met with the Vice-President of the European Parliament's ENVI committee and was involved in the work of the Technical Platform set up by the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions in this area. As part of the follow-up work on this opinion, Mr Banaszak gave a presentation on the opinion at the meeting of the Council Working Group on Public Health at Senior Level. This meeting took place in Brussels on 18 March 2011 so that its results could feed into the informal meeting of health ministers in Gödölő, Hungary on 4-5 April 2011. The EA Group rapporteur also welcomed the creation of the inter-regional health group as its aim was to enable CoR members to take part in an open debate on health issues in the EU. During the CoR's current term of office, Councillor Adam Banaszak invited the NAT commission, in cooperation with the regional authorities of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie region and the city authorities of Inowrocław, to organise a seminar entitled “*The development of a sustainable food supply chain as a factor in the integrated development of urban and rural areas*”, which took place in Inowrocław, on 13 September 2010.



Jan Bronś, Mayor of Oleśnica

“The European Union, which has been particularly affected by the unprecedented economic crisis, needs to draw up a comprehensive strategy to ensure sustainable development, not only from the economic point of view, but also in social and environmental terms.”



Mirosław Lech, Mayor (Wójt) of Korycin

“We must not forget about European solidarity when considering the future cohesion policy. Accordingly, regions that are less developed or urbanised must not be left lagging behind; we need to ensure a more sustainable form of financing among the various regions. We should remember that the EU is not a single, homogenous region”



Dariusz Wróbel, Mayor of Opole Lubelskie

“ I would like to highlight the need for cooperation between the CoR and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE). ”

Dariusz Wróbel, Mayor of Opole Lubelskie is an alternate member of the CoR/CLRAE liaison group. These bodies cooperate in various ways and at a variety of levels. In 2009, a revised cooperation agreement between the two bodies confirmed the principle of complementarity between the Congress and the Committee of the Regions along with the principle of mutual respect for the different competences and characteristics of the two institutions. Mr Wróbel advocates a coordinated approach to issues that are covered by commissions or working groups at both institutions.

Former Commissioner on regional policy, Danuta Hübner meeting members of the EA Group and Polish winners of the 3rd EA/CoR Secondary Schools Competition

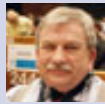


Polish EA members and alternates:

MEMBERS



BRONŚ



TRAMŚ



SZWABSKI



ZAJĄKAŁA

ALTERNATES



BANASZAK



LECH



SOBIERAJSKI



GODEK



OLSZEWSKI



WRÓBEL



KOTYŚ



PANASIUK

Polish members at the CoR

Role of EA Group members at the Committee of the Regions:

Jerzy Zająkała

Mayor (Wójt) of Łubianka Gmina

- Chair of the EA Group
- Member of the CoR Bureau
- Member of NAT and EDUC commissions
- CoR rapporteur on the WEEE and RoHS Directives

Jan Bronś

Mayor of Oleśnica

- Member of the COTER and NAT commissions

Stanisław Szwabski

Leader of Gdynia City Council

- EA Group coordinator in the CIVEX commission
- Member of the COTER and CIVEX commissions
- Member of the ARLEM
- Member of the Montenegro Joint Consultative Committee

Marek Tramś

Starosta (Mayor) Polkowice Powiat

- Member of the ECOS and NAT commissions
- Member of the Working Group on Turkey

Adam Banaszak

Councillor, Kujawsko-Pomorskie region

- EA Group Coordinator at the NAT commission
- Alternate in the CFAA
- Executive Chair of the CoR interregional group on health
- CoR rapporteur on forestry policy
- CoR rapporteur on the health strategy

Dariusz Wróbel

Mayor of Opole Lubelskie

- Alternate on the CoR-CLRAE liaison group

EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions

EA Group Secretariat – Committee of the Regions:

101 rue Belliard • 1040 Brussels | Tel: +32 2 282 22 51 • Fax: +32 2 282 23 34 | e-mail: michael.oconchuir@cor.europa.eu