



## AER COMMITTEE 1 “ECONOMY AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT” PLENARY MEETING

16 March 2010  
Alba Iulia, Alba (RO)

### Draft minutes

#### Opening of the meeting

Committee 1 President Håkan SANDGREN (Jönköping-S) welcomed all participants and thanked Alba county council for their warm hospitality. The minutes from the previous Committee 1 plenary meeting (Sundsvall, Västernorrland, 22/09/2009) were unanimously adopted.

There was a change in the agenda, with one point added: on Per Inge BJERKNES' (Ostfold-N) demand, a point on regional airport was added in the second part of the agenda. After that change, the agenda was agreed upon unanimously.

#### Cohesion policy

Thomas ANDERSSON (Jämtland-S) gave a brief update on recent developments on cohesion policy, completed by Estelle DELANGLE (AER Secretariat), who explained in particular the principle of the technical workshops to be held in April, June and September 2010 and the AER Conference on cohesion policy to be held on 7<sup>th</sup> December in Bruxelles-Capitale. (B)

More information on these activities upon demand to Estelle DELANGLE ([e.delangle@aer.eu](mailto:e.delangle@aer.eu); +33 368 46 00 82) or on the following webpage: <http://www.aer.eu/main-issues/cohesion-regional-policy.html>

#### Economic Development and Innovation

Christina DIEGELMANN (AER Secretariat) gave an update on innovation award. The 2010 edition was launched on 22<sup>nd</sup> February. She underlined that it is not only about winning an award but above all communicate on regional best practices. Ad hoc promotional events are to be organised (BB, Tales etc.) to stimulate exchanges between previous years' winners and potential new applicants. Information on the Innovation award available under:

<http://www.aer.eu/main-issues/economic-development/aer-innovation-award.html>

Christina DIEGELMANN also informed Committee 1 members about the upcoming Training Academy on innovation. This idea came up during the last innovation award and

this event may take place during the summer. She called members to come up with their specific requests or needs.

Esko LOTVONEN (Lapland-FIN) had a question concerning the concept of innovation? Innovation can be understood very differently, in particular it is not only about scientific innovation. Practice-based innovation is important as well. AER should think about clarifying the concept of innovation, towards a broader concept, not only research oriented but also practical.

Christina DIEGELMANN also informed members that the topic of the next AER General Assembly will be about R&D contribution to regional wealth. She called for a discussion on how could the General Assembly could be a success. The strategy is to combine the three committees on this research theme. It is therefore necessary to get good contribution from a maximum number of regions. For example, a topic for discussion could be the lack of cooperation with SMEs at regional level.

Paul DIEMEL (AER) asked how the final topics would be articulated. And how this will be organised by the secretariat. Christina DIEGELMANN answered that the secretariat would invite a number of keynote speakers and would also make sure to propose good speakers from regions.

Esko LOTVONEN (Lapland-FIN) wondered how to combine the specific development issues with the R&D in the regions. Good practices are linked to local circumstances : combining the practical activities and R&D is the key for success. It is essential that it should be quite concrete with good examples from AER member regions and not remain too general.

Finally, Christina DIEGELMANN presented the AER upcoming activities on women entrepreneurship in cooperation with the Istanbul region. First a Conference on 25 March and a Training Academy in June in Istanbul. Håkan SANDGREN will be there for the inaugurating session. The concept behind this activity is also to mainstream equal opportunities in further topics usually dealt with in other committees than Committee 2. Information on the conference is available under:

<http://www.aer.eu/events/group-equal-opportunities/2010/women-entrepreneurship.html>

Information on the Training Academy is available under:

<http://www.aer.eu/events/aer-training-academy/2010/aer-training-academy-woman-entrepreneurship.html>

## AER and Europe 2020

### 1. EC consultation paper and AER first reaction

Christina DIEGELMANN presented the latest developments concerning the Europe 2020 strategy. She explained that the first contribution for the consultation held by the European Commission was produced in December 2009. The short deadline prevented the secretariat to have the paper formally approved by the Committee but a consultation was nevertheless carried out among AER members. The main position in this first paper was that this new strategy should avoid all mistakes of Lisbon, in particular regarding ownership: until the middle of the period, nobody really felt responsible for this strategy.

