

## Boost to Euro-Mediterranean cooperation



The Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) held its 17<sup>th</sup> meeting in Murcia, south-eastern Spain, last 3 May. The President of the Murcia Region, Pedro Antonio Sánchez (ES/EPP), welcomed Markku Markkula, President of the European Committee of the Regions and first vice-president Karl-Heinz Lambertz, the co-president of ARLEM and Mayor of Beit Sahour, Palestine, Ham Abdelmasih Al-Hayek and Fathallah Sijilmassi, Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean. In the pressing context of the refugee crisis and global warming, the three key topics were cross-border cooperation, the revised EU Neighbourhood Policy and energy and climate in the Mediterranean.

Mohamed Sadiki Mayor of Rabat presented a discussion paper on energy and climate.

ARLEM partners are willing to foster cooperation on sustainable energy and climate adaptation and mitigation actions. During the COP22 climate summit to take place in Marrakesh next November, the CoR will organise a conference to promote the roll out of the Covenant of Mayors in Morocco and the rest of the Mediterranean basin. ARLEM will hold a meeting of its Commission for Sustainable Territorial Development.

Delegates discussed "Cross-border cooperation (CBC) in the Mediterranean" by rapporteur Francesco Pigliaru (IT/PES). The report will provide an overview of the most innovative sectorial policies in CBC with emphasis in the fields of youth and women-related issues. The report is to be issued in 2016. Anne Quart (DE/PES) presented a draft report on the "Review of the

EU Neighbourhood Policy". Amongst its pledges is to reinforce multi-level governance and cooperation mechanisms at the local and regional level and to support socio-economic development through foreign investment, the development of small and medium sized enterprises and job creation as a way to stabilize neighbouring countries and prevent mass migration flows.

Moving ahead Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, ARLEM launched in Nicosia (Cyprus) a support initiative for Libyan local authorities last January, setting up working groups in areas that are crucial for its stabilisation and socio-economic development. Murcia region will be the first in organising a support action last week of May 2016 on water management, irrigation systems and agriculture. Other European cities will organise seminars in public administration, management of health centers and waste management services throughout the year.

ARLEM is the assembly of local and regional elected representatives from the European Union and its Mediterranean partners. It was set up in 2010 by the European Committee of the Regions. The Assembly has 80 members, 40 from the Mediterranean and 40 from the EU. President Markkula acts as the co-president of ARLEM representing the EU group. Hani Abdelmasih Al Hayek, Mayor of Beit Sahour, Palestine, is ARLEM's co-president representing the Mediterranean members.

## EGTC Award

### THE HOSPITAL OF Cerdanya SERVING FRENCH AND SPANISH MOUNTAINOUS COMMUNITIES AWARDED 'BUILDING EUROPE ACROSS BORDERS' PRIZE.

During the annual meeting of the European Groupings for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), held at the European Committee of the Regions on 20 April, the Hospital de Cerdanya was awarded the 'Building Europe across Borders' prize as the brightest example of cross-border cooperation in Europe in 2016. The hospital, 500 metres away from the border, was set up by Catalonia and Languedoc-Roussillon to serve 34 000 permanent inhabitants and a floating population of 120 000 in the Cerdanya valley, situated on the Spanish side of the Pyrenees.

"The jury was impressed by the dimensions of the project, which goes far beyond the usual projects of cross-border cooperation and really brings European added value to citizens in their daily lives", said the chair of the CoR's Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy, Raffaele Cattaneo (IT/EPP), who coordinates the EGTC platform. "A growing number of communities across the EU benefit from better services and new opportunities thanks to EU cross-border cooperation. This work must not be harmed by calling into ques-

tion a basic principle such as free movement of persons", stressed Mr Cattaneo.

The EGTC Euroregion Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino was also given an award in recognition of the Euregio Science Fund project, allowing member regions to mutualise EUR 3 million to fund cross-border research projects between 2015 and 2018, supported by a Euroregional Research Advisory Board.