

# Building Europe with Local Councillors

## THE BULLETIN

In the fourth issue of the Building Europe with Local Councillors (BELC) bulletin, we are delighted to share news about the remarkable growth of our network.

BELC has officially surpassed **1,000 members** in total – a testimony to the growing enthusiasm for enhancing local government’s role in communicating the EU goals.

Additionally, we have welcomed our first members from Sweden, and, with this development, we have achieved

another milestone: **BELC’s presence in all EU Member States**. This achievement reflects our shared commitment to encouraging collaboration and knowledge exchange among local councillors throughout Europe.

As you delve into this issue, expect insightful perspectives on the upcoming European elections, a rich array of events and webinars, and a series of best practices shared by our esteemed BELC members.

**1,000+**

BELC members

**500**

registrations on Futurium

**180**

regions covered

Economic opportunities in rural areas, including for young farmers



Opportunities linked to tourism, including eco-tourism



Access to (quality) education, including education for environmental sustainability and digitalisation



**BELC members’  
5 top-ranked  
EU topics of interest  
so far**

Valorisation of cultural heritage & traditions



Communication and dialogue with local stakeholders and citizens (participatory democracy)





# #EUElections2024

## All you need to know

The European elections are **one of the biggest democratic votes in the world**, and they are just around the corner. From 6 to 9 June 2024, EU voters will choose the **720 Members of the European Parliament** who will be their voice for the next 5 years. Once formed, the European Parliament elects the president of the European Commission, approves the EU budget, and **exercises its full legislative power** together with the Council of the EU.

## How to vote in your country

The election is governed by common EU rules, but with the possibility of specific national provisions and procedures (for instance, the size of the constituencies, voting age and election dates within a given time frame). You can check **how it works in your country** [here](#).

## Your voice counts, we count on you!

Spreading the word, encouraging others to vote, and sharing knowledge at local level is key to enhancing electoral participation. **How can you get involved?** Join the [together.eu platform](#).

The best way to motivate citizens to participate in the European elections is to showcase the tangible results the EU has achieved over the past five years and how these have improved their daily lives. To that end, **BELC members will soon receive materials** and narratives covering **EU deliveries** around ten topics, including an ambitious European Green Deal, Europe's Digital Decade, investing in Europe's prosperity, building a fairer and more inclusive Union. These resources will **empower councillors for effective engagement** in their community.

That's it in a nutshell. More details are available on Futurium, under [European Elections 2024](#).

# BELC members' best practices



During a community council meeting on 5 December 2023, **Bernard Devic**, a BELC member from **Le Grand**

**Narbonne in Occitanie, France**, hosted an important discussion about the upcoming European elections. The focus was on how various European networks – including the European Movement, the Houses of Europe, Ensemble.eu, Eurodesk Occitanie, and the Young Economic Chamber of Occitanie – can prepare for them.

The meeting was organised collaboratively by the Office of the European Parliament and the Representation of the European Commission in France, as well as the EUROPE DIRECT centre in Occitanie. Together with other BELC members, they are poised to play a pivotal role in communication activities aimed at EU citizens in the run-up to this year's European elections.

**EUROPE DIRECT Alentejo Central e Litoral, Portugal**, teamed up with BELC members Deputy Mayor **Tiago Salgueiro** from Vila Viçosa and Mayor **Marta Prates** from Reguengos de Monsaraz to create a series of impactful videos spotlighting their municipalities, their EU-related interests, and their involvement in the BELC network. Visit their [official Facebook page](#) to watch the videos.

**Marco Bittner**, BELC member from Calp in Spain, organised a lively discussion with students aged 12-16 around the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), titled **'Learning About the 2030 Agenda with Teenagers from Calp'**. The initiative aimed not only to raise awareness about our impact on the planet, but also to instil a European spirit in students.

Visit the brand-new [Best Practices](#) section on the [BELC website](#) to delve deeper into the remarkable initiatives in communicating the EU at local level undertaken by the BELC community!

## EU events and initiatives

### A promising collaboration unfolded during the EUROPE DIRECT Centres training in Bucharest.

On 30 and 31 January, BELC members **Andrei Iordanescu** from Romania and **Mojca Erjavec** from Slovenia were invited to participate for the first time in the EUROPE DIRECT centres training in **Bucharest**.

