



## editorial

"AER on line-en direct-direkt", which reflects the new dynamic era of our movement, should not only be seen as an instrument for information on the progress of regionalism in Europe, but also a forum for exchanges of experience between our member regions which participate actively, on the ground, in the integration and construction process of Europe.

Many of you have a great deal of know-how and experience of interregional or crossborder cooperation which could be useful to the regions from central and eastern Europe. Others have set up innovative initiatives to encourage growth and employment which contribute to social and territorial cohesion in the European Union. We should regroup this multitude of experiences, encourage exchanges to create synergies and develop new partnerships and show, at European level, the constructive role that we play in the unification of Europe.

Indeed, the AER will only be successful at European level if the regions are prepared to guide and nourish the political movement that it represents. Thanks to your contributions, this support can become, not only a good source of information, from both sides, but also one of the first interregional information networks for us all.

Luc Van den Brande  
President of the AER  
Minister-President  
of Vlaanderen

## >Agenda 2000, employment and EU Enlargement at the heart of our work

Under the presidency of Luc Van den Brande, President of the AER and Minister-President of Vlaanderen, the Presidium and the Bureau of the AER met on 12th and 13th February 1998 in Brussels for the first time this year. As a follow-up to the work of the General Assembly of Montpellier, some important decisions were made:

### Agenda 2000 for the regions

The Bureau asked a reflection group to draw up, for June 1998, a regional Agenda 2000 on the political role and priorities of the AER for the coming years. The AER would like to see itself as a full regional partner in the construction of Europe, to which the regions make a major contribution.

### Promotion of employment

The Bureau launched an appeal to its EU member regions to participate actively in the national plans for employment which are being prepared in their countries. President Luc Van den Brande will write to the Heads of national governments asking them to take account of regional initiatives when they draw up and implement their plans and, at European level, to ensure that the principle of subsidiarity is applied in this area.

In carrying out the decisions made by the extraordinary Bureau on Employment and the General Assembly in Montpellier (concerning the creation of an interregional network for the exchange of experiences and the setting up of a permanent observation centre for employment in the regions of Europe), President Van den Brande will draw up, in liaison with the European Commission, a proposal for the implementation of this observation centre. Made up of regional experts and social partners, it will carry out a

prospective analysis of the labour market in the regions of Europe and will lead to the exchange of experience on a methodical basis. Moreover, the Bureau appeals to the member regions to take an active role in the exchange process set up last year and to join the unofficial existing network (26 regions participate already) which shall have the necessary interregional information at its disposal.

### Enlargement of the European Union

In the perspective of the European Conference on enlargement, the Bureau has asked the Presidents of the six Committees to develop bilateral and multilateral regional partnerships with the regions from candidate countries. Its objective: to ensure the transfer of know-how and the exchange of experiences, the setting up of democratic institutions at regional level, economic development in the regions from the candidate countries and the participation of these regions in European programmes and European regional networks.

The AER, which will follow very closely the work of this Conference, will organise, at the end of 1999, a European conference on the contribution of the regions of Europe and the enlargement and integration of the EU.

AER Contact: Wolfgang Maier

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### > *M. Dammeyer, new President of the CoR*

During the first Plenary Assembly, held on 18th and 19th February 1998 in Brussels, the 222 new members of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) elected Manfred Dammeyer, Minister of State for Federal and European Affairs for Nordrhein-Westfalen (D), as President of the CoR for a first term of office of two years. Jos Chabert, Minister of Finances and the Economy for Bruxelles-Capitale (B) was elected First Vice-President. These newly elected members take over from Pasqual Maragall, Mayor of Barcelona and Jacques Blanc, President of Languedoc-Roussillon, who alternated the presidential posts between 1994 and 1998.

The CoR is an EU consultative body that was established following the Maastricht Treaty (1993) and which enables regional and local authorities to intervene in the decision-making process at European level.

In the letters of congratulation sent to the new President and First Vice-President of the CoR, who are also members of the AER Bureau, Luc Van den Brande, President of the AER, reaffirmed the continued support of our political movement for the recognition of the CoR as an EU institution in its own right. He stressed the importance of the complementarity and the cooperation between the AER, which is the political movement representing all the regions of Europe, and the CoR as an EU consultative body.

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### > *Regionalism in action: Poland*

At the end of 1997, the Polish Government launched a work programme for the administrative reform of the country. The bills which are currently being discussed in the Parliament propose introducing a decentralised system similar to that in France. This would mean a distribution of competencies between three administrative levels (there are only two at present): municipality, district, voivodeships as well as the creation of regional councils made up of elected members. In this context, the competencies of the municipalities will remain practically unchanged, the districts would cover inter-municipal administration responsibilities and a large part of those of the voivodeships. The voivodeships would then carry out the standard administration for the State at regional level.

The Regional Council would be elected through direct suffrage, which represents major progress when compared to the

present system. It would be made up of an elected Assembly (legislative and control body) and an executive body. It would be responsible for the regional strategy and development policy and its implementation. The competencies of the Council would include: education and higher education, health, culture, social services, regional planning, the environment, management of water resources, infrastructures and transport. It would have its own financial resources (30% from income tax and 15% from VAT, collected at regional level etc.) and would prepare and vote its own annual budget.

