

European Alliance Group

Let's grasp the opportunity of the Conference on the Future of Europe to create a real bridge to our regions and citizens



Kieran McCarthy

As one of the privileged eighteen members appointed by the European Committee of the Regions to the plenary session of the Conference on the Future of Europe, I feel that this is our once in a generation opportunity to really open up and map the course of the EU which is reflective and reactive to those we represent in our regions and cities. Whether we live in an island or a city, a mountain or near a river we all have a view and this view needs to shape our Europe of diverse cultures, languages and regions. Over the next year, our group commit to reaching out, listening and bringing this message to the Conference and hopefully we can see the results as we reach its conclusion next Europe Day.

We also welcome the Recovery and Resilience Facility as a start to the recovery

post-Covid-19, but we repeat once again that this must be implemented at a regional and local level. If we want true bottom-up recovery it can never be achieved with a top down process. I call on all the national governments to keep this in mind when putting the national plans into regional action.

Can we also step back and thank all the front-line workers, the researchers and everyone involved in the vaccination campaign. I truly believe that we are seeing light at the end of the tunnel and I hope that our recovery will be sustainable, fair and that we see a summer of health and happiness to all our readers.

Keep the faith, hold firm,

Kieran

Nanette Maupertuis: There can be no cohesion without cooperation across borders

During the July plenary session, the European Committee of the Regions will adopt a resolution on the future of cross-border cooperation. The resolution, which also aims to contribute to the discussions in the Conference on the Future of Europe

builds on the results of a recent public consultation organised by the CoR in cooperation with the European Cross Border Citizens Alliance.

In the run-up to the plenary session, Ms Nanette Maupertuis, the European

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Nanette Maupertuis

"Conference on the Future of Europe, I feel that this is our once in a generation opportunity to really open up and map the course of the EU which is reflective and reactive to those we represent in our regions and cities."

Cllr Kieran McCarthy, president of the EA Group

Alliance group Vice President and coordinator in the COTER commission, who was also rapporteur on the opinion on the European Territorial Cooperation programme 2021-2027 underlined the high added value of cross-border cooperation as an essential element of the European project.

"Territorial cooperation and particularly cross-border cooperation has a very strong symbolic value for Europe. There can be no cohesion if there is no chance to cooperate across borders, if

companies, researchers, students and young people are unable to exchange, strengthen links, share knowledge and expertise. The EU needs a long term vision to support cooperation along land and maritime borders in order to strengthen economic social and territorial cohesion", she added.

In light of border closures which severely impacted cross-border regions during the Covid-19 pandemic, the CoR is calling on the European Commission to present a proposal for maintaining land and maritime cross-border coop-

eration even in case of major EU crisis to ensure the delivery of cross-border public services and guarantee the smooth functioning of the single market and the Schengen area. Moreover, the CoR calls on the European Union to cooperate with its Member States and local and regional authorities in promoting the development of functional living areas in land and maritime cross-border areas of the European Union and focus its future funding opportunities and policies on those areas.

EA members at the Conference on the Future of Europe plenary

Local and regional authorities are part of the foundations of the European Union and to ensure that we build and deliver on behalf of the citizens in every village, mountain, island and city we have to have strong voices in the Conference on the Future of Europe.

EA Group president and Cork City councillor Kieran McCarthy, as well as our two vice presidents, Karl Vanlouwe, member of the Flemish Parliament, and Nanette Maupertuis,

member of the Executive Council of Corsica will be among the delegates at the Conference's plenaries. They have all committed to work with other participants in the Conference across regions and the EU institutions to ensure results are delivered.

We would also like to congratulate our friends from the European Parliament: Jordi Solé, President of the European Free Alliance, and Ms Assita Kanko MEP on their nominations. We will be



Kieran McCarthy

in contact to work with our colleagues in the European Parliament delivering for the regions and nations of Europe.

EA members discuss post-pandemic recovery in Western Balkans and Turkey

After a year of disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, European Committee of the Regions is again intensifying dialogue and cooperation with local and regional authorities in the Western Balkans and Turkey. In a series of online meetings during the month of June, EA members have discussed the role of local and regional authorities in the EU accession process and post-pandemic recovery with their peers from the region. In

addition, members have agreed the work programmes and priorities of the joint consultative committees and working groups for cooperation with the Western Balkan countries during the forthcoming 5-year period.

This round of dialogues will culminate in the annual Enlargement Day, which will this year be organised on 13 July and gather a number of high level guests from EU institutions and the region.

EA members active in cooperation with the Western Balkans and Turkey are Andries Gryffroy (Joint Consultative Committee CoR - North Macedonia), Declan McDonnell (Joint Consultative Committee CoR - Serbia), József Kóbor (Working Group on Turkey), Bronius Markauskas (Joint Consultative Committee CoR - Montenegro) and Milošlav Repaský (Working Group on the Western Balkans).

