



AER Committee 1 Key achievements in 2011

Cohesion policy

2011 has been a crucial year for future cohesion policy. After publishing its White Paper on the Future Cohesion Policy, AER answered the EC consultation on the 5th cohesion report. In April, the AER Bureau adopted a statement on transition regions, supporting the creation of a new category, provided that it allows for an equitable distribution of resources among all regions. AER acknowledges that the proposals were taken up in the draft regulations and will remain vigilant that the level of funding does not decrease in the course of 2012 negotiations.

In this reform context, AER believes that united we stand, divided we fall. That is why AER organised a high level summit of regions and cities in St. Pölten (Niederösterreich-A) where a joint declaration of 11 interregional organisations was handed over to Commissioner Hahn and to the Polish Minister of Regional Development.

Finally, aware of a general tendency to increase the use of new financial instruments, AER examined the stakes for regions. After a 9 months investigation, exchange and training among AER members, a report was issued in December, outlining the advantages and shortfalls of these new instruments for European regions.

Innovation and Economic Development

With the current financial and economic crisis, innovation and economy are more than ever at the heart of regional concerns. The newly created working group on Entrepreneurship and Innovation organised two SWOT analyses in Crete and Istanbul to help these regions elaborate sustainable entrepreneurship policies. The AER Regional Innovation Award 2011, was granted to Wielkopolska (PL) for its project "Promoter of Innovation", dedicated to supporting young entrepreneurs at a very early stage of their business' development.

The working group on Regional airports and the region of Østfold (N) commissioned a study on the role of regional airports in the future transportation system to assist regions in establishing long-term perspectives. The group also visited the Bulgarian region of Ruse to share advice on how to develop its airport and attract investors.

Lastly, AER continued to ensure the dissemination of the ECREIN+ INTERREG IVC project, where 12 regions and organisations share experiences and knowledge to support eco-innovation and make recommendations for improving the legal frameworks at all governance levels.

Environment: climate change and energy

The aim of the 2nd European Regions Energy Day “Investment in sustainable energy – Regions as motors for growth and innovation” was to demonstrate the success of both territorial action and public-private cooperation in the face of the energy crisis. A survey on regional investment in energy projects was published, with the aim to analyse how regional authorities handle energy investments. The report highlights the incentives that are used to increase business involvement in energy projects as well as different factors that hamper or facilitate the deployment of green energy projects in regions. Lastly, 2011 sees the closure of the MORE4NRG project. After three years of collaboration, partners can proudly showcase the results of 5 peer reviews and many good practice transfers on green energy and climate change.

Rural development and CAP

Through many briefings, meetings and participation to consultations, AER members voiced their concerns, opinions and recommendations in view of the CAP reform, reaffirming in particular the importance of taking an integrated territorial approach to rural development. A seminar was also organised in order to assess the impact of CAP on European non-EU regions and the members of the working group on agriculture and rural development met and discussed the legislative proposals for future CAP and elaborated a first draft reaction.

Tourism

After three years of on-going activities and a full agenda, PRESERVE and its 13 partners close their actions on sustainable tourism. Through the final conference and publications, partners proudly share the results of their 6 peer reviews and action plans as well as a wide series of good practices identified.

