

European Alliance Group

Clear action is needed to reduce the serious problem of youth unemployment

■ says Dr Uno Silberg



Dr. Uno Silberg, President of the EA group, with EU leaders during the Open Days of the Committee of the Regions

At this time every year our group organises a Primary Schools art competition and this year we see the wonderful portrayal by our young people on "My Region, My Environment". Their skills in portraying what is around them are remarkable, and we are so proud of what they have achieved.

Now we should ask ourselves how we would like to be portrayed in our efforts to make Europe more real, more responsive to the citizens. European leaders have an opportunity to give some badly needed certainty in agreeing the Multi-Annual Financial Framework. There is so much that the EU can do in terms of addressing the real and substantial problems of youth unemployment. This needs to be done as a matter of urgency; otherwise we are only leaving more serious problems for the future. When we hear that the excellent ERASMUS student exchange scheme is short of finance this is hugely worrying as we need highly skilled people coming from our universities who have experienced living and studying abroad.

We also need to finally put some resources behind renewable energy and the immense potential it has to not only create such badly needed 'green-job' but also reduce our dependence on imported energy. Europe needs to have a strategic

long term vision and the CoR members in their roles of local and regional authorities elected members can give some clear guidance to EU leaders in their determination to help European recovery.



Rhodri Glyn Thomas meets EU Budget Commissioner Janusz Lewandowski to discuss future EU budget

"Committee of the Regions" rapporteur Rhodri Glyn Thomas had a series of high level meetings in Brussels over the past few weeks as part of the evidence gathering phase for his own-initiative report on creating synergies between EU, national and sub-state budgets.

Rhodri discussed with EU Budget Commissioner Janusz Lewandowski the proposals by the European Commission to strengthen the

CONTENT

2012's EA/CoR primary schools competition "My region, my environment" finalized

Europe's Nations and Regions have a major role to play in building economic recovery and growth

Szwabski co-chairs inaugural CoR – Montenegro joint consultative committee

Influencing EU Presidencies: Benelux and Baltic sea area share examples

CoR to discuss Mrs Erikson opinion and ready to raise the bar against harmful substances in water

The Committee of the Regions to adopt the opinion of Mr Stanislaw Szwabski on the European Code of Conduct on Partnership (ECCP)

2

3

4

leverage and multiplier effect of EU funding on the ground, as part of a medium- to long term investment strategy focusing on growth and jobs, expressing his support for the proposals prepared by the Commissioner, and outlining concerns that cuts to this would have a detrimental effect at local and sub-state level. He underlined the importance of ensuring a strong involvement for the local and sub-state level in the EU political processes, including the new measures to strengthen economic governance, in particular highlighting their roles and responsibilities that sub-state authorities have in key areas for delivering Europe 2020, including education and economic regeneration.

Mr Thomas also chaired a stakeholder consultation with representatives from Brussels-based networks and organisations, which was extremely useful in confirming a number of the key issues to be covered in the draft report, together with further meetings with the General Directorate of Economic and Financial Affairs, the Europe 2020 unit in the General Secretariat of the Committee of the Regions and with OECD officials.

The report is scheduled for adoption at the plenary session at end of January 2013.

"The devolved Governments of the EU's nations and regions are absolutely central to Europe's overall economic recovery."

Stewart Maxwell, Member of the EA group



European Alliance

2012's EA/CoR primary schools competition "My region, my environment" finalized

The EA/ CoR primary schools competition arrived to a final on the 26th October. Each participating primary schools have sent the best three drawings to the EA secretariat.

The 2012's EA/CoR primary schools competition had the theme of "My region, my environment". When defining the topic of the competition, EA members have decided to choose a more general definition of the environment, wanting children to express what they understand under environment.

Children's drawings, regardless of nationality and age, do not miss family, green areas, like parks and forests, and the precious time they spend with their friends.

Olivia Kobiałka, 7 years old child from Gdynia, Poland, considers that "environment is everything around us. It is a place where we live, rest and spend our free time. It is the swans swimming on the sea when tourists and inhabitants feed them. It is fish living in the Baltic Sea and birds flying in clouds during the sunset. It is the sun which changes colors during the day and leaves which look the most beautiful in autumn."

For the 9 years old **Caitlin Kelly** (Scotland) "Carman Hill is a place for fun. I and my friends go there for walks. The scenery is wonderful and there's lot of things to do in the open air. I love to play with the cows and play hides and seek."

