Descendants of the founding fathers of the EU at the 14th Conference of

What will become of Europe?

European Regions and Cities in Salzburg

3 Asfa-Wossen Asserate: Is Europe’s Future Deciding in Africa?

16 Traditional reception in Brussels: “Vojvodina, Great for Business, Great for Life”

18 Austrian State Secretary Edtstadler in Kosovo: Full support in the fight against corruption
If Africa is to have a future, Europe must say goodbye to its disastrous economic and trade policy. Europe must stop subsidizing its agribusiness at the expense of developing countries. Imports of dumping products that drain water from local farmers and small producers must be stopped.

Africa needs development assistance that is sustainable and self-initiative. The promotion of small people through microcredits plays a key role here. Even small sums of money are often sufficient to enable people to develop their own source of income. Above all, it is important to promote women – they are the key to Africa’s future. Especially in the areas of health and education, women are particularly important. And the longer the girls go to school, the lower the number of their children will be.

Africa is a huge challenge for Europe. If you want to contain the migration, you have to improve the living conditions of the local people. An Africa without hunger is quite possible. However, we know that achieving this goal will require huge investment, for example in infrastructure and the energy sector. Most of all, however, is job creation for the young population in Africa, which accounts for 85% of the 1.2 billion people. In some sub-Saharan countries, youth unemployment is close to 60%. In order to fight the causes of alignment in Africa, we must ensure that 20 million new jobs are created in Africa every year over the next ten years. Only if we succeed in bringing the hopeless African youth into bread and work, we can convince them to stay in their home countries.

It is undisputed that Europe and the United States have done much in the last 50 years to help Africa. But the biggest gift that Europe Africa can make in the future would be to finally end its appeasement policy towards African tyrants. The policy of concessions, restraint, appeasement, and accommodating to African dictators, who ruthlessly exploit and oppress their own peoples, cannot continue. Further assistance and support for African countries must go hand in hand with the demand for good governance. False tolerance of inhuman potentates I see as a betrayal of the universal values of humanity, which also form the basis of the United Nations.

Prosperity and power sometimes appear in Africa today as the overlaying values. Accordingly, social, family, but also administrative relationships are highly monetized. But this problem does not exist only in Africa. The demon of greed and insatiability drives its mischief throughout our globalized world.

I believe it is our greatest task in the 21st century to reconcile the demands of the market with humanity.

Speech at the 14th Conference of European Regions and Cities.

Asfa-Wossen Asserate
Prince Asfa-Wossen Asserate is a business consultant for Africa and the Middle East, best-selling author and political analyst

Panel „What will become of Europe?”

Panel „What became of the Europe of its founding fathers?”

Descendants and confidants of the founding fathers of the European Union described their personal memories and discussed whether the European Union has developed in the spirit of the founding fathers.

Panel „What will become of Europe?”

Asafa-Wossen Asserate
A business consultant for Africa and the Middle East, best-selling author and political analyst
14th Conference of European Regions and Cities in Salzburg

Europe’s regions call for more co-determination in EU legislation

The Salzburg Summit, the 14th Conference of the Regions and Cities of Europe, organised by the Institute of the Regions of Europe from 30th September to 2nd October 2018, began with a vivid appeal to give regions and municipalities more co-determination and participation in decisions on EU-wide regulations.

Task Force „Subsidiarity“ should be taken seriously

The legal status of municipalities and regions in the EU and in the Member States was the opening theme of the Salzburg Summit. The power of the regions could only develop if they had responsibilities, i.e. competencies and the necessary financial resources. However, that is precisely what is lacking, as was made clear in the panel debate. Both RE-Chairman Franz Schauburger and Reinhard Lopatka, member of the Austrian parliament, praised the report of the „Working Group on Subsidiarity“, but expressly criticized the fact that the President of the Commission, Jean Claude Juncker, had not responded to this in his State of the Union speech. The regions of Europe can currently scrutinize whether their responsibilities and obligations are affected by draft legislation, but the eight week deadline is too short for all participants. They require more time and equipment to carry out the subsidiarity check.

