

## European Alliance Group



## Challenging times need focussed policies and programmes

■ By EA Group President

As we begin the New Year reflections are now coming to fruition on a number of policy issues in particular the future of the **Common Agriculture Policy** as well as the Structural Funds. We have argued on many occasions for the need for a strong CAP which will guarantee fully traceable, high quality food supply and security for the citizens of the EU as well as a 'fair' income for farmers. We will continue to reiterate our points to ensure that this will be the final outcome for the CAP.

It is also important that in the current economic crisis those instruments such as the **Structural and Cohesion Funds** are focused on the needs of Regions. It is imperative that this budget line is not constrained and that the success of

the past for regions will continue. Our group will strongly oppose any form of renationalisation of the Structural and Cohesion funds. This is a clear message that we will take to the Cohesion forum at the end of January.

Focussed policies must also have tangible benefits for regions and local authorities across the EU and then discussing these in a European context, this is why I'm delighted that our colleagues in the Scottish National Party have invited our group to Scotland to discuss **Sustainable Tourism Policy** on the 21st March 2011.

As we begin the **European Year of Volunteering** I would call on all of us to make that special effort and volunteer: to your local sports club, services to young and old, other community based activities, of which there are many. Let's show that during 2011: together we can make a difference!

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Jerzy Zajacka, President of the EA group with (from left to right), Flo Clucas (UK), President of the ALDE group, Michael Schneider (DE), President of the EPP group, Mercedes Bresso (IT), President of the CoR, Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso, 1st Vice-President of the CoR and Karl-Heinz Klär, President of the PES group

"I think it will be also a good occasion to give recognition to the volunteers".

Roger Knox, EA coordinator in EDUC Commission

## EA Rapporteur welcomes the creation of the Intergroup on Health in the CoR

Mr **Banaszak Rapporteur** for the CoR opinion on the "The role of local and regional authorities in the implementation of the Health Strategy 2008-2013" welcomes the decision of the CoR Bureau to setup an inter-regional group on health as of 1 January 2011. The aim of setting up the group is to enable the CoR members to debate openly and to share point of views on EU health issues, as well as to discuss other public health matters in depth, without impinging upon the remits of the NAT Commission. The activities of the group would focus on the topics related to public health, such as healthy living, health inequalities, health work force, nutrition, cross-border healthcare and use of structural funds for health purposes.



Adam Banaszak, Rapporteur for CoR opinion on Health Strategy 2008-2013, meeting John Dalli, Commissioner on Health and Consumer policy

## Daiva Matonienė appointed CoR rapporteur on the EU LIFE+ mid term review

EA member and deputy mayor of Šiauliai city, Lithuania, **Mrs Daiva Matonienė** was appointed by the ENVE commission rapporteur on the EU LIFE+ mid term review.

LIFE+ is the EU financial instrument for environment whose financial envelope amounts to € 2.17 billion. The European Commission will adopt at the end of 2011 a proposal for a new regulation which would be applied from 2014 on-

wards. Mrs Matonienė opinion would enable the CoR to anticipate the European Commission proposal and provide

a political position at an early stage on an issue which is of major relevance for local and regional authorities.

## EA coordinator for EDUC Commission welcomes 2011 as the European year of Volunteering

Mr **Roger Knox**, Member of East Lothian Council, EA Group coordinator for EDUC Commission welcomes the decision that 2011 be designated as the "European Year of Volunteering". He said that "2011 should help volunteers and volunteering organisations from everywhere in Europe to meet and to learn what is done best in other countries. The public authorities like LRAs will be able to learn more about volunteers and making volunteering easier. It will also offer to the citizens

who do not know much about volunteering the possibility to find out more about it, and maybe become volunteers one day themselves. And finally, I think it will be also a good occasion to

give recognition to the volunteers. Most volunteers are looking for an exciting experience, discovering something new, taking a break from job or studies, etc. However, value-based commitment is still an integral part of volunteering and should be given proper acknowledgement" – he added.



## CoR Plenary to adopt Brian Meaney's opinion on biomass sustainability

The CoR Plenary Session will adopt on 28 January the opinion on biomass sustainability drafted by the "green" EA member **Brian Meaney**.

