



**The Assembly of European Regions
3rd Meeting of the Youth Regional Network (YRN)**

‘YRN’s Take On Youth Employment – In Times of Economic Crisis’

**10-12 December 2009
Paris, Île-de-France (F)
Co-hosted by Disneyland Paris**

The Assembly of European Regions (AER) is the largest independent network of regions in wider Europe. Bringing together more than 270 regions from 33 countries and 16 interregional organisations, AER is the political voice of its members and a forum for interregional cooperation. One of the main achievements of the AER in 2008 was the creation of the AER Youth Regional Network.

Introduction

At the Assembly of European Regions (AER) we are fully aware that bringing together young people from 270 European regions, 33 countries and 16 interregional organisations cannot go unnoticed. That is why the AER Youth Regional Network, the first platform of regional youth councils, parliaments and organizations, was established in November 2008. After the meetings in Wiesbaden (D) and in Krzyzowa (PL), the AER Youth Regional Network proved that the young voices of European regions do count at the European level. This time young participants, actively involved in their home regions, will focus on various topics related to youth employment - a highly important issue, especially during financially challenging times.

The meeting ‘YRN’s Take on Youth Employment - in Times of Economic Crisis’ will take place in Paris (Île-de-France, F) and will be co-hosted by Euro Disneyland.

Why Disneyland Paris?

The first contact between AER and Euro Disney was established in 2008 due to Disneyland Paris’ involvement in AER Eurodyssey programme.

With 14 500 employees from more than 100 countries, **Disneyland Paris** gives young Europeans the opportunity to get a first professional experience in an environment of quality and excellence and is committed to help them grow professionally in the pursuit of rewarding careers in the tourism and leisure industry within Europe and beyond, thus encouraging European mobility, diversity and multiculturalism. Given that, AER has decided to organise the third meeting of the AER Youth Regional Network at Disneyland Paris.

The conference

The conference will consist of 2 plenary sessions organised in the mornings and will be followed by discussions in round tables on topics related to youth employment.

Following the plenary session on the first day, young participants will take part in 4 round tables, where they will have a chance to discuss various issues related to youth employment, such as youth entrepreneurship, transition from school to work, first job, youth mobility and skills requested on the European labour market. The objective of these discussions will be to identify obstacles, exchange good practices and brainstorm about possible solutions.

The second day of the meeting will be devoted to designing a tool that will provide young people and regional authorities with a source of reference when improving regional policies in terms of youth employment.

Therefore AER Peer Review methodology will be presented. The methodology was developed to help regional authorities assess and improve their performance in key areas of regional responsibility.

Now, with the significant contribution of young people, the tool will be re-adjusted so as to help regional authorities identify what can be improved in regional youth employment policies by hosting a multinational team of experts in the field.

Round tables

1. Education:

Education as kick-off for professional career. Re-definition of skills required on the labour market.

Despite the fact that today young people are smaller in number due to demographic change and better educated than the previous generation, difficulties remain in entering the labour market. It goes without saying that unemployment rates decrease with the level of education. Interestingly enough, we live in times when diplomas are no longer guarantee of employment. There are several reasons for this, such as the mismatch between skills acquired in education and training and labour market requirements, as well as general labour market conditions. Which are the relevant skills for young people entering the labour market? Where to look for them? During this workshop means of formal and non-formal education will be explored.

2. First employment:

First job - lost cause? Fostering equal opportunities for youth applying for their first jobs.

Contemporary youth, although computer-literate, fluent in foreign languages and highly motivated, still face a threat of unequal treatment when applying for their first jobs. The main reason is the lack of professional experience, which results in accepting poorly paid jobs and unfavorable working conditions. This round table will also focus on a school-to-work transition, which may be defined as the passage from the end of schooling to the first significant, ideally permanent employment of a young person.

During this workshop young people will focus on solutions to be implemented at regional level, such as 'one stop shops', 'consultative centres', 'alumni networks', i.e. various means of reducing unemployment rates among young men and women and fostering their full integration into the labour market after education and training. It will also focus on highlighting hiring practices of employers in regard to contemporary youth.

How to make sure that young people know their rights? Where to look for support? Can regional bodies foster acknowledgement of youth rights in their first employment?

3. Entrepreneurship:

Empowering young entrepreneurs - youth can do it!

This workshop is dedicated to those who feel that something is missing in their home regions when it comes to fostering youth entrepreneurship. This round table will also focus on exploring possibilities of setting up one's own business in various sectors of industry.

During the workshop various means of facilitating establishing one's own company at regional level will be discussed. Participants will have a chance to share good practices from their European regions, thus providing information about gaps in policies targeting youth entrepreneurs to be filled in by regional decision-makers. Where can regional authorities provide support? What can young people expect from regional decision makers? What can be improved in regions experienced in this respect?

4. Mobility:

Youth mobility on the European labour market - broadening horizons without risking brain drain.

Due to the fact that contemporary Europe is getting more and more open, young people stand the chance of getting their first professional experience abroad. Not only learning mobility, but also mobility in terms of vocational training should become a natural feature of being European and an opportunity provided to all young people in Europe. By giving the example of the AER Eurodyssey programme, we will show that mobility in terms of vocational training should be considered equally important. In other words, during the workshop participants will discuss how to convince regional decision makers to support young people and give them the opportunity to get vocational training abroad? On the other hand they will be also invited to share their views on how to make regions attractive enough for young people to come back home afterwards.

Peer Review Initiative Regional Youth Policies

AER has developed a new European-wide 'peer review' methodology, which allows regional authorities to assess and improve their performance in key areas of regional responsibility. The peer review methodology, now implemented in other areas of AER's work, such as alcohol policies and renewable energies, can also prove useful in the area of youth employment policy.

The aim of the initiative is to develop a comprehensive peer review system for regional employment youth policies throughout Europe. The key objectives of the project are to:

- encourage the development of better regional youth policies throughout Europe,

- allow an exchange of experience between European regions on youth policy,
- develop new methodologies in regional youth policy.

Activity reports

The third meeting will serve as an opportunity to look back at the projects created since the meeting in Krzyzowa (PL) and to discuss YRN participation in Youth Events in Prague (Czech Presidency) and in Stockholm (Swedish Presidency). Moreover, Network's official position on new EU Strategy 'Youth - Involving and Empowering' will be presented.