



*Press release*

## **New cohesion policy: still a long way to go The AER calls for more pragmatic approach**

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The AER welcomes the Third report on economic and social cohesion which takes the majority of our proposals into account.

The sharing of structural funds for the period 2006-2013 between regions from the new Member states and those from the EU 15, as well as the concentration of objectives on convergence, job creation and competitiveness open to all the regions, with large urban or rural areas, will allow them to tackle the challenges of enlargement and globalisation in a more effective way.

The focus on vital sectors such as services of general interest, the accessibility of peripheral regions and innovation matches well with the AER recommendations and priorities.

The recognition of the regions as regional policy makers and main partners is another significant step forward.

*“We are particularly satisfied with the integration of interregional cooperation in the new architecture for EU cohesion policy; its promotion figures today among the three main priorities, next to convergence, regional competitiveness and job creation”* stated Brian Greenslade, President of the AER Regional Development Committee, at the round table organised by the CoR yesterday in Brussels. *“However the delivery modalities of this strategic priority, as well as those for Objective 2, must be clarified; the Cohesion Forum in May would be an opportunity for us to formulate some concrete proposals in this field”* he added.

The AER insists on the high importance of better coordinating cohesion with other EU policies, especially the Common market and Competition policies. *“We must take care in the future that regional development projects subsidized with state aid would not hindered by the competition rules, as recent examples of regional airports have pointed out”* Brian Greenslade stressed.

Nevertheless uncertainty remains about the feasibility of this new cohesion policy, because of disagreement between the Commission and some Member States concerning the financial perspectives for the next period. The AER calls upon the political wisdom and pragmatism of the European Council and of the Commission in finding an agreement, which could allow to overcome the economic difficulties in the EU 15 as well as to face up to the growing need for cohesion in an enlarged Europe.

### **AER contacts**

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