

## European Alliance Group

### Give Local and Regional Authorities the Resources to generate Growth and Employment Locally

■ says European Alliance Group President Mr Jerzy Zająkła, Mayor of Łubianka



As the Economic crisis deepens and we can all see that this is having an effect on our neighbours, our friends, our families there is a need to assess whether the overall 'austerity' measures are having their desired effects. Yes it is true that debt levels need to be kept under control but it is also true that the financial markets are flexing their muscles and are moving

to expose European leaders' lack of implementation of their agreements.

Locally we can make a difference, but we cannot have our resources cut as is happening across the European Union. In a local project in my home town of Łubianka we have begun installing solar panels on private houses, and hope to shortly have over 700 houses covered. I hope that this initiative will help in the security of energy supply locally, will provide savings for private households and will be very good for the environment. In fact I have on many occasions said that the Covenant of Mayors is a fantastic initiative but it needs to have the financial commitment to implement its very ambitious targets.

In order to encourage real growth and employment locally the resources must be given to local government, and not as is beginning to be reported by many of my colleagues across the EU, the first cuts initiated.

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### 'My Region, My Landscape' Theme for this years CoR/EA Group Primary Schools Art Competition

Members of the EA group this year decided to continue to encourage

young children to express themselves through art and have organised a competition 'My Region, My Landscape' in 16 primary schools across 8 Members States of the EU.

their friends and families. Prizes will also be awarded to the winners. The best drawings are exposed and can be seen in the Committee of the Regions building in Brussels during the month of December 2011.

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



## European Alliance Group – Strong supporters of the Covenant of Mayors

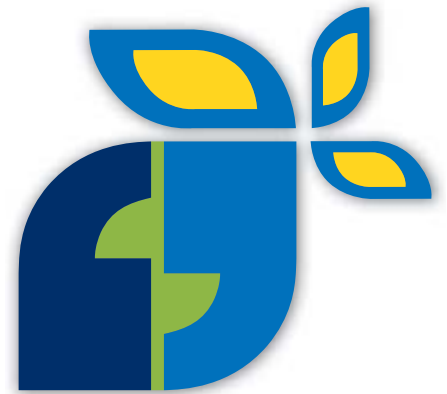
On 29th of November high-profile political representatives from the EU institutions and local and regional authorities (LRAs) all around Europe gathered at the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and European Parliament's premises for the Covenant of Mayors Ceremony.

The Covenant of Mayors is one of the most visible examples of how LRAs in Europe can contribute to the achievement of the EU climate and energy goals.

Many LRAs have been actively engaging in the Covenant by developing innovative approaches and policies which have been successful both from an economic and environmental point of view.

According to Mr. Jerzy Zająkła, President of the EA group and Mayor of Łubianka, one of the signatories of the pact, the Covenant of Mayors, highlights the leading role of the Committee of the Regions when it comes to going "green" and promoting sustainable energy solutions at local level. He points out that rural and small communities must be encouraged to take part in this initiative since they risk being left out when it comes to developing energy policies tailored to the characteristic of the different territories. Synergies between urban and rural energy policies are of paramount importance, he added

Runnymede Borough Councillor Mrs Linda Gillham and EA group coordinator in the CoR ENVE commission considers this event as a



key occasion for LRAs to learn from each other and gives all of us an idea of how much LRAs can go forward in this respect even when they do not dispose of significant resources and autonomy." As former rapporteur on the Biodiversity Strategy post 2010, I do believe that biodiversity must be integrated part of the general climate change agenda and that this means also integrating this approach into the Covenant of Mayors"

## EA member calls for flexibility in some aspects of the MFF

During last meeting of the CoR's Ad-hoc commission on MFF which took place on 10 November 2011 in Brussels, Mr Rhodri Glyn Thomas, Member of National Assembly for Wales whilst welcoming the commitment to greening CAP was concerned at the potential negative and "unintended" consequences that may result from requiring all farms receiving payment entitlements to create ecological focus areas on a minimum of 7% of their land; this could impact disproportionately on smaller and family based farms, potentially threatening their long-term viability, and have a negative impact on the food production and food security objectives of the policy. Therefore he called on the Commission to take a more flexible approach to this issue, by either (i) providing for a special derogation reducing the minimum % for small or family farms where this would threaten their viability; (ii) consider applying the 7% minimum threshold at a territorial rather than farm level.



