



Dear AER members,

European legislative elections are one of the most decisive moments in European political life. Aside from our political beliefs, I do know that each and one of us is deeply committed to this new building block of the European project.

All of us have hence been firmly active with regards to the upcoming European elections in June, who will without a doubt test our fellow citizens' support of the European project. We do this in spite of the numerous daily reports that remind us of those same citizens' lack of enthusiasm and trust towards Europe.

This lack of trust is indeed evident and undeniable, and if those surveys were to be confirmed, it would mean that the overall level of participation in EU elections would once again decrease since the 1979 elections, which marked the first direct universal voting for a EU institution. That same year, the level of participation had risen to approximately 63% within a nine country strong EU. It barely reached 45,7% twenty-five years later in 2004, when the European Union was constituted of twenty-seven countries. During those same elections, the level of participation among the European youth, European citizens ranging from 18 to 24 years, dropped to 33%.

The rationales behind these phenomena are well known: it is precisely against them that we, European regions, endeavour to speak with a common voice and change the setting of institutional Europe. Indeed those rationales are unacceptable, and certainly not impassable.

As regional representatives and as members of an association that promotes citizen participation in European affairs, we cannot fail to be struck by the present situation. I therefore call upon you to come up with an appropriate response, one that rises up to the occasion. We cannot fail to react when it is the European project itself, which is so vital for regions, that is put in question.

I believe it is not too late in this campaign to arouse more enthusiasm among our fellow citizens. I also believe it is our duty to strongly react to this situation aside from our political orientations and differences. Because we as regional representatives are closer to the grassroots level, I ask you to join me in a call to European citizens, so as to mark our commitment to Europe, as well as our determination to reinforce the participative dimension of its political life. I do hope you will join me in that respect.

Hoping that all together we will mobilize citizens to go to vote, please accept my most sincere regards,



Michèle SABBAN  
President of the Assembly of European Regions