



AER COMMITTEE 1 ECONOMY & REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON CLIMATE CHANGE

28 October 2008
Linz, Upper Austria (A)

DRAFT MINUTES

Agenda items 1 to 3:

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of the last meeting's minutes
3. Adoption of the draft agenda

The meeting was opened by Matthijs Van Miltenburg, Senior Advisor on International Affairs of the Province of Noord-Brabant, on behalf of Anne-Marie Moons, chairman of the working group on climate change. Professional obligations forced Ms Moons to stay away from the meeting.

The minutes of the last meeting of the working group (28 February 2008, Lillehammer, Oppland) were adopted unanimously.

The draft agenda of the meeting was adopted unanimously as well.

Agenda item 4:

Update about the EC White Paper on adaptation to Climate change

Karel Giesen, policy advisor of the Province of Noord-Brabant communicated the main conclusions of the consultation conducted in the last months by the European Commission on the Green Paper on Climate Change. As Mr Giesen said, all the parties taking part in that debate had unanimously agreed that climate change policies should involve both, mitigation and adaptation measures. Nevertheless, setting up accurate mitigation and adaptation strategies would require increased research investment to produce more reliable data and to elaborate good risk assessment tools and methodology.

Mr Giesen reminded that the next step in the EU debate over global warming would be the White Paper on adaptation to climate change for which the European Commission had identified three cross cutting issues, namely land use, biodiversity and water. Mr Giesen spoke of his worries about the content of that document. He mentioned that a more ideological conflict would likely rise between Southern countries and other EU member states in what concerns the structure of the White Paper. While the first group of countries urged the European Commission to set up more binding regulations, the second one was in favour of softer provisions including the exchange of best practices.

Members of the working group decided to meet in Brussels to share their views on the White Paper in order to adopt common guidelines. Their remarks will help the AER secretariat draft its first reaction to the document. Gustav Malmqvist from the region of Vasternorrland suggested that a representative of the SALAR, Swedish Association of

Local Authorities and Regions could take part in the meeting as well in order to provide expert input to the discussion.

Gustav Malmqvist also proposed to organise the meeting at the same time as the Sustainable Energy Week that would take place in January/February 2009. This would allow some of the members of the working group to participate in two different events at the same time, and would thus contribute to reducing the overall air travel carbon footprint (that question was raised during the plenary session).

Moreover, Estelle Delangle pointed out that the AER group on emergency planning, working with the Committee 2, should get involved in the preparation of an AER position towards White paper.

The meeting will likely be rescheduled to coincide with the White's Paper publication, the date of which remained unknown at the time of the meeting.

Agenda item 5:

AER Conference on climate change, Limousin, 30-31 March 2009

Estelle Delangle - AER Committee 1 secretariat - presented to all participants an updated version of the conference agenda. She explained that the event in Limousin will be divided into two parts. The plenary session will give a somewhat theoretical overview of the subject, which will be further complemented with a more practical training during two smaller workshops' session. The workshops will touch upon issues of spatial planning, vulnerability assessment, risk prevention, forest biodiversity and water management. The event will be prepared together with the AER group on emergency planning.

Ms Delangle reminded that the proposed agenda was subjected to possible modifications. She therefore strongly encouraged all participants to make their own input to the conference. She said that their remarks would help AER better understand their expectations and allow to adjust the conference programme accordingly. Participants were asked to submit their comments and to propose potential speakers by the end of January at the latest.

Gustav Malmqvist from the Swedish region of Västernorrland proposed to have a closer look at the conference agenda during the meeting on the EC White Paper in Brussels. Ms Delangle raised however concern about the timelines needed to organise such an immense event. She therefore asked the members to send their comments to the AER secretariat as soon as possible.

Agenda item 6:

AER-UNDP North-South peer reviews on climate change

Justyna Podralska - AER Committee 1 secretariat - briefly described the main objectives and intended results of the AER-UNDP partnership. She reminded that programme partners would support regions in developing and transition countries in the following areas:

- Exchange of know-how and good practices in the field of climate change

- Appropriate technical and methodological assistance in developing Integrated Territorial Climate Plan (ITCP)
- Identification of appropriate financial tools and resources to help regions carry out their ITCPs
- Dissemination of information on existing conventions on climate change

The UNDP project will be officially launched during the World Summit of Regions on 29 and 30 October 2008 in Saint Malo, France. The AER members should be informed of its outcomes shortly after the meeting.

Agenda item 7:

Update about the AER application for Interreg IVC funding of the MORE4NRG project

This point was not discussed during the meeting.

Agenda item 8:

Presentation of the best practices in the field of energy in Upper-Austria, by Harald Huber, Climate protection officer, Upper Austria

Mr Huber outlined the main features of the sustainable energy strategy developed in the region of Upper Austria over the past years. He reminded to all participants that Austria is one of the world leaders among the countries that base their energy supply primarily on environmental friendly energy sources. At European level, Austria is ranking third after Sweden and Finland in renewable energy consumption.

Upper Austria, one of country's nine federal states, can be considered as a pioneer in the use of clean and sustainable energy resources. Mr Huber explained that success had been a result of the visionary policy conducted by regional authorities over the last two decades.

Harald Huber introduced various regulations that had been passed in the Upper Austria region in the recent time, namely the Upper Austrian Energy Action plan for 1994 – 2000 and the "Energy 21 Action Plan" for the period 2000 - 2010. As Mr Huber emphasised, the Upper Austrian regulation had been far more sophisticated than any EU regulation at that time. He also explained that during the first regulation phase, focus had been put on legislative measures and financial incentives, while the second phase had more concentrated on information and education. The main objective of all those initiatives was to reduce high regional dependence on a heavy industry and fossil fuels.

In the transport sector a series of financial and fiscal measures were introduced, namely toll for motorways, taxes on oil, motor vehicles and fuel consumption in order to force people to abandon cars for more environment-friendly transportation systems. The Upper Austria was also first to adopt some of the EU measures such as for example labelling for domestic appliances. The region also quickly integrated the emissions trading scheme from the Kyoto protocol and the EU emissions trading directive of 2005.

Mr Huber also described briefly the organisation and functioning of the Upper Austrian energy cluster. As he emphasised, in 2006 alone, the cluster companies invested more than 100 million euros in new infrastructure and created more than 600 new jobs. The cluster association also cooperates at international level with some 23 clusters from abroad. Also neighbouring regions are involved into cluster development, comprising partner companies for example in the Czech Republic.

Agenda item 9:

Further activities to come in the field of energy and climate change

Justyna Podralska invited all participants to take part in the Breakfast Briefing on EU energy policies scheduled for 27 November 2008 in Brussels. She introduced briefly main topics of the meeting, which would focus mainly on energy issues. The administrators from the European Commission and Environment Agencies will participate in the event to share with participants their knowledge on how to promote energy efficiency and renewable energy strategies the regions.

End of the meeting

The next meeting of the working group is scheduled for 30 and 31 March in Limousin (F). Another meeting could take place beforehand, in order to prepare the AER draft answer to the EC White paper on Climate change adaptation. The date still remains to be proposed.

List of participants

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