Mr Rhodri Glyn Thomas and EU Budget Commissioner Mr Lewandowski

## CoR-Croatia JCC continue good cooperation with European Parliament JPC

On 10 November under the chairmanship of EA member and Runnymede Borough Cllr. Mrs Linda Gillham and Dubrovačko-Neretvnska County Prefect, Mr. Nikola Dobroslavic, the CoR-Croatia Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) discussed in Brussels the latest developments in EU Croatia relations in the presence of the Croatian Ambassador to the EU Mr Baricevic and Mrs Pejčinović Burić, Chairperson of the Croatian Parliament delegation to the EU-Croatia Joint Parliamentary Committee in the European Parliament.

During her speech, Mrs Pejčinović Burić, highlighted the importance of involving all tiers of government in the enlargement and accession process and said the delegation was eager to continue the cooperation between the European Parliament Joint Parliamentary committee, which she



chairs, and the CoR-Croatia JCC as both committees address important issues for Croatia from different but absolutely complementary perspectives.

The members of the JCC had also a chance to debate the creation of an Adriatic Ionic Macroregion and best

practices in the field of sustainable tourism.

A document with recommendations on the involvement of Croatian local and regional authorities in the EU regional policy was also unanimously endorsed by the Committee.

## European Alliance hosted Open Days debate: Developing a coherent Urban – Rural balance in EU policies

During the European Alliance group meeting on the 11 October members held the debate on *developing a coherent Urban – Rural balance in EU policies* with the guest speaker, Vice Chairman of the Agriculture Committee in the European Parliament, Mr Wojciechowski, MEP. Members agreed that it was an area where CoR members and MEPs should cooperate in achieving a balance between both areas in EU policies. Mr Wojciechowski agreed with the EA members that it is possible to overcome the rural areas lagging behind by appropriate use, empowerment and development of their development potentials by upholding the importance of small rural and agricultural areas as important elements of local economic and social development. The European institutions should take greater account of the needs of rural areas and strike the right balance between urban and rural development policies.

## The Benelux Parliament foreign affairs commission visits the CoR

On the initiative of EA group member Marc HENDRICKX, the foreign affairs commission\*\* of the Benelux Parliament visited the Committee of the Regions on the 28<sup>th</sup> October 2011. Mr HENDRICKX, President of the foreign affairs commission invited commission members as well as Mr. Jack BISKOP (NL), president of the Benelux-parliament to the CoR to discuss the institutions role in the EU decision making process. They held a meeting with CoR Secretary General Mr Gerhard Stahl

\*\* *The Benelux Parliament provides the governments with advice on economic and cross-frontier cooperation. More info on: [www.benelux-parlement.eu](http://www.benelux-parlement.eu)*

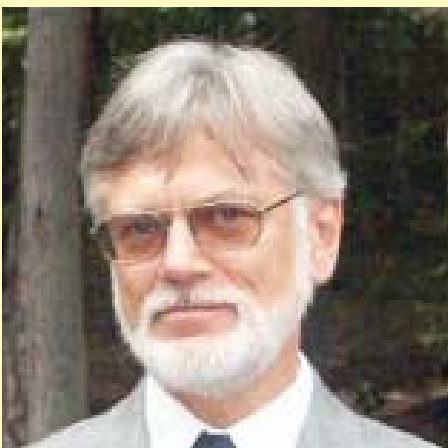


# Estonian High Level Representatives from Local Authorities visit the Committee of the Regions

On the 21 – 23 November 2011 a high level delegation of local authority representatives visited the CoR, the delegation was met by Dr Uno Silberg, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President of the European Alliance group and CoR member. Dr Silberg discussed the role of the CoR in the EU institutional decision making process with the delegation.



## Mr Stanislaw Szwabski appointed Rapporteur on the Enlargement Package 2011-2012



EA member and Chairman of the municipality of Gdynia, Mr Stanislaw Szwabski, was appointed rapporteur by the CoR CIVEX commission on the enlargement package 2011-2012

which includes the progress reports on the countries Croatia, Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Turkey, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Kosovo.

The EA coordinator in the CIVEX commission has already discussed the progress report of Croatia on 10 November during the last meeting of the CoR-Croatia JCC in the presence of the Croatian Ambassador to the EU Mr. Baricevic and Mrs Pejčinović Burić, Chairperson of the Croatian Parliament delegation to the EU-Croatia Joint Parliamentary Committee in the European Parliament.

They both expressed their interest in further discussion on ways to tackle

the need for restructuring shipyards which is a pressing issue for the Croatian authorities.

After an exchange of views of the draft opinion in the CIVEX commission on 1 December, the rapporteur will also participate in the next meeting of the Western Balkans working group on 13 December to discuss the recent developments in the region with a special focus on Bosnia.

The opinion will be adopted in the CIVEX commission in February 2012 and will go to the May Plenary session for final approval.