



ASSEMBLÉE DES RÉGIONS D'EUROPE
ASSEMBLY OF EUROPEAN REGIONS
VERSAMMLUNG DER REGIONEN EUROPAS
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AER Press Release

A step further towards decentralisation in France
Twenty years after the first law on decentralisation

The Assembly of European Regions (AER) welcomes the coming into effect of the law on the regionalisation of the SNCF (French national rail network) on 1st January 2002. This law allows the French Regions to organise their regional train networks (Regional Express Trains - TER). They will now be responsible for their own fares, new lines and the renovation of stations. The State government will provide a budget of 1.5 million Euros for 2002 for each Region in order to execute the new law. Twenty years after the first law on decentralisation, this transfer of competences in the field of transport is remarkable progress in the decentralisation process in France. The AER considers this law as going in the right direction for the building up of European Transport infrastructure - which requires the increased involvement of the Regions regarding planning, decision-making and execution - for the benefit of commerce, industry and the citizens.

On 13th February 2002, the French Senate also adopted a draft law on "grass-roots democracy"*. This law provides for the transfer of supplementary competences from the State to the Regions and local authorities ("départements", "communes"...). The Regions will thereby gain new responsibilities in the fields of vocational training, the environment and its protection, tourism, ports and airports, economic assistance and culture to a certain extent. It may also be appropriate to mention that some of the competences transferred by the law are transferred "in a trial manner", particularly the management of civil airfields, the development of national ports, the listing of monuments and items of artistic value.

The AER takes good note of the government's efforts towards decentralisation on the eve of the twentieth anniversary of the Defferre law of 2nd March 1982. This law on "grass-roots democracy" may not be the cure all for the French Regions, but it's a step towards decentralisation in France. The AER is keeping a close eye on its implementation and hopes that these new "trial" prerogatives will rapidly become the responsibility of the Regions. The AER asks the French government to provide the Regions with powers of taxation, without which the new competences cannot be fully effective.

The AER will continue its initiatives with the same intensity alongside of the French Regions and the whole of Europe to make the voices of the citizens and their representatives heard in their respective State governments and the European institutions.

* *Document as yet un-referenced. See the Web site of the French Senate: <http://www.senat.fr/dossierleg/pjl00-415.html>*

Created in 1985, the AER is a political organisation of the Regions in Europe and the speaker for their interests at European and International level. Its mission: bring together the regions of Europe and allow them to be, together, actors in the construction of Europe and European integration. The AER currently has 250 member regions from 25 European countries and 13 interregional organisations.

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