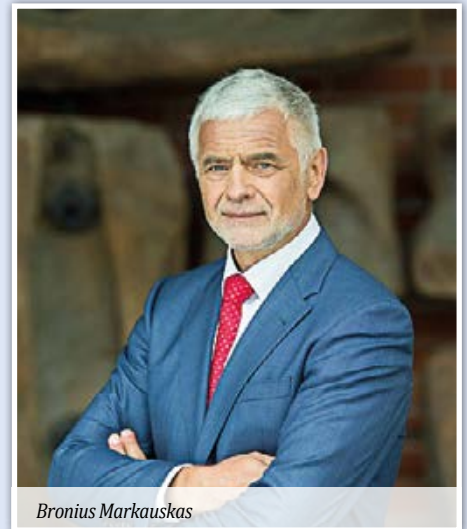
Bronius Markauskas appointed CoR rapporteur on Sustainable Blue Economy and Aquaculture

During the NAT meeting which took place online on 20 May 2021, members agreed to appoint Mr Bronius Markauskas, EA member and Mayor of Klaipėda (Lithuania) as the rapporteur on the opinion on sustainable blue economy and aquaculture.

The opinion will react to the European Commission's recently proposed new approach to a sustainable blue economy in the EU under which all blue economy sectors, including fisheries, aquaculture, coastal tourism, maritime transport, port activities and shipbuilding will have to reduce their environmental and climate impact. Tackling the climate and biodiversity crises requires healthy seas and a sustainable use of their resources to create alternatives to fossil fuels and traditional food production.

On the same day, the Commission also adopted new guidelines for a more sustainable and competitive EU aquaculture. These guidelines provide a common vision for the further development of aquaculture in a way that contributes to the European Green Deal and especially the "Farm to Fork" strategy.

Mr Markauskas said that this is very important subject for port municipalities such as Klaipėda on the Lithuanian Baltic Sea coast. "As the Mayor of Klaipėda I am happy that the NAT members trusted me by giving me the opportunity to draft this important opinion. A sustainable blue economy is essential to achieving the objectives of the European Green Deal and ensuring a green and inclusive recovery from the pandemic. And promoting EU



Bronius Markauskas

sustainable aquaculture as an example of local production linked to short food circuits also plays an important role in diversifying and adding value to EU aquaculture production".

Mikel Irujo's opinion on the future EU Action Plan for Social Economy to be adopted at the CoR plenary

During the 145th plenary session of the European Committee of the Regions, which will be held from 30 June to 2 July, members are due to adopt Mikel Irujo's opinion on the future EU Action Plan for Social Economy.

The European Commission has committed to present a Social Economy Action Plan in the fourth quarter of 2021 as a far-reaching instrument that will create an environment for the social economy to thrive in the European Union. In this outlook opinion, Mr Irujo, Minister of Economic and Business Development of Navarre and EA coordinator for the SEDEC commission, outlines the main suggestions and expectations of local and regional



Mikel Irujo

authorities which should feed into the plan.

In his opinion, Mr Irujo argues that harnessing the full potential of social economy enterprises and organisations is a way to ensure economic recovery, promote collective entrepreneurship and create high-quality jobs. He outlines a number of concrete proposals for the future Action Plan in the domains of training and education, incorporation of social economy into other policy areas, promotion of financing and other support measures, and others.

The draft opinion was adopted at the SEDEC commission meeting on 22 April.

Building renovation is the key to ensure a sustainable recovery and create new jobs in our regions and cities says Andries Gryffroy

On 27 May 2021, Andries Gryffroy, European Alliance group coordinator in the ENVE commission and member of the Flemish Parliament took part in a multilevel energy and climate dialogue on the Renovation Wave which also saw the participation of representatives of Member States, the European Commission and the European Parliament.

Participants had a chance to discuss the role of local and regional authorities in the Renovation Wave, the EU flagship initiative aiming to double the renovation rate by 2030 by renovating 35 million buildings in the coming

decade, as well as include building renovation investments in National Recovery and Resilience Plans.

“The cheapest energy is the energy you don’t consume. The best thing we can do regarding energy is to for example insulate our homes as best we can so that as little energy as possible is lost. Therefore, renovating residential and non-residential buildings is a strong tool to achieve short- and long-term climate goals,” Mr Gryffroy said.

“Investing in building renovation is also the key to ensure a sustainable recovery and create new jobs in our re-



Andries Gryffroy

gions and cities. I am certainly pleased that my own region, Flanders, has made renovation a spearhead initiative. With the long-term renovation strategy, Flanders is committed to renovate almost 3 million homes (96,5 housing stock) by 2050 and thus reduce energy consumption while making sure the transition to a climate neutral Europe is affordable for business and citizens”.

EA Group to organise seminar on Revival of Town Centres at the 2021 Edition of the European Week of Regions and Cities

On 12 October, in the context of the 2021 edition of the European Week of Regions and Cities, the European Alliance Group will organise a seminar “Best practices of revitalizing town centres across EU regions”.

Towns are undergoing a process of deep transformation as a result of globalisation and the Covid-19 crisis.

Speakers and participants across different EU regions will discuss ways to revive town centres through

tailored policies and investments, enabling small business to thrive while ensuring high quality of life for citizens. The seminar will also provide the occasion to discuss the place of town and city regeneration within the national recovery plans.



19th EUROPEAN WEEK of REGIONS and CITIES
Together for Recovery #EURegionsWeek