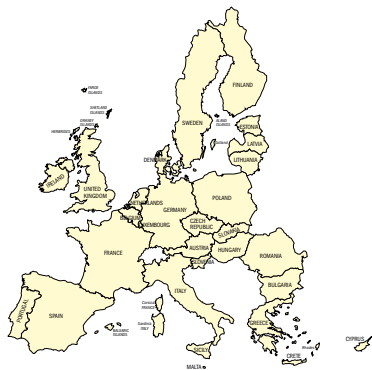


Heroes and villains

Richard Medic is looking for a new superhero to champion the subsidiarity cause



What do an American Pulitzer prize winning journalist, a scientist from New Zealand, a Turkish retail manager, a Greek language teacher and a Spanish would-be referee have in common?

Nothing at all, until they made the shortlist for what could well be the most unique job in Europe: campaign coordinator and superhero for the Assembly of European Regions' (AER) 'subsidiarity is a word' movement.

OK I admit it, the "most unique job in Europe" tag I pinched from my home country Australia's "best job in the world" campaign, which eventually led to a young Brit's selection as the new face of the Great Barrier Reef. I now

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hear they're looking to send over a few friends to keep him company. That's one thing I won't have to worry about once we select our winning 'superhero' – she or he will be leading a movement that has attracted thousands of supporters from across the world, so there are friends aplenty.

I advertised the superhero position just before my summer leave, and then sat back on an Adriatic banana lounge as dozens of applicants formulated their visions for the future of the 'subsidiarity is a word' movement.

One candidate suggested creating a counter-movement called "subsidiarity is NOT a word", complete with villainous puppets who would attempt to "dismantle and destroy" AER's movement by keeping decision making as far from citizens as possible. Another applicant sent in a video of himself as a so-called 'subsidiarity referee', handing red cards to European institutions and state authorities whose decisions failed to respect the subsidiarity principle.

Still another candidate submitted a rather puzzling video of a Hitler character taking his officers to task for not "spreading the s-word". Even more puzzling was the candidate's con-



Subsidiarity man jumps from the Mostar Old Bridge, Bosnia-Herzegovina



The subsidiarity queen pictured in Vienna, Austria, in August 2008



Subsidiarity man is taken away in an ambulance after jumping from the Mostar bridge

What is the 'subsidiarity is a word' movement?

AER's 'subsidiarity is a word' movement aims to secure recognition of the word in every major dictionary worldwide, along with spell-checkers in applications such as Microsoft Word and Gmail. The movement's leader, 'subsidiarity man', has been spreading the word for the past 18 months via a Facebook group, Twitter postings, traditional media and personal appearances in regions across Europe. YouTube videos feature the 'superhero' attempting to free climb a Brussels building, being mistakenly arrested by special operations police, cracking a vertebra after jumping from the Mostar Old Bridge, and setting a new world record for the most people chanting the word subsidiarity. AER's movement is now recruiting a new leader and superhero. Find out more at www.aer.eu

fused disbelief when I opined that a fascist, genocide-inflicting dictator would not make an ideal superhero for a movement promoting decentralised, ground-up decision making. "I'm sure some people would find it funny, just like when you got arrested as subsidiarity man," was the applicant's wide-eyed justification, as if my administrative arrest and Hitler were somehow ripped from the same comic cloth.

And then there's the Pulitzer prize-winning journalist who took a constructive criticism approach to his application. "I think the language the campaign is using will almost certainly doom it to failure. Why? Because it breaks one of the cardinal rules of marketing: Don't coin a word unless you have every good reason to believe it can succeed," he said. Buddy, of course you're spot on when you point out that the word is "hard to say", "not memorable", and "unappealing". But do you think I'm crazy and cruel enough to have coined such a six-syllable nasty myself?

So from this diverse cast of candidates we must choose my successor. Someone with a fresh approach, new ideas and a bit of spunk; someone who can help us to further decentralise and publicise our movement across the regions and local communities of wider Europe. Someone who understands that the principle of subsidiarity, as a cornerstone of our civilisation, should not be exiled from Europe's decision making psyche simply because the word coined to describe it lacks sex appeal.★



Richard Medic is spokesman for the Assembly of European Regions and the outgoing 'subsidiarity man'