



PRESS RELEASE

## **AER: 25 years promoting regionalism**

*From Subsidiarity to Success: Strong Regions for a Strong Europe*

Brussels (B), 14 June 2010.

Celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Assembly of European Regions (AER) has organised the conference “From Subsidiarity to Success: Strong Regions for a Strong Europe” in Brussels, together with the Region Bruxelles-Capitale (B). Among the speakers were **Jean-Luc Vanraes**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bruxelles-Capitale, MEP **Danuta Hübner**, **Mercedes Bresso**, President of the Committee of the Regions and **Jordi Pujol**, former AER President (1992-1996) and former President of Catalunya (1980-2003). Together with AER Members and representatives of European institutions, they analysed the regions’ evolution over the last 25 years, the contribution of EU policies to decentralisation, the role of the Regions in today’s Europe and the perspectives for regions in the coming years.

In the words of **Jordi Pujol** “*AER, who first advocated for the principle of subsidiarity, can be proud of the fact that this principle has now been integrated into European texts. In 1985-1986, there was a certain optimism for the potential of the regions. At this time, the national level enjoyed legitimacy, while Europe and a will for increased regionalism were also gaining ground. Regions’ competences have indeed increased since then, but regions must nonetheless remain vigilant today. In this time of economic and social crisis, Europe is debating its future. The choices Europe will make, could have either a positive or negative impact on the regions. As Europeans and regionalists, now is the time to join forces and make our voices heard.*”

Echoing Mr Pujol’s words, participants agreed that since the creation of the AER in 1985, the crucial role played by regions in any functioning democracy has become evident. As a major result, the new Lisbon Treaty has extended the subsidiarity principle to regional authorities, increasing the regions’ involvement in the European integration process. However, as highlighted by AER President **Michèle Sabban**, “*a change in political culture is needed to provide for the system of multilevel governance that Europe so badly needs.*”

The AER has spent a quarter of a century serving as the political voice of the regions in Europe and it certainly has no intention of stopping now. As stated President Sabban: “*Even though we have achieved a great deal, much remains to be done. Whether combating climate change, facilitating economic recovery or tackling social issues, we must work together – exchanging best practice and developing citizen-centred solutions - every step of the way. Regions are dynamic, and should play a full and active part in building the European future, which is so fragile today.*”

The AER presented its new regionalism report to illustrate development in this area in recent years, notably in relation to increased multilevel governance. Based on its 1996 declaration on regionalism, this report is a snapshot of the state of regional democracy in countries in Europe in 2010. This year's edition, enriched with interviews of regional politicians and experts, gives an overview of the 47 Member States of the Council of Europe.

AER Report on regionalism will be available Wednesday at: [www.aer.eu/main-issues/regional-democracy/aer-regionalism-report.html](http://www.aer.eu/main-issues/regional-democracy/aer-regionalism-report.html)

*The **Assembly of European Regions (AER – aer.eu)** is the largest independent network of regions in wider Europe. Bringing together more than 270 regions from 33 countries and 16 interregional organisations, AER is the political voice of its members and a forum for interregional co-operation.*

#### **AER Contacts**

Francine Huhardeaux  
Press & Communication Officer  
+33 3 88 22 74 49  
[f.huhardeaux@aer.eu](mailto:f.huhardeaux@aer.eu)

Valentina Guerra / Antonio Buscardini  
Press & Communication Assistants  
+33 3 88 22 74 33/44  
[v.guerra@aer.eu](mailto:v.guerra@aer.eu) - [a.buscardini@aer.eu](mailto:a.buscardini@aer.eu)