Most contribution to the Lisbon strategy was done at regional level: therefore, the future one should be based on a bottom-up approach and multi-level governance. AER also asks for a better alignment with budget and programmes. Cohesion policy is an interesting instrument, however has a goal of its own as set in the treaty and should keep it. Finally, rural development and agriculture were completely missing from the consultation paper. This position was communicated to the EC.

The position paper is available under:

<http://www.aer.eu/main-issues/economic-development/eu2020.html>

## 2. Outcome of the Conference organised with Eurochambers in Brussels in February 2010

The conference with Eurochambers was aiming at presenting the AER contribution to the consultation paper and to present good practices from regions to show how Lisbon was supported in the context of structural funds. Some examples of projects were given by Rhône-Alpes (F), Lombardia (I), or Baden-Württemberg (D). The Conference was well attended and got extensive press coverage. Eurochambers have a direct contact with SMEs, even better than regions themselves, that is why this is a good partnership for AER.

All information on this event available under:

<http://www.aer.eu/events/regional-development/2009/eu2020.html>

## 3. New EC communication, decision-making process to take place until final adoption in June

The latest Communication by the EC did not really take into account all the points made in the answer to the consultation, therefore the arguments used in the first position are still valid.

Christina DIEGELMANN explained the content of this new communication: the EC proposes three priorities (smart, sustainable and inclusive growth), with the aim of bringing more people into employment and an objective of 3% EU GDP invested in R&D. Some Member States have already reacted to this Communication. The EC paper is available under:

[http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm)

## 4. AER final contribution to the debate and steps to be taken in the coming weeks

Christina DIEGELMANN presented a paper for adoption: a mandate to Committee 1 presidency to elaborate a final position on the strategy proposed by the Commission, in order to lobby the European Parliament and the Council into a better text, taking into account the need for multi-level governance and territorial ownership of the strategy.

Esko LOTVONEN (Lapland-FIN) considered these points as acceptable. He highlighted two issues: the need of practice-based innovation activities and the need to use territorial resources at regional level. Regions should strongly position themselves in sectors where the EU has a potential to bypass other world economic weights.

The document was unanimously adopted. It is available for logged-in members only

under:

<http://www.aer.eu/en/events/regional-development/2010/albaiulia.html>

## Energy

Christina DIEGELMANN gave a short update on the AER Energy survey. 67 regions from 25 countries answered, which in itself shows that energy is a regional matter. 92% of regions that contributed stated that it is an important challenge. 75% have a strategy in place. The results will be presented at AER Energy Day on 28-29 April in Brussels, organised jointly with GE energy. The aim of the day is to gather regional decision-makers and energy experts from different European organisations and present the work carried out by AER all along the year 2009 and the perspectives for the future.

Information on the AER European Regions Energy Day available at:

<http://www.aer.eu/en/events/regional-development/2010/energy-day.html>

She also briefly explained that a study visit was being organized on 8 April in Munich (Bayern-D) in GE research centre. On that occasion, a meeting of the working group on energy and climate change will take place, to be chaired by Kenneth BACKGÅRD (Norrbotten-S).

Information on this visit and working group meeting available at:

<http://www.aer.eu/events/regional-development/2010/ge-studyvisit.html>

Kenneth BACKGÅRD took the floor to insist on the importance of taking part in this meeting.

## Regional airports

Paul DIEMEL explained that the working group started two years ago years ago with Harry DIJKSMA (Flevoland-NL) as a chairman, who recently stopped politics. There is therefore a need for a new politician to chair the group. For the group to be successful, at least 5 regions have to be active, make a programme and then inform Committee 1.

Per Inge BJERKNES (Ostfold-N) stated that one of the main question to be raised for both large and smaller airports was how regional airports should be included in regional planning systems. He declared to support this working group and hoped other regions would wish to participate. He finally suggested to chair the group.

