



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 policy
Strasbourg, 18th June 2002
Original in English

Press Release

**How can Regions ensure a sustainable future for their citizens?
The AER answer**

More than 40 Regions from all over Europe gathered in Bodo, Nordland, on 14 and 15 June 2002. The Regions' contribution to sustainable development was the major issue for this meeting of the 'Regional policy' Committee of the Assembly of European Regions (AER) in view of the forthcoming UN Johannesburg Summit (27 August – 4 Sept. 2002).

Major European institutions, such as the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe took active part in the AER debate and expressed their interest in further co-operation with the AER in view of common action in favour of sustainable development.

Various good regional practices in sustainable development were presented, such as, for example: development of renewable energies (Niederösterreich-A, Jämtland-S), preservation of water and land resources (Pest, Heves-H, Tulcea-RO), sustainable transport (outcome of the 1st workshop Regions' contribution to sustainable transport, Florence, April 2002), eco-tourism (Västerbotten-S, Thüringen-D) and sustainable rural development (Gloucestershire-UK).

On the basis of its member Regions' concrete actions, Committee C unanimously adopted a Final Statement* as the AER contribution to the Johannesburg Summit and designated Thomas Haag, Councillor, from Jämtland as its representative at the Summit. *"In this statement we expressed our strong conviction on the fundamental role of Regions and interregional cooperation for the promotion of sustainable development in all its environmental, social, economic, and cultural dimensions"* said Brian Greenslade, Committee C President, Leader of Devon. *"We urged all regional authorities to identify the results that the Summit should aim for and committed ourselves to specific strategies as a concrete follow up to the Johannesburg Summit at regional level"* he added.

In this context, a major interregional Summit on Sustainable Development will be organised next year, in joint co-operation with all AER member interregional organisations and major European bodies. The first AER European Eco-Region Prize will be awarded on this occasion, with the support of the Royal Award Foundation, and the EEA.

Committee C also focused on the preparation of the 1st AER Conference of Regional Presidents and Ministers on the Future of Regional Policy (Baranya, 14-15 November 2002).

The Committee meeting was followed by a seminar organised by the host Region. The crucial current situation of regionalisation in Norway and other countries of Northern Europe, on the one hand, and the political support of the AER in this process on the other hand, were the major issues of this successful seminar.

Some meetings in 2003 were already scheduled, such as the 2nd AER workshop of Regions' contribution to transport in Rhône-Alpes (F) and the AER workshop on the Regions' contribution to Eco-tourism in Thüringen (D).

* available at the AER General Secretariat

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 12 interregional organisations. The AER headquarters are in Strasbourg (F).

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