

European Alliance Group

Democracy, dialogue and delivery are key for 2019, says Karl Vanlouwe, President of the European Alliance Group



As we lead up to the CoR summit of regions and cities which is being held on the 25 year anniversary of the CoR, it's time for us to reflect on how we can become better at engaging with, and working for regional and local government across the European Union. We need to reinvent ourselves to be more open to their concerns, and feed this into the EU decision-making process. The strength of the CoR is its elected members and if we speak of the future of Europe it is with the cities and regions we must construct it with the cities and regions at its core.

This future must be constructed with the democratic view of the people, and this is something the European Union needs to

defend. Again I reiterate my wholehearted objection to democratic Catalan leaders being jailed in Spain. This cannot be allowed to continue and the EU institutions should act and the Spanish government should release them.

The CoR should now also engage in a process to encourage people to vote in the European elections. We have Flemish elections the same time but clearly we need to engage the youth of today to get out and exercise their democratic vote.

We are also in a crucial time for discussions on BREXIT and we need to ensure that the local and regional consequences are understood, which is one of the reasons that we met with the BREXIT observatory in Navarra in January. Our group will also hold a meeting on 'helping towns and villages drive rural revival in the European Union' in Leitrim on the 11th February and we are looking forward to holding discussions on this important subject.

Finally, our group was deeply shocked and saddened by the horrific murder of a very well-respected member of the CoR and Mayor of Gdańsk Mr Paweł Adamowicz. There are no words to express our sorrow towards his family, friends and the people of Gdańsk. May he rest in Peace.

CONTENT

Navarra leading by example in developing energy efficient houses

BREXIT worries of Navarra regional authorities and businesses outlined to EA Group members

EA Group members reinforce the need to avoid a no-deal Brexit during a debate with Michel Barnier in the CoR plenary

Tadeusz Truskolaski elected 1st vice chair of the EA Group

Romania takes over the Council Presidency, Drăghici calls for closer cooperation with Moldova

ARLEM to hold its 10th plenary session in Seville on 26 and 27 February

8th European Summit of Regions and Cities to take place in Bucharest on 14 and 15 March

COP24: role of local government rises in Climate talks by Andrew Cooper

Flanders and Catalonia in the front line to ensure better implementation of EU legislation and subsidiarity

McCarthy to discuss future of Urban Agenda

Helping towns and villages drive rural revival in the European Union is the focus of our group meeting in Lough Rynn, Leitrim

On the 11th February, the European Alliance group will hold a meeting in Leitrim, Ireland which will focus on the theme of 'Helping towns and villages drive rural revival in the European Union'. Keynote speakers will include Sean Canney TD, Irish Minister of State for Rural Affairs and Natural Resources; Mairi Gougeon MSP, Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment of Scotland and Marian Harkin MEP. The meeting will also examine the importance of cross-border cooperation and comes at a pivotal time coming up to the BREXIT deadline as well as the forthcoming European Parliament elections.



EA
European Alliance

EUROPEAN ALLIANCE GROUP Seminar

European Committee of the Regions

Helping towns and villages drive rural revival in the European Union

In cooperation with Northern & Western Regional Assembly Comhairle Chontae Leitrima Leitrim County Council

11 February 2019
Lough Rynn, Mohill, Leitrim

*"I hope that the Romanian Presidency will bring about a significant progress in the field of rural development but also in cooperation with the Republic of Moldova",
Emil Drăghici, mayor of Vulcana-Băi and EA bureau member*



European Alliance

Navarra leading by example in developing energy efficient houses

Members of the European Alliance Group visited a Passive Houses project in Pamplona and saw at first hand the environmentally-friendly and energy-efficient pilot project for social houses implemented by the Government of Navarra. The project is highly innovative and the apartments will cost +/- €150 per year to heat which will lead to savings on average costs of over €500. Representative of the government of Navarra in Brussels, Mr Mikel Irujo said that 'it is important that we move towards these projects for environmental and energy saving'. Cllr Andrew Cooper said 'this is an exciting large scale project which should be replicated in many regions across the EU'. More information on the project is available here: <https://www.theclimategroup.org/news/navarra-constructs-over-500-energy-efficient-homes-social-housing>.