For more information on the group on regional airports, please contact Christina DIEGELMANN: [c.diegelmann@aer.eu](mailto:c.diegelmann@aer.eu)

## European projects in which AER is involved

Justyna PODRALSKA (AER secretariat) gave a short update on the INTERREG IVC project called More4NRG to which AER is a partner. She briefly reminded AER Committee 1 members of the objectives of the project and provided information on the latest activities. More information on More4NRG available at: <http://www.more4nrg.eu/>

Estelle DELANGLE presented the new INTERREG IVC project to which AER is a partner: ECREIN+. This network (European Clusters and Regions for Eco-investments Network)

was created in 2006 to propose innovative financial instruments and support eco-innovation and SMEs at regional level. It exposed a lack of knowledge, adapted tools and coordination between public and private sectors, and as a consequence, a difficulty for financiers to invest in this specific sector.

The main objective of ECREIN + is develop tools and actions to implement innovative regional policies supporting eco-innovation and eco-businesses, easily adaptable to every European Region.

More information on ECREIN+ is available upon demand to Estelle DELANGLE ([e.delangle@aer.eu](mailto:e.delangle@aer.eu); +33 368 46 00 82)

### Rural development

Estelle DELANGLE explained that the region of Oppland had left the chairmanship of the group and it is now necessary to give a new impulse to the group. This will be done in the course of May, with a meeting of rural development experts, most probably in Brussels. Information on the proposed calendar of activities for the group will follow in the coming weeks.

Interested members should contact Estelle DELANGLE ([e.delangle@aer.eu](mailto:e.delangle@aer.eu); +33 368 46 00 82)

### Sustainable tourism

Estelle DELANGLE briefly presented the draft AER answer to the EC discussion document on “A new framework for tourism policy in the EU”. The document was unanimously adopted and can be downloaded under:

<http://www.aer.eu/main-issues/tourism.html>

Håkan SANDGREN reported on the outcome of the working group on tourism which took place in the morning. He explained that the secretariat would send out a questionnaire to assess the interest of members in the field of sustainable tourism, in order to decide whether a permanent working group should remain or if there should only be ad hoc meetings when an important issue comes onto the agenda. The full minutes of the meeting of the working group on social and sustainable tourism are available to logged-in members only under: <http://www.aer.eu/main-issues/tourism.html>

### Miscellaneous

Håkan SANDGREN announced the upcoming elections in Committee 1 presidium, to be held in the next plenary meeting in October. He presented the procedure as laid down in the newly revised AER statutes. He precised that the deadline for submitting candidatures was 1<sup>st</sup> September 2010. An information note is available to logged-in members only under:

[http://www.aer.eu/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Commissions/RegionalPolicies/EventsAndMeetings/2010/Alba/Plenary/21-Election-note.pdf](http://www.aer.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Commissions/RegionalPolicies/EventsAndMeetings/2010/Alba/Plenary/21-Election-note.pdf)

Sanna SARROMAA (Oppland-N) remarked that it is Committee 1 members who should be electing their president themselves, and not the AER Bureau.

Håkan SANDGREN answered that this rule was stated in the statutes who were revised

last year in Belfort (Franche-Comté-F), by all AER members gathered in an Extraordinary General Assembly.

Håkan SANDGREN announced the next meeting of the Standing Committee on “Monitoring and Evaluation”, to be held on 26 April in Brussels. He explained that could not personally attend and encouraged other members of Committee 1 to attend the meeting<sup>1</sup>. Information on this meeting is available by contacting Sandrine VINÇON ([s.vincon@aer.eu](mailto:s.vincon@aer.eu); +33 (0)3 88 22 74 42)

Finally, the next AER General Assembly, to be held in Istanbul (TR) on 10-12 November, was announced.

*Håkan SANDGREN closed the meeting warmly thanking the hosting region for its hospitality, the AER secretariat for organising the meeting and the interpreters for their good work all along the meeting.*

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<sup>1</sup> Note by the secretariat: Meanwhile, the date was changed and the meeting will take place on 28 April. AER Committee 1 President Håkan SANDGREN will therefore be able to attend the meeting.