



Press release

## **AER backs up IDAHO**

Strasbourg (F) - Brussels (B), 17 May 2010

No, Monica Carlsson, President of the AER Standing Committee on Equal Opportunities, is not flying all the way to Boise to meet up with Governor Otter inside the beautiful sandstone walls of the Idaho State Capitol. Today is the annual International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHO) – and AER, through the voice of Mrs. Carlsson, wishes to recall that the largest independent network of regions in the wider Europe has always been strong on condemning *“all discrimination on grounds of gender, race or ethnic origin, religion or beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation”* and strongly supports the directives adopted by the European Union to protect each and every citizen.

*“In 2006, in my hometown of Kiruna, in Northern Sweden, AER adopted for the very first time a declaration condemning homophobia and considering that homophobia and sexism are two faces of the same coin”,* says Monica Carlsson with pride. *“This declaration was then unanimously approved by the AER General Assembly in Palma de Mallorca and last year, during the AER General Assembly in Belfort, the Standing Committee I am chairing was officially given the responsibility to deal with all equal opportunities, and equal rights for Gays, Lesbians and Transsexuals were among them”.*

To those who might wonder why such a large network of European regions took so long before adopting an official position on the matter, Mrs. Carlsson acknowledges that fighting homophobia in Europe is as hard as achieving equal opportunities between women and men. *“It might come as a surprise to some people that these two issues have so much in common, but they really do. While considerable advances have been achieved in recent years, and while many consider Europe as a light unto the nation as far as equal rights for all are concerned – aren’t most of the countries allowing gay marriage members of the European Union? -, both women and gays still face discrimination and harassment at school or at work, and are too often the victims of violent attacks perpetrated by men. Eastern Europe still lags behind on both issues, and AER is dedicated to help its member regions from those countries to move forward and establish tolerant societies.*

Mrs. Carlsson announced that she will put the fight against homophobia on the next agenda of her Standing Committee meeting. *“Homophobia is a blatant breach of human dignity that questions fundamental rights, and thus it must be strongly condemned”* she concluded.

*The **Assembly of European Regions (AER – aer.eu)** is the largest independent network of regions in wider Europe. Bringing together more than 270 regions from 33 countries and 16 interregional organisations, AER is the political voice of its members and a forum for interregional co-operation.*

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