

European Alliance Group

Local and Regional Authorities should be given resources to generate sustainable local employment

■ says Stanisław Szwabski, President of the European Alliance Group



EA President with President Juncker

We very clearly welcome the EU Investment Plan which has been launched by the European Commission President Mr Juncker, what is needed is local implementation for local results. It is often very easy to focus on large scale projects or focus on the Capital cities of Europe but we would argue that local projects in towns cities and rural areas would maximise the impact on job creation and give citizens more visibility as to what the European Union is delivering for them.

We need to modernize our rural economy so that we can create jobs and ensure a high quality of life for citizens, the same needs to be done for our smaller towns and cities. If we have projects that are specifically targeted to provide local infrastructure and services; to create sustainable energy and environmental local communities, then we have a chance that people can live and work where they want to be and not be forced to move to cities in search of employment.

We will organise an Open Days seminar 'EU policy for regenerating town and

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city centres' which will hopefully give an insight into how EU policy can be matched with the regeneration of these centres.

Lastly, we welcome for this CoR plenary our Secondary Schools competition winners. Indeed a competition we are immensely proud of which allows students to engage in Europe.



Winners of the 10th edition of the EA/ CoR Secondary Schools Competition to participate in CoR plenary session

Winners of the 10th edition of the EA/ CoR Secondary Schools are joining the CoR plenary session in 8-9th July to experience one of the EU institutions in full action. The competition took place in eight member states, involving pupils with ages between 14-18 years. The competition's first stage was a multiple choice test that assessed the pupils'

knowledge on the European Union and the EU institutions, while the second one was to write an essay on one of the topics reflecting European Year of Development 2015 or bottom-up communication in the European Union.

Two pupils from each participating school, with the best results in both

stages will be participating in a three day study trip to Brussels on the 7-9th July 2015. They will meet Mr Markku Markkula, the president of the CoR, members of the EA group in the Committee of the Regions, visit the European Parliament's Parliamentarium and learn about the functioning of the European Union.

Uno Silberg is the future CoR rapporteur on EU 2016 budget

On 12 May 2015 the COTER commission proposed the EA member, Mr Uno Silberg as rapporteur-general for the opinion on the Draft EU Budget 2016.

As local and regional authorities manage directly some EU programmes under shared management (European Structural and

Investment Funds) and, at the same time, they are beneficiaries of other programmes or instruments, they are directly interested in the level of both commitment appropriations and payment appropriations.

The opinion of Mr Silberg will highlight the local and regional relevance in the negotiations on the annual EU budget and tackle the pressing issue of the yearly gap between commitments and payments that have accumulated since 2007 and which finally are set to decrease. The COTER commission will hold a first debate on 13 July.



Mr Uno Silberg

EA Vice-President calls for a greater role for ARLEM in the future ENP



Mr Stewart Maxwell

While the European Neighbourhood policy will be reviewed by the end of the year and a consultation process started, the CoR as well as CORLEAP and ARLEM, joint assemblies of

local and regional representatives from the CoR and neighbouring partner countries, have been contributing with a series of recommendations.

On 28 May the ARLEM Bureau adopted its position that, whilst advocating differentiation towards the South and the East, underlines the necessity for the EU to 'rethink' the approach to the southern neighbourhood. Recent developments make it even more urgent. ARLEM calls for specific projects whereby an inclusive approach involving local and regional stakeholders and civil society is applied.

EA Vice-President and member of the Scottish Parliament, Stewart Maxwell, claimed a greater role for local communities in the definition and implementation of the ENP and added that it is wrong to regard them as civil society as they have greater legitimacy from the people.

Given the difficulties to find national interlocutors in the countries affected by conflicts, the EU and international organisations are turning to municipalities and local authorities. There is a huge untapped potential for the CoR and ARLEM to play a greater role and ARLEM should aim to become the only international body representing LRAs in the Southern Mediterranean, said Stewart Maxwell.

Capital Market Union: a preview from the Committee of the Regions rapporteur Mr Truskolaski

The European economy has been enduring difficulties since the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2007 and the subsequent sovereign debt crisis that struck several Member States. It's taking its time to recover from the shock, despite the efforts made by Member States, regions, local administrations and the European Union over the last years.

Mr Truskolaski (PL/EA) CoR Rapporteur highlights that 'although there are substantial differences between the different Regions and Member States of the EU, we all agree that more stimuli are needed across Europe to overcome the current situation. Companies across Europe, but especially in some regions,

struggle to obtain financing that would help them to develop, innovate and grow. Banks are now subject to stricter prudential regulation and bank lending upon which the businesses in Europe have been traditionally more reliant when seeking funds, has shrunk. More sources of funding are urgently needed, especially for SMEs and infrastructure projects'.

The rapporteur's objective is for the opinion is to highlight the CoR's view on topics like access to finance for SMEs, securitisation, supervision or the role of local banks. The measures that may be proposed as a result of the current consultation process could have a strong impact on local and regional economies and it is therefore



Mr Tadeusz Truskolaski (PL/EA)

fundamentally important that the CoR pronounces on the topic. Furthermore, it should be highlighted that SMEs are the major source of economic growth and employment in Europe and they are also the cornerstone of local and regional economies.

The Committee of the Regions (CoR) is scheduled to adopt the opinion at its Plenary Session on the 8-9 July.

