



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 European policy
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Press Release

**Consensus between the Regions of Europe
for a sustainable European Union**

At Stuttgart, the President of the Assembly of European Regions (AER) took up position on the future European Constitution. *"The development of regionalism in Europe may continue if the Regions act together. What can be said for the Member States of the European Union, can also be said for the Regions: consensus is needed in order to maintain diversity in regional identities. The aim is to ensure that the Regions are fully borne in mind in the European Treaties and that the internal organisation of Member States is respected alongwith that of the Regions and Local Self-Government"*, declared Dr Palmer, Minister for European Affairs for Baden-Württemberg-D and President of the AER Institutional affairs Committee, at the AER Presidium meeting.

On 24th and 25th June 2002, the AER will present its conception of the future European Constitution in Brussels at the Convention on the future of Europe. The AER represents the largest regional group in Europe with 250 member Regions.

"A sustainable European Union requires initiative and creativity at all levels", stated Dr Palmer, Minister of European Affairs. In the context of enlargement, consideration and action in a regional perspective must be developed and reinforced. The AER speaks in favour of greater coordination between the Regions. *"Throughout the whole of Europe, the search for wide consensus is decisive. This is the only way for the Regions, which seek to incorporate their status as Nations into the European Constitution in an appropriate manner, to ensure that their interests - legislative competences for example, be taken into consideration"*, concluded Dr Palmer.

The AER emphasises to the Convention that a bottom up Europe can only be fully understood if the Regions and Local authorities are specifically mentioned in the Treaty. In the future, the distribution of competences must lay out clear indications and be respected in the interests of the Regions. The main political fields of Member states such as internal organisation, regional structures, local self-government, culture and the application of Community regulations must be guaranteed by the Constitutional Treaty. The Regions expect the Treaty to put essential values and decisions in priority and to define the principles governing competences such as the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity. *"The principle of subsidiarity included in the Treaties must also mention national and local levels"*, declared Liese Prokop, AER President and Vice-Minister President of Niederösterreich. The Regions also expect European solidarity to be re-defined and EU assistance to focus on the Regions present clear weaknesses.

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Enlargement is one of the key themes for the AER. The Danish government has placed this issue on its list of priorities for the EU Presidency (2nd half 2002). "*We are in favour of rapid progress for enlargement. Initial accords may be signed before the end of this year*" said Liese Prokop. "*The AER insists on the need to differentiate between applicant countries depending on individual progress. The "Copenhagen criteria" remain essential for all countries. Countries meeting criteria can join the EU without any hesitation*" she added. In this perspective, the AER will co-organise, a Conference entitled "Enlargement in a local and regional perspective" with the regional and local representations in Brussels, on 5th July 2002 in Brussels (B).

The AER also decided to act in the field of regional twinning, which, although existing in various forms, has no legal nor institutional status. The AER institutional affairs Committee is entrusted with creating a working group on regional twinning in the aim of distributing information and promoting the concept and seeking formal recognition with the European institutions. The Presidium is also in favour of a "Year of local and regional twinning" at European level.

The AER is organising three major Conferences for 2002, thereby providing a broad platform for interregional coordination to Ministers and regional politicians. Take note of the following dates, all are open to the public:

- 18th October, Brixen-Italy, Culture Conference,
- 8th November, Milan-Italy, Conference on public health and social affairs,
- 14th and 15th November, Pécs-Hungary, Conference on spatial planning.

Further information and programmes available from the Secretariat.

Further information on the AER: www.are-regions-europe.org

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