

## Standing Committee on Institutional Affairs Key priorities and work plan 2012

Adopted at the AER General Assembly, Ponta Delgada (Azores), 24 November 2011

### Key priorities 2012

#### Priority 1: The multi-annual financial framework

A budget that allows regions, cities and local level to be an active part in the European integration project and play their role as key actors of the Europe 2020 Strategy will be of mutual benefit for all actors in the multi-level governance of Europe.

Proposed actions:

**Influence:** Approach relevant actors on national and European level to ensure that the forthcoming draft regulations which will detail the MFF proposals be based on the key principles of multilevel governance and partnership

**Knowledge:** collect, monitor, analyse and disseminate information on the different regulations and policies from a regional perspectives

**Action:** arrange seminar(s), meeting(s), training session(s) among decision makers on the basis of the knowledge generated.

#### Priority 2: The impact of the economic crisis on regional democracy, subsidiarity and decentralisation

In times of crisis, regional democracy, decentralisation and regionalisation can be a tool for growth and good management of resources. At the same time, the regional level can provide a political “closeness” to its citizens and keep an open dialogue. A relevant question to address is how does the economic crisis affect regionalisation, decentralisation in different parts of the EU?

Proposed actions:

**Influence:** Enhance awareness among national and EU decision-makers about the importance of a regional dimension in efforts to handle the crisis and its effects.

**Knowledge:** Increase knowledge by collecting information on the situation in different countries and sharing this information with relevant partners, stakeholders, and decision-makers.

**Action:** arrange seminar(s) on the development in different EU member countries. Suggestions

- A comparative approach in a North/South perspective between for ex. Spain, Italy, the UK and Sweden
- Show how regions can contribute, with examples, in creating growth, competitiveness and cohesion in the EU through good governance

#### Priority 3: Regionalisation and interregional cooperation in the EU, its Neighbours and Potential Member States

The promotion of regional democracy, regionalisation and decentralisation is vital for the further integration of the EU and its future enlargement (see AER Draft Position on the European Neighbourhood Policy). The development of interregional cooperation among regions from neighbouring countries also appears crucial to help maintain peace and dialogue throughout Europe.

Proposed actions:

**Influence:** Participate in arenas for discussion on democracy, subsidiarity, regionalisation and interregional cooperation, in particular in countries bordering the EU.

**Knowledge:** Promote discussions and dissemination of knowledge on regionalisation in current

member states/regions, but also in candidate and third countries. Collect and disseminate information on relevant tools and programmes for interregional cooperation, in particular towards regions from neighbouring countries. Update the AER report on regionalisation, when needed.

**Action:** co-arrange relevant seminars/forums in different candidate and third neighbouring countries as well as in Brussels. Actions can also include the possibilities of visits on a bilateral level between regions from candidate and third neighbouring countries to regions located in EU member states.

#### **Priority 4: European funding**

In 2010 and 2011, the Working Group on European Funding sought to maximise synergies and joint working opportunities with other areas of AER, and notably with the Task Force on Cohesion (from Committee 1). This has proven to be successful and beneficial. It is therefore proposed to continue with this approach. In 2012, the working group will follow up on three main objectives:

- Monitoring and influencing future EU funding programmes
- Understanding innovative EU financial instruments of increased importance post 2014 and influence their design for the benefit of the regions
- Building AER members general understanding of and capacity to access EU funding.

☞ For further details, in particular of proposed actions, please see separate work programme for the working group.

#### **Priority 5: Empowering regions as key actors of the Europe 2020 initiative**

In 2012, the Standing Committee will continue to organise, in cooperation with the other AER Committees, training academies to equip regional officers and decision-makers with tools and knowledge useful in their everyday work. An ad hoc Training Academy is planned in the context of the current territorial reform affecting Hungary, which implies that, from 2012, Hungarian counties will be responsible for regional development and able to manage EU funds.

Otherwise, the main focus of the training sessions for 2012 will be in line with the activities planned in the frame of the REALM project (which is co-financed in the frame of the European programme for education and lifelong learning). This project, run by Hampshire and which AER is involved in, foresees 4 half-day training seminars on Europe 2020 flagship initiatives in Brussels:

- Active ageing and European Platform against poverty
- Youth on the move and new skills for new jobs
- Innovation union and digital agenda
- Resource efficient Europe and an industrial policy for the globalisation era

☞ Further details on the project are available at the AER General Secretariat.

#### **Priority 6: Communicating about Europe**

The Standing Committee will pursue its activities aimed at informing the wider public about the EU and EU policies. Citizens Forums will be organised in cooperation with the other AER Committees, at the occasion of their plenary meetings.

### Calendar 2012

The table below entails the main events linked to the actions proposed for each priority above

and does not aim at being exhaustive. Meetings of the working group on funding, in particular, are not included, please refer to the separate work plan for the group.

When?	Where?	What?
January	Czech Republic	AER promotional event and Training Academy
January	Brussels (BE)	TA Europe 2020 (REALM) project
March	Brussels (BE)	TA Europe 2020 (REALM) project
Spring	Budapest (Hungary)	Training Academy on the management of Structural Funds following the territorial reform in Hungary
April	tbc	AER Bureau and Standing Committee Institutional Affairs meeting
Spring	Venues of the Committee meetings	Citizens' Fora at the occasion of AER Committees' plenary meetings
June	Brussels (BE)	TA Europe 2020 (REALM) project
Autumn	Venues of the Committee meetings	Citizens' Fora at the occasion of AER Committees' plenary meetings
October		AER Bureau and Standing Committee Institutional Affairs plenary meeting
October	Nikosia (Cyprus)	TA Cyprus project <sup>1</sup>
October	Brussels (BE)	TA Europe 2020 (REALM) project
November	tbc	AER General Assembly
December	Brussels (BE)	TA Cyprus project

<sup>1</sup> AER is involved in this project run by the Union of Municipalities of Cyprus, and which aims at disseminating information on EU funding. The Standing Committee is involved in the project both through its funding working group and through its Secretariat staff, who will co-organise 2 training sessions.