



## VISIT OF AER DELEGATION TO GEORGIA 15 – 20 June 08

### BACKGROUND AND SHORT SUMMARY

The Secretary General of the AER had been asked for a long time by Georgian member regions to pay a visit to their country. In March 2008 the AER secretariat was again contacted on behalf of the Governor of Shida Kartli to visit his region in order to establish personal contacts and to explore cooperation possibilities. The AER Secretariat welcomed the invitation and decided to go for the visit to Georgia in June 2008 which included a member region as well as a journalist from the German weekly 'Focus'. The visit consisted of a series of meetings with representatives from the national, regional and local level as well as with representatives of international organisations such as the UNDP and the German development organisation, GTZ.

### AIMS OF VISIT:

- To follow up the invitation of the governor of Shida Kartli
- To visit other AER members
- To make Georgian member regions aware of the various cooperation possibilities they have within the AER network
- To establish personal contacts with regional representatives in Georgia
- To get a better insight into the situation of regional governance in Georgia
- To get other regions in Georgia interested in the AER network

### OUTCOME OF THE VISIT:

#### General:

- Close relationships with politicians and other representatives from the regions of Shida Kartli and Adjara
- Awareness raising among Georgian regional, national and local representatives about work and role of the AER
- Extensive media coverage in Georgian national and local TV+Press
- Articles in the German weekly 'Focus'
- Discussion about future common projects
- Deeper understanding of the political situation in Georgia
- Other regions in Georgia became aware of the role and work of the AER

#### Membership

- The Georgian regions of Guria and Kakheti applied for full membership (have had observer status before)
- Kvemo Kartli and Tbilisi applied for membership
- Georgian AER member regions have selected their representatives for the AER bureau

**Visits to AER meetings by Georgian members:**

- Representatives from Adjara, Guria and Imereti participated the AER General Assembly in Tampere in November 2008
- A Georgian delegation comprising representatives from Tbilisi and Adjara visited in the beginning of December 2008 the AER Brussels office
- The region Guria has sent young people from their youth council to Hessen, (Germany) to participate in the AER regional youth network

**Involvement in AER projects:**

- Adjara started to participate in the AER Emergency planning project

**Planned future activities:**

- AER is planning a coordination meeting with all AER member regions from Georgia in order to discuss internal cooperation and communication, possible projects, as well as a position towards the new Eastern Partnership instrument of the European Commission (near summer 2009)

**VISIT**

15 June 08 - Gori, Shida Kartli:

**Conference: “The Region’s Opportunities and potential” at Gori University**

Klaus Klipp, AER Secretary General, and Wolfgang Platzer, Expert on interregional cooperation (Carinthia) gave key note speeches on the role of the AER as a platform for interregional cooperation in Europe and provided examples of AER's work on developing the tourism potential in its member regions.

16 June 2008 - Tbilisi:

**Dr. Gabriele BOEHRINGER, Regional director of the GTZ office in Tbilisi and Knut GERBER, project manager at the GTZ (the German Development Agency)**

Exchange of information on GTZ's work in Georgia and on work of AER in area of regional cooperation. GTZ's main activities are development of decentralisation strategies (in cooperation with UNDP) and local community development. AER representatives informed about the AER network of experts on regionalisation and cooperation possibilities.

**David TKESHELASHVILI, State Minister for Regional Affairs**

Official meeting with the State Minister for Regional Affairs. Discussion about current status of territorial decentralisation in Georgia and the challenges posed to this development by the unresolved conflicts in Abkhazia and South-Ossetia. AER representatives introduced AER's role and know-how in the field of decentralisation and territorial cooperation and offered its cooperation.

**Matilda DIMOVSKA, UNDP Assistant Resident Representative Tbilisi and Natia NATSVUKISHVILI, UNDP Governance team leader.**

Further discussions on the policy developments, implementation and challenges of decentralisation strategies in Georgia with UNDP representatives. (UNDP has been a main actor in the development of such strategies). Remaining challenges according to UNDP: undefined role of the governor; question of financial decentralisation. AER representative introduced AER platform and offered to work together with the UNDP on the subject of decentralisation (exchange of experts, organisation of seminars).

17 June 08, Kurda, South Ossetia:

**Dimitri SANAKOEVI, Head of the temporary administration of South Ossetia.**

Official meeting with the Head of the temporary administration of South-Ossetia. Detailed information on the current administrative and political situation, challenges and needs of the local population in South-Ossetia by Mr. Sanakoevi. Expression of interest to cooperate with partners from the EU, in particular in area of conflict resolution/management and educational exchange programmes.

17 June 08, Batumi, Adjara:

**Official dinner of AER delegation with the Mikheil MAKHARADZE, Chairman of the Supreme Council of Adjarian Autonomous Republic**

18 June 08, Batumi, Adjara:

**Levan VARSHALOMIDZE, Head of Adjara Supreme Council**

Official meeting with the Head of Adjara Subpreme council. Discussion and exchange of information on current economic and social situation in Adjara and possible fields of cooperation within the AER network. One of the main challenges: lack of trained staff. Expressed wish for closer cooperation within the framework of the Erasmus Mundus and the Black Sea initiative. AER can play a key role as facilitator.

19 June 08, Gori, Shida Kartli

**On the way back to Tbilisi visit of archeological sites in Shida Kartli region. Final dinner with the representatives of Shida Kartli region.**

20 June 08 - Signaghi, Kakheti

**Visit to Kakheti region**

Visit of the small town of Signaghi and meeting with representative in charge of culture. Signaghi represents a major investment project of the Georgian government in terms of public private partnership. It has been fully renovated and serves as a flagship project of tourism development in Georgia and as an important tourism attraction for the whole country.

**Departure**