

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
- **Theo Follings** – EURADA president
- **Júlio Teixeira** – Policy Officer, Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions

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
- **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
- **Bryan Daniels** – IEDC (Video Testimonial)

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
- **Martijn de Vries** – New Energy Coalition
- **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 explore how emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, and advanced IP strategies can drive regional innovation. It will present concrete projects and examine ways to strengthen technological capabilities over the long term. With an international perspective, the discussion will focus on supporting SMEs in digital transformation and building inclusive, globally connected innovation ecosystems. Topics include global best practices for SME digital adoption, tools to bridge gaps between

regions and research institutions, and cross-border collaboration for knowledge transfer. The role of IP will be highlighted as a key enabler, with insights on protecting and managing digital-related IP, integrating IP into regional strategies, and leveraging strong IP frameworks to enhance competitiveness and attract investment. The session will emphasise the role of regional development in advancing Europe's broader technological and industrial transformation.

Speakers:

- **Anabela Marques Santos** – European Commission, Joint Research Center
- **Giovanni Zazzerini** – INSME
- **Cristina Oyon** – SPRI
- **Arūnas Želvys** – Liaison Officer at the EUIPO Brussels

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 advancing efforts in re-industrialisation, logistics, energy, tariffs, and defence. While the EU debate on strategic autonomy has often been top-down and spatially blind, this session will introduce a territorial perspective, showing how local initiatives and regional ecosystems are shaping practical responses. Rather than merely implementing EU and national policies, regional actors are emerging as proactive agents of resilience, leveraging local assets, industrial strengths, and innovation networks. The discussion will underscore the need for strategic autonomy to be rooted in place-based approaches and will showcase concrete, on-the-ground solutions that demonstrate regions' capacity to drive meaningful change.

Speakers:

- **Andrea Conte** – European Commission, Joint Research Center
- **Lucia Huertas** – INFO MURCIA
- **Daniel Janeiro** – EURADA Vice President
- **Jonathan Slow** – Scottish Enterprise

Moderator:

- **Javier Adrian** – ACCIO

13.00 to 13.15 – Next steps and closing remarks

Next CmR events:

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

Closing Remarks

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

13.15 to 14.30 – Networking Lunch