



AER brings its expertise to the Albanian regions

Michèle Sabban highlights regions as important stakeholders for youth employment

Tirana (AL), 1st July 2010.

Michèle Sabban, AER President, came to Albania at the invitation of the United Nations Programme for Youth Employment and Migration (YEM).

Ms. Sabban was invited as a keynote speaker during a forum entitled “Youth Employment in Albania: Innovative approaches and financing mechanisms”. In this forum, policy makers, the private sector and partners discussed how innovative approaches – such as public-private partnership (PPP) – at the regional level could promote youth employment in Albania. The main objective of this event was to increase the awareness of the regions and public sector to improve their potential regarding youth employment in a country such as Albania, where fiscal decentralization is in its early stages. The event was attended by Presidents of all Albanian regions, as well as by stakeholders involved in the youth employment, such as the Albanian Ministers of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Youth and Home Affairs.

The visit of Ms. Sabban was the opportunity to officially launch the Regional Employment Fund of Shkodra in the presence of **Gjovalin Kolomba**, President of the Shkodra Regional Council. This fund is the first financial instrument in Albania enabling a regional administration to improve youth employment at the regional level: *“We know that employment is the first social integrator. The effort to create this fund is really crucial since almost 46% of Albanian citizens are under 25 years old. AER has always valued entrepreneurship and youth participation in European affairs, particularly through its mobility program Eurodyssey and Youth Regional Network (YRN)”* said Michèle Sabban.

Ms. Sabban stressed in the presence of all Albanian regional Presidents that AER would provide support and expertise for the future initiatives to give young people the place they deserve on the labour market. 11 out of 12 Albanian regions are currently members of AER: Berat, Dibër, Durrës, Elbasan, Gjirokastër, Korçë, Kukës, Lezhë, Shkodër, Tiranë and Vlore. *“The establishment of this fund may provide a compelling argument in favour of the creation of a permanent fund for employment and social issues – like the EU structural or social funds that exist in many countries around the world”*, she concluded.

Tomorrow the AER President will meet the President of the Republic of Albania, **Bamir Topi**. Together, they will discuss different regional models adopted in the AER member regions, as Albania is currently debating and reflecting about decentralisation. On this occasion Ms. Sabban will present to Mr. Topi the AER 2010 Regionalism Report.

*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.*

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