



Assembly of European Regions Youth Regional Network

Strategic Programme 2010-2011

*Adopted on 22 May 2009
in Krzyzowa, Dolnoslaskie (PL)
and revised on 9 June 2010
in Donja Stubica, Krapinsko-zagorska (HR)*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The participation of young people in all aspects of life is crucial precisely because young people are affected by the decisions made by governments, whether at regional, national or international level. Policy areas such as housing, environment, transport and education, to name but a few, have a direct impact on the lives of youngsters just as much as on those of the adults.

The world of today concerns young people just as much as the world of tomorrow. To deprive the young people of today of the opportunity to participate in the governance of society is to deprive them of both the right to affect what happens around them and to shape their future.

Europe is not only a continent of countries but also a continent of regions. In all aspects of life certain issues are better solved at different levels of government (local, regional, national or European). It is therefore crucial to let young people involve themselves in the management of these issues at all levels.

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 co-operation¹. AER is committed to pay more attention to youth issues because it fully understands the stakes of the youth policy in the long run and puts the principal of subsidiarity in the field of youth issues².

AER created the **Youth Regional Network (YRN)**, which provides a platform of regional youth organisations, councils and parliaments from wider Europe. The platform works as a forum where young people can influence regional and European policy while exchanging experiences and good practice. It also promotes institutional youth participation at the regional and local levels. One of the aims of the Network is to support the legal framework for regional youth participation.

AER's Youth Regional Network was established on 25 November 2008 in [Wiesbaden](#) (the region of [Hessen, Germany](#)), where ninety young people representing 55 European regions launched Europe's first and only platform of regional youth councils, parliaments and organisations. During the founding meeting young people adopted the Wiesbaden Resolution, which laid out the guidelines for future cooperation (see Appendix 1).

The main idea behind launching YRN was to stress that decision-making should be based upon the principle of [subsidiarity](#). This means that, on the one hand, youth policy at European level should reflect the diversity of the regions and of the young people that live in those regions. On the other hand, youth policy within the regions should maintain a European dimension so that the common challenges faced by all young people can be tackled when co-operating in sharing ideas, knowledge and experiences.

¹ For further information, please see: www.aer.eu

² For further information, please see: www.aer.eu/en/main-issues/youth.html

This Strategic Programme was adapted unanimously on 22 May 2009 during the meeting in Krzyzowa (Dolnosloskie, PL) as the next step towards ensuring that the voice of young people is taken into account at regional and European levels and that the young people have influence on their future. The Strategic Programme explains the mission, structure and priorities of the network. It was revised during the meeting in Donja Stubica (Krapinsko-zagorska, HR) on ... 2010.

2. AER YOUTH REGIONAL NETWORK

a. Who we are?

The AER Youth Regional Network (YRN) is a common platform of youth organisations/councils/parliaments acting at a regional level in Europe. This platform is a forum for discussion and exchange of experience between young people across all European regions. All youth parliaments, councils and organisations, which represent the voice of young people from AER members as well as non-member regions, are invited to join the YRN.

b. Our objectives

The YRN has four main objectives:

- Encouraging more effective communication between young people to build a sense of a common future;
- Promoting the principle of subsidiarity and developing interregional cooperation at European level;
- Encouraging greater youth participation in local and regional democratic processes;
- Developing a sense of civic and political responsibility.

c. How do we work?

YRN works in the following way: networking, influencing policy, exchanging best practice and experience.

1. Networking

- Creating a European forum that allows young people to address specific regional issues;

2. Influencing policy

- Involving young people in decision-making processes at regional and European levels;
- Developing a sense of civic and political responsibility among young people and encouraging youth participation in democratic processes.



- Applying the principle of subsidiarity to decision-making processes by influencing European youth policy from a regional perspective;

3. Exchanging best practice and experience

- Working together on European projects and utilising European funding;
- Bringing together young people to enlarge the European networking (many of the regions represented in YRN are not within the EU zone).

According to the Wiesbaden Resolution, adopted on the 25th November 2008, the main objectives are:

“We, as members of regional youth councils, parliaments and organisations, and on behalf of all young people living in Europe, hereby establish the AER Youth Regional Network, an initiative of the Assembly of European Regions, which will:

- *provide a common European platform of youth organisations acting at regional level;*
- *exchange practices and experiences of youth organisations in the European regions;*
- *put into practice the principle of subsidiarity in the field of youth policy;*
- *bring young citizens closer to Europe while acknowledging their regional identities, and thus give real meaning to the idea of “unity in diversity”.*

d. Our values

YRN gives a youth perspective to the values of its founding organisation, the Assembly of European Regions:

Equality in diversity: YRN shares AER’s respect for diversity. The youth regional councils, parliaments and organisations within the network have equal status.

Democracy: YRN is a democratic structure and promotes democratic values, freedom of choice and transparency. The network encourages the active involvement of all members in the development of its policies.

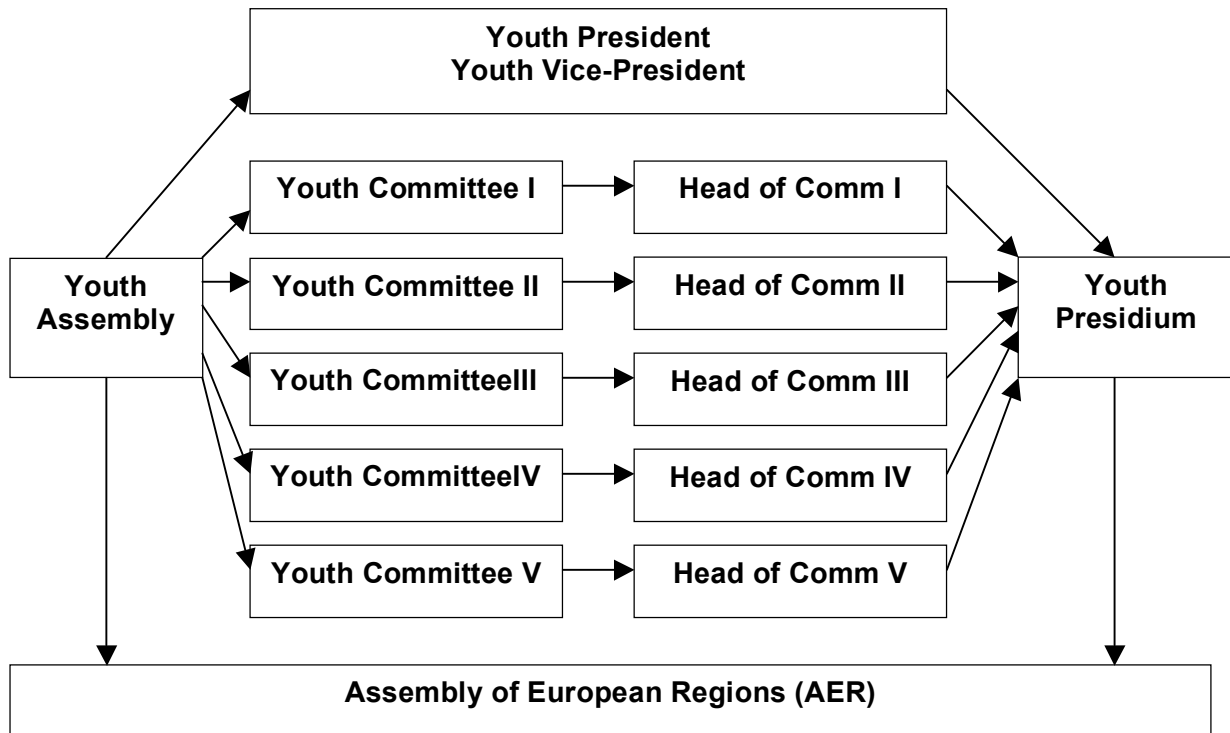
Subsidiarity: YRN believes that the principle of subsidiarity should be applied to all decision-making processes, which means that political decisions affecting youth should be taken as closely as possible to young citizens.

Solidarity: YRN believes that this value should assure / strengthen the sense of solidarity in Europe of regions

Innovation and Creativity: YRN works, takes decisions and implements projects in an innovative and creative way. YRN strives to develop excellence in all actions and initiatives.

3. STRUCTURE

YRN is governed by the following structures³:



Youth Assembly

The Youth Assembly consists of representatives of the youth regional councils, parliaments and organizations. This Assembly meets twice a year to decide about the strategy and actions of YRN. All decisions are taken by majority rule. The Youth Assembly chooses the Youth President (majority rule).

All youth councils, parliaments and organizations acting at a regional level from the European regions can become members of YRN.

Youth President

Youth Assembly elects the Youth President for a one-year term. The President chairs the Youth Assembly, the Youth Presidium and represents YRN to the outside. The President stays in contact with the AER President and the AER Secretary General in order to maintain close relations between youth and AER.

Election of the President: the President is elected during the Youth Assembly meeting among the participants from an AER member region. Each region has got ONE vote.

³

This is only draft proposal of the structure.

Who can be elected as the President: a young representative of regional youth council, parliament or organization, who is between 18 and 30 years old.

Youth Vice-President

The Vice-President is elected as the second candidate receiving the largest amount of votes. The Vice-president substitutes the President in his/her office in the case of vacation, absence or illness.

Youth Committees

The Youth Assembly is divided into five different committees (see the next section). They meet twice a year during the Youth Assembly sessions. Each Youth Committee elects by consensus a Youth Committee Head who becomes one of the Youth Presidium members.

The Committees are in charge of concrete projects.

Youth Presidium

The Youth Presidium consists of the five Youth Committees Presidents, the Youth President and the Youth Vice-President.

The role of the Presidium is to coordinate the actions of five Committees as well as to cooperate directly with AER. That means, the Youth Presidium should:

- attend AER meetings to present young people's point of view
- be in contact with AER Committees
- shape the YRN strategy and priorities

4. YOUTH COMMITTEES

The YRN members can choose to participate in one of five Youth Committees. They elect a head of the Committee for a 1-year term (consensus). Each Committee is in charge of monitoring the main topics, influencing AER policy as well as relevant European institutions and developing the youth projects in this field.

The members of each Committee take direct actions by:

- discussing and exchanging experience and best practice
- deciding about concrete actions and projects of the YRN
- influencing AER and European decision making processes

The Head of each Committee will represent the Committee during the Youth Presidium Meetings, as well as during AER meetings and at European level.

Youth Committee on Sustainable Development

Key areas of activity: sustainable development in all aspects of life, renewable energies, energy efficiency, environment.

Concrete actions: involvement in the AER Youth Summer School 2009 on Water and cooperation with the 2009 Youth Ambassadors.

Youth Committee on Professional Life and Youth Entrepreneurship

Key areas of activity: training, non-formal education as a means of gaining first professional experience, employment, healthy society, equal opportunities, mobility.

Concrete actions: involvement in the Eurodyssey programme by promoting the project and having a direct influence on the programme; evaluation of the application of the MYFER Award on Youth Entrepreneurship.

Youth Committee on Culture and Education

Key areas of activity: formal and non-formal education, multiculturalism, equal opportunities, diversity, regional languages.

Concrete actions: organization of the European Youth Forums in order to educate young people around Europe; evaluation of the applications for AER Scholarship.

Youth Committee on Health and Social Affairs

Key areas of activity: cross-border healthcare, equal opportunities, aging societies, balanced lifestyle and addictive behaviors (drugs, alcohol, health and IT).

Concrete actions: involvement in AER Peer Reviews on topics relating to healthcare; AER Working Group on Equal Europe for People with Disabilities; Observatory on Gender Issues.

Youth Committee on Communication and Media

Key areas of activity: communication, media, information, multilingualism.

Concrete actions: supporting the 'Subsidiarity is a word' movement; Communicating Europe (establishing contacts with European and regional media; creating a regional database of youth media; improving the YRN Facebook Group and Website); AER Photo Competition; AER Regional Reporters.

5. CONCLUSIONS

AER treasures youth as the most important resource of the future and it understands the stakes of supporting youth participation and action in all aspects of life. That is why it commits to promote youth interests at both regional and European level. The 'AER Youth Regional Network' project is to be an axis between past and future AER youth activities. It is about bringing young people from European regions together in a European context in order to discuss problems and concerns they might be confronted with in their respective regions, to share their experiences and exchange hopes for the future, as well as to learn from one another so as to build themselves better.

The Youth Regional Network will thus focus on bringing a regional dimension in the young people's reflection about youth issues in a European framework. It will also encourage the members of the Network to consider the idea of further sustainable cooperation of young people from European regions. AER wants to launch and develop in time a sustainable network of young people from the AER member regions. Representatives of youth councils/parliaments/associations from these regions will form a platform for dialogue and exchange of regional experiences in the European context with the final goal of improving the societies in which they live in.

The Youth Regional Network is a milestone not only for AER, but also for the European youth work because this presents the starting point for a European platform representing for the first time specifically the youth from regions all over Europe.

Appendix 1

RESOLUTION

AER Youth Regional Network

Noting that young people are directly affected by the decisions made by governments at European, national and regional level;

Recalling that young people have the right to affect what happens around them;

Understanding that young people are the future of Europe;

We, as members of regional youth councils, parliaments and organisations, and on behalf of all young people living in Europe, hereby establish the AER Youth Regional Network, an initiative of the Assembly of European Regions, which will:

- provide a common European platform of youth organisations acting at regional level;
- exchange practices and experiences of youth organisations in the European regions;
- put into practice the principle of subsidiarity in the field of youth policy;
- bring young citizens closer to Europe while acknowledging their regional identities, and thus give real meaning to the idea of "unity in diversity".

Therefore, it is hereby resolved that the AER Youth Regional Network is to:

- influence regional policy on jobs, health and education to stop brain drain in Europe and keep young people healthy in an ever-changing society;
- support education to encourage young people to be entrepreneurial, take initiative, and participate in regional policy making;
- manage globalisation by promoting the values and traditions of our individual regions and by exchanging regional knowledge and experience;
- instigate change by educating young people from a regional perspective, and change consumer mindsets by promoting sustainability, the use of renewable energy and technology;
- take action against and overcome prejudices, inequalities, xenophobia and segregation by improving education, and migrant participation, and by facilitating exchange among the cultures and identities of all young Europeans.

Adopted, in recognition of the needs and concerns of young people, during the Youth Regional Network Founding Meeting in Wiesbaden held on 25 November 2008.