Fostering and Promoting the Cultural and Linguistic Heritage of Europe must be at the core of EU policy provisions says the European Alliance group in Aalst



EA members in Aalst

On the invitation of Mr Karim Van Overmeire, Alderman of the City of Aalst, Member of the Flemish Parliament, the European Alliance Group of the European Committee of the Regions held its extraordinary meeting and a seminar on 'Fostering and Promoting the Cultural and Linguistic Heritage of Europe' in Aalst (Flanders) on 15th June 2015.

A vibrant debate was held with regional representatives from across Europe on cultural heritage as a very broad concept which does not include only tangible artefacts but also a wide range of shared values, beliefs, lifestyles and practices which strongly influence our perceptions and our daily lives. Amongst the guest speakers were Mr Marc Demesmaeker, Member of the European Parliament and Professor Matthias Storme.

Host for the meeting, Mr Karim Van Overmeire (1st Vice-President of the EA group), said he was honoured that

Members of the Committee of the Regions were visiting the historical city of Aalst. He said that it was imperative that the EU promotes and preserves Europe's Culture, Language and Heritage. It is important to note that fostering national and regional cultures and languages is a decisive factor for successful integration and participation of citizens in daily life. Mr Van Overmeire added: our cultural heritage is essential to contribute to social cohesion, and we see our European cultural heritage as a strong factor in European understanding.

A Member of the European Parliament since 2013 Mr Marc Demesmaeker seeks European support and recognition for peoples and regions all over the world and defends the right to self-determination. Demesmaeker cherishes the European principle of "united in diversity" and defends the rights of languages which have not yet achieved

full official EU status and recognition, languages such as Catalan, Basque and Welsh.

Mr Stanislaw Szwabski, EA President added: "Our Group will continue to work to support national and regional identities assuring that the respect of cultural and linguistic heritage is one of the basic principles underlying the process of European integration which is not about levelling out differences or creating uniform identities but fostering greater cooperation and understanding among the peoples of Europe."

The EA group have adopted the Aalst Declaration: Fostering and Promoting the Cultural and Linguistic Heritage of Europe. This will be forwarded to all the EU institutions.

For the text of the Declaration see the EA Group website www.ea.cor.europa.eu



European Alliance group seminar

Fostering and Promoting the Cultural and Linguistic Heritage of Europe



15 June 2015
Aalst, Flanders

Hendrickx addresses GUAM parliamentary assembly

On Friday 26 June, Marc Hendrickx, member of the Flemish Parliament and of the EA, addressed the GUAM parliamentary meeting on Security in Europe in Kiev, Ukraine. Delegations

from the Baltic Assembly, the Nordic Council and the Visegrad Group were also present and, as a representative of the Benelux Parliament, Mr Hendrickx was able to shed light on military cooperation between the Benelux countries. He indicated that this might provide the GUAM countries (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova) with inspiration in these difficult times.



Mr Marc Hendrickx

View from the Regions: The Copper Belt — a Modern Place for Business.



Mr Marek Tramś

Mr Marek Tramś is the delegate for a modern region which has many opportunities and bold plans for the future. It is strategically located at the crossroads of international transport routes connecting northern and southern Europe. It benefits from numerous business institutions, a favourable labour market, relatively low unemployment (average of 11%), a growing number of economic operators (approximately 5 000), and above all an extractive industry.

When construction began on the Lubin mine in the 1970s, nobody expected that it would soon grow to become the Kombinat Górniczo-Hutniczy Miedzi (KGHM), the region's biggest employer — indeed the copper deposits running between Legnica, Lubin, Polkowice and Głogów are the richest in Europe and among the largest in the world. According to Marek Tramś, "this was one of the last regions in the country where such a massive industry was built from scratch. This move left its mark for many years to come and changed the region's status not only on the local scale but also nationally and even internationally."

Today the development of the Copper Belt depends not on what is happening in the

province, but on global copper and silver prices. This area is more closely linked with the global economy than the national one. It drives growth in Lower Silesia, and the subregion is considered one of the main barometers of economic growth in the country. It is also one of the most urbanised areas in the country.

Being aware of the gradual depletion of natural resources, the Polkowice region has for some years been pursuing a policy of diversification with the aim of attracting investors not connected with the copper industry. To this end, the Legnica Special Economic Zone was established in 1997. This has resulted in a positive trend in the region towards less dependence on the copper company, including the opening of one of Poland's first waterparks, in Polkowice.

Mr Tramś emphasised that "diversification is a deliberate and sensibly implemented policy on the part of local authorities. Although investors may have a stake in businesses, these are still independent employers. It is also easy to find skilled workers in the region. There are many vocational schools in the area which have also recently been modernised."

The Legnica-Głogów Functional Area is also one of Europe's environmentally endangered areas due to the constant draining of mines and the discharge of highly mineralised ground water into the Oder, creating large concentrations of tailings in surface landfills. According to Tramś, "now that the old machines and vehicles have been replaced and investments made in environmentally friendly equipment, the world's largest tailings pond, Żelazny Most, is no longer such a direct threat, but we, as residents, still have concerns about it."

Marek Tramś is Head of Polkowice District, a member of the EA Group Bureau and of the Committee of the Regions representing the Copper Belt region, also known as the Legnica-Głogów Copper District. This is the urban-industrial and copper ore area in the northern part of Lower Silesia province. It is bordered by four districts — Głogowski, Legnicki, Lubiński and Polkowicki — and one town with the status of district — Legnica. It covers over 5 000 km² and has a population of around 600 000.

The full article is available on www.ea.cor.europa.eu



Headquarters of Polkowice District Office