Lithuanian **Beatričė Mickute** (9 years) has a different view. "I could compare my region with my school. Here live a lot of different kind of people and they have different hobbies: writing, reading, doing sports, singing. I can see a beautiful environment and it makes me happy because it gives life to everyone."



For the Slovak **Aneta Králová** (11 years) family is important. "We are a big family. I have two siblings Matej and Soňa, my mum Anka and my dad Vladimír. We also have a turtle IZZY at home. I like to play with her. It is needed to change her water frequently, because we want her to have a good life with us. Also animals and people too must live in the clean and healthy environment!"

A two weeks exposition of the best art works will be organised in the Committee of the Regions as of the 29th November.

Best drawings of the competition can be seen on our website:
www.ea.cor.europa.eu



Europe's Nations and Regions have a major role to play in building economic recovery and growth

Strengthening the Role of Nations and Regions in the Recovery Strategy was the focus of the joint European Free Alliance (EP) and the European Alliance group (CoR) which was held during Open Days of Regions and Cities on the 9th October 2012.

The seminar held at the Committee of the Regions in Brussels featured speakers from Flanders, Wales, the Basque Country and Scotland.

Minister Keith BROWN, MSP, Minister for Transport and Veterans, Scotland presented his Country's strategy in getting out from the economic crises. The Scottish government has developed its own Economic strategy which follows the Europe 2020 ambitions to accelerate recovery, promoting innovation and creating support for business environment.

Prof. Koenraad DEBACKERE, Manager, KULeuven, presented the recent research results and research insights of recovery strategies, undertaken by a research group in KULeuven on regional indicator development, regional industry analyses, with potential strategies for regions to rejuvenate industrial texture. (Smart specialization for regions, a common project with several OECD countries).

Jill EVANS, MEP, President of EFA group, European Parliament considered that central governments across Europe, together with the EU Commission, seem at a loss in dealing with the economic firestorm gripping the continent. The EU has become so obsessed with forcing deep public spending cuts that it has lost sight of the need to invest to create sustainable long term growth.

Gorka ESPIAU IDOYAGA, Head of the International Programmes, Innovalab, explained the reasons how the Basque country became one of the leading Nations from a decadent and obsolete economy to being today a competitive centre of business embracing entrepreneurship. In his view, the transformation was possible due to a comprehensive strategy based on self-government, reactivation of the economy, social innovation and clear local identity.

Vice President of the EA Group of the Committee of the Regions, Stewart Maxwell MSP said "The devolved Governments of the EU's nations and regions are absolutely central to Europe's overall economic recovery. In Scotland we are bound by the harsh austerity measures being put forward by the UK Government which have already been shown to be ineffective and damaging to our long-term economic prospects. Instead, we are advocating that the UK Government makes available funding for our list of 'Shovel Ready' capital investment projects which will boost the construction industry, create jobs and stimulate economic growth."

More information and copies of the presentations is available on
www.ea.cor.europa.eu

Szwabski co-chairs inaugural CoR – Montenegro joint consultative committee

On the 14 November 2012 the inaugural meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) between the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and Montenegrin local authorities took place in Brussels. It comes at a very timely moment. A few months after the official opening of the accession negotiations and one month after the European Commission presented its strategy paper for the enlargement and the progress report on the country, the formal setting up of the JCC comes to complement the other bilateral structures within the framework of the Stabilisation and Association Process aiming to pave the way to Montenegro's gradual full integration into the European family.

Stanisław Szwabski (PL/EA), Chairman of Gdynia City Council and co-chair of the



Mr Szwabski chairing the meeting

JCC, was delighted to open the first meeting and underlined the objective underlying the setting up of the new body: "The work of the Joint Consultative Committee will aim to follow the accession negotiations of Montenegro. The JCC can strive to provide concrete input in this process in terms of recommendations or reports. The JCC, which gathers CoR members and local representatives from Montenegro, aims to ensure that Montenegrin local authorities are involved in the enlargement process, in particular as regards the proper implementation of the EU acquis at local level.

In his opening statement, the Montenegrin JCC co-chair, **Miomir Mugoša**, Mayor of Podgorica, was to emphasise the "real transformation keen, both visually and in terms of quality of life" that towns and cities in Montenegro, including the capital Podgorica, are now experiencing due the accession prospect.