The bill envisages that the voivode would supervise the Regional Council in legislative fields and foreign policy. It also envisages the suspension of activities or dissolution of the Council by the President of the Council of Ministers should the Constitution not be respected or if public commitments are not carried out.

**AER Contacts:** Barbara Thauront or Laura de Rose

### > *Three seminars for promoting our ideas*

To promote regionalism in Europe and to publicise the AER's Declaration on Regionalism, three seminars have been planned for 1998, two of them within the framework of the meetings of the AER's Committee on Institutional Affairs (I).

#### • **Münster (D), 5th June**

This seminar will look at the economic importance of the regions in the construction of Europe. Political representatives will present the economic competencies of their regions and their experiences in economic

policy. Economic representatives will explain the factors which contribute to making the region attractive for investors and a pole of economic development.

#### • **Iasi (RO), 24th September** • **Karelia (RUS)**

Among the issues to be discussed at these two seminars: the creation of information centres on European Institutions and the promotion of regionalism in these two regions and under the aegis of the AER.

**AER Contact:** Laura de Rose



### Activities in 1998

#### **Declaration on Regionalism**

Continuation of the implementation of this AER reference text through the organisation of three seminars. Up-dating and printing the synoptic tables on regional structures in Europe, country by country.

#### **Enlargement of the Union**

Monitoring of negotiations and participation of the regional level in the enlargement process through the elaboration of a regional Agenda 2000 and through regional cooperation programmes.

#### **Employment**

Setting up a regional observation centre for employment in the regions of Europe.

#### **Agenda 2000**

Follow-up and influence of the process of the reform of the Structural Funds. Developing an opinion on the "European Spatial Development Perspective".

#### **Euro-Mediterranean Cooperation**

Finalising the regions' participation in the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, defined by the Barcelona Conference.

#### **Health, Social Services and the Environment**

Three seminars: "The challenge to political leadership in health care", "Towards a regional Agenda 21", "Partnership in the field of social services".

#### **Culture, Training and Sport**

Organisation of a forum "Sport in regional policy", a conference on

the East-West partnership in the fields of education and training and the Festival for Traditional Games and participation in the Turin Book Fair.

#### **Minorities**

Drafting of a resolution and definition of the role and tasks of an "AER representative for minorities".

#### **Equal Opportunities**

Organisation of a conference in Turin on the role of women in politics at regional level.

+ See agenda, page 8

## Regional Policy

### > *The European Commission welcomes AER Resolution on the Structural Funds*

Adopted at the General Assembly in Montpellier, following a wide consultation of the regions, member and non-member states of the EU, the AER's opinion on the reform of the Structural Funds was well received by the main European political bodies. The Prime Minister of Luxembourg and President of the EU Council for the second quarter of 1997, Mr J C Juncker, felt that this opinion "constitutes an irreplaceable basis for the long negotiations at European Union level".

The President of the European Commission, Mr J Santer, stressed the need for a "constructive cooperation of all the political representatives at European, national and regional levels" and "in this context" he "welcomed the Assembly of European Regions' contribution to the current debate" and he pointed out that "the concerned directorates in the European Commission will examine, in detail, the Declaration adopted in Montpellier".

Mr A Larsson, Director-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs in the European Commission, notes that the problems highlighted in the opinion go "to the heart of the reform" and says that he is convinced that there will be a lot of items to discuss among those concerned, "especially once the Commission has adopted its detailed proposals for new Regulations this spring". Mr Larsson went on to say "during the course of forthcoming discussions on the reform, we would be pleased to have the opportunity for an exchange of views and suggest that we make contact again about this later in the year".

Mr R Savy, President of the Committee on Regional Policy, Regional Planning, the Environment and Tourism (V) (the Committee which drew up the AER resolution) intends to do just that.

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### New President for the East-West Committee

On 3rd December 1997, the AER Bureau elected Ivan Jakovcic as the new President of the East-West Committee (II).

Mr Jakovcic is 41 years old and a graduate from the Zagreb Foreign Trade Faculty. He has been the President of the Istrian regional party, "IDS-DDI" since 1991. In 1992 he entered the Chamber of Deputies of the Croatian Parliament and re-entered in 1995 and 1997. Within the Croatian Parliament, Mr Jakovcic is a member of the Commission for External Policy and also President of the Commission for interregional cooperation and relations with the emigrants of the Istra Regional Assembly.

Istra, one of the 23 regions in Croatia, became a member of the AER in October 1994 and Mr Jakovcic has been a member of the Bureau since 1996.

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## Culture

### > *The European Union supports the interregional network*

The concept of a unique EU programme for culture was the main theme of the exchange of views which took place in Brussels on 12th February 1998 between Mr S Pappas, Director-General of DG X, and the Presidency of the AER Committee on Culture, Education, Media and Sport (VI).

Mrs Liese Prokop, President of Committee VI and Vice-Minister President of Niederösterreich (A) reaffirmed the AER's opposition to a common European policy on culture. She approved, however, the idea put forward by the European Commission to concentrate the

financial means for this new programme on the functioning of interregional cultural networks.

Moreover, the AER delegation expressed some criticism on the procedures for the invitations to tender (complicated procedures for submission, reply deadlines too short, lack of transparency in the decision-making process etc.) