

Editorial



Michael Schneider,
President of the EPP Group in the CoR

The refugee crisis has had an impact all over Europe and nowhere has it been felt stronger than in our cities and regions. Over a million individuals arrived in Europe in 2015 alone, and as they landed on the shores of the Mediterranean or crossed the borders to the villages in Eastern Europe and made their way towards Central and Northern Europe, the arrivals needed and continue to need help and support from local and regional authorities for accommodation, food, healthcare, education and social services.

Structural funds often get called into action as the fastest and most flexible funding tool to help our regions and cities. The refugee crisis is no exception. Cohesion policy can and does support the long-term integration of migrants and refugees - mainly through its development and social funds: investments in infrastructure from shelters, schools and urban regeneration as well as training, language courses, anti-discriminatory initiatives and childcare. In Italy, already 200 million euros have been reprogrammed to address the refugee crisis; more countries are expected to follow.

Migration is a global problem - Europe will not be able to solve all of the problems arising in Africa, the Middle-East or at the Eastern borders of the EU. There is no reset button for the situation. Cities and regions will step up and carry their responsibility - as we have thus far. However, we can only do this together with the support of our national and European partners. We are all part of the same European Union and it will take all of us to tackle the crisis.

Europe calling! in Maastricht: 25th anniversary of the Maastricht Treaty

By **Theo Bovens**, King's Commissioner (Governor) of the Province of Limburg



In February 2017, it will be 25 years since the signing of the Maastricht Treaty - an event that marked the birth of the European Union, the euro *and* our Committee of the Regions.

Consequently, Maastricht - capital of my Province Limburg, is the perfect place to look back at Europe at the time when the treaty was signed as well as to look forward to the Europe of the future. We are doing so by organising *Europe Calling! Maastricht Treaty 25th Anniversary*: a varied programme

of events and activities in Maastricht and the region, focusing on the debate about Europe.

On 9 December for example - exactly 25 years after the European summit in Maastricht - a conference will be organised for academics and EU politicians. One of the venues will be the Provincial Government Buildings on the River Meuse: the location in Maastricht for the treaty negotiations and the place where the treaty was signed. This is also where the EPP will be holding

its party conference on 20 October. This means that Maastricht, and the Provincial Government Buildings in particular, will once again become a real workplace for Europe that is open to everyone.

For more information about Europe Calling! please go to: www.europecalling.nl

We look forward to seeing you again in Maastricht!



Europe's most sustainable city Espoo represented cities and regions in UN's High Level Political Forum

By **Sirpa Hertell**, Vice Chair of the City Council of Espoo

The Chair of the Sustainable Development Programme in the City of Espoo, Sirpa Hertell, participated in the Finnish delegation led by Minister Tiilikainen in the UN's High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in New York 18.-20.7.2016.

Finland is one of the first countries reporting on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Hertell was pleased to share Espoo's sustainable development work as the city has been chosen as the most sustainable city in Europe as well as rewarded for the most impressive commitment in 2016.

Mrs. Hertell stated in her speech how business, cities and the civil society implement

the 2030 Agenda together: "This is the decade of nourishment. Finland was the first country to offer free lunch to all pupils in schools 60 years ago. Today, Espoo is the first city to weigh food waste from school lunches and the children were very proud to tell that waste has reduced by 30 % during the past six months! A diet good for people is also good for the planet."

Finland's second largest city Espoo is committed to an ambitious programme on Sustainable Development. The programme focuses on climate action, promoting nature values, and finding innovative mobility and energy solutions. Schools, daycare centres, libraries and other municipal organisations can all take part with their own com-



mitments. Individual commitments range from reducing food waste at schools to promoting electric public transportation. For us, it is important that no one is left behind in Espoo.

The EPP Group in the Committee of the Regions welcomes the recent announcement of EPP Member Tipperary Councillor Michael Murphy as Head of the Irish Delegation



"I'm deeply honoured to have been appointed by the Irish Government to take up the position as Head of the Irish Delegation. I'm very much looking forward to the role and working alongside my EPP colleagues in dealing with the many opportunities and challenges that

lie ahead. I believe that my experiences as a local and regional public representative, my keen interest in European affairs, coupled with my strong business background, will make me an asset to the EPP team. I feel very strongly that there is a need to translate the benefits that our involvement in Europe has on citi-

zens' everyday lives. In maximising Ireland's involvement and influence in the delivery of the Committee of the Regions' programme, I'm particularly keen to strengthen links with other Delegations and regional interests. Following the Brexit vote and the challenge to European solidarity and cohesion that it presents,

it is so important that we all work together to re-assert the European values and ideals upon which the Union was founded and ensure that any risks that lie ahead are managed very carefully," concluded Councillor Murphy.