Mr Joost Korte, Deputy Director-General DG Enlargement at the European Commission, Mr Ivan Lekovic, the Ambassador of Montenegro to the EU, MEP Mr Eduard Kukan also participated in the meeting. More information is available on:

www.cor.europa.eu

Influencing EU Presidencies: Benelux and Baltic sea area share examples



Mr Marc Hendrickx

Early November in Lithuania, Mr Marc Hendrickx, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs of the Benelux Parliament presented to the 31st Session of the Baltic Assembly and 18th Baltic Council in the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania the perspective of the Benelux Parliament on: EU presidencies from perspective of the Benelux regional cooperation.

Mr Hendrickx focused on the role and functioning of the Benelux Parliament towards the Belgian Presidency of the EU in 2010 and indeed via the programmes for the trio of Presidencies.

Both, during the preparatory process and during the Presidency itself, the Belgian presidency relied on the support of the other two countries. This support, at all levels of the Council meetings, turned out to be an important and effective element in the realisation of the presidency programme and the establishment of the necessary compromises.

Through the exchange of views between the Benelux partners in the margins of the European councils, the three countries have tried, during the Belgian Presidency, to develop common positions on priority areas such as the Treaty of Lisbon, energy, EU

enlargement and the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).

He also outlined that: the Presidency is an excellent opportunity "for a State to prove how a small country can be an important player on the European level. Within the European Union the individual members of the Benelux are small players, and as Benelux countries, we certainly do not agree on everything, but if we present a common front through memoranda and speak with one voice, we give more weight to issues we consider important and contribute to the steering of the EU in the direction we want".

He concluded saying that "by joining forces the Benelux countries, the Baltic States and the Nordic Council, we will exercise even more influence on the EU decision-making and will be an influential factor that the EU should take into account".

More information on www.marc-hendrickx.be

COR to discuss Mrs Erikson opinion and ready to raise the bar against harmful substances in water

The CoR Plenary session is to discuss on 29-30 November the opinion of Mrs Erikson on "Priority substances in the field of water".

The draft opinion adopted by the ENVE commission supports the European Commission's proposal to set higher standards for the quality of water, notably by imposing restrictions and close monitoring of substances, mostly chemicals, whose presence in surface



Mrs Urve Erikson

waters is extremely harmful to the environment and public health.

"We need a baseline to make sure our grandchildren could enjoy clean water, Mrs Erikson, member of Tudulinna Municipality Council (Estonia) said. At the same time we should give Member states and local authorities enough time

to adjust their legislative framework in accordance to the new EU Directive".

Nevertheless, Mrs Erikson laments in her opinion that the European Commission proposal fixes concentration caps for substances, while disregarding the risks arising from reactions with other substances in the aquatic environment as, she recalls that small compounds can affect the aquatic environment even in extremely small concentrations.

Moreover, she believes that more attention should be given to import and distribution of dangerous products containing hazardous substances to make sure that the efforts to protect the environment don't go in vain.

But "It is worth moving in this direction and investing in a better environment and in a better world for our grandchildren. If we were not to act now, they will not forgive us and the costs would be much higher in the future"



Mr Stanisław Szwabski

The Committee of the Regions to adopt the opinion of Mr Stanisław Szwabski on the European Code of Conduct on Partnership (ECCP)

Chairman of the municipality of Gdynia, Mr Stanisław Szwabski's opinion on the European code of conduct on partnership (ECCP) is to be adopted during the November 2012 CoR plenary session. Under the Commission's proposals for the Community Support Framework funds in the period 2014-2020 Member States will have a clear obligation to organise a partnership, but the specific procedures for involving the relevant partners in the different stages of the programming will be left to the national authorities. The ECCP will lay down minimum requirements which are necessary to attain a high quality partnership in the implementation of the funds while maintaining ample flexibility to Member States in ways they organise the participation of the different partners.

Mr Szwabski said "I can only welcome the publication of the draft Code of Conduct to be applied across the

different EU funds dealing with Territorial Cohesion. I am pleased that an opportunity is given to contribute to its finalisation now. In practice only a system of multilevel governance involving all levels can effectively combine these two dimensions. I welcome the fact that the Commission intends to adopt the ECCP as a delegated act immediately after the entry into force of the Common Provisions Regulation. I would not welcome the dilution of this position. In the event that it is decided to give the document a different legal status, the Committee would call for solutions ensuring a real, high-quality improvement in compliance with partnership principles in the 2014-2020 budget periods."



We wish all our Readers Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



EUROPEAN UNION



Committee of the Regions

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