In addition, the distribution of responsibilities in the bodies of the EU and the states should not be static, but subsidiarity should be applied dynamically, said Innsbruck legal academician Anna Gamper. An emphatic appeal, to structure Europe as a federation of regions, was addressed by German political scientist Winfried Böttcher to the conference. The EU is not in a structural crisis but in a systemic crisis, it will only have a future as Europe of the regions. Subsidiarity, as the right of smaller or lower units to regulate their own affairs, is also a matter of justice. And since much of this policy is being implemented at this level, regions and local communities should be given more say, rather than being confronted with EU regulations, as is currently the case.

Prof. Martin Rhoneheimer emphasized that the breach of the principle of subsidiarity is a violation of justice. The lower level is to assist in the performance of their duties. Subsidiarity is not top down but bottom up and closely linked to financial autonomy. Unfortunately, the EU is not interested in subsidiarity. The problem is not the nation state but nationalism. Alexander Miesen, President of the German-speaking Community in Belgium, is convinced: The member states are in the big EU construct; the more important is the application of the subsidiarity principle. It’s a matter of justice: I cannot explain to a craft business in my region that it has to pay dues if an international concern can choose.

Martin Eichtinger, member of the Lower Austria regional government, called for more transparency in the allocation of competences, why is something decided where. He criticized that EU directives are becoming more and more detailed, thus narrowing the scope of the regions more and more. He called for the continuation of cohesion policy and the financial resources for it, because only then regional autonomy can live.

Enlargement Commissioner wishes the EU as a global player

The European Union has to develop the capacity to play a role in global politics commensurate with its economic importance. This demanded EU Commissioner Johannes Hahn, responsible in the European Commission for Enlargement. „The founding idea of the EU, namely to secure peace, has been successfully implemented, but has led to a strong focus on internal affairs. As a result, the EU has lost the ability to look at developments and changes globally.“ Thus, this is the challenge right now, as Hahn explained on the basis of a few comparisons. In 1900, Europe accounted for 25 percent of the world’s population, today it is 6 percent, and in 2050 only 4 percent of the world’s population will be in Europe. Furthermore, just a decade ago, Europe and the US would have been responsible for two-thirds of world trade. Today it is only half and in another ten years only two-thirds of the global trade volume will go to the two transatlantic partners. Hahn explained, that the EU is not in a structural crisis but in a systemic crisis. It will only have a future as Europe of its founding fathers.

Europe needs answers to the simple questions

The founding fathers of united Europe would be concerned about the current development of the Union. They would fight national populism and try to find answers and solutions to people’s most urgent questions. This was emphasized by descendants and close confidants of the pioneers of the European unification during the discussion round „What became of the Europe of its founding fathers?“

Jean-Gabriel Lieberher, grandson of Jean Monnet, emphasized his grandfather’s constant effort to point problems at heart. Especially in difficult times simple solutions are rare. Currently the question is: „Which countries want to move forward, want a further development and deepening of the Union?“ Lord Watson of Richmond, author and confidant of the Churchill family, also criticized the EU’s ability to play a role in global politics commensurate with its economic importance.

Lord Watson of Richmond, author and confidant of the Churchill family

Alan John Watson, Baron Watson of Richmond, Historian and personal friend of family Winston Churchill

“Hard Brexit or soft Brexit? – No Brexit!“

Juliane Bogner-Strautz, Austrian Federal Minister in personal representation for Federal Chancellor Sebastian Kurz

Wolfgang Sobotka, President of the Austrian parliament

Governor of Salzburg Wilfried Haslauer welcomed the international guests.
find and communicate clear positions. „If we want to move Europe forward, we have to make people feel that the EU is essential because it tries to answer the right questions.“ The most important issue right now is without a doubt the issue of ‚fight and migration‘, but the EU does not just lack a solution, but also a clear question. „One of Winston Churchill’s greatest strengths has always been to get the feel for the key point, even with very complex problems."

Maria Romana De Gasperi, daughter of the Italian Prime Minister Alcide de Gasperi, found in the population of Europe a certain EU fatigue, which had to be overcome. A Europe of emigrants has become a Europe of Immigrants. This problem should be considered in peace and all states should contribute to a solution, De Gasperi demanded. „Not everything is allowed to get stuck in the Mediterranean states“, presumably also the founding fathers of the EU would have thought so.

