

THE

# ReppORTER

February 2019

Activity report of the EPP Group in the European Committee of the Regions



Summit of EPP regional and local leaders in view of the 2019 European elections

A Europe Closer to Citizens, a Europe that Delivers and Protects -

EPP High-level Conference in Austria

Key outcomes of COP24



# Foreword

by President Schneider

Looking back on 2018, I would like to thank all our active and committed members and colleagues for making the year such a success for our EPP-CoR Group.

The launch of the EPP Local Dialogue initiative in Sofia in March kick-started our Grassroots Engagement towards the 2019 European elections. The EPP can count on our Group's continued support in making the elections a success. Our local and regional EPP leaders, together with MEPs and national and European politicians, have been active in organising local events across Europe and listening to people's expectations on what the EPP should do for them. The EPP Local Dialogues continue in 2019, and we look forward to sharing the fruits of this initiative with the entire EPP family ahead of the elections.

Other successful milestones of 2018 include our EPP-CoR event in Warsaw in June where we discussed the EU's added value for people's daily life and the local and regional dimension of EU politics. At the Helsinki EPP Congress, our side event on sustainable solutions showcased the work of our cities and regions that are delivering for the citizens on the ground. This crucial role that we, regional and local leaders, play in the fight against climate change, was further highlighted by the CoR's delegation at COP24 in December, with active contributions from **Markku Markkula**, **Cor Lamers** and **Sirpa Hertell**.

Finally, the year finished with our EPP high-level event in Austria, where Spitzenkandidat **Manfred Weber** and Chancellor **Sebastian Kurz** joined us for a fruitful debate on stronger regions for a stronger Europe that protects its citizens.

This year, the March Summit of EPP Local and Regional Leaders in Bucharest during the Romanian Presidency will attract more than 4000 political leaders representing local, regional, national and European levels. This will be one of the largest events of the EPP 2019 electoral campaign. The main purpose of the Summit is to send a strong signal to our citizens for a united and value-based Europe.

Over the course of 2018, the CoR adopted several important opinions led by our EPP-CoR members delivering the views of our regions and cities to the negotiations on the new MFF, Cohesion Policy and funding programmes for 2021-2027. Making decisions close to the people being a central value of the EPP, our work was also visible in the European Commission's Task Force on subsidiarity, proportionality and doing less more efficiently. This will allow local and regional authorities and national Parliaments to make a more effective contribution to EU legislation in the future.

Sadly, 2019 started with tragic news: **Paweł Adamowicz**, the long-standing Mayor of Gdansk was brutally killed at a charity event in his city. We express our most sincere sympathies to his family and loved ones during this difficult time. We lost a dear friend, member of our Group and a defender of European and Christian values and democracy. His memory will live on forever.



**Michael Schneider**  
President of the EPP-CoR Group

## This issue:

- ➔ **Foreword by  
EPP-CoR President  
Michael Schneider** p 2
  
- ➔ **Members on the field** p 3
  
- ➔ **EPP Local Dialogues  
– latest events** p 4
  
- ➔ **Summit of EPP regional  
and local leaders  
in view of the 2019  
European elections** p 5
  
- ➔ **Stronger regions for a  
stronger Europe - EPP  
High-level Conference in  
Klosterneuburg, Austria  
on 10 December 2018** p 6
  
- ➔ **Overview of the February  
Plenary Session** p 8
  
- ➔ **Key outcomes of COP24** p 10
  
- ➔ **Upcoming events** p 11
  
- ➔ **Opinions** p 11
  
- ➔ **Interview with  
Tibor Navracsics,  
European Commissioner  
for Education, Culture,  
Youth and Sport** p 12

# Members on the field

## Braga invests in sport for better citizens' health and quality of life



EPP CoR member **Ricardo Rio**, Mayor of Braga, Portugal, emphasized that the title of 'Best European City of Sport' (ECS) in 2018 demonstrates Braga's ability to exceed itself and to show the enormous potential and talent of the City at a sporting level. "This is proof that Braga is on track to make sports an increasingly important factor in society, contributing to improving health and quality of life" he stated when receiving the award on 4 December 2018. "The ECS will leave a legacy of enormous value for the future of the people of Braga" he concluded.

