

## European Alliance Group

### Future direction of Europe must have regions and cities at its heart, says Karl Vanlouwe, President of the European Alliance Group

As we reflect on the European Commission President's State of the Union we regret that he has not recognised the role of regions and cities in the development of the European Union, its policies or indeed the CoR's role in creating that bridge between regions and the EU institutions. We can only hope that the democratic voice of locally and regionally elected representatives can indeed play a true role in creating a European Union for and with its peoples.

For us the principle of democracy must be fully respected in the European Union. The continued imprisonment of politicians in Spain is a disgrace. The European Commission and Council Presidents should initiate action to ensure that the Catalan prisoners are released and that those in exile can return home.

The European Union and the UK now enter a crucial phase in the BREXIT negotiations.



Mr Vanlouwe with Ms Juliane Bogner-Strauss, Austria's Federal Minister for women, families and youth

I have heard first-hand about the impact this will have on the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland. The impact on Flanders will also be huge and we need to make sure the CoR has a role in sharing experiences and preparing our business people for the economic and social consequences of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union.

Lastly, I am looking forward to our group discussing 'Local and regional authorities fostering energy transition policies' during the European Week of Regions and Cities.

### European Week of Regions and Cities: EA Group discuss role of LRAs in fostering energy transition policies

With the entry into force of the Paris Climate Agreement, the EU has set higher renewable energy and energy efficiency targets to accelerate the transition to a cleaner energy system and achieve climate goals.

On 9 October, in the context of the European Week of Regions and cities, the EA group is organising a workshop on "Local and regional authorities fostering energy transition policies". Speakers include Mr Andy Kantoudaki from the European Commission's DG Energy, Mr Carlos Chocarro from the government of Navarre, Member of the Flemish parliament Mr Andres Gryffroy and the CoR Rapporteur on climate change governance COP 24 Mr Andrew Cooper.

Regions and cities' role is central to making this transition happen. They are at the forefront in implementing ambitious policies but they also need to be empowered with adequate means and enabled to participate in the definition of national energy and climate plans.

Local and regional policy makers, experts and practitioners will also have the opportunity to share examples of good practices and discuss innovative approaches to energy efficiency and diversification supporting the creation of new jobs and growth.



Cllr Andrew Cooper, CoR rapporteur on climate change governance post 2020

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## **Cllr Tony Buchanan in Skopje to discuss fiscal decentralisation and local tax policy with FYROM peers**

On 11 September, the capital of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) Skopje hosted the 15th meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee between the European Committee of the Regions and the country's local authorities. On this occasion, the focus of the meeting was fiscal decentralisation and local tax policy.

Separately from the representatives of FYROM's local authorities, members of the CoR delegation had an opportunity to exchange views with ministers from the

country's government, the Head of the EU Delegation to FYROM, Mr Samuel Žbogar and representatives of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations.

The EA Group was represented by Cllr Tony Buchanan, leader of the East Renfrewshire Council, Scotland.



*Cllr Tony Buchanan*



*Cllr Gillian Ford*

## **CoR members set to adopt Gillian Ford's opinion on the European Education Area**

On 10 October 2018, the 131st plenary session of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) will vote on the draft opinion by Ms Gillian Ford, councillor in the London Borough of Havering, UK. This opinion outlines the CoR's position on the European Commission's Communication "Building a stronger Europe: the role of youth, education and culture policies" and three Proposals for Council Recommendations which deal with automatic mutual recognition of diplomas and development of high quality early childhood education and care, as well as a better approach to language learning.

Ms Ford's opinion introduces a number of legislative amendments to the proposals put forward by the commission which, among other things, emphasise the need to guarantee accessibility and additional support to children and learners with special educational needs and disabilities, the importance of quality assurance instruments in online education and training and the need for recognition of qualifications and learning periods abroad by employers.

Ms Ford was appointed rapporteur-general for this file at the SEDEC commission meeting held in Logroño, Spain in June this year.

## **EA Group to meet in Bucharest to discuss investment and cohesion in EU**

On 26 November the European Alliance Group will hold its external group meeting and seminar in Bucharest on the subject "Investment and Cohesion in Europe's Regions and local communes". The members of the group will discuss ways of developing successful regional investment strategies which address the needs of cities as well as rural areas and communes.

For more details, please visit our website [www.ea.cor.europa.eu](http://www.ea.cor.europa.eu).



*Mr Emil Drăghici, Mayor of Vulcana-Băi and the meeting's host*

## CoR Bureau adopts declaration on Implementation of subsidiarity and proportionality principles.

In November 2017, the European Commission set up the Task Force on Subsidiarity, Proportionality and “Doing Less More Efficiently” in which the CoR took part.

Its final report, published in July 2018, includes proposals to better apply the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality and improve involvement of regional and local authorities in EU policy making across the whole policy cycle. Many concrete measures proposed by the CoR are being taken up such as applying the subsidiarity common assessment grid in re-

lation to each CoR opinion on legislative proposals falling under the subsidiarity control mechanism; setting up a pilot project of regional hubs to assess the implementation of EU policy; and promoting a system of EU-focused local councillors throughout the EU, similar to what has already been developed in Austria.