EA Group members at the project site

BREXIT worries of Navarra regional authorities and businesses outlined to EA Group members

A delegation of European Alliance Group led by its 1st Vice President Tadeusz Truskolaski met with the BREXIT observatory of Navarra to discuss concerns of the region's government and businesses as regards BREXIT. A particular focus was placed on the impact UK's leaving of the EU could have in the Agri-Food and automotive sectors in the region and regional government representatives outlined some of the work being undertaken to inform businesses. Cllr Kieran McCarthy from the Cork City Council outlined some of the initiatives of the Irish government in ensuring businesses were prepared for the different possible consequences of Brexit. The delegation also held a bi-lateral meeting with Ms Ana Ollo Martinez, Minister for Citizen and Institutional Relations for the Government of Navarra.



EA group members on the visit to Navarra

EA Group members reinforce the need to avoid a no-deal Brexit during a debate with Michel Barnier in the CoR plenary

The European Committee of the Regions members on the 6 December urged the European Union to take measures to mitigate the impact of the UK's withdrawal from the EU. The debate with Michel Barnier, during which the EU's Chief Negotiator with the United Kingdom was praised for having secured an agreement

that limits the risks posed to the EU and to Ireland in particular and for his outreach to cities and regions over the course of negotiations.

Mr Barnier, the EU's Chief Negotiator and a former European commissioner for regional development, said on 6 December:

"the withdrawal deal; it is the only one and the best one possible. The agreement respects the EU's principles, while taking into account the UK's red lines. It will preserve fair competition and will maintain opportunities for cooperation with UK cities, regions or universities. It will maintain the economic dynamism

of our territories, some of which closely trade with the United Kingdom, though our principal shared asset remains the internal market. But without ratification, there will be no withdrawal agreement or transition period. This 'no deal' scenario cannot be ruled out so it is necessary for all regions and cities to be well prepared."

EA Group President Karl Vanlouwe, member of the Flemish Parliament called for more flexibility for EU state aid rules to regions and business most affected by BREXIT and more focus on ports, while welcoming the new proposals in the North Sea Corridor in the Connecting Europe Facility.

Leitrim County Councillor Enda Stenson spoke at the debate and said that coming from a border County everything should be done to ensure there is no hard border on the Island of Ireland. He also said that measures should be put in place to protect the agriculture and food producers. Lastly Cllr Stenson highlighted that the healing of communities since the Good Friday agreement should not be reopened due to the madness of a number of politicians in London and in Northern Ireland "this is not about egos this is about real life consequences on the ordinary citizens".



Cllr Enda Stenson with Mr Michel Barnier



Mr Tadeusz Truskolaski

Tadeusz Truskolaski elected 1st vice chair of the EA Group

At the EA Group meeting held on 5 December 2018, members elected Mr Tadeusz Truskolaski, mayor of the Polish city of Białystok as the group's 1st vice president.

Mr Truskolaski is currently EA Group's

coordinator in the CoR's Commission for Economic Policy (ECON) and also a member of the Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy and EU Budget (COTER) and the Joint Consultative Committee CoR-Serbia.

Romania takes over the Council Presidency, Drăghici calls for closer cooperation with Moldova

On 1 January 2019, Romania took over the six-month Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The Romanian Presidency's stated priorities include further integration and connectedness within Europe, security, the role of Europe as a global actor and the promotion of common European values.

Mr Emil Drăghici, mayor of Vulcana-Băi said that first Romanian presidency is a great source of pride for the country and for him personally, and that he hopes that his country

will play a constructive role of the "first among the equals" in these challenging and uncertain months which will see both BREXIT and EU-wide elections.

"I particularly hope", Mr Drăghici added, "that in the next months we will see some concrete steps towards our friends in the Republic of Moldova and that we will raise a general awareness within the EU about how important it is to keep the country on the European path."



Mr Emil Drăghici



Ms Marie-Antoinette Maupertuis

ARLEM to hold its 10th plenary session in Seville on 26 and 27 February

On 26 and 27 February, the Spanish city of Seville will host the 10th plenary session of the Europe-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM).

