



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

**AER SUMMER SCHOOL 2002**

(Opatija, Primorsko-Goranska, Croatia, 8 - 12 September 2002)

**'The Regions' follow-up to the Johannesburg Summit**

**PRESS RELEASE**

Roughly 200 participants from 50 Regions in 19 European countries - both inside and outside from the European Union – attended the Summer School 2002, along with high-ranking representatives of European and Croatian national authorities. Mere days after the Johannesburg Summit (26 August – 4 September), this year Summer School focused on concrete implementation policies of sustainable development at regional level and was supported by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. The Summer School encouraged exchange of concrete experience and know-how among the participants in various fields of environmental protection and sustainable social and economic development.

As a concrete outcome of our work, the organising Adriatic regions - Primorsko-goranska, Istarska, Dubrovacko-neretvanska (Croatia) and Friuli-Venezia Giulia (Italy) - launched the "Adriatic Agenda 21". The "Adriatic Agenda 21" initiative aims to establish a permanent cooperation network between Adriatic regions and towns on sustainability issues in order to stop degradation of the environment within the Adriatic basin and improve quality of life.

*"Sustainable development is the only way that can prevent Adriatic countries in transition from repeating development mistakes made by the most developed countries. Yet, it is also a complex process that cannot happen spontaneously. Therefore, a cooperation network through which sustainability principles will be promoted, a common vision of the future of Adriatic space will be made and practical actions will be planned and initiated, is very much needed there"* said the Presidents of the signatory Regions in their common Final Declaration.

The AER is determined to support the process that has been started in Opatija, therefore AER co-signed the Opatija Declaration. *"We indeed believe that with joint efforts, such as the Adriatic Agenda 21 initiative, we can preserve remaining European areas of unspoiled nature and areas with specific culture which are both threatened by dominating development trends"* explained Paul Diemel, Coordinator of the AER Summer School Organising Committee.

Another interesting outcome of the Summer School 2002 was the parallel organisation of the 1<sup>st</sup> AER Youth Summer School. As a result of this combination, more than 40 young people from all over Europe had the opportunity to discuss their proposals for a more sustainable future directly with regional experts and elected representatives (see previous press release on the AER Web site).

A final outcome report on the AER Summer School 2002 will be produced by the General Secretariat. It will be available soon on the AER Web Site.

*Initiated in 1996, the AER Summer School is a truly interregional project. The Summer School 2002 was organised by Bruxelles-Capitale (B), Gloucestershire (UK), Noord-Brabant (Netherlands), Thüringen (D), Vienna (A) and Wallonia (B), with the special support of the above mentioned Adriatic Regions.*

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