

European Alliance Group

Sustainability, Creativity, Youth to be prioritised in the coming months by the EA group:

■ says Dr Uno Silberg, President of the EA group

The second half of this year is where the final main acts of the current European Parliament will be implemented. Next year there are elections and it is clear that their focus will be on the elections rather than new policies at that stage.

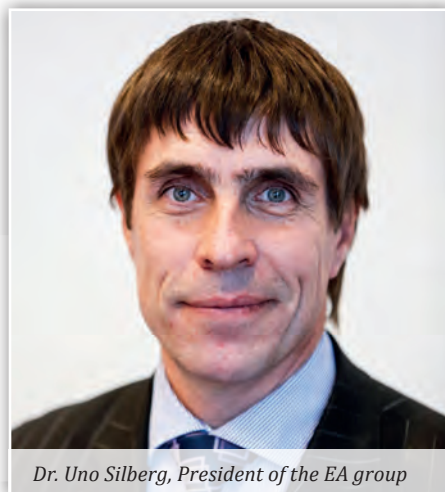
From the local and regional perspective it is fundamentally important that there is agreement on the Structural and Cohesion funding within the new MFF. These funds are vital for the future development of our regions and we will follow these developments very closely.

EA group has always believed in practical steps to developing EU policy. Our group meeting in Panevėžys Lithuania on the 30th September focused on EU policy towards the sustainability of rural areas. Rural areas are being deprived of many services as they are not the priority due to low population densities, yet at weekends and on holidays many rural areas are under huge pressure from those who return to their home from working in major towns and cities. For too long the rural areas have been the poor relation of EU policy and we believe that it is now time to change. We thank Mr Povilas Žagunis, Mayor of Panevėžys for his initiative in asking us to deal with this very important issue.

Europe needs to create jobs and in this respect Europe needs to get creative, this is why during the Open Days the EA group will organize a seminar "Creative tourism development: creating jobs across Europe's regions". Where we will bring together the policy formers as well as practitioners from regions across Europe.

Lastly our focus on youth is back again with the launch of our annual Primary Schools Art competition. Young children this year will be asked to give their artistic impressions of "My Region, My Traditions", this will look at traditions including Music, Dance, Folklore, Food, Culture, Sport. We are looking forward to the results of this competition.

As always our website: www.ea.cor.europa.eu is full of additional information regarding the work of our Group members.



Dr. Uno Silberg, President of the EA group

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European Alliance group launches annual Primary Schools Art Competition

The European Alliance has once again launched its highly acclaimed Primary Schools Art Competition which is aimed at primary school students between the ages of 6 and 12. This year's theme agreed after a wide ranging consultation will focus on 'My region, My traditions' which will allow students to depict their local Music, Dance, Folklore, Food, Culture, Sport, etc.

Previous competition themes were 2012 - My region, My environment; 2011 - My region, My landscape; 2010 - My region,

My Christmas; 2009 - My region, My market. This year promises to be just as good a competition with 17 Primary schools across the EU participating.

The Competition will be organised in October with an exhibition being held in the CoR at the end of November and the winning entries also transformed into postcards for the students and schools to send to their friends. More information will be available on: www.ea.cor.europa.eu

Creating jobs and growth in across Europe's regions through development of creative tourism



11th European Week of Regions and Cities
Brussels 7 - 10 October 2013

On October 8, the European Alliance group will organise a workshop on the development of creative tourism as part of the Committee of the Regions' annual Open Days manifestation. The workshop, entitled "Creative tourism development: creating jobs across Europe's regions" will aim to explore and point

out best practices in the field of creative and sustainable tourism in several European countries and demonstrate how a combination of a bottom-up approach, carefully designed communication strategy and efficient policy coordination can drive job creation across Europe.

The idea underlying the discussion is that each European region has something authentic to present and offer to visitors. At the same time, tourism can be an opportunity for visitors to actively contribute to the environment and the development of the region they are visiting. Thus, creative tourism fosters the promotion of local and regional identities, contributes to further European integration and, at the same time, represents an opportunity, particularly for underdeveloped regions, to use their authenticity and boost jobs and growth. Besides, it promotes the development of other sectors, such as those in the domain of services, agriculture, arts or artisanship, to name just a few.

Apart from the EA group members, the event will see participation by representatives of the European Commission, academics, project managers and marketing experts from several European countries.

CoR to adopt Gillham opinion on Plastic waste in the Environment

The CoR plenary session will vote on the opinion of the EA member Cllr. Linda Gillham concerning the Green Paper "European Strategy on plastic waste in the Environment" which was adopted by overwhelming majority at the last ENVE commission meeting.

In the context of the EU2020 Resource Efficient Flagship initiative such a document is of crucial importance as it opens a discussion on how to deal with plastic waste in the most efficient way.

The incidence and impact of plastic in the environment is a challenge as plastic is cheap and versatile but its durability creates a lasting problem.

While the growing accumulation of



Cllr. Linda Gillham

plastic litter in the global marine environment is a wake-up call it is acknowledged that the majority of this uncontrolled disposal originated on land.

Cllr Linda Gillham added that we cannot keep regarding plastic purely as waste. More efforts should be made to move plastic waste away from landfilling and incineration, thus enhancing reuse and recycling, so as to ensure plastic is regarded as valuable resource. Cllr Gillham, while recalling the key role of industry in this collective effort as the main provider of employment and driver for innovation, considers that support for a market for recycled plastic would promote high quality recycling more effectively than energy from waste.

