

AGORADA 2025: Regional Development in Challenging Times

DAY 1. – Tuesday 20 May 2025

Location: *Umbria Region Representation in Brussels, Rond Point Schuman, 14 - 1040 Bruxelles*

14.00 to 14.30 – Welcome and registration

14.30 – 14.40 Welcome Speech by EURADA President

- **Theo Follings** – EURADA president

14.40 to 15.30 – Session 1: Simplifying regional development policy to advance the EU competitiveness agenda.

The session will explore how EU regional policy can be further simplified and red tape reduced to better support the spirit and objectives of the new competitiveness agenda. In light of the ongoing debate on the future of Cohesion Policy and the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the discussion will address key questions: Why has simplification in regional policy remained elusive despite past efforts? What can be done differently this time to deliver real change? How can administrative processes be streamlined not just for authorities but also for beneficiaries? What measures are needed to avoid gold-plating at national and regional levels? And how can simplification go hand in hand with accountability and impact?

Speakers:

- **Antonella Sberna** – Vice President EP
- **Nicola De Michelis** – Deputy Director General DG REGIO
- **Thomas Wobben** – Director, European Committee of the Regions
- **Jorge Nunez Ferrer** – Director for Cohesion and EU Budget, CRPM - TBC
- **Theo Follings** – EURADA president

Moderator:

- **Francesco Molica** – EURADA Director

15.30 to 16.00 – Coffee break

16.00 to 17.30 – Session 2: Regional Development Agencies at a crossroads: rethinking their mission and impact

The session will reflect on the role and mandate of Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) in light of ongoing economic, technological, and societal transformations confronting Europe, and their implications for regions. Kicking off with the presentation of the EURADA-OECD survey on Development Agencies, the session will assess how RDAs across Europe may need to evolve over the next decade to remain effective and relevant. It will explore the challenges they face and the policy areas where their contribution could be most impactful — from innovation and the green transition to skills, entrepreneurship, and territorial cohesion. Key questions include: How can RDAs better align with future policy priorities? What governance and financing models will ensure their long-term relevance? How can they act as true intermediaries between EU policy goals and local needs? And what lessons can be drawn from international experiences to inspire reform and innovation within these institutions?

Presentation EURADA-OECD survey on Development Agencies:

- **Stephan Visser** – OECD (online)
- **Roberta Dall'Olio** – External Senior Consultant at EURADA

Panel Discussion: The role of Development Agencies in shaping the Post-27 Cohesion Policy

Speakers:

- **Vasile Asandei** – Director General ADR Nord Est and President of ROREG
- **Cristina Oyon** – FORO ADR
- **Ingrid Meijer** – ROM Netherland
- **Stephan Visser** – OECD (online)
- **Bryan Daniels** – IEDC (online)

Moderator:

- **Francesco Molica** – EURADA Director

DAY 2. – Wednesday 21 May 2025

Location: *ATELIER 29, Rue Jacques de Lalaing 29, 1000 Brussels*

8.30 to 9.00 – Welcome coffee

9.00 to 10.00 – Session 3: Preserving the Past, Powering the Future: Collaborative Local Action in Smart Heritage Cities

As cities embrace green and digital transitions, historical districts must balance innovation with cultural preservation. This panel will explore how local collaboration supports smart, sustainable development in heritage areas. Drawing on the experiences of Évora and Alkmaar in the POCITYF project, it will highlight energy-efficient solutions, digital tools, and inclusive governance. Key themes include smart retrofitting, digital heritage management, and citizen engagement. The session will showcase how cities can integrate innovation while safeguarding identity. It promotes local resilience through multi-stakeholder cooperation. Participants will gain insights into replicable, community-driven models for smart heritage cities.

Speakers:

- **Nuno Bilo and Daniel Valente** – Municipality of Evora
- **Martjin de Vries** – New Energy Coalition
- **Meis de Jongh** – Municipality of Alkmaar - TBC
- **Ghazal Etminan** – Fellow Cities and Scalable Cities Representative, Energy at Work

Moderator:

- **Jade Connoly** – EURADA

10.00 to 11.00 – Session 4: Regional development and emerging new technologies

The session will focus on the development and deployment of emerging technologies—such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing, blockchain, Industry 5.0, and advanced IP strategies. Beyond showcasing concrete projects on the ground, the discussion will reflect on how to strengthen the technological capabilities of regions over the long term. It will explore how regional development agencies and related institutions can support SMEs,

foster talent and digital skills, and create environments that enable collaboration, experimentation, and knowledge transfer. The session will highlight how regional development can serve as a powerful enabler of Europe's broader technological and industrial transformation.

Speakers:

- **Cristina Oyon** – SPRI
- **Anabela Marques Santos** – European Commission's JRC
- **EUIPO representative and Intellectual Property**
- **Giovanni Zazzerini** – INSME
- **Paolo Pratico** – Calabria Region - TBC

Moderator:

- **Andreea Leru** – ADR Nord Est

11.00 to 11.30 – Coffee break

11.30 to 13.00 – Session 5: Strategic autonomy starts locally: the regional dimension of a resilient Europe

The session will explore how regional actors are contributing to Europe's open strategic autonomy by enhancing resilience to trade disruptions and driving efforts in re-industrialisation, raw materials, energy and food security, and defence. While the EU debate on strategic autonomy has often been top-down and spatially blind, this session will bring forward a territorial lens, showing how local initiatives and regional ecosystems are shaping practical responses. Rather than being mere implementers of EU and national efforts, regional actors are emerging as proactive agents of resilience, capable of leveraging local assets, industrial strengths, and innovation networks. The discussion will highlight how strategic autonomy must be rooted in place-based approaches and will showcase concrete solutions on the ground that demonstrate the regional capacity to drive meaningful change.

Speakers:

- **Strategic autonomy/re-industrialisation** – DG GROW - TBC
- **Lucia Huertas** – INFO MURCIA
- **Daniel Janeiro** – EURADA Vice President
- **Jonathan Slow** – Scottish Enterprise
- **Isabel Paliotta** – European Environmental Bureau - TBC

Moderator:

- **EURADA member**

13.00 to 13.15 – Next steps and closing remarks

Next CmR events:

- **Valeria Tudisco** – Sviluppumbria
- **Mihaeil Leskovar** – RDO Ajdovscina

Closing Remarks

- **Cristina Oyon** – EURADA Vice-President
- **Francesco Molica** – EURADA Director

13.15 to 14.30 – Networking Lunch