

European Alliance Group

Imagination and Curiosity are the bedrock of our cities and regions

by Cllr Kieran McCarthy, President of the EA group



Cllr Kieran McCarthy

The autumn CoR/EA group primary school art competition “My region, my window to the world” is attracting many entries. We have some very talented young people in our regions and cities. It has always been an important aim of our group to not only give a voice to the next generation but to champion on their behalf as well. The drawings provide an insight into what young people see in their region - the challenges and the opportunities. At the heart of the drawings are creativity, colour, imagination, curiosity and a genuine care for our neighbourhoods and our regions. These traits are so important in the world we live in

today as we tackle a relentless pandemic. They are also at the soul of our local and regional authorities across the EU.

The Next Generation EU fund is an important creative toolkit to bring Cities and Regions to sustainable recovery and growth. As a group we continue to call for more involvement for local and regional governments in the design and implementation in the new operational programmes or the partnership agreements.

In addition, we welcome that the final COP26 declaration, which recognises locally and regionally determined contributions through the inclusion of “multi-level action”. I would like to sincerely thank our member Andries Gryffroy for putting this case forward during the COP26 plenary on behalf of the local government and municipal authorities (LGMA). Now the real work begins to ensure we achieve the targets agreed.

As this newsletter shows our members are very active across a wide range of topics. Bravo to all.

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Lastly, as we approach the festive season may I wish all our readers a very happy Christmas and a happy, peaceful and healthy New Year.

*Stay safe
Kieran*

Climate COP26: Gryffroy decisive push gets regions a place in final text

Our member Andries Gryffroy was part of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) delegation to the UNFCCC COP 26 on climate change that took place from 31 October to 12 November in Glasgow, Scotland.

The CoR delegation advocated a strong

regional and local dimension in global climate governance and greater involvement in the UN decision making process.

Despite being at the forefront of the fight against climate change, local and regional authorities are not fully in-



Mr Andries Gryffroy and US Special
Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry

"Bottom up approach is the key to achieving climate goals and fair transition. Any initiatives in this regard must include multi-level international cooperation and local and regional authorities."

Andries Gryffroy, member of the Flemish Parliament

volved in the policymaking processes and frequently encounter difficulties in accessing direct funds necessary to carry out the plans and receive technical assistance.

Mr. Gryffroy, who is also Member of the Flemish Parliament had the occasion to represent the Committee of the Regions as well as the Local Governments and

Municipal Authorities (LGMA) constituency in several high-level meetings and ministerial consultations.

Following Mr. Gryffroy's intervention in the COP Plenary, where he called for local decision making and multilevel collaboration to be formally recognized, and thanks to the collective lobbying efforts with other organizations,

local and regional authorities have been referenced in the final text as key actors for achieving climate goals. Mr. Gryffroy and the EA group as a whole remain committed to strengthening the bottom up approach to climate governance and work to enhance role of regions at next year's COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt.

EU Week of Regions and Cities: EA holds seminar on town centre revitalisation

On the 12th October 2021, the European Alliance group held a workshop for sharing best practices for revitalising town centres across EU regions, which was attended by over 80 guests.

Introducing the event, EA Group President Kieran McCarthy outlined how "towns and regions have gone through profound changes over recent years, in many cases leading to urban decay". The pandemic, he outlined, has "further reconfigured urban dynamics with the shift to e-commerce, among other things". The four invited guests

included Minister of Development of Navarra Mikel Irujo Amezaga, Marc Hendrickx, Mechelen city councillor, Adrienne Rodgers, Cork City Director of Services, Community and culture, and Anna Rzosińska, Director of the Town Planning Department in Bialystok.

Over the seminar they showcased the innovative ways in which their cities and municipalities have dealt with urban renewal and the pandemic. From creating a "warm and welcoming" square for public events in the

heart of Bialystok, Poland, to the introduction of a free cultural festival and the pedestrianisation of 17 streets in Cork City, Ireland. Following the four presentations, guests had the opportunity to ask the speakers questions, further delving into some of the topics discussed, such as the cultural aspect of revitalisation and the role of public consultation.

You can watch the entire workshop in the EA group website's Past Events section.

Maupertuis: Islands' constraints must be fully taken into account in EU policies

On 4th of November, in the context of the European Week of Regions and Cities, the Region of Sicily organized a side event on island territories and territorial cohesion with Gaetano Armao, Vice-President of the Sicilian Region and President of the CoR Insularity group, Nanette Maupertuis, EA group member and president of the Assembly of Corsica as well as Antonio Tajani, former European Parliament President among the main speakers. They underlined the particularity of island territories and the need for "island mainstreaming" across EU legislation so as to achieve cohesion policy objectives. Attention was given to a recent study on the economic impacts and cost of insularity and Sicily, which has provided both facts and figures. Many

attendees voiced their opinion that it is essential that such tangible figures and facts are brought to any debate on social and territorial cohesion policy.

During the seminar, Ms Maupertuis underlined that geography matters and can be decisive in determining socio economic development path of a region. "If we want island territories to be resilient, innovative and fully integrated in the EU market, their structural constraints must be taken into account and art 174 of the treaties be fully applied to achieve cohesion policy objectives," she said in her intervention.

Ms Maupertuis also placed great importance on the scope for islands to



Ms Nanette Maupertuis

cooperate in the future, on an array of shared challenges, from recovery and climate change to blue economy and sustainable tourism.