## Cyprus kicks off Spitzenkandidat tour



On 10-11 January, EPP CoR Vice-President **Eleni Loucaidou** met with EPP Spitzenkandidat **Manfred Weber** in Cyprus, where he visited the Ledra Street barricade and the Environmental Center of Skarinou and Lefkara. "The Cyprus issue is an important issue for the European Union," said Mr Weber during this first stop of his EU-wide listening tour ahead of the 2019 European elections.

## Sustainable smart city projects in Cluj-Napoca



Congratulations to **Emil Boc** who has been awarded with the title 'Mayor of the Year' for his efforts in promoting Smart City projects in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Under Boc's mayoralship, Cluj-Napoca is working on several projects supported by EU funds in the field of energy and the environment. The city also

invests heavily in education and in sustainable economic development.

## Empowering women in local politics



On 21 January, **Jelena Drenjanin** spoke at the Europe for Her conference in Brussels in a panel about empowering the next generation of women leaders. "Most women get into politics because things are not working in their society and they want to change it", she said. In her closing remarks, she encouraged young women to consider a career in politics. "Don't be scared, trust yourself, go for it, change the world".

## European Youth Capital



## In Memoriam of Paweł Adamowicz 1965 – 2019

We are deeply saddened by the death of our dear colleague and friend, **Paweł Adamowicz**, who lost his life as a result of a horrible tragedy in January 2019. The event came as a shock to the city of Gdansk, to his home country Poland, to the international community and everyone who knew him.

Paweł Adamowicz was a truly committed local politician, who had just been re-elected as the Mayor of Gdansk for the sixth time. Over the last 20 years, he made his beloved city of Gdansk a modern, vibrant, and dynamic city, deeply rooted in the EU values of peace, solidarity, democracy, respect of human rights and the rule of law. He worked day and night for his citizens to provide to them a better standard of living by modernising the city's infrastructure, transport and buildings and by creating cultural spaces for the people to enjoy. He was always ready to listen to the concerns and suggestions of

CoR Commission SEDEC Vice-Chair and EPP member **Alin Nica** sat on the panel of jury members who elected Klaipeda in Lithuania as the European Youth Capital in 2021. Nicosia in Cyprus presented a strong project bringing it a close second. Alin Nica will represent the CoR again in the jury that will select the EYC 2022 later this year.

## EPP family in support of Creative Europe Programme and a New Agenda for Culture



**János Adám Karácsony**, CoR rapporteur on the Creative Europe Programme and a New Agenda for Culture, met MEP **Francis Zammit Dimech** on 9 January 2019 for a frank exchange between EPP rapporteurs on the future of Europe's Cultural Sector. The meeting was followed by a bilateral encounter with MEP **Jan Olbrycht** to discuss among others, budgetary matters linked to the Creative Europe programme for 2021-2027. Both the European Parliament and the CoR have concerns about the level of the proposed budget for the new culture programme, which they consider too low. They agree that mainstreaming culture and cultural heritage in other policy areas and programmes would also be needed.



his citizens; Thanks to this close partnership, Gdansk became a better and more attractive place for its people.

Paweł Adamowicz was also active at the EU level within the EPP Group in the CoR, where we had the honour to work with him over the past years on topics such as entrepreneurship, social inclusion and local democracy in the EU and beyond, especially in the Eastern Partnership countries. He was a true defender of Christian values and democracy and of decisions being taken as closely as possible to the citizens. He left us too soon, but his legacy will stay for the generations to come.

## EPP Local Dialogues – latest events

### Future of CAP and opportunities at regional level



On 7 December 2018, **Csaba Borboly**, President of the Harghita County Council, Romania, hosted his second EPP Local Dialogue in the region. Members of the EPP Group in European Parliament **Herbert Dorfmann**, **Csaba Sógor** and **Gyula Winkler** participated in the debate on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy and the opportunities at local and regional level.

*"Romania's EU membership has brought opportunities for local development and better infrastructure in our region. Focus needs to be put in reducing obstacles in trading local products."* – Citizen from Harghita

### Moving towards a digital society



Innovation in the public sector, with special focus on the digitalisation of public services, was the topic of an EPP Local Dialogue that took place in the Kujawskie-Pomorskie region in Poland on 12 December 2018. The event, which attracted over 100 local participants, was organised by EPP-CoR member **Piotr Całbecki**, Marshal of the Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship.

*"I would like my party to focus on renewable energy, e-mobility, and the reduction of air pollution."* - Citizen from Kujawskie-Pomorskie

### Future of the main railway line in Finland



On 18 December, CoR Vice-President **Markku Markkula** participated in an EPP Local Dialogue in Hämeenlinna, Finland. Organised by the political party Kokoomus, the event focused on the future of the Finnish main railway line, which secures an important connection for local businesses, residents and commuters. MEP **Henna Virkkunen** spoke about the possibilities to fund the main line as part of the EU's TEN-T network. Other speakers included **Sari Rautio**, Chair of Hämeenlinna city board, local Kokoomus politicians and rail transport experts.

*"I want the EPP to find a balance between larger European issues and a local approach."* – Citizen from Hämeenlinna

Members can continue organising EPP Local Dialogues in 2019 and benefit from financing from the CoR - please contact the EPP-CoR secretariat for more information.

**#EPPLocalDialogue**

# Summit of EPP regional and local leaders in view of the 2019 European elections

The forthcoming European elections will determine the future of the European Union.

The EPP Group in the European Committee of the Regions, together with the National Liberal Party of Romania and the European People's Party is organising a **Summit of EPP regional and local leaders in view of the 2019 European elections** on **Saturday, 16 March 2019 in Bucharest, Romania**.

The Summit will be one of the largest events of the EPP 2019 electoral campaign, bringing together about **4.000 political leaders** representing local and regional, national and European levels.

The main purpose of the Summit is to raise awareness

of the upcoming European elections as well as to support the EPP candidates for the European Parliament and the **EPP Spitzenkandidat** for the European Commission, **Manfred Weber**.

In all Member States, the EPP takes its strengths from the trust the people put in their local and regional politicians. In order to once again reach a clear pro-European majority in the European Parliament, we need to further strengthen our joint efforts at all levels of governance within the European People's Party family.

United together, in Bucharest we will **send a strong signal for a united and value-based Europe**, closer to its citizens, delivering solutions to their daily lives and protecting them on the ground.

Launch of EPP  
Grassroots  
engagement

Engaging EPP local  
and regional leaders  
in view of 2019  
elections

Engaging EPP local  
and regional leaders  
in view of 2019  
elections

**BULGARIA,**  
9 March 2018

**AUSTRIA**  
10 December 2018

**ROMANIA**  
16 March 2019

**EUROPEAN  
ELECTIONS**

**EPP  
Local Dialogues**

**EPP  
Local Dialogues**

# Stronger regions for a stronger Europe

EPP high-level debate in Austria 10 December 2018

'A Europe closer to its citizens, a Europe that delivers and protects' was the focus of the EPP high-level debate that took place on 10 December 2018 in Klosterneuburg, Austria. EPP Spitzenkandidat **Manfred Weber** and the Federal Chancellor of Austria **Sebastian Kurz** joined EPP-CoR members and international and local guests to discuss the role of strong regions and the importance of making decisions close to the people ahead of the May 2019 European elections.

*"Preparing EU elections is about an approach on the ground. Europe starts in our own towns and regions",* said **Dara Murphy**, Vice-President of the EPP and Campaign Director for the 2019 European Elections, who moderated the event.

This was confirmed by President **Michael Schneider** in his opening statement: EPP-CoR members are in close contact with people in their cities and regions, reinforcing the EPP's presence on the ground. *"This is an important factor for winning the elections",* Schneider said, and continued: *"Together with Manfred Weber we are working for a common Europe."*

The first Roundtable discussion focused on the theme of subsidiarity and how the EU delivers on the ground. *"We must continually remain in close contact with the citizens and communicate the positive achievements of the EU",* stressed **Nikola Dobroslavić**, EPP-CoR.

*"Europe is the solution, not the problem... Making decisions closer to the citizens will strengthen the fundamental values of the*



*European Union and create the basis for a society that is united in diversity",* continued **Arno Kompatscher**, EPP-CoR.

**Reinhold Lopatka**, Chair of the EU Affairs Committee in the Austrian National Council, summed up the discussion: *"The big project "European Union", which is without any alternative, could be much closer to the citizens with the notion of subsidiarity put to a more practical level. This would mean a stronger involvement of national, regional and local politics."*

Strengthening unity in diversity: our cultures, identities and common values was the theme of the second Roundtable.

**Jelena Drenjanin**, EPP-CoR spoke about the important role of local and regional authorities in supporting education and entrepreneurship and emphasised: *"We need the local and regional levels to build a strong Europe."*





"The upcoming European elections take place in very challenging circumstances", said **Günther Oettinger**, European Commissioner for Budget and Human Resources. He thanked the Austrian Presidency for the progress made on the EU's next multiannual budget, but stressed the need to conclude the negotiations as soon as possible to avoid delaying European investments in 2021.

**Ludovic Orban**, President of the National Liberal Party of Romania, announced the

“ **Regions are at the heart of Europe** ”

Spitzenkandidat Weber



upcoming Summit of EPP regional and local leaders with the Spitzenkandidat in view of the EU 2019 elections, which will take place on 16 March 2019 in Bucharest.

The event's highlight was the debate with Sebastian Kurz and Manfred Weber who were welcomed by **Johanna Mikl-Leitner**, President of Lower Austria, EPP-CoR. "Since we are today with regional representatives, mayors and local politicians, I would like to add that we are the only party in Europe that gives a clear commitment to the principle of subsidiarity and strong regions. We think & act together", underlined Manfred Weber.

Sebastian Kurz spoke about the importance of strong regions and remaining united in diversity ahead of the European elections. Themes such as safety, jobs and competitiveness are sure to be topics, which will benefit people's everyday lives. "Politicians should



put their focus on issues that truly matter to people," he concluded.



# Overview of the February Plenary session



The Committee of the Regions' first Plenary session of 2019 takes place on 6-7 February in the hemicycle of the European Parliament. The first day kicks off with a debate on the future EU programmes for education, culture, youth and sport with Tibor Navracsics, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport. Other topics include a presentation of the priorities of the Romanian Presidency, as well as a resolution on Combating hate speech, following the tragic death of Paweł Adamowicz, Mayor of Gdansk and member of EPP-CoR in January.



Photo: Navracsics, © European Union, 2015

## EPP-led opinions on the agenda

### Creative Europe and a New European Agenda for Culture

SEDEC-VI/040

Rapporteur: **János Ádám Karacsony (HU/EPP)**

The New European Agenda for Culture proposed by the European Commission seeks to support Member States in making the most of the potential of culture in fostering innovation, economic growth and job creation, as well as in building stronger links between communities and with the EU's partners across the world.



EPP-CoR rapporteur János Ádám Karacsony welcomes the European Commission proposals, which he believes reflect the expansion of culture as a policy area. He proposes that local and regional authorities should be systematically consulted in the planning, implementation and governance of the measures designed to support culture and the creative sectors across Europe. He also proposes a budget of EUR 2 billion to ensure that culture and cultural heritage are better incorporated into the priorities of the next Multiannual Financial Framework. These need to go hand in hand with a greater mainstreaming and synergies with other programmes and policies.

“ *It was both an honour and a challenging task for me to work as a rapporteur on this opinion; I see a change in how cultural policy is increasingly perceived and treated as an EU policy. Having started with the Social Summit in Gothenburg in November 2017 and strengthened by the success of the European Year of Cultural Heritage last year, culture is moving higher on the EU's agenda.* ”

Rapporteur **János Ádám Karacsony**

### A renewed European Agenda for Research and Innovation

SEDEC-VI/047

Rapporteur: **Birgitta Sacrédeus (SV/EPP)**



The European Commission proposed a renewed European Agenda for Research and Innovation (R&I), setting out concrete actions to deepen Europe's innovation capability and provide lasting prosperity. EPP-CoR rapporteur Birgitta Sacrédeus believes that the development of research and innovation in Europe requires a new joint approach between regions, Member States and the Commission. She points to the need for a broader definition and understanding of research ecosystems and innovation hubs, which if well defined in the future EU R&I programme will allow these ecosystems to be effectively taken into account in the implementation of all programme strands. In her opinion, the rapporteur recalls that local and regional authorities should be involved in designing and managing research and innovation programmes.

“ *Making more strategic use of local and regional innovation ecosystems, and putting more emphasis on the complex collaborative research and innovation processes developed through quadruple and quintuple helix structures within those ecosystems, is key to success.* ”

Rapporteur **Birgitta Sacrédeus**

### Artificial Intelligence for Europe

SEDEC-VI/046

Rapporteur: **Jan Trei (EE/EPP)**

European leaders have called for a European approach on Artificial Intelligence (AI), as one of the most strategic technologies of the 21st

century. In response the Commission has put forward proposals to increase public and private investment in AI, adapt to resulting socio-economic changes, and develop an appropriate ethical framework.



EPP-CoR rapporteur Jan Trei agrees that a clear European framework is needed for AI but regrets that the proposed strategy is not binding on the Member States; Legislative proposals at European level are urgently needed. He draws attention to the fact that the proposed measures do not cover the public sector at local and regional level and defends this should not be overlooked.

“ *Developing Artificial Intelligence for the regions is very important – particularly in terms of developing and automating local services; be it self-driving public transport, smart solutions in social welfare and health care; environmental issues; Applying artificial intelligence to e-government; different e-services in education.* ”

Rapporteur **Jan Trei**

### Tackling online disinformation: a European Approach

CIVEX-VI/037

Rapporteur: **Olgierd Geblewicz (PL/EPP)**

The European Commission has proposed a series of measures to tackle fake news, which the large majority of EU citizens considers as a danger to democracy. In his opinion, rapporteur Olgierd Geblewicz calls for a pan-European debate to be launched on how local and regional authorities could better support the local press so as to ensure a healthy mixture of opinions while at the

same time continuing to comply with the principles of the EU single market.

The opinion outlines three main areas where the CoR and local and regional authorities can show initiative and effectively support efforts to counteract current online disinformation. These are: civic education, support for non-governmental organisations and civil society, and support for local media.



“ *Disinformation affects society at all levels. Local and regional authorities, as the level of governance closest to citizens – and often responsible for primary and secondary education – are best able to launch educational programmes that teach how to make responsible use of online information sources and how to distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources – starting with primary schools.* ”

Rapporteur **Olgierd Geblewicz**

## Road safety and automated mobility

COTER-VI/043

Rapporteur: **József Ribányi (HU/EPP)**

In his opinion, rapporteur József Ribányi discusses the different challenges related to technology, infrastructure and cohesion in the transition towards automated mobility. Automated mobility has potential to support the European Union's cohesion objectives, but the transition has to be managed properly and involving local and regional authorities.

There is a need to ensure appropriate financial resources



for infrastructure modernisation and road safety measures over the years ahead, including for smaller regions and those that are lagging behind. In the context of the MFF 2021–2027, operators need to make full use of opportunities under all funding instruments available and optimise synergies. Attention is also drawn to the need to envisage particular support for regions where the socio-economic impact of the transition to automated mobility is likely to be greatest.

“ *We call for a multi-level governance approach in road safety and automated mobility, recalling that mobility and transport are a competence of local and* ”

*regional authorities, who are in charge of designing and implementing safe mobility policies and of providing automated, environmentally-friendly public transport in their territory* ”

Rapporteur **József Ribányi**

## Towards an 8<sup>th</sup> Environment Action Programme

Rapporteur: **Cor Lamers, Mayor of Schiedam (NL/EPP)**

ENVE-VI/027

The 7<sup>th</sup> EU Environment Action Programme (EAP), was adopted in November 2013 and will run until 2020. The European Commission will publish a mid-term evaluation of the 7<sup>th</sup> EAP in spring 2019 and will start discussions on a possible 8<sup>th</sup> EAP in 2019.



As regions and cities are key actors in designing and implementing environmental, climate and energy policies, they are indispensable players in delivering the 7<sup>th</sup> EAP's goals on the ground and should have a say on the EAP post-2020. Rapporteur Cor Lamers proposes a more strategic 8<sup>th</sup> EAP, which should focus on transitions, innovation, better implementation of the current legislation and wider global challenges.

“ *Healthy urban and rural living should be at the centre of the 8th EAP. This approach, based on quality of life, integrates the three pillars of sustainable development – economic, environmental and sociocultural aspects – and places human health and nature in the wider context of sustainability, in line with Sustainable Development Goals.* ”

Rapporteur **Cor Lamers**

## Digitalisation in the Health Sector

NAT-VI/033

Rapporteur: **Fernando López Miras (ES/EPP)**

The European Commission has published a communication on digital transformation of health and care in the Digital Single Market.

CoR Rapporteur López Miras (EPP/ES) welcomes the Commission's initiative to promote cooperation between Member States to speed up the digital transformation of the health sector. However, the Commission's proposal lacks concrete measures to raise public awareness and to ensure that citizens fully understand the legislative framework protecting privacy and health data. The rapporteur also calls for mandatory common standards for all Member States in order to remove obstacles for interoperability in favour of more efficient digital systems.



“ *The use of digital solutions is essential for improving the accessibility and sustainability of our social and health care systems, and regions play a fundamental role in this necessary challenge. To carry out this digital transformation, we must rely on key technologies such as artificial intelligence or high-performance computing, and ensure the involvement and coordination of all levels of government and actors in the system, promoting close collaboration between the public and private sectors.* ”

Rapporteur **Fernando López Miras**

## Proposal for a Regulation on the European Border and Coast Guard

CIVEX-VI/039

Rapporteur-General: **Anna Magyar (HU/EPP)**



The European Commission proposed to reinforce the European Border and Coast Guard. Under the next EU budget period 2021–2027, a total of €11.3 billion is proposed. According to the CoR rapporteur, Anna Magyar, the protection of the external borders of the EU is a common interest. She believes that the objectives of the proposed legislation cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States and regional authorities alone, and that the proposal therefore complies with the principle of subsidiarity and proportionality.

The rapporteur stresses the fact that the protection of free movement shall continue to be guaranteed, and expresses a certain concern about the proposal to create a standing corps of up to 10 000 operational staff, as it may result in a possible brain drain and thus place an additional burden on local and regional authorities, especially in frontline regions. Mrs Magyar also points out that these obligations must not endanger the performance of national tasks carried out at the external borders, and therefore proposes a more realistic and gradual establishment of the standing corps.

“ *There is a urgent need to strengthen the co-operation with third countries, with a view to ensuring the effective protection of the EU's external borders and in order to step up significantly the effective return of those not in need of international protection.* ”

Rapporteur **Anna Magyar**

## Key outcomes of COP24

Can we make our cities greener and our urban transport more sustainable without compromising our economic competitiveness? Can we better preserve the natural richness of rural landscapes? Can our cities and villages be more attractive to live in? These and other questions were addressed at the United Nations Climate Change Conference COP24 on 3-14 December 2018 in Katowice, Poland.

While the 2015 Paris Agreement set a goal of keeping a global temperature rise well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, the Katowice Rulebook provided a roadmap on how to get there. After long and tough negotiations, and thanks to the leadership of the EU Climate and Energy Commissioner **Arias Cañete**, the COP24 concluded in signing a guiding set of rules on how to implement what was agreed in Paris.



The final text “Recognizes the efforts and actions that Parties and non-Party stakeholders are undertaking to enhance climate action.” Local and regional authorities are one of the most important non-Party stakeholders: Given their responsibilities and the budgetary resources at their disposal, cities and regions play a crucial role in implementing climate adaptation and mitigation policies, building sustainable communities, fostering low-carbon local economies and boosting investment and competitiveness of local businesses. Therefore, their active participation in and contribution to shaping national climate and energy plans as well as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) is vital.

The CoR delegation, as part of the EU delegation to COP24 in Katowice, was led by the CoR 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President

**Markku Markkula** (EPP/FI) and ENVE Commission Chair **Cor Lamers** (EPP/NL) and supported by seven ENVE members, including the rapporteur on the EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change, **Sirpa Hertell** (EPP/FI). Members actively participated in the political debates, workshops, debriefings with the Members of the European Parliament and EU Commissioner Arias Cañete, and held



a number of bilateral meetings with high level representatives.

At the Global Covenant of Mayors Day on 10 December, Markku Markkula reiterated the political commitment of cities and regions to fight climate change: “We, local and regional governments are ambitious, inclusive and innovative, we know how to deliver on climate action. Today we say to climate Parties: we look forward to acting with you. You can count on us.”

At the European Union’s Energy Day on 11 December, Markkula stressed further the need for cities and regions, industry, academia, citizens and the EU to join forces to enable the energy transition. Using the example of coal regions, he talked about the importance of multi-level governance, the need for new technologies and capacity building as well as tailored financial measures for these regions.



In the same vein, at the conference on Climate resilient urban infrastructure: the G20 work on adaptation on 11 December, Sirpa Hertell highlighted the importance of working together at all levels of governance involving all relevant stakeholders, and the need for proper financing to ensure that the money goes where it is most needed and where it brings real added value. Hertell also met with **Thomas Brose**, the executive director of Climate Alliance to discuss how multilevel climate governance can be put in practice.

The topic of inclusive cooperation was the main theme of the Talanoa Dialogue Conclusion session held on 12 December. Cor Lamers delivered a speech on behalf of all local and regional authorities worldwide, calling for a formal recognition of local and regional authorities in the UNFCCC regulatory framework and its decision-making process, the inclusion of Regionally and Locally Determined Contributions (RLDCs) that would complement Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and an extension of Talanoa dialogues beyond COP24. This call was to a certain degree reflected in the final Katowice agreement where the Parties were invited to “consider the outcome, inputs and outputs of the Talanoa Dialogue in preparing their nationally determined contributions and in their efforts to enhance pre-2020 implementation and ambition”. These provisions open a window of opportunity to further push for a better place for local and regional authorities at the global negotiating table.

# Upcoming events

→ <b>6<sup>th</sup> Task Force Ukraine meeting</b> – 13 February 2019
→ <b>ECON Commission meeting</b> – 14 February 2019
→ <b>SEDEC Commission meeting and conference on the Digital Agenda, Palermo, Italy</b> – 18-19 February 2019
→ <b>10<sup>th</sup> ARLEM Plenary Session, Seville, Spain</b> – 27 February 2019
→ <b>COTER external seminar on 'Promoting growth and jobs through regional development policies', Dubrovnik, Croatia</b> – 4 March 2019
→ <b>8<sup>th</sup> European Summit of Regions and Cities, Bucharest, Romania</b> – 14-15 March 2019
→ <b>Summit of EPP Regional and Local Leaders in view of EU 2019 Elections, Bucharest, Romania</b> – 16 March 2019
→ <b>CFAA Commission meeting</b> – 21 March 2019
→ <b>COTER Commission meeting and conference on 'Supporting and developing an efficient cohesion policy', Cluj-Napoca, Romania</b> – 25-26 March 2019
→ <b>NAT Commission meeting</b> – 28 March 2019
→ <b>CoRLEAP Bureau meeting, Yerevan, Armenia</b> – 28 March
→ <b>CIVEX Commission meeting</b> – 1 April 2019
→ <b>SEDEC Commission meeting</b> – 2 April 2019
→ <b>ENVE Commission meeting</b> – 4 April 2019
→ <b>134<sup>th</sup> CoR Plenary Session</b> – 10-11 April 2019
→ <b>European elections</b> – May 23-26 2019

## Ongoing opinions

### CIVEX

No ongoing EPP-CoR opinions

### COTER

Better Communication of Cohesion Policy – **Adrian Ovidiu Teban** – Adoption foreseen in June 2019

Recommendations for the successful design of regional development strategies beyond 2020 – **Adam Struzik** – Adoption foreseen in October 2019

### ECON

Implementation report on public procurement – **Thomas Habermann** – Adoption foreseen in October 2019

Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030 – **Arnoldas Abramavičius** – Adoption foreseen in June 2019

Socioeconomic transformation of coal regions in Europe – **Mark Speich** – Adoption foreseen in June 2019

### ENVE

Sustainable Europe by 2030, follow-up to the UN Sustainable Development Goals: The Paris Agreement on Climate Change – **Sirpa Hertell** – Adoption foreseen in June 2019

Implementing the Paris Agreement through innovative and sustainable energy transition at regional and local level – **Witold Stepień** – Adoption foreseen in October 2019

Implementing the Clean Energy Package: the INECPs as a tool for local and territorial governance approach to climate, active and passive energy – **Josze Ribanyi** – Adoption foreseen in October 2019

### NAT

Active and healthy ageing – **Birgitta Sacrédeus** – Adoption foreseen in June 2019

Agro-pastoralism – **Jacques Blanc** – Adoption foreseen in June 2019

The African swine fever epidemic and its risks to the rural development and the pork market in Europe – **Slawomir Sosnowski**

### SEDEC

Strengthening STE(A)M education in the EU – **Csaba Borboly** – Adoption foreseen in June 2019

## Interview with Tibor Navracsics, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport



**Your broad portfolio which encompasses Education, Culture, Youth and Sport can play a key role in turning Europe from a thought to a feeling for Europeans. Would you agree, and how do you think these four pillars can better work together for European citizens?**

