

European Alliance Group

Regions and cities should be at the core of future EU priorities, says Karl Vanlouwe, president of the European Alliance Group



Mr Karl Vanlouwe

Citizens of the EU have had their democratic say in the European Parliament elections and, at the same time in many Member States, in local or regional elections. Now it is time for the European institutions with elected members to listen to their concerns. Concerns over a wide range of topics which need to shape the next European Commission and its policies. Regions and cities need to be pivotal in developing a vision for the future and I would like our group to have a strong role in defining this future.

The success of regionalist, pro-autonomy and independence parties in the recent elections proves that the EU needs to promote decentralisation while abandoning the top down approach thus showing the true meaning of active subsidiarity. We are glad to see many MEPs elected from Flanders, Catalonia, Scotland, Wales, Corsica and we look forward to working with them for a Europe of all peoples.

Uno Silberg's opinion on endocrine disruptors set to be adopted at the 135th CoR plenary session

The Opinion on the EU-wide Framework for endocrine disruptors, drafted by Dr Uno Silberg, member of Kose Municipality Council (Estonia) is due to be adopted at the 135th CoR plenary session, which will take place on 26 and 27 June 2019 in Brussels.

In his opinion, Dr Silberg amongst other points underlines the need to update the EU's approach regarding endocrine disruptors as rapidly as possible. He emphasises the link between exposure to such substances and ailments in humans (male reproductive health, IQ loss...) and the adverse effects they have on the environment.

We reiterate our call for jailed Catalan politicians to be released, as also recently demanded by the United Nations Arbitrary Detention Body, to allow them to take up their functions in local, national and European parliaments. It is inconceivable that democratically elected politicians are barred from taking office and representing their voters. We should all stand up for European values and the respect of fundamental rights and principles. More than ever, we call for dialogue and for a mediation role for the European Union.

We cannot forget that the October BREXIT deadline is on the horizon. We need to find a solution that will minimise the social and economic impact on our people, on business and on our regions. We wish to continue working with our UK members long into the future. The Scottish First Minister has been very clear on her vision for the next steps and it is a pity the leaders of both the larger parties in Westminster have added confusion rather than clarity.

Finally, during this Plenary Session, as part of our activities aimed at engaging with young people, we will welcome the winners of our successful Secondary Schools Competition. Students from 7 member states will have an opportunity to present their regions, towns and villages, meet CoR members and observe the work of the European Committee of the Regions.

Endocrine disruptors are chemical substances that alter the functioning of the endocrine system and negatively affect the health of humans and animals. The European Commission's Communication "Towards a comprehensive European Union framework on endocrine disruptors", published on 7 November last year, provides a comprehensive EU framework on endocrine disruptors, describing key issues, taking stock of what has been achieved so far and outlining concrete steps to be taken in the future.

Dr Silberg's opinion was adopted unanimously at the 23rd meeting of the European Committee of the Re-

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Dr Uno Silberg

*"The success of regionalist parties in the recent elections proves that the EU needs to promote decentralisation and active subsidiarity."
Karl Vanlouwe, President of the EA group*

Cooper, Ford and Irujo highlight the need for a gender perspective in climate policies

On 13 May, the European Alliance Group and the Delegation of the Government of Navarre in Brussels organised a workshop on the role of women in the fight against climate change. The goal of the workshop was to promote the development of integrated and interconnected climate change mitigation and adaptation policies, with a special focus on strengthening the role of women in the process.

Discussing the importance of regions and cities in the fight against climate change, Cllr Andrew Cooper, member of the Kirklees County Council (UK) and CoR rapporteur on climate governance post-2020 argued that, having lower incomes and consequently sometimes lacking means to invest in climate-efficient solutions, women risk being particularly vulnerable to the measures fighting climate change.

Cllr Gillian Ford from the London Borough of Havering highlighted the need for more engagement

by female politicians in order to effectively address climate change and underlined that EU policies need to keep in mind the impact on women when designing (climate) policies.

Mr Mikel Irujo, Head of the Delegation of the Government of Navarre in Brussels and Ms Isabel Elizalde, regional minister of Rural Development,

Environment and Local Administration outlined government of Navarre's efforts to mainstream gender perspective and involve civil society in the implementation of policies as much as possible. In this regard, they highlighted the importance of sharing experience and best practices across the EU.



From left to right: Ms Elizalde, Cllr Cooper and Mr Irujo

Kieran McCarthy meets EU ministers to discuss future of Urban Agenda



Cllr Kieran McCarthy

On 14 June, Mr Kieran McCarthy, Cork city Councillor and CoR rapporteur on the Urban Agenda took part in an Informal Meeting of EU Ministers Responsible for Urban Matters, held in Bucharest, Romania, to discuss a common framework for urban development in the European Union.