Mr Bronius Markauskas

Markauskas' opinion on Sustainable Blue Economy and Aquaculture to be adopted by the CoR Plenary session

Markauskas, Mayor of Klaipėda district municipality in Lithuania. In the opinion, Mr Markauskas highlights that aquaculture is an established and integral industry in many regions across the EU, but a more sustainable and competitive industry can offer benefits across the entire Union as Member States recover from the pandemic. Particularly, sustainable aquaculture will be vital in the green transition.

"I am happy to discuss this important subject for my region with the Committee of the Region's members. During

the preparation of the opinion I had an occasion to discuss the topic with the Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius. Aquaculture should be recognised as a specific policy area, with sufficient funding so that it provides an alternative to traditional fisheries. In my opinion greater involvement of local authorities would ensure better development of a sustainable blue economy by developing dynamic and sustainable blue economy ecosystems, promoting innovation, applying smart solutions and creating jobs," Mr Markauskas said.

The Committee of the Regions Assembly is due to adopt, in December 2021, the opinion on sustainable blue economy and aquaculture by Mr Bronius

Truskolaski: EU competition policy must take account of the SMEs' needs

During the Committee of the Regions Plenary Session in December 2021, members are set to adopt Mr Tadeusz Truskolaski, Mayor of Białystok's opinion on the Competition Report 2020. In his view the report is welcome, however what is really needed is that the EU competition policy take account of the needs of SMEs to create a fair and level-playing field for the benefit of all EU citizens. In terms of the future of EU competition policy, Mr Truskolaski opposes the exclusion of products and ser-

vices from certain geographical areas of the EU, considering it an infringement of competition rules. He also calls for boldness when implementing new solutions, particularly those that concern climate neutrality or strengthening the uniformity of the Single Market.

"The EU Competition Policy is essential for the smooth and effective functioning of the European Single Market. Its existence is a test for the unity of the EU, a test of negotiating capacity and the ability to understand the situation and



Mr Tadeusz Truskolaski

expectations of all EU citizens from its remotest parts," said Mr Truskolaski.

Strugała: Prevention and education crucial in facing natural disasters

During the 146th CoR plenary session debate with Janez Lenarčič, European Commissioner for Crisis Management



Mr Dariusz Strugała

Mr Dariusz Strugała, EA NAT coordinator and Mayor of Jaraczewo (Poland) said that increasingly common, extreme and complex natural disasters clearly demonstrate the need to develop prevention, preparedness and response, coupled with efforts to adapt to climate change and ecological transformation.

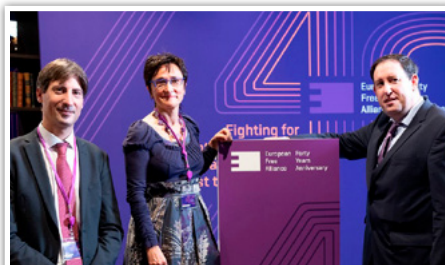
Giving example of a devastating storm that passed through his commune in August 2017, Mr Strugała stressed how important it is to create efficient and effective procedures in a crisis situation. "This situation also made me

realize how much we underestimate the role of prevention. We do not think ahead enough, focusing on current, often apparent activities and savings. Also, a huge problem is the insufficient percentage of insured property."

"The resilience of cities and regions to natural hazards can be increased if disaster risk management is also part of adaptation to climate change, public health, land use, urban planning and infrastructure, or adapting building standards to threats and strengthening the role of building supervision," Mr Strugała added.

European Alliance group and EFA Party collaborate on creating a real “Europe of the People”

At a recent European Free Alliance (EFA) General Assembly the EA Group President Cllr Kieran McCarthy, President of the EFA party Lorena Lopez de Lacalle as well as President of the EFA Group in the EP Jordi Solé agreed to enhance collaboration on the Conference on the Future of Europe, thereby ensuring that we create an impact and build a two-way communication between regions and cities of the EU



Jordi Solé, President of EFA in the EP; Lorena Lopez de Lacalle, President of EFA and Kieran McCarthy President of the EA group in the CoR

with the institutions in Brussels and Strasbourg. This creates a real “Europe of the People’s”.

Cllr McCarthy said that we cannot miss this opportunity to make our voices heard on a range of issues of concern to local and regional authorities. The EA President congratulated the EFA party on the 40 year anniversary and hopes the party will continue to go from strength to strength.

McCarthy appointed rapporteur on the New European Bauhaus

During the SEDEC commission meeting held on 1 October, our president and member of the Cork City Council Kieran McCarthy was appointed Committee of the Regions’ rapporteur on the New European Bauhaus initiative.

The New European Bauhaus initiative will aim to bring a cultural and creative dimension to the European Green

Deal, putting together creative design and sustainable innovation to offer tangible, positive experiences in our daily life. It aims at accelerating the transformation of various economic sectors such as construction and textiles in order to provide access to circular and less carbon-intensive goods to all citizens.

The opinion will be discussed at SEDEC meetings on 13 December and 17 February and the adoption in the plenary session is planned for April 2022.



My region, my window to the world: EA launches annual primary school art competition

The EA group is pleased to announce that, during November, it has launched its annual primary school art competi-

tion, with the theme “My region, my window to the world”. The competition sees schoolchildren from across the EU’s regions and cities submit drawings and paintings which illustrate the link between their local area and the wider European Union.

offices in Brussels. The children are also asked to include a brief description of their dreams for their regions within the wider European context, which will be published in a booklet highlighting the diversity of children’s perceptions of the EU.



*My Region,
My Window to the World*

The logo of the 2021 edition

The best submissions will be chosen later this year and the children awarded prizes. The winning submissions will be converted into postcards, while all submission will be exhibited within the Committee of the Regions’

The EA has already begun to receive artworks from schools across Europe, and is looking forward to further examples of the wonderful creativity schoolchildren submit each year.