Migration and integration: The impact on women: EPP women summer academy

By **Jelena Drenjanin**, Local Councillor of Huddinge

EPP women have been in dialogue for several years with many actors on the situation for women in conflict zones, such as during the Arab spring and the refugee crisis. It is important to ensure a gender perspective in all refugee policies, actions in conflict zones and in fragile states that cannot protect their citizens' rights.

Women and girls are particularly vulnerable in those situations. There

are many aspects involved and our big concern is the "silence" about the violation of women's rights and how women are targeted for mutilation, rape, trafficking and murder. As a political group we have a responsibility to understand what is happening in these conflict zones but also to seek political solutions to ensure human rights and women's rights. In addition, we need to em-

power the immigrant women that live in our European societies but are still excluded from the job market, engagement in political bodies and other decision-making areas.

As the majority of the refugees are men, they are also the majority in the refugee camps where many come from countries with male-dominated societies. This creates challenges for us if we wish to

ensure the protection of the girls and women escaping conflict zones and living in the camps. Erosion of democracy, human rights and values does not take place overnight, it is a slow change and it happens every day in the small decisions and the behaviour we make and accept. We already see changes in some countries on the repression on women and non-Muslim minorities,

segregation from society, from secular to religious based government, women staying at home jobless, or women-unfriendly laws.

EPP women are deeply concerned about the development for women in the world and will adopt a resolution during the next congress in Sofia on 7 October.

State of the European Union Speech September 14th 2016



Jean-Claude Juncker,
President of the European Commission

"Europeans want concrete solutions to the very pertinent problem that our Union is facing. And they want more than promises, resolutions and summit conclusions. They have heard and seen these too often. Europeans want common decisions followed by swift and efficient implementation."

"Europe can only work if we all work for unity and commonality, and forget the rivalry between competences and institutions. Only then will Europe be more than the sum of its parts. And only then can Europe be stronger and better than it is today. Only then will leaders of the EU institutions and national governments be able to regain the trust of Europe's citizens in our common project."

"The next twelve months are the crucial time to deliver a better Europe:

a Europe that **protects**;
a Europe that **preserves the European way of life**;
a Europe that **empowers** our citizens,
a Europe that **defends** at home and abroad; and
a Europe that **takes responsibility**."

"The European way of life stands for **future**. We have inherited a wonderful Europe and we want to pass it on to our youth."

"For Europe's youth, Europe is the hope for a better future. They want to shape a common future."



Manfred Weber,
Chairman of the EPP Group in the European Parliament

Highlights from the Bratislava Summit

Almost 1,000 local, national and EU decision-makers, experts and business representatives took part in the 7th Summit of Regions and Cities on 8th and 9th July in the city of Bratislava, Slovakia. The EPP Group in the European Committee of the Regions was right at the heart of the Summit titled "Invest and Connect" as the hosts for this one of the key events during the Slovak Presidency of the European Union were our Members Mr. **Pavol Frešo**, President of the Bratislava Self-Governing Region, and Mr. **Ivo Nesrovnal**, the Mayor of Bratislava.

Key issues in the Summit were addressing the investment gap and connecting resources, ideas, places and people. Our Members were also prominent among the

Summit speakers: in addition to the hosts and European Committee of the Regions' President **Markku Markkula**, **Raffaele Cattaneo**, **Christian Buchmann**, **Marek Woźniak** and **Iñigo de la Serna Hernáiz** presented their views on investment, innovative entrepreneurship, transport and digitalisation.

Speaking ahead of the Summit, **Michael Schneider**, President of the EPP Group in the European

Committee of the Regions, stressed the need to improve existing instruments and remove obstacles to investment: "The enthusiasm surrounding the Urban Agenda clearly demonstrates the potential for Europe's regions and cities to generate smarter, greener and more sustainable growth across the Union. However, Europe's crises have seen the social, economic and territorial gaps widening. Whilst this is a con-



cern, I am sure that through optimised use of the European structural and investment funds, better spending and simplified policies, we will be able to get Europe back on track."