Antoinette Spaak, daughter of the Belgian statesman Paul-Henri Spaak, urged the EU today to be more inclusive and the younger Member States in Eastern Europe to engage in a dedicated process of catching up on human rights, democracy, the rule of law and transparency. „Some enlargement processes have simply gone too fast“, said the daughter of the former Belgian foreign minister.

Theda Aghina Mansholt, daughter of former European Commission President Sicco Mansholt, recalled the more than simple beginnings of the EU in 1958. Long meetings had already been held at that time, but the EEC was much more focused on common solutions and agreement despite its great differences. Sicco Mansholt, according to Adenauer.

Even Sven Georg Adenauer, grandson of Konrad Adenauer, noted that Europe had become saturated and Europe-tiredness prevailed. All of Europe’s enthusiasts would have to stop the populists all the more. That would be the supreme credo of his grandfather, according to Adenauer.

Michael Kilian (private secretary to Walter Hallstein, the first Commission President of the EEC, 1958) took the same horn. Hallstein, too, had experienced crises, for example in the long and unsuccessful discussion on the majority principle. Yet, he has always known that discussion and divergent opinions in a community are necessary and normal, without questioning the EU itself.

The historian Jürgen Elvert stressed, that the current criticism of the EU may often be unfair and spring from irrational roots, but it is also behind the truth, namely the central concerns of Europeans. „The EU must succeed in securing borders, creating economic and social stability and guaranteeing prosperity“, painted Elvert. It considers a reformed common foreign and security policy to be indispensable. However, as no consensus can currently be expected among the Member States, it would make sense to form a foreign and security union within the core area of the EU. This should decide its approach with a majority in order to be taken seriously as a security policy actor on the international stage.

Is Europe’s Future Deciding in Africa?

Refugee flows and waves of immigration will continue to dominate European politics in the years to come, requiring the utmost efforts of all states.

Prince Asfa-Wossen Asserate called for an end to the „disastrous economic and trade policy“ of Europe. Ivan Vejvoda from the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna advocated a kind of Marshall Plan for Africa in the sense of a joint European action.

Genc Pollo, chairman of the European Committee in the Parliament of Albania, referred to the potential of good and responsible politicians in Africa. Increased international networking and the creation of a close EU-style African Union could massively strengthen these forces while giving the EU access to reputable contacts in Africa.

Austria’s former Agriculture Minister and Principal Advisor to the General Secretariat of the Council Andreas Rupprecht stated that only increased development aid efforts by Europe could combat the root cause of emigration from Africa. Prince Asserate recently pointed to the need for trustworthy governments in Africa. Any attempt by Europe to find partners in Africa (keyword: reception centers) will certainly fail because of the corrupt structures in Africa, Asserate believes.

Is European politics taking the problem of migration seriously enough?

According to Nini Tsikauri, singer, artist and co-founder of the initiative “Pulse of Europe” in Austria, the problem of immigration is massively overvalued. „Many people, especially in the cities, have no problem whatsoever“, says the Georgian-born musician.

Karl-Heinz Lambertz, President of the Committee of the Regions in Brussels, however, warned against taking European fear of increasing migration seriously. „If you miss this, you are giving these people to the populists“, says Lambertz. „People need to understand immigration and pluralism as enrichment to their lives and their country, and then migration will not be a problem anymore“. But Europe needed a strategy that would be borne by all EU states.

For Andreas Rupprecht the Union still has a long
way to go. As long as some countries like Hungary or Poland categorically deny the admission of refugees or immigrants, one can neither talk about fixed quotas nor about the question of which refugee or immigrant may go to Europe and in which country. Enver Hoxhaj, Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo, called for a much broader view on migration. In many states of Eastern and Southeastern Europe there is a brain drain, which causes problems in the countries of origin. Migration has always been a European reality, according to Hoxhaj, and it does not only cause irritation in the host countries.