The ministers highlighted the importance of continuing the implementation of the urban agenda for the EU within the future Leipzig charter and committed to strengthen multilevel governance approach. They also put emphasis on the need to link the Urban

Agenda with the EU Better Regulation Agenda and the framework of the objectives of the UN 2030 Sustainable development Goals.

Finally, participants also stressed that urban development should continue to be part of a wider EU approach to territorial cohesion. It is crucial for Cohesion policy to pursue the added-value of the integrated territorial approach and, in conjunction with its strong rural support, to also have a strong urban dimension as well as "urban ownership" on the ground in cities and urban areas.

Truskolaski meets stakeholders to discuss new EU policy framework for SMEs

On 24 May, the EA group Vice President Tadeusz Truskolaski took part in meetings with stakeholders in Brussels to discuss his draft opinion on 'the contribution from regions and cities towards a new EU policy framework for SMEs. During this exchange of views, Mr Truskolaski presented his opinion which calls for a policy focused on future challenges for SMEs such as digitalization, the rise of the data economy and sustainability.

SME Europe and Eurochambres supported Mr Truskolaski's views and identified the skills mis-

match as one of the major concerns for SMEs in the near future. In order to address this problem adequately, the curricula in schools should be more adapted to the skills needed and entrepreneurship education should be included in the curricula.

Mr Truskolaski also met with the European Commission representatives to discuss ways to make the SME framework future-proof. His draft opinion will be discussed and voted at the next ECON Commission meeting on 9 July.



Mr Tadeusz Truskolaski

CoR hosts its annual Enlargement Day, meetings with local and regional authorities from the Western Balkans and Turkey

On 18 and 19 June 2019, EU enlargement was high on the agenda of the European Committee of the Regions which hosted the 5th edition of its annual Enlargement Day along with meetings of Joint Consultative Committees (JCCs) and Working Groups (WGs) for relations with Western Balkan states and Turkey.

This year's edition was focused on links between the rule of law and socio-economic development in enlargement countries, as well as EU support to the region in these two domains.

The topics of individual joint consultative committees included EU pre-accession assistance to Montenegro, rule of law at the local level in Serbia, measures to strengthen good governance in North Macedonia, youth unemployment in Turkey and the evolution of governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina 24 years after the Dayton peace agreement which ended the civil war in the country.

The European Committee of the Regions currently has JCCs with representatives of local and regional authorities from Serbia, Montenegro and North Macedonia, whilst cooperation with Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Kosovo takes place at the level of working groups.

EA Group members who took part in the events are Cllr Andrew Cooper (JCC Serbia), Dr Uno Silberg (JCC Montenegro), Cllr Tony Buchanan (JCC FYROM), Mr Karim Van Overmeire (WG Turkey) and Mr József Kóbor (WG Western Balkans which includes Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Kosovo).



Uno Silberg to attend 23rd ARLEM bureau meeting in Ramallah

On Sunday, 30 June, Dr Uno Silberg, member of Kose Municipality Council (Estonia) will participate in the 23rd meeting of the Bureau of the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM), which will take place in Ramallah, Palestine.

Together with representatives of local and regional authorities from across the EU, as well as those from northern, southern and eastern coasts of the Mediterranean Sea, Dr Silberg

will discuss efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in the Mediterranean region, regional integration in the Mediterranean and Blue economy.

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



CoR/EA Group Secondary School Winners to visit Brussels and the CoR in June



Participants of the 2018 competition at the CoR Plenary session

The EA Group is delighted to welcome the winners of our 15th annual essay writing competition. Two winning pupils from each nominated school and their accompanying adult will arrive in Brussels on 25 June. The young people are coming from 7 member states – Estonia, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. We love watching them make con-

nections with each other and we hope some lasting friendships will be formed.

On 26 June they will have the opportunity to meet EA Group members and to present their schools and regions before attending the Plenary Session which will give them a taste of the EU in action.

The essay topic this year was highly relevant: “Discuss ways in which young people’s participation in the European elections can be increased”. We hope this will raise awareness in schools of how important it is to vote in the European elections once reaching voting age.

EA Group takes part in the EU institutions’ Open Day



EA Group's stand at this year's Open Day

The 4th May was the 27th Open Day of the European Institutions. Visitors to the European Committee of the Regions were able to experience Europe’s diversity with different stands of European regions and cities, each highlighting flagship products from their city/region, such as arts, crafts, food and beverages. The European Alliance was one of the five political groups to have a stand.

Almost 100 people had a go at the European Alliance’s Fun Quiz testing their knowledge of Europe, its institutions and the European Alliance group. We hope people learned more about what we do and the way we function whilst meeting members of our team, seeing our video presentation and looking at our booklets and newsletters. There were small prizes to be won and we enjoyed connecting with members of the public of all ages and nationalities.