Whereas the European Commission considers that times are not mature to set binding harmonized scheme for biomass, Clare County Councillor Mr. Meaney pleads for a harmonization of criteria, where voluntary schemes already exist at national and regional level. He points out that "same or similar sustainability criteria must apply for both EU produced and imported biomass" so as to set internationally

recognized standards and reduce uncertainty. Biomass producers should be adequately supported by administrative and fiscal policies since innovation on biomass use require long lead in time, he underlines in his opinion.

The opinion which received positive feedback from the CoR members was adopted unanimously by the ENVE commission in December last.



## Francesco Musotto to take part in ARLEM Plenary Session in Agadir

On 28-29 January, **Mr. Francesco Musotto**, EA member and deputy of the Sicily Region Assembly, will participate in the ARLEM Plenary session taking place in Agadir, Morocco.

He will bring the views of the European Alliance group on the future of the Mediterranean region and will participate in the discussion on the two to-be adopted opinions on water local management and urban development. Mr Musotto, is con-

vinced that the EU must work with determination for the development of the Mediterranean which would be beneficial for both the EU and our neighbourhood since it would trigger growth, investments and ensure political stability.

During the meeting members will adopt the work programme of the two thematic ARLEM commission and set the objectives for the year 2011.

## Marc Hendrickx becomes chairman of the external policy committee of the Benelux Parliament

Late last December **Marc Hendrickx** (42), a member of the Flemish parliament (for the New Flemish Alliance [N-VA]) and of the CoR's EA political group, was appointed chairman of the external policy committee of the Benelux Parliament.

The Benelux Parliament is an inter-parliamentary assembly comprising 50 members from the Benelux countries (21 from the Netherlands, 21 from Belgium and 8 from Luxembourg), with Belgian representatives drawn from both the federal parliament and various regional parliaments. The seat of the Benelux Parliament rotates every two years between The Hague, Brussels and

Luxembourg. From 2011 to 2012, it will meet in The Hague.

Flemish nationalist and CoR member Marc Hendrickx said: "The new Benelux treaty in any case offers scope for Flanders to play a more prominent role in Benelux, freed from the constraints of Belgium. It should come as no surprise that this is also one of my own goals, together with closer contacts with the Baltic states and the German Land of North Rhine-Westphalia. In the past, Benelux served as a kind of laboratory for cooperation – a paradigm for what has now become the EU. I have no doubt it will continue to serve this function in the future."





Winners of the EA/CoR Secondary Schools competition 2010" with the President of the CoR

## EA members focus on youth in 2011

The main project of the EA group last year was the *Secondary schools competition*, organised in eight EU members states, having the aim to encourage young people to learn and understand more about the European Union, the Committee of the Regions, and other EU institutions as well as each other's regions.

Best practices represent examples which worth to be considering. The feedbacks from participants of the past years' EA/CoR Secondary Schools Competition allowed members to conclude the success of the EA group's project. In this reason EA members have decided to continue addressing to the youth during the year 2011 and continue focusing on the younger generation, bringing them closer to the concept of the European Union and listening their



EA President welcomes winners of the EA/CoR Secondary Schools competition 2010

opinions as regards European matters. In this reason the first project of the EA group "*Secondary schools competition*" will concen-

trate on students aged between 14 and 18 years. On the two stage competition pupils will need to be successful in a multiple choice quiz on the European Union and the Committee of the Regions. Since 2011 is the year dedicated to volunteering, the members would like to hear also the opinions of student on the issue of volunteering through an essay competition on "*How would I increase participation in volunteering in my region?*"

The project starts end of January and finishes in June. Full members of the EA group will nominate the secondary schools from their region to participate in the competition. Two winners from each participating school will be awarded with a two days trip to Brussels, where they will meet members of the Committee of the Regions during the June 2011 plenary session, representatives of the European Commission and European Parliament, having the chance to discover Brussels, the capital city, its history and present.



Winners and EA members meeting in the Committee of the Regions

### Upcoming meetings:

#### 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

#### February 2011

- 1 CoR - EESC political monitoring group
- 3 COTER commission meeting
- 9 ECOS commission meeting
- 10 CIVEX commission meeting
- 14 ENVE commission meeting
- 21 EDUC commission meeting

#### March 2011

- 3-4 CoR Bureau meeting, Gödöllő, Hungary
- 10-11 NAT commission meeting, Clermont-Ferrand, France
- 14 CAFA meeting
- 21 EA group meeting, Isle of Aaran, Scotland
- 25 COTER commission meeting
- 31 March - 1 April EA group meeting and CoR plenary session

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