Future of energy supply in Europe

The future of energy supplies in Europe is decentralized and market-based, with a high proportion of renewable energy and private households that understand themselves not only as consumers but also as producers of energy. The European Union has clearly defined objectives with regard to the energy transition, as Florian Ermacora, Head of Unit in the Directorate-General for Energy, explained. By 2030, energy efficiency is to be increased by 32.5 percent compared to 2007; the share of renewable energies in the energy mix should be 32 percent; and CO2 emissions are to be reduced by 40 percent. „Without decarbonisation, the fight against climate change will not succeed”, explained Ermacora. „CO2 emissions by 2050 must go down to zero”, stated scientist Nebojsa Nakicenovic. „If Europe wants to play a pioneering role, the EU must do it sooner”. To achieve these goals, „we need the consumers“, said Chairman of the Board Wolfgang Anzengruber (Verbund), who should also be provided sufficient information: „If we want to replace the fossil energy, then we need more electricity“. This should come from renewable energy sources, such as hydropower, wind power and solar radiation. The subsidies should be taken out of the energy market; market-based mechanisms should be used. What is the biggest growth potential? Anzengruber: „Unambiguously in solar energy”. According to Ivo Milatich, State-Secretary for Energy in Croatia, his government is now working intensively towards the EU’s 32 percent. Croatia is focusing primarily on hydropower and solar energy with as many photovoltaic systems as possible. In Croatia, people will no longer focus on fossil energy sources in the future. Consumers must become prosumers who can save as much energy as possible through their own energy production. Janez Kopač, Director of the Energy Community in Vienna, is convinced that no new additional nuclear power plants will be built in Europe. He justifies this with the cost factor. He does not see nuclear energy as the future of the energy community, coal-fired power plants are dying out, incinerators in the member states must be closed. In Serbia, there are eight coal-fired power plants, and in Macedonia and Montenegro one each. Angela Köppl, a specialist in environmental economics and climate change in Vienna, sees transport as one of the major problems in the climate and energy debate. The substitution of all internal combustion engines by electric motors is not a solution. Not every type of mobility needs to be combined with physical movement. Taxation requires the cost-truth of international equality. The term energy efficiency must be replaced by the term energy productivity.
The future is digital

In his keynote, Jiří Burianek, Secretary General of the Committee of the Regions, made it clear: “if we want Europe to be globally competitive in the digital age, we need citizens with digital capabilities that are well integrated into the digital world.”

Karoline Edtstadler, State Secretary at the Austrian Ministry of the Interior, confirmed this: “It takes all. And it needs the expansion to-wards 5G to strengthen the industry and the business location.” She warned to keep the risks in mind, because cybercrime was the fastest growing crime field.

Anke Knopp, political scientist and blogger, also reiterated that the possibilities of digitization should be prepared in such a way that citizens are involved and enabled to use them for new parti-cipatory formats.

Christian Rupp, spokesman for the platform Digitales Austria in the Federal Ministry for Digitization and Business Location, pointed out that for the individual and for companies the further development of the ‘digital skills’ will be more and more important in the future. He called for horizontal communication between all parties involved, since digitization is not a software update, but an all-encompassing cross-sectional matter that affects everyone.

Martin Bailey, Head of Unit F1, Development and Coordination of Digital Policies in the European Commission, added that digitiza-tion, in addition to clear regulation, widespread convergence and well-considered investment across Europe, needs more positive communication for its successful implementation.

Stefan Eder, Partner at Benn Ibler Rechtsanwälte GmbH and share-holder of Openlaws GmbH, underlined this: “We have a great star-tling position in Austria and I believe that we have to understand digitization as a process that is progressing slowly and that no one has to fear.”

This was joined by Lorenz Schöne, Head of Product Management & Digital Safes at Erste Group Bank AG. Digitization was taken out of abstraction and fear, and the focus was on new, great innova-tions and developments.

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Broadband, tourism and much innovation from the outside

The migration of mainly young people from rural areas to urban centers connects the countries of Europe like no other pheno-menon of our time.

The rural area in Austria is characterized by low homogeneity, em-phasized Josef Plank, Secretary General of the Ministry of Sustai-nability and Tourism. Some areas of emigration, such as Upper Sty-ria, could not have coped with the technical structural changes of recent decades, while other rural areas were characterized by very diverse employment opportunities and were also driven by tour-ism. Rural areas must take advantage of their opportunities and stay structurally up to date. One of the most interesting growth options is currently the energy transition, because the potential of renewable energy lies in rural areas.