During the event, DG COMM Director **Richard Kuehnel** highlighted the pivotal role of BELC members as partners for EUROPE DIRECT centres, stating:

*A successful exercise was the one around the State of the Union screenings and more such initiatives should follow. BELC members should become the go-to persons when organising debates about Europe, especially in smaller municipalities.*

BELC members are all encouraged to reach out to **EUROPE DIRECT** centres, as well as other EU networks in their region.



Andrei Iordanescu, Romania and Mojca Erjavec, Slovenia

### Join the 10th European Summit of Regions and Cities

The **10th European Summit of Regions and Cities**, organised by the European Committee of the Regions, is taking place on 18 and 19 **March 2024**. Set against the charming backdrop of Mons, in Belgium, this summit is a great opportunity to be part of a unique assembly where local and regional elected representatives, including BELC members, converge to voice their opinions on the future of the EU.

## Strengthening the BELC community

### Thematic webinars

The second and third editions of the webinar **'Working together to bring the European elections close to people'** were held on 25 January and 15 February. These multilingual events hosted members from across the BELC and EUROPE DIRECT networks. Commission experts offered insights into available resources that can help communicate the elections effectively to the local communities, fostering a more active and democratic environment.

On 18 January, the European Commission team introduced the **revamped 'Have Your Say' portal**, along with the **new Citizens' Engagement Platform** and the **upcoming European Citizens' Panel**, in a highly informative online presentation. BELC and EUROPE DIRECT network members were equipped with essential tools to organise citizen engagement activities at local level.

On 12 February, the webinar on the **Energy Performance of Buildings Directive** was attended by more than 150

**members**, offering a great opportunity for local councillors to gain first-hand knowledge from EC experts on one of the most significant policies on the EU agenda.

More webinars about EU topics of local councillors' interest are regularly being organised, such as the **Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)** and its implementation at local level, and the **EU Pact on Migration and Asylum**, among others. Visit Futurium for more information.

### Welcome webinars

Recent webinars welcomed new BELC members in Italy, Spain, and across the EU. In February, 45 members from Italy, 46 from Spain, and 86 members spanning 18 EU countries were introduced to BELC's activities and services, such as study visits to Brussels, EU materials, support from the EUROPE DIRECT centres, Team Europe Direct, etc. Participants had the opportunity to talk with the EC Representations as well as with the BELC support team in their respective EU language.



## Visits to Brussels

Building on the success of the 2023 study visits, BELC members continue to make a strong impact in Brussels in 2024. The final visit of 2023, featuring members from Romania, took place in December. Following this, German members delved into the operations of EU institutions in January, while **the Commissioner for Democracy** convened with Croatian and Slovenian members.



German BELC members visit to Brussels



BELC members visit to Brussels from France, Belgium and the Netherlands

In February, DG Communication Director General **Dana Spinant** engaged with the French delegation, and a group of Spanish councillors were received by MEP **Domènec Ruiz Devesa** and **Jaume Duch Guillot**, Director General for Communication and Spokesperson of the European Parliament. Meanwhile, members from Italy, Slovakia, and Greece are getting ready for their forthcoming visit to Brussels in March and April.

## Members' corner

Join us in commemorating **Europe Day** on 9 May, a special celebration of peace and unity across the continent. This year, we extend a special invitation to BELC members to **take the lead in organising your own events**, fostering a spirit of community, and shared European identity in your region. Your local EUROPE DIRECT centres are invaluable partners in making these initiatives successful.

**Navigate this map** to discover your nearest centre and exciting collaboration opportunities!

### Futurium: introducing the 'Meet the BELC members' space

Explore our new space in Futurium, **Meet the BELC members**, where you can introduce yourself, share your vision, and foster meaningful connections with fellow BELC members.

If you haven't already done so, **register to Futurium here**.

As members of the network, the Futurium platform is your space! It's where you can find **EU materials on EU topics**, information about **EU-policy webinars** as well as where you can showcase **how you engage with EU topics within your constituency**.

Use your own language; the automatic translation will help you interact with other members.

If you have any questions, please visit the **Building Europe with Local Councillors** website, consult the **FAQs** or contact us at **info@eu-councillors.eu**



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