

the plenary sessions of the 3 committees to raise awareness about the SCEO and its activities and to identify areas of common interest where cooperation can be established.

Equal Opportunity issues should be addressed across the entire AER. SCEO will therefore liaise with the other AER Committees to contribute speakers on the equal opportunities perspective for Committee meetings, where appropriate.

(ii) New SCEO Roadmap 2011 – 2016

SCEO member regions will be invited to draft a 5-year Roadmap on Equal Opportunities for European Regions to be presented to the AER General Assembly in November 2011. This Roadmap will stress which are the priorities AER regions should work on for the next five years, in the same way the priorities expressed in Kiruna in March 2006 guided the work of the former Observatory on Gender Issues for the subsequent years.

(iii) Comparison of regional competences in the field of equal opportunities

European Regions have been granted different competencies by their central states, and their latitude for action can vary greatly. When it comes to promoting equal opportunities, not all regions are equal: some face legal barriers, others lack political will and most are short of the necessary funding. However all can contribute to the creation of a fairer society, acting through their areas of competence (healthcare, territorial planning,...).

In order to give the adequate information and the most helpful ideas to our members, and to allow SCEO to initiate the right cooperation projects, SCEO proposes to launch a comparative analysis of regional competences in the field of equal opportunities and how they are used. It will also list those other competences through which some regions promote equal opportunities (e.g. make sure that companies hired by public administrations to perform any kind of business do indeed apply the principle of equal opportunities for all).

This study is to be published for the benefit of AER members and future work of the Standing Committee. A one-day event in Reggio di Calabria, IT, will present its results to members and allow them to give additional examples in order to proceed to the final publication.

(iv) Education as a tool for promoting equal opportunities for all and fighting prejudice:

SCEO will cooperate with AER Committee 3 (Culture, Education and Youth) and the AER Youth Regional Network in order to organize a conference or a series of conferences on the theme of education, with a particular focus on how education can, for instance, prevent violence against women and promotes gender equality. This now becomes all the more important as education is also crucial when it comes to explaining differences, soothing fear and preventing racism or homophobia.

Furthermore, AER has already emphasized the significance of the role – negative or positive – played by education from a very young age in the molding of mentalities and the promotion of the role of women in professional life, and recognized the importance of the involvement of men in equality projects.

This conference would inform the regions on what has already been done across Europe in this area and what new initiatives regions can implement. It could also be an opportunity to identify regions interested in setting up a regional program to raise awareness among men on equal opportunities, especially in regional administrations.

(v) Exchange of experience and best practices

SCEO is a place where politicians and civil servants actively involved in the improvement of equal opportunities for all women and all men can meet and exchange experience and best practices. Ideas and projects that proved to be successful in one European region can be implemented in another region. Participants can also learn from problems and pitfalls encountered by other regions while implementing a given idea or project, and therefore save time and money later on when themselves tackling the same issues.

Therefore, SCEO members will always be offered the opportunity to showcase regional policies, initiatives or projects at SCEO conferences and seminars.

The General Secretariat will monitor European funding programs, inform member regions about possible funding opportunities and facilitate the creation of partnerships and cooperation projects in the field of equal opportunities.

(vi) European Institute for Gender Equality (Vilnius).

The long awaited European Institute for Gender Equality finally opened its doors in Vilnius on June 21, 2010: <http://www.eige.europa.eu/>. As soon as this Institute is fully operational, a meeting will be organized between EIGE Director Virginija Langbakk and the presidents of AER and the SCEO.

(vii) Proposals from members

SCEO is dedicated to work on issues that are of interest to its member regions. Therefore, members are more than welcome to submit their ideas for conferences, projects, etc...

Apart from education, another topic could therefore come up during the year, to be dealt with in the framework of a conference or seminar, a training academy or a more specific project, preferably co-financed by the EU.

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