



ASSEMBLÉE DES RÉGIONS D'EUROPE  
ASSEMBLY OF EUROPEAN REGIONS  
VERSAMMLUNG DER REGIONEN EUROPAS  
ASAMBLEA DE LAS REGIONES DE EUROPA  
ASSEMBLEA DELLE REGIONI D'EUROPA

**Regional and Institutional policy**

Madrid, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2002

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Press Release

**Meeting in Madrid**

**Convention, Enlargement, Reform...  
The Regions in action for tomorrow's Europe**

The institutional affairs Committee of the Assembly of European Regions (AER) made the following decisions and set out the following guidelines at its meeting in Madrid on 14<sup>th</sup> May:

The AER will present its political position to the European Convention at its hearing on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> June 2002 in Brussels. This position has been drawn up on the basis of a résumé of the contributions of AER member Regions which gave their view of the need for institutional reform and better regional policy in an enlarged Europe.

*"Reform in competence distribution within the European Union (EU) is indispensable for bringing Europe closer to its citizens and increasing transparency. The Regions must be considered as more than mere administrative units, they are essential bodies and authorities in a democratic Union"* proclaimed Dr. Palmer, President of the AER Institutional affairs Committee. *"This aim can only be reached via strengthening the existing principle of subsidiarity and via control by an independent EU body. This would lead to the establishment of the Regions as a 3<sup>rd</sup> level of power. The Convention must be capable of creating a legal and political framework for a solid, united and strong Europe in the future"*. The AER considers that it is also essential for the Convention to set out a clear and understandable distribution of competences, in the form of a catalogue for instance.

*"The AER would like to see the EU leave room for the development of regionalisation in order to ensure that the enlarged Europe be governed in an efficient and democratic manner, close to the citizen. The reality of regional policy must be institutionalised and find its place in the Treaties. The strengthening of the role of the Committee of the Regions in the decision-making process at European level is essential in this line of thought, the Committee of the Regions must be brought up in ranking to that of a decision-making body"* concluded Dr. Palmer.

A hearing on EU enlargement has also been organised in order to identify problems faced by the Regions and to clarify what help the AER can offer. In its Declaration\*, the AER considers enlargement as a political and economical necessity to be integrated into economic, social and territorial cohesion policies throughout Europe. *"Enlargement must take place rapidly and deadlines must be set in order to ensure controlled progress"*, declared Philip Johnsson, Vice-President of the AER Institutional affairs Committee. *"It is also vital to differentiate between candidate countries according to the progress of each individual state and to allow those meeting accession criteria to join the EU without any hesitation"* added the Vice-President. The AER also feels that EU agricultural and structural financing should be subject to reform from 2006.

Committee members looked at the activities of Regions with legislative powers, i.e. 60 Regions from 8 EU member states: Germany, Austria, Belgium, Spain, Finland, Italy, Portugal and the United Kingdom. They stressed that Regions with legislative powers are particularly concerned by European integration and that it remains indispensable to consider these Regions as a potential source of impetus for all Regions in terms of regionalisation.

Participants also produced an intermediary report on the Spanish Presidency and weighed up the initial programme of the Danish EU Presidency.

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**For further information on the AER: <http://www.are-regions-europe.org>**

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\* Document available from the AER Secretariat