The innovation consultant Gertraud Leimüller called for a far-reaching rethinkering and more involvement of the affected people. “We offer far too little innovation space in the country. Our inno-vation centers are urban because creative potential in the country cannot easily develop,” explained the Vienna Consultant. Austria’s rural area and its inhabitants urgently need new models of design and participation, new attractions for young, knowledge-intensive companies and dense social networks for young families.

Michael Beismann from the Regional Synergie GmbH Innsbruck called for a departure from the idea of wanting to keep the rural population on land. “Emigration can save the rural area”, said the Tyrolean scientist, “but it must balance itself with immigration from the metropolitan areas. For rural areas lack impulses from outside.” All studies on villages in Austria would show that the innovative initiatives do not come from the villages themselves. Fertilizing is therefore the exchange, not staying in their own bor-ders, so Beismann.

Alois Steinbocher from Kommunalkredit Austria and Mario Winkler (Hagelversicherung) warned against seeing the consequences of rural emigration only from an economic point of view. It also threatens a huge loss of culture. Also the landscape care is thre-ated, because the soil consumption by traffic, trade and trade is enormous and deprives the producers the employment basis.

Bertold Meyer, Mayor of Bollewick in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, underlined the importance of social and cultural offers to make ru-nal areas more attractive. His community had succeeded, despite initially negative forecast (population decline of minus 20 percent by 2030) to stop the rural depopulation. This is due not solely to tourism, attractive public connections and digitization - creative opportunities for development and functioning social networks can also make rural areas attractive.

Bulgarian Minister of Tourism Nikolka Angelkova said that tour-ism was the main option for the development of rural areas in Bulgaria. The sector is characterized by its high degree of effec-tiveness, because all important decisions in politics, administrati-on and the tourism industry are taken autonomously on site. On the part of the government in Sofia, they limit themselves to three main supports the provision of know-how, including through spe-cial schools for young people, access to EU co-operation grants and the creation of sensible tourist packages and incentives.

Niko Pelesi, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development in Albania outlined his government’s efforts to bundle the limited financial resources as effectively as possible. Around 100 ‘flagship villages’ are currently being developed among the approximately 3,000 villages in his country, which, in the sense of best-practice examples, can have an imitative character in terms of infrastruc-ture, economic growth and tourism development.

Pedrag Stromar, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Construc-tion and Regional Planning in Croatia, presented a whole packa-ge of measures, with which his country has already successfully fought against the exodus and has achieved an increase in salaries in rural areas. Because families tend to stay in the country when childcare is secured, Croatia has greatly expanded the opening hours of care facilities with EU funding. Much was also invested in the expansion of the student transport in order to enable children from rural areas to attend a secondary school in the metro-politan areas. In addition, the increase in housing subsidies for growing families in rural areas is becoming increasingly popular - the number of applications is steadily rising. An EU pilot project that will reduce energy costs for rural investors for some years is also having an impact, according to Stromar. According to surveys among young people, there is still room for improvement in the expansion of rail and digital networks.
IRE-Chairman Franz Schausberger in Arad/Romania

IRE conference on common Central European cultural heritage planned 2019 in Arad

Franz Schausberger met on 3rd of October 2018 with the president of the Arad County Council, Justin Cionca, for a detailed conversation. The main topics discussed were the intensification of cooperation between the Arad district and the Institute of the Regions of Europe (IRE). Arad has been a member of the IRE for many years, having held several events in Arad. It was agreed to hold a conference in Arad in 2019, which will focus on the restoration of the important cultural heritage and its tourist use in Arad and its neighbouring regions. It is about the common Central European heritage, especially from the time of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Arad County is planning closer cooperation with neighbouring regions in Hungary and Serbia, as well as neighbouring regions in Romania, as part of an “Acteursum” platform. However, this would require greater financial autonomy of the regions.

EU funding has enabled many important projects in Arad

Issues of European values, mobility within the EU, the education system, EU support for the regions, decentralization and much more were the focus of a European People’s Party (EPP) Local Dialogue in Arad City Hall (Romania) on the 5th of October 2018. The large numbers of students present were highly interested in the question of study opportunities in other EU countries and which education system would offer them the best career opportunities. Schausberger pointed out that the education system had to orient itself above all to the needs of the economy and administration of the region. There was particular interest in the ERASMUS program and internships abroad. The political representatives of the National Liberal Party, notably Gheorghe Falcă, Mayor of Arad, and Justin Cionca, president of Arad County Council, pointed out that decentralization is not only between the EU and its Member States, but also within the states must be done. Above all, a fair financial decentralization is important, since in Romania, the distribution of funds is currently taking place, especially on the part of political parties. However, Arad’s politicians highlighted the huge financial support from the EU funds that made possible the renovation of important cultural monuments and cultural facilities, such as the Concert Hall and Moise Nicoara College.

“Decentralization must be done also within the states. And above all, a fair financial decentralization is important.”

Justin Cionca, President of the Arad County Council

EU-Commissioner Johannes Hahn visited the IRE

The strengthening of regional structures and self-government in the municipalities and cities in the six enlargement countries in the Western Balkans is an important prerequisite for their rapprochement with the European Union, said Commissioner for Enlargement Johannes Hahn during a working visit to the Institute of the Regions of Europe (IRE) on 28th of August 2018. For the future implementation of EU policies, it is essential to have strong and well-resourced political and administrative institutions at regional and local level.

In the meeting, the EU Commissioner thanked the Institute of the Regions of Europe for the numerous activities, especially in the area of Eastern and South-eastern Europe. Above all, the many conferences and seminars in the Western Balkans contribute to improving the capacity of sub-national administrations.

Franz Schausberger pointed out that the Local Self-Government Charter provided a valuable frame of reference for the municipalities and cities, a corresponding Regional Self-Government Charter had been missing for years, but would be very helpful for the Western Balkan enlargement countries.

Referendum on the name of Macedonia

On 27th of July 2018 Franz Schausberger met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Macedonia, Nikola Dimitrov. The main topic of the meeting was the referendum on changing the name of Macedonia (Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia) to “North Macedonia”. 37 percent of eligible voters took part in the referendum, 94 percent of them were in favour of the name change. In the meantime the Macedonian parliament has confirmed the change of the name with majority.

Provincial Councilor Stefan Schnöll: Infrastructure and traffic are the main challenges for Smart Regions

Smart Regions is not only about solving the difficult traffic problems of the provincial capital and its surrounding communities, but also about mobility in the district capitals, such as Zell am See or St. Johann in Salzburg, explained the Salzburg provincial council Stefan Schnöll during a working visit to the Institute of the Regions of Europe on 18th of September 2018. The government member responsible for transport and infrastructure in the Salzburg state government emphasized that in his work he relied heavily on experts and best practice examples from other European regions. He therefore highly appreciates the work of the IRE because, at its expert conferences, it always endeavours to promote the exchange of knowledge and experience among the various regions on various essential topics in the regions.

IRE Chairman Franz Schausberger pointed out that it is precisely to promote the creation of good transport infrastructure and public transport in remote regions that are able to largely stem the outflow from rural peripheral areas which can be observed throughout Europe.
State Secretary Karoline Edtstadler paid a visit to the IRE on 25th of July 2018. The State Secretary and the Chairman of the IRE, former Governor Franz Schausberger, agreed that the issue of cyber security is an extremely important area of digitization across Europe.

Almost every week there are cyber attacks on banks. Edtstadler pointed out that the number of cyber attacks is skyrocketing and that in 2017, 80 percent of European companies have been affected by it in some form. It mainly affects small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which often do not have the opportunity to effectively prepare for such attacks.

Across Europe, better cross-border cooperation and a clear definition of what cybercrime is necessary. Therefore, State Secretary Edtstadler advocates that the cyber security package be completed this year during the Austrian EU Presidency.

Main Topic Cyber Security

Strongly centrally organized countries have much more problems with the migration of the population from rural areas and border areas as decentralized or federal states, said the Austrian Federal Minister of Education, Science and Research, Heinz Faßmann on the occasion of a visit to the Institute of the Regions of Europe on 17th of September 2018. Faßmann, himself University Professor of Applied Geography, Spatial Research and Regional Planning, has been confirmed by several scientific projects in the Danube region. He cited Serbia as a special example, a highly centralized country where migration from rural areas to the central region of Belgrade or even abroad is particularly serious. It shows - so Faßmann - that there is a direct connection between centralism and regional disparities. Decentralization and sensible dismantling of centralization measures in the periphery would therefore make sense in terms of regional policy, explained Minister Faßmann.