EA group holds an external meeting in Lithuania on the sustainability of rural areas

At the invitation of Mr Povilas Žagunis, Mayor of Panevėžys district municipality, and in the presence of Lithuanian state officials, the European Alliance group held an extraordinary meeting in the Lithuanian town of Panevėžys on September 30. The central topic of the meeting was the burning issue of the sustainability of rural areas in the EU.

The discussion highlighted the problems rural areas are facing, particularly the lack of job opportunities and intensified depopulation which strongly affects the quality of life and the provision of basic services to those people who decide to stay in such regions.

The participants in the meeting agreed on a declaration which is to be sent to relevant policy- and decision-makers in the

EU and which stresses that rural development policy must insist on diversification and investment in all economic activities with partnerships, a bottom up approach and local involvement at its core. The key to increasing the competitiveness and sustainability of rural areas is in a smart policy mix, synergies between European, national, regional and local policies and carefully developed research and innovation strategies which will create conditions for smart rural growth.

Apart from the EA group members, the meeting brought together Members of the Lithuanian Parliament, vice Ministers of Agriculture and Environment, representatives of Lithuanian local and regional authorities and representatives of the former Irish Presidency of the Council of the EU.



Mr Povilas Žagunis

The meeting coincides with the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the EU and the forthcoming CoR plenary session which will see adoption of the opinion on the sustainability of rural areas by Mr Jerzy Zająkła, EA group's first vice-president.



Mr Jerzy Zająkła

Jerzy Zająkła's own-initiative opinion "Sustainability of rural areas" to be adopted at the CoR October Plenary

The Committee of the Regions' October Plenary Session will see adoption of Mr Jerzy Zająkła's own-initiative opinion on sustainability of rural areas. In the opinion, Mr Zająkła drew attention to a list of highly diverse problems which are threatening the development, sometimes even the mere persistence, of rural areas across Europe today and proposed to address some of these challenges through creation of functional

urban-rural territorial partnerships based on careful strategic planning and identification of long-term interests of rural communities.

Sustainability of rural areas was also the central topic of the European Alliance group's external meeting held on 30 September in Panevėžys, Lithuania. The draft opinion was adopted at the NAT commission external meeting in July in Kaunas.

The European Alliance Group welcomed Secondary School Competition winners to the CoR plenary

For the 8th year running the EA group welcomed winners of its Secondary Schools Competition to Brussels for the July CoR plenary session. The competition's aim was 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.

The two stage competition consisted of a multiple choice quiz on the European Union and an essay competition this year focused on young people's views on promoting European Citizenship. Two winners from each participating school participated in two days trip to Brussels in July, to meet members of the CoR, having also the opportunity to discover Brussels, the capital city, its history and present.

The students met with the CoR President at the beginning of the plenary session.

The European Alliance group President Dr Uno Silberg said that this was a hugely important competition as there is a need



for the EU to engage with the young people and it is through visits such as this that a better understanding is received by members of the needs of young people. More information is available on www.ea.cor.europa.eu.

CoR Plenary to set LRAs viewpoint on the impact of fracking

The European Commission indicates that "Shale gas and other unconventional gas sources have become potential important new sources of supply". However, there are concerns over fracking activities ranging from water pollution to intense land occupation and minor earth quakes. The CoR will adopt at its October Plenary session the opinion of Cllr Meaney which was voted upon by the ENVE commission in June after a lively debate.

The CoR rapporteur and EA member, while highlighting that drilling poses high environmental and human health risks, calls for a legally binding framework in a form of Directive and requests

the Commission to consider asking Member States to limit Unconventional Hydrocarbon development until regulatory gaps in relevant EU legislation are amended.

Furthermore Cllr Meaney call for the establishment of waste water treatment standards and compulsory water management plans by operators as well as



Cllr Brian Meaney

for the obligation to declare chemical contents of fracturing fluids. Taking into account of local and regional authorities' competence, the rapporteur underlines that LRAs should possess the right to prohibit, limit and control the activities associated with the extraction of unconventional hydrocarbons.

While some consider shale gas as a "game changer" which would trigger a huge reduction in energy prices, the rapporteur seems sceptical as he believes that at current gas prices the potential for shale gas is yet too small to determine changes in the supply and that this could undermine the growth potential of renewables and the reduction of CO₂ emission targets. Finally, stresses the rapporteur, other issues which cannot be overlooked and need to be addressed regard the social and economic impacts of well abandonment.

Silberg actively contributes to the debate on the long-term financing of European economy

EA group president Uno Silberg's opinion on the European Commission's Green Paper on the long-term financing of the EU economy will be adopted on Wednesday 9 October at the Committee of the Regions' Plenary session.

The opinion contributes to the recently initialised debate on how to improve, strengthen and diversify the system of long-term financing of the European

economy and better channel savings into long-term investments in the context when the crisis and the weak macroeconomic environment created a climate of uncertainty and risk aversion especially felt by cash-strapped Member States and SMEs.

The draft opinion was originally adopted at the ECOS commission external meeting in July in Graz, Austria.



Dr. Uno Silberg

Upcoming Events:

September			October					
30/9	Extraordinary meeting and seminar of the EA Group	Panevėžys, Lithuania	01/10	Meeting of the NAT Commission	Brussels	07/10	Meeting of the CoR Bureau	Brussels
			02/10	Meeting of the ECOS Commission	Brussels	08/10	EA Workshop	Brussels
			07-10/10	OPEN DAYS	Brussels	08/10	EA group meeting	Brussels
			07/10	Meeting of the EA Bureau	Brussels	08-09/10	Plenary session of the CoR	Brussels