

Overview of the October Plenary Session



MEP **Danuta Maria Hübner** (EPP/PL),
Chair of the European Parliament
Committee on Constitutional Affairs

The October Plenary Session of the European Committee of the Regions will be launched with the opening session of the European Week of Regions and Cities on Monday October 10th – more information can be found on the last page of this edition. The actual Plenary Session begins on Tuesday 11th with a debate on *Reflections on the EU – Present and future* with **Danuta Maria Hübner**, Chair of the European Parliament Committee on Constitutional Affairs. The debate is extremely timely considering the past

events in the European Union, and Europe's local and regional leaders have a special role in bridging the Union closer to its citizens. The EU should be able to produce tangible results on the everyday lives of its citizens and thus increase the trust towards the European project. The EPP has been and is the central engine for the creation and development of the EU and our Members are keen to share their experiences and knowledge to help strengthen our common Union.

European Commission Vice President **Andrus Ansip**, EU Commissioner for a Connected Digital Single Market, will also join our Members connected to the three opinions on the *eGovernment Action Plan* (**Andreassen** EPP/SE), *Digitising European Industry* (**McCarthy** EA/IE) and the *European Cloud Initiative* (**Karjalainen** PES/FI) opinions. The completion of the Digital Single Market would be an essential tool in creating more growth and jobs in Europe and the opinions stress the digitalisation of both public and private sector for fostering innovation and effectiveness.

Cohesion Policy is one of the few EU instruments to have a direct, concrete and

tangible impact on citizens' quality of life through hundreds of thousands of projects implemented all over Europe. The opinion on the *Simplification of ESIF from the perspective of Local and Regional Authorities* (**Osvald** PES/CZ) states that ESIF should undergo a process to increase its effectiveness and added value, with the aim not only of achieving the EU's targets and the Europe 2020 strategy, but also benefiting the citizens and thus improving their perception of the EU. Perhaps one of the most important ways of achieving this is by simplifying the overall ESIF implementation system and increasing its flexibility.

Stability and coordination within and outside the EU is one of the CoR political priorities for 2015-2020 and the review of the *European Neighbourhood Policy* (**Quart** PES/DE) emphasises that local and regional authorities their associations must be involved in every phase of implementing the ENP – from programming to democratic control.

On the final day of the Plenary Session, the focus is on sustainability and climate change, in addition to the opinion on establishing a *European Deposit Insurance Scheme* (**Duppéré** EPP/DE). Both the delivery on the global climate agreement with a view on the COP22 in Marrakesh (**Pigliaru** PES/IT) as well as the opinion on the *EU action plan for the Circular Economy* (**Winter** PES/DE) touch upon pressing environmental issues for cities and regions. A majority of climate change mitigating action takes place on the grass roots level and the inclusion of local and regional authorities in the action against climate change has become a fundamental feature. Circular economy has been one of the key packages of the Juncker Commission and the CoR opinion recommends ambitious legislative provisions together with support so that regions and cities can fully adopt the policy. ■