The chairman of the IRE, Franz Schausberger, pointed out that in a federal state, political leaders in the regions felt obliged to create liveable conditions for the people in the remote rural areas. After all, they wanted to be re-elected in the next regional elections. Key requirements included good transport links and an excellent supply of fast broadband connections.

Federal Minister Heinz Faßmann welcomed the numerous activities of the IRE on the subject of rural depopulation with the aim of providing solutions for particularly affected regions.
Within the framework of the European Week of Regions and Cities, AP Vojvodina hosted the traditional reception on 8th October 2018, whose guest was David McAllister, EU Parliament’s rapporteur, Franz Schausberger, Chairman of the CoR-Working Group Western Balkans, Ana Hrustanović, Ambassador of the Republic of Serbia to the European Union, moreover MEPs, representatives of EU institutions, a number of regions and cities, as well as the business community.

The hosts of the event, which took place at the Mission of the Republic of Serbia to the EU, were Đorđe Milićević, Vice-president of the Provincial Government, István Pásztor, President of the Assembly of AP Vojvodina, and Ognjen Bjelić, Provincial Minister for Regional Development, Interregional Cooperation and Local Self-Government. The event “Vojvodina, Great for Business, Great for Life” was organized by the European Affairs Fund of AP Vojvodina and the Vojvodina European Office in Brussels, with the support of the Vojvodina Development Agency.

Đorđe Milićević, Vice-president of the Provincial Government, emphasized that Vojvodina had made an excellent step, and that the presence of a large number of officials from European institutions testified that Serbia and Vojvodina were on the right track and that the reforms implemented in Serbia were successful. “I believe that we’ve managed to present all the potentials, of which there are a lot, in the best way possible, and tonight’s reception shows that the reputation of Serbia and its province of Vojvodina is high,” said Vice-president Milićević.

István Pásztor, President of the Assembly of AP Vojvodina, underlined that Vojvodina had a lot of friends among the European regions and that it was of common interest to build partnerships and trustworthy relationships. He added that common ideas related to joint projects allowed European regions to progress.

An agreement on cooperation between the Vojvodina Chamber of Commerce and the Walloon Union of Companies has been signed in Brussels at the Mission of the Republic of Serbia.

From left to right: Ognjen Bjelić (Provincial Minister for Regional Development), Franz Schausberger (IRE-Chairman) and István Pásztor (President of the Provincial Parliament Vojvodina)
State Secretary Edtstadler in Kosovo: Full support in the fight against corruption

The Secretary of State at the Ministry of the Interior, Karoline Edtstadler, visited, on 4th and 5th September 2018, together with the Special Adviser of the European Commission for the EU enlargement countries Franz Schausberger, Kosovo. The purpose of this working visit was to strengthen security and stability in the region and to assist the Republic of Kosovo in the fight against corruption. „Corruption can erode a state and jeopardize it in the long term. The fight against corruption is also crucial for Kosovo in terms of the EU integration process. Austria would like to help with their expertise in order to make further progress“, said Edtstadler in an interview with the Kosovar Minister of the Interior, Bejtush Gashi, as well as during her visit to the Agency for Combatting and Preventing Corruption.

The fight against corruption is also crucial for Kosovo in terms of the EU integration process. Austria would like to help with their expertise in order to make further progress. Edtstadler and Franz Schausberger also met Kosovo’s Deputy Prime Minister Enver Hoxha and discussed the current situation surrounding the negotiations between Serbia and Kosovo. Hoxha and Schausberger agreed that the ultimate goal must be to reach a legally binding, sustainable agreement between Serbia and Kosovo as soon as possible. This is crucial not only for the Western Balkans, but for peace throughout Europe.

As Kosovo Interior Minister Gashi emphasized, 90 percent of Kosovars who emigrated to Western Europe in 2014/15 have since returned to Kosovo. Cooperations with 22 countries and its own ‘returnees program’ would have contributed to that. A third of the Kosovars already live legally in Western Europe since the years after the war on the Western Balkans. Kosovo is also involved in the Task Force on the fight against smuggling.

Franz Schausberger, Deputy Minister of Interior Enver Hoxha and Austrian Ambassador Gernot Pfandler visited the monastery Gračanica. Left: One of the numerous frescoes inside the 14th century Gračanica Monastery.
CEO Andreas Klauser is a new member of the IRE-Economic Board

The Institute of the Regions of Europe and above all its IRE Chairman Franz Schausberger are pleased to announce that Andreas Klauser, CEO of Palfinger AG, joined the IRE-Economic Board.

Born in 1965, Andreas Klauser took over as CEO of Palfinger AG in June 2018. For many years Palfinger has been one of the world’s leading manufacturers of innovative lift solutions for use on commercial vehicles and in the maritime field. As a multinational group headquartered in Bergheim, Austria, the Palfinger Group, which has approx. 10,212 employees, generated total revenue of approx. EUR 1.471,1 million in 2017.

Plenary session of the European Committee of the Regions
Reduce European regulatory density

Franz Schausberger expressed the hope that “what was painstakingly worked out by the Task Force on Subsidiarity will not be diluted too much.” For us, the topic of shifting back many detail regulations from European areas of competence is particularly important to the Member States and their regions, in order to reduce excessive regulation.

The program of the Austrian EU Presidency was presented by Austria’s Minister for Women, Families and Youth, Juliane Bogner-Strauß. The representative of the Land Salzburg in the Committee of the Regions and IRE Chairman Franz Schausberger thanked the Austrian Minister for the clear and concise presentation, pointing out that there would have been easier times for an EU Presidency than at present. He supported Minister Bogner-Strauß’ statement that the motto of the Austrian Presidency “For a Europe that protects” is not only about migration issues, but is meant in a comprehensive sense, including economic and social security.

From left: Franz Schausberger (Representative of Land Salzburg), State Councillor Doris Kampus (Styria), Federal Minister Juliane Bogner-Strauß, State Councillor Barbara Ebinger-Miedl (Styria), Governor Peter Kaiser (Carinthia) and Municipal Councillor Peter Florianschütz (City of Vienna)

From left to right: Michael Schneider, Barbara Ebinger-Miedl, Reinhold Lopatka, Franz Schausberger und Michaela Petz-Michez

“United in diversity” should not only be a motto, it needs to be lived! Therefore, regional cooperation and exchange have to be more than pretty words.
It is essential for the credibility of the EU to rapidly and effectively implement the proposals of the EU’s ‘Subsidiarity’ Task Force. People do not want more than absolutely necessary to be decided in Brussels. The regions, cities and municipalities must play a more important role in the EU of the future, said the representative of the Land Salzburg in the CoR and IRE Chairman Franz Schausberger in the plenary session in Brussels on the 9th of October 2018.

In 2009, the Treaty of Lisbon formally strengthened the subsidiarity principle, as well as the regions and local authorities, but in reality the development has been quite different. Over the last ten years, many European countries have been centralized and not decentralized, the EU’s regulatory density and bureaucracy have increased enormously, and the opportunities created by the early warning system on the credibility of the EU: Quickly implement proposals from the Task Force on Subsidiarity!

Franz Schausberger with the Vice-President of Sicily, Gaetano Armia in the plenary session of the Committee of the Regions in Brussels. Both are also Vice Presidents of the EPP in the CoR

Now, the Task Force on Subsidiarity has been set up, involving the European Commission, national parliaments and the CoR. The European Parliament unreasonably refused to participate. Unfortunately, after presenting the report of the Task Force with concrete proposals to the President of the European Commission, in his annual speech to the European Union, he did not mention this topic at all. In order to give the EU more credibility, it was therefore urgently necessary to implement the proposals of the Task Force as quickly and concretely as possible, demanded Schausberger. It is not enough to confess to the principle of subsidiarity in Sunday speeches, without taking measures for concrete implementation.

Schausberger met the Deputy Prime Minister of Croatia, Predrag Štromar

IRE-Chairman Franz Schausberger visited on the 21st of August 2018 the Deputy Prime Minister of Croatia and Minister of Construction and Planning, Predrag Štromar. Schausberger brought the Croatian Vice-President a personal invitation to the Conference of European Regions and Cities in Salzburg. Štromar spoke on the subject of “rural depopulation”, which is an eminent problem especially in Croatia.

Predrag Štromar with Franz Schausberger
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