



From Subsidiarity to Success: Strong Regions for a Strong Europe

A conference organised in the frame of 25th Anniversary of AER

14 June 2010
Bruxelles - Capitale

The organiser:

The Assembly of European Regions (AER) 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. Further information under: www.aer.eu



Conference overview

The Assembly of European Regions (AER) 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.

Established in 1985, AER was a key player in the creation of the advisory bodies to the Council of Europe (Congress of Local and Regional Authorities) and the European Commission (Committee of the Regions).

How have Regions and AER evolved in the last 25 years? To what extent have EU policies contributed to the decentralization process in Europe? Does EU integration allow for strong Regions? Which role do Regions play in today's Europe? What are the perspectives for Regions in the coming years?

These questions will be at the heart of the conference "From Subsidiarity to Success: Strong Regions for a Strong Europe" organized at the occasion of AER's 25th Anniversary on 14 June in Brussels, at the kind invitation of Bruxelles-Capitale.

The entry into force of the new Lisbon Treaty, on 1st December 2009, with, in particular, the extension of the subsidiarity principle to regional authorities, sets the milestones for a stronger consideration and involvement of Regions into the European integration process. Already in the past, EU policies, with European cohesion policy on the first place, played a key role in the 'Europeanisation' of Regions and their strengthening. The territorial organisation of European countries, though, depends from their national policies. Not all Regions have the same potential and capacities to fully benefit from this favourable institutional framework at EU level, as the updated AER regionalism report, to be unveiled at the Conference, will show. At a wider European scale, the long-lasting negotiations on a Charter for Regional Autonomy at the Council of Europe, which led to the recent adoption of a non-binding reference-framework on regionalism in Utrecht, also show that there is still much to do to get stronger recognition of regions as institutional partners. At the same time, the various AER studies all prove that stronger Regions do better economically and that European growth therefore highly depends from the strengthening of regional authorities.

Whether strong or weak from an institutional point of view, though, the political reality and our experience at AER clearly proves that regions all participate in building today's Europe, being even often at the forefront in many key policy fields. To face climate change, for instance, Regions have not waited for the

Copenhagen summit to act, but have already been actively developing their green economy. Similarly, whilst many debates are going on at national level throughout Europe to revise the pension systems, European Regions have set up efficient strategies to tackle demographic change, support young people or deal with equal opportunities. Our Conference in Brussels will give us an opportunity to highlight some of the best practices developed by Regions of Europe in these fields.

To go on with their leadership role, Regions need to be better acknowledged as institutional partners, in particular by the national authorities. Our meeting in Brussels will be the occasion to think ahead, to see what can be expected in this respect in the medium term, and discuss how Regions could/ should look like in 25 years time.

Target public:

Our Conference will gather delegates from AER member Regions, together with academics and experts. Danuta Hübner, MEP and President of the regional policy Committee of the European Parliament, has been invited as guest speaker. We will also benefit from the support of the Committee of the Regions and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

For any questions on the content of the event, please contact:

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For questions on the practical aspects of the event, please contact:

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Registration forms available under:

<http://www.aer.eu/events/standing-committee-on-institutional-affairs/2010/aer-25th-anniversary-conference.html>

Draft programme

Welcome

09:00 Opening by Michèle Sabban, AER President
And Minister Vanraes, in charge of the budget, civil service and external relationships of Bruxelles-Capitale Region

From the past...

09:30 25 years of AER, 25 years of work for stronger Regions – An overview.
Guest speaker: Jordi Pujol, Former AER President

...to the present

PART I The institutional background

10:00 Europe of Regions

- Lisbon Treaty: Which role for Regions in the EU multilevel governance system? Intervention by Danuta Hübner, MEP, Chair of the Committee on Regional Development, European Parliament
- Reference-framework for regional democracy: The starting point towards a legally binding document? Intervention by Knud Andersen, Vice-President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Council of Europe

10:45 *Coffee break*

11:00 Regions in Europe

- Regionalisation in Europe today, where are we?
 - Intervention by Karl-Heinz Lambertz, First Minister of the Government of the German-speaking Community (B), member of the Committee of the Regions, President of Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)
 - Presentation of the AER updated report on regionalism, by Peter Straub, President of the Landtag of Baden-Württemberg, Vice-President of AER and President of AER Standing Committee of Institutional Affairs

PART II The political reality

11:45 Why do we need Regions? Challenges for European Regions today:
Presentation of AER studies, by Klaus Klipp, AER Secretary General

12:15 Moderated discussion among the speakers and the audience
Moderator: Pascal Goergen, Diplomatic representative of Bruxelles-Capitale to the European Union

- 13:00** *Lunch*
- 14:30** How are Regions building Europe?
- 14:30** Bruxelles-Capitale and the place of Regions under Belgian Presidency, by Anne Claes, Head of External Relations, Bruxelles-Capitale Region (B)
- 14:50** Strategies on demographic change: Best practices, by Martin Andreasson, Member of the Regional Executive Board, Västra-Götaland (S)
- 15:20** Regions' initiatives for young people, by Rui Jorge da Silva Leite de Bettencourt, Secretary General to the Eurodyssey Programme, Azores (P)
- 15:40** Equal opportunities: Regions at the forefront, by Monica Carlsson, Chair of the AER Standing Committee on Equal Opportunities and representative of Norrbotten (S)
- 16:00** *Coffee break*

...Into the future

- 16:30** How will the Committee of the Regions play its role of guardian of the subsidiarity principle and promoter of multi-level governance in Europe? Intervention by Mercedes Bresso, President of the Committee of the Regions
- 17:00** Regions in 25 years, AER in 25 years: Perspectives for the future – Closing speech by Michèle Sabban, AER President
- 17:30** *End of the Conference*

