

# THE BULLETIN

## From BELC to EU Local Councillors: Entering a new era

### 1. The network success in promoting EU values

Welcome to the last bulletin under the BELC flag! The European Commission is boosting the alliance with the local level through the establishment of a single EU Local Councillors network, together with the European Committee of the Regions and following the success of the BELC initiative. Launched in June 2022, BELC has brought together more than 1 100 locally elected politicians from across the EU, fostering collaboration and a shared commitment to the European project.

Through a range of training sessions, workshops, outreach campaigns and networking events, local leaders have gained essential EU-related resources, enabling them to exchange ideas, adopt best practices and develop ground-breaking solutions. In her second-term speech, EC President Ursula von der Leyen emphasised the importance of strengthening local engagement, calling for further expansion of this network of Councillors. In her mission letters to European Commissioners, the President encouraged them to rely *'on our network of EU Local Councillors, and to give more visibility to EU projects [...] on the ground'*.

As of 2025, *the new joint network of EU Local Councillors* will be fully operational. Members will receive a series of revamped products featuring a new visual identity, including a new newsletter, while keeping their privileged access to key EU products and services, website, etc.



**Ursula von der Leyen**  
President of the European Commission

### 2. An announcement at the EU Week of Regions and Cities

This year in October the **EU Week of Regions and Cities** was the occasion for the European Commission and the EU Committee of the Regions to announce the upcoming merger of their parallel networks into a unique one that will offer EU Local Councillors expanded opportunities for collaboration, learning and direct engagement with the EU institutions, supporting them in communicating the EU at local level.

This event, attended by BELC members in-person and online, was also the occasion for some of them to share their experience and best practices during the **'Empowering Communities. Communicating Europe: a promising alliance between the EU and the local level'** workshop. Thanks to those who took the floor for their enthusiasm and meaningful ideas!

*Networking coffee at the annual EWRC event*



### 3. BELC members' activity highlights

Over 1 200 communication activities by more than 500 BELC members taking the lead. You can see below a small selection of stories. For more information, please visit the Best Practices [website](#).

#### EU policies on the ground

##### Ilion municipality hosts planting event for bee conservation

**Greece's Ilion municipality** celebrated the 7th International Fascination of Plants Day on 31 May with a bee conservation planting event in collaboration with the University of the Peloponnese. Over 70 **primary school students** attended. 'A greener and more sustainable Europe is essential for future generations. Through our participation in the EU Mission "Adaptation to Climate Change" and the BELC network, we aim to raise public awareness and environmental consciousness', said Dimitrios Koukouvinos, president of the Ilion municipal council and BELC member.



Dimitrios Koukouvinos  
Municipality of Ilion

#### Responding to EU calls to action

##### Dubrovnik engaged in successful underwater cleanup

On 21 September, Mayor Mato Franković celebrated World Cleanup Day with an underwater cleanup in Zaton, as part of the **EU Beach Cleanup initiative**. Over half a tonne of waste from the seabed was removed. Supported by a letter of intent signed by him, the event highlighted Dubrovnik's efforts to maintain a cleaner marine environment and demonstrated effective community engagement in environmental protection.



Underwater cleanup in Dubrovnik  
organised by the municipality as part of  
the EU Beach Cleanup

#### Creating synergies for a common future

##### Forio hosts European local councillors' exchange

In early July, the **municipality of Forio** on the Italian island of Ischia hosted a European meeting for **Italian and French BELC members**, including Alexandre Mazin from Saint-Léonard-de-Noblat and host Giustina Mattera. Together with Christian Gsodam, principal adviser in the Strategic Communication and Foresight directorate in the EU External Action Service, they presented the BELC network in multiple languages. Over 250 participants, including local councillors, bishops and cultural associations, attended the meeting to foster collaboration and cultural exchange, with copies of the latest BELC newsletter distributed in each delegation's language.



(from left to right) Christian Gsodam, EU External Action Service;  
Alexandre Mazin, French BELC member from Saint-Léonard de  
Noblat and Giustina Mattera, Italian BELC member of Ischia.



## Putting the EU in the spotlight

### Engaging youth in political dialogue

On 4 June, just before the European elections, a panel discussion with party representatives took place at the [Werner-von-Siemens-Gymnasium in Gronau](#), Germany, moderated by local councillor and BELC member Susanne Reinhofer. Over **450 students** from four high schools attended, discussing topics such as the EU's Green Deal, sustainability, climate neutrality and the Ukraine war. The enthusiasm for allowing 16-year-olds to vote was evident among students and party representatives. The event received coverage from local newspapers and German free-to-air television network.



Susanne Reinhofer  
Municipality of Gronau

## Celebrating Europe

### Castelldefels goes blue for Europe Day

On 9 May, Castelldefels, Spain, celebrated Europe Day by adorning the city's castle and the letters of Castelldefels in Plaza de las Palmeras with the European flag, joining over 60 cities across Europe. The celebration also marked the start of

Senior Citizens Week with the 5th Castelldefels City Nordic Walking March, which was attended by a hundred seniors. Events included musical performances, readings and the European anthem, while a bench in Plaça Catalunya was painted in European flag colours by the AVIVA youth association.

## 4. A privileged access to EU services and products

Over the last 2 years and 5 months, BELC members had a privileged access to a wealth of EU products and services, which will of course remain under the remit of the new joint network of EU Local Councillors:



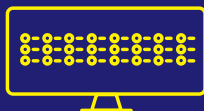
### 24 study visits to Brussels

involving almost 500 Councillors coming from 18 Member States



### 42 webinars

in various languages covering various EU topics of interest to the members, such as democracy and public participation, employment and social affairs, energy, environment and climate



### 1 multilingual online platform

[Futurium](#), where BELC members can find the info about all the above-mentioned products and services, as well as have the possibility to present themselves, share their own best practices, engage with their peers, etc



### 115 online resources

on 115 EU topics, policies and programmes

**The European Commission BELC Team wishes to thank all the BELC members for their precious contribution to bringing the EU closer to citizens! Let's stand ready to make this alliance between the EU and the local level stronger and contribute to the citizen awareness about what the EU is and does for their daily lives.**