Representatives of local authorities from all sides of the Mediterranean will discuss governance and transparency as well as youth entrepreneurship in the region. Members of the European Alliance Group who will be present at the meeting are Ms Marie-Antoinette Maupertuis, Executive member of

the Corsican regional authority and member of the ARLEM bureau, as well as Mr Emil Drăghici, mayor of the Romanian town of Vulcana-Băi.

Set up in 2010, ARLEM is a platform where members of the CoR and territorial associations active in this area meet with elected representatives from southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean to maintain political dialogue and promote interregional cooperation.

8th European Summit of Regions and Cities to take place in Bucharest on 14 and 15 March

On 14 and 15 March, Bucharest will host the 8th European Summit of Regions and Cities, this time under the slogan “(Re)New Europe.”

Over those two days, CoR members and a number of other local and regional politicians from across the continent will hold a number of panel debates on different topics, such as social cohesion and integration, sustainability, territorial cohesion, active subsidiarity and citizens’ participation.

The summit will also host a number of very high-profile guests from the EU



institutions and Romanian government.

The summit is organised jointly with the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union which started on 1 January 2019.

COP24: role of local government rises in Climate talks by Andrew Cooper

In December last year the COP24 meeting in Katowice took an important step by deciding how to achieve the Paris Climate goal of limiting Global Temperature increases to 1.5 degrees centigrade.



Cllr Andrew Cooper speaking at COP24

The talks established the ‘Rulebook’ for achieving tough carbon reduction targets. Kirklees Country Councillor and EA Group coordinator in the ENVE commission, Cllr Andrew Cooper was part of the CoR delegation attending the negotiations.

Cllr Cooper’s mission at COP24 was to promote more action at the local and regional level and push the United Nations to acknowledge the need for national governments to do much more to reduce carbon emissions.

Cllr Cooper was also the CoR rapporteur on climate governance after 2020 in which he proposed to set up a concept of Locally- and Regionally-Determined Contributions to encourage local

and regional governments to take more action to reduce their carbon emissions. This concept has received backing from the European Parliament, “Local Governments for Sustainability” and other stakeholders. The final statement signed in Katowice showed a real progress towards this goal. “There is now a statement in the final text on how to assess Nationally-Determined Contributions that refers to preparing implementation plans to include “domestic institutional arrangements, public participation and engagement with local communities”. This statement gives a much greater role to local authorities and regions around the world. Now it is the time to back up those declarations with solid actions”.

Flanders and Catalonia in the front line to ensure better implementation of EU legislation and subsidiarity

Involving local and regional experiences in implementing EU legislation more efficiently and in a more systematic and timely manner is one of the key recommendations of the Subsidiarity Task Force chaired by EC Vice President Timmermans.

To follow up on this recommendation, the CoR is setting up a pilot network of regions, the so-called “RegHubs” to test out, on a selected number of EU

policies, the methodology for implementation reporting.

Flanders and Catalonia have been selected and will be part of the projects. They will have the opportunity to channel their experience and report on the implementation of EU legislation on the ground with a view to address data gaps and improve the evaluations of legislation.

This is part of a “new way of working” proposed by the Task Force with the goal of achieving not only effective subsidiarity monitoring throughout the legislative cycle but also during the implementation of EU legislation.

If successful, this pilot project will pave the way for a wider, long-term project that will be accessible to regional and local authorities coming from all EU Member States.

McCarthy to discuss future of Urban Agenda

On 11-12 February Cork city councillor and CoR rapporteur on the Urban Agenda, Kieran McCarthy will meet with coordinators of the Urban Agenda partnerships and take part in the Urban Europe Policy Conference which will aim to launch the updated Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda and to provide an arena for discussions and exchange on urban transitions.

Representatives of cities, practitioners and experts across the EU will discuss how experimentation, socio-technical innovation and stakeholder involvement

can play an important role in local urban-transition strategies.

As expressed in Cllr McCarthy’s opinion, the Urban Agenda offers a considerable potential to improve the way in which our cities will work together and is strongly tied to the Future of Europe debate. By engaging urban authorities in the EU policy-making process, Urban Agenda contributes to bridging the gap between citizens and decision makers and to better law making, said Cllr McCarthy.



Cllr Kieran McCarthy