Bratislava Declaration

The aim of the Bratislava Summit was to ensure that local and regional experiences are reflected in the policies that will affect Europe's economic, social and territorial prospects for years to come. This is particularly relevant given that regional and local authorities are responsible for more than 70 % of public investment. In the Bratislava Declaration, the European Committee of the Regions endorses a forward looking vision for Europe based on strengthening investment for promoting cohesion, sustainable growth and job creation in the cities and regions.

The declaration also proposes five solutions to improve investment:

- 1 **Connecting Europe** through territorial investment
- 2 A change in mindset towards **results-oriented investments**
- 3 Enhanced investment capacity through **stronger coordination** at all levels
- 4 Continuous **dialogue and partnership**
- 5 Increased **ownership and awareness of citizens' needs**

Upcoming EPP-CoR events and meetings

EWRC workshop: Europe's demographic – from challenges to local and regional opportunities



Demographic change is a major challenge facing Europe's regions and cities. It affects the sustainability of pension systems and dictates the evolution of the welfare state, due to pressure on health and social care systems. While the characteristics of some areas or regions mean they will be affected later or to a lesser extent, it is indisputable that the effects will be felt across the entire EU. Looking to the future, the situation seems even bleaker with population projections from Eurostat forecasting even greater age dependency ratios. Despite these challenges, The EPP Group in the European Committee of the Regions organises a workshop during the European Week of Regions and Cities on **October 12th** aims to turn the perception of demographic change on its head by showcasing European regions and cities that are turning the challenges of ageing populations, low birth-rates and new arrivals into opportunities.

EUSAIR: closer cooperation and connectivity in the Adriatic and Ionian Region



To reap the benefits of cross-border cooperation, including with the EU's neighbours, the EPP Group in the European Committee of the Regions will meet in **Dubrovnik on October 28th 2016** to examine the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), following an invitation from **Nikola Dobroslavić**, County Prefect of Dubrovnik-Neretva. Bringing together eight countries (Croatia, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia) the third EU macro-regional strategy aims to strengthen prosperity and security in South and Southeast Europe. The EPP Group has already encouraged the use of multi-level governance in the shaping of the EUSAIR and the importance of local and regional authorities in defining and implementing the Action Plan. This meeting will be a chance to look at the achievements of EUSAIR since its launch in 2014.

Data, data everywhere: what relevance for local and regional media?

By providing easy and free access to data, the European Union wants to encourage innovation and unleash further economic potential. This rise in open data has enabled a few, innovative journalists to tell powerful stories and to back them up with interactive graphics. On **November 23rd-24th 2016**, the EPP Group in the European Committee of the Regions will invite 50 young media makers to the ninth edition of its Winter University, where they will share experiences of data journalism and using data to break stories as well as exploring value of open data for the transparency of government with Members of the CIVEX Commission.

Ongoing opinions

CIVEX

- Legal Migration Package, **Olgierd Geblewicz**
Adoption foreseen December 2016

COTER

- The future of Cohesion Policy beyond 2020, **Michael Schneider**
Adoption foreseen May 2017
- Arctic Sea, **Pauliina Haijanen**
Adoption foreseen February 2017

ECON

- European Deposit Insurance Scheme, **Hans-Jörg Duppré**
Adoption foreseen June 2016
- Bridging the Investment Gap: How to Tackle the Challenges?, **Markku Markkula**
Adoption foreseen February 2017
- Fiscal Capacity and Automatic Stabilisers for the Economic and Monetary Union, **Carl Fredrik Graf**
Adoption foreseen February 2017
- Smart regulation for SMEs, **Christian Buchmann**
Adoption foreseen May 2017

SEDEC

- EU eGovernment Action Plan, **Martin Andreasson**
Adoption foreseen October 2016
- Towards an EU Strategy for international cultural relations, **Apostolos Tzitzikostas**
Adoption foreseen February 2017
- Digital Single Market Package – Copyright 2, **Mauro D'Attis**
Adoption foreseen February 2017

ENVE

- Towards a new EU climate change adaptation strategy, **Sirpa Hertell**
Adoption foreseen February 2017
- Outlook Opinion on Mid-term evaluation of the LIFE programme, **Witold Stepień**
Adoption foreseen February 2017

NAT

- Regulating price volatility of agricultural products, **Jacques Blanc**
Adoption foreseen December 2016
- Tourism: a driving force for investment, jobs and sustainable growth in Europe's regions and cities, **Hanspeter Wagner**
Adoption foreseen December 2016
- Towards a sustainable EU food policy that creates jobs and growth in Europe's Regions and Cities, **Arno Kompatscher**
Adoption foreseen March 2017