The CoR Bureau in Innsbruck reaffirmed its commitment to promote the implementation of the Task Force recommendations for an inclusive and effective Europe by adopting a declaration on the implemen-

tation of subsidiarity and proportionality principles. The declaration highlights that the multilevel governance principle should be enshrined in the EU legal structure and that the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality are inseparable from the principle of multilevel governance as their shared goal is to assess the most appropriate levels of governance to take actions.

The declaration is based on a request of the Austrian Presidency and serves as an input for a Subsidiarity Conference to be held in Bregenz in November.

## Nanette Maupertuis takes part in EP discussion on the future of Interreg



Ms Nanette Maupertuis

On 4 September, Nanette Maupertuis, member of the Executive Council of Corsica and CoR rapporteur on the future of European

Territorial Cooperation (ETC) after 2020 met stakeholders and representatives of regions across Europe to discuss the future of cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation. She also had an opportunity to convey the concerns of European regions to the European Parliament as she took part in the REGI committee debate on the Arimont report.

Mrs Maupertuis expressed concerns about the 1,8 billion budget reduction to the ETC and the radical changes proposed by the European Commission that impact on ETC traditional components. “Despite the creation of new components for outermost regions and the interregional innovative instrument, the Commission is proposing massive budget cuts for cross-border and

interregional cooperation and the move of cross border maritime projects into transnational programmes”, she said.

“There is no justification for cutting programmes that have proved to work and for rendering cooperation between maritime regions more difficult. These cuts go against the principle of territorial cohesion as they would penalise cities which are currently working together, cross-border regions that have carried joint projects, and islands which are by definition cross-border areas. We will also ask that the budget be restored and that maritime cross border programmes could continue as they presently stand”, added Ms Maupertuis.

## CoR plenary set to adopt Repaský’s opinion on EU risk assessment in the food chain

On 10 October, members of the European Committee of the Regions will vote on the opinion “Transparency and sustainability of the EU risk assessment in the food chain” prepared by Mr Miloslav Repaský, Member of the regional parliament of the Prešov Self-Governing Region, Slovakia.

In the draft opinion, Mr Repaský welcomed the Commission’s initiative to increase the transparency and sustainability of the EU risk assessment in the food chain as a positive

move in the right direction but expressed some doubts about the independence of scientific scrutiny of studies and data used in the risk assessments of regulated products and substances due to the current legal framework on confidentiality rules.

Mr Repaský’s opinion will be one of the topics for discussion and adoption during the October meeting of the NAT commission and is due to be adopted at the CoR plenary session in December.



Mr Miloslav Repaský



## “Plurilingualism, intercultural understanding and promotion of minority and regional languages” conference and exhibition organised by the Delegation of the Government of Navarre in Brussels



Mr Mikel Irujo Amezaga with Ms Ana Ollo, Navarrese Minister for Citizens and Institutional Relationships and EA President Karl Vanlouwe

On 25 September, the Delegation of the Government of Navarre in Brussels organized a conference “Plurilingualism, intercultural understanding and promotion of minority and regional languages” which gathered speakers from the Council of Europe, civil society, European Parliament, European Committee of the Regions, as well as representatives of local

and regional authorities from Navarre, Generalitat Valenciana, Fassa Valley in Trentino, City of Cork and the Nouvelle Aquitaine-Euskadi-Navarre Euroregion.

The event’s goal was to alert the public to the importance of language learning and diversifying the range of languages learnt in order

to increase plurilingualism and intercultural understanding, including the promotion of minority languages. The workshop analysed successful multilingualism policies and their effects on strengthening the life chances of citizens, such as increasing their employability, facilitating access to services and rights, and contributing to solidarity through enhanced intercultural dialogue and social cohesion.

The event, hosted by EA Group President Karl Vanlouwe was organized in cooperation with the Government of Navarre, Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity and European Language Equality Network.

The Delegation of the Government of Navarre also organized an exhibition “Navarrorum - 2000 Years of Basque language through documents” which was displayed in the European Committee of the Regions in the week preceding the conference.

Head of the Delegation of the Government of Navarre in Brussels is Mr Mikel Irujo, member of the European Alliance Group.

## “La Diada” or how one cannot stop the people

On 11 September, more than one million Catalans and their guests celebrated the Catalan national holiday, “La Diada.”

Among them was also Member of the Flemish Parliament Marc Hendrickx who was part of a 3-member strong Flemish delegation. In addition to participating at the traditional march, Mr Hendrickx and his colleagues had very productive meetings with members of the Catalan parlia-

ment, including President Roger Torrent, Vice-President Josep Costa and MP Aurora Madaula, as well as with representatives of the civil society.

This year’s Diada march gathered over one million attendees who showed that the festival has overcome its purely Catalan character and is on the road to becoming a point of inspiration for all forces in Europe who believe in democracy, self-determination and political freedoms.



Mr Marc Hendrickx at 'La Diada'

## Winners of the EA-CoR Secondary Schools Competition in Brussels

On 4 July 2018, during the 131st CoR plenary session, EA Group members hosted the winners of the 13th EA-CoR Secondary Schools Competition. This year’s edition took place in 9 schools from eight Member States, involving pupils aged between 14 and 19.



Winners of the EA-CoR Secondary Schools Competition at the CoR Plenary