*I agree, and would go even a step further: Europe needs to be not only a feeling, but also a strong part of our identity – alongside our local, regional and national identities. My portfolio combines four areas that have a big role to play in fostering a European identity and a sense of belonging. And we already benefit from plenty of synergies between these areas: just look at the Erasmus+ programme, combining education, youth and sport; or the DiscoverEU initiative, which brings together informal learning and culture. The European Year of Cultural Heritage in 2018 was another example: with young people a particular target group, the Year was geared towards preserving cultural heritage for future generations and raising their awareness of its importance. However, I agree that this work is never completed and that we can certainly find further synergies. The on-going discussions on the future of the funding programmes in these areas offer an excellent opportunity to do just that.*

**Local and regional authorities are central in promoting and celebrating the artistic and cultural life of their communities, are empowered through multi-level governance and decentralization of educational policy, and promote sport and healthy lifestyles. How can the Commission work further with local and regional authorities in these key policy areas for Europe's future?**

*At the institutional level the European Commission works very closely with the Committee of the Regions, a valuable partner providing input on everything we do.*

*Just as importantly, local and regional authorities are involved in all main activities. For example, the European Week of Sport, which I launched in 2015, is successful*

*because it involves people in physical activity where they live, in regions, cities and towns across Europe. In 2018, 13 million people took part in more than 50,000 events in 42 countries and regions. Likewise, the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage was everything but a "Brussels" event, involving at least 7.5 million people in more than 13,000 events organised across 37 countries. We also support local and regional authorities in their daily work. For example, the Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor, developed by the Commission's in-house science service, the Joint Research Centre, helps policy-makers in towns and cities make the most of culture in driving economic development and social cohesion. Our experts have been developing this interactive tool, and I look forward to presenting an updated and expanded version later this year.*

**The CoR advocates that culture and cultural heritage should be better incorporated into the priorities of the next Multi-Annual Financial Framework both through mainstreaming and synergies with other programmes and policies and setting a higher budgetary target. In your view, how can these ambitions be met?**

*Indeed, culture and cultural heritage are, by their nature, transversal and have to be embedded in other policies. This also applies to relevant funding – I fully share the Committee's views also reflected in the excellent report of the rapporteur, Adam Karacsony (EPP/HU), that they need to be seen as a strategic priority in the future policy programmes and the EU's next long-term budget for 2021–2027, as they contribute to investment in Europe's human and cultural capital and help promote Europe's values, which is probably more important today than ever.*

*During the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, the Commission made substantial funding available for cultural heritage projects across different EU funding programmes. I will continue working to build synergies across programmes to reach the best possible deal for culture and heritage. To this end, I presented a set of actions at the end of last year designed to help us promote and protect cultural heritage over the coming years. I trust that these actions can be a valuable source of inspiration for decision-makers at the regional and local level.*

**The need for a paradigm shift from STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) to STEAM (including Arts) education and the timeliness of extending creative and critical thinking to all levels of education and training**

**have been identified as key elements for a competitive Europe. What more could the Commission do to support local and regional authorities and Member States in this paradigm shift?**

*Indeed there is a need to shift from STEM to STEAM, to underline that creativity and critical thinking need to go hand in hand, that science and arts are both central for innovation. Many young people still see STEM subjects as difficult or unattractive. We need to do more than just stimulate children's interest in the fundamentals of maths and science at school. They need to understand how applying these competences and their own imagination can help shape the world. This vision is clearly reflected across the eight Key Competences I proposed to Member States and which they have agreed to. The Commission can support Member States, regional and local authorities in advancing the STEAM agenda. We need more role models in STEAM and we need to ensure that teachers – regardless of what subjects they teach – get the support and training they need to feel confident in this interdisciplinary approach at all levels of education.*

**A topic of particular interest in our series of EPP Local Dialogues with citizens has been the future of education and the opportunities available for our young generation. As we head towards the European elections, a new Commission and a new programming cycle, how would you respond to this citizen concern?**

*Studies show that young people are the most European-minded generation of all. Young people tend to be more positive about the EU than older generations. Yet, many young people often mention that they do not feel they are being heard by politicians – and too many of them tend not to vote in European Parliament elections. That is why I have invested a lot in broadening the EU's dialogue with young people, to reach more young people from all parts of society. But we want to do more and this is why Erasmus+, the European Solidarity Corps and DiscoverEU are so important. Each in their own way empowers young people to fulfil their potential while building their European identity – and helping us shape resilient, cohesive societies. We have therefore proposed to significantly boost all of these actions in the future EU budget – to show that we want to invest more in all young people. I know that the Committee of the Regions supports this, and I count on you to continue standing by this objective in the negotiations.*

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