



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 Cohesion Policy (Original French)
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Press release

The regions request the preservation of a strong European cohesion policy and the development of a new regional policy for an enlarged Europe

In a common resolution adopted at the closure of a conference organised by the AER on the 14th and 15th of November in Pécs (Baranya-H), the 250 Presidents of Regions, regional Ministers and heads of regional development policy representing 80 regions (EU, candidate countries and those outside of the EU) request the preservation of strong European cohesion policy and the implementation, in consultation with all of the regions, of a modern regional policy that will aid the competitiveness of the regions.

Economic, social and territorial cohesion must remain paramount Community objectives, asserted the Regions that came together in Pécs. They stressed that the European Union must not disregard its responsibility in the matter and must, in addition, develop a new policy aimed at making all of the regions competitive, in order to enable them to face the challenges of globalisation and an enlarged Europe. The AER suggests, in particular, that the new eligibility criteria not only take account of GDP, but also indicators of sustainable development such as unemployment, demographic data and access to transport.

The AER is convinced that *“the success of the new cohesion policy (...) will depend on the capacity of ALL the actors concerned to show a spirit of solidarity and efficiency”*. In this respect, the Regions of the AER confirmed in Pécs their unified engagement towards those Regions that are lagging in terms of development and their desire to fortify co-operation with the European Union and the Member States in a true partnership. They underlined that EU Structural and Cohesion policy must fully support the Regional policies of spatial planning, which reflect, primarily, the diversity of the territories and a knowledge of their needs.

This “bottom up”, decentralised approach, must also ensure the increased inclusion of the regions, not only in the development phase, but also in that of the attribution and management of funds, stressed the resolution of Baranya. Within this framework, the AER believes that the idea of tripartite contracts is going in the right direction but expresses serious reservations as for their application. In particular, the AER pointed out the absence of clarity in relation to the role of the regions in this type of contract and formally requests that the regions be recognised as partners, acting on an equal footing with the Member States and the EU. Moreover, the Ministers who came together in Pécs asked that the proposal for bilateral contracts negotiated in respect of the laws be duly taken into account in the current debate.

The AER emphasises that an increase in the allocated budget of the EU is necessary, along with the consequently parallel engagement of the States. Finally, it believes that co-ordination between Community policies remains a major priority necessity.

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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 has 250 member regions and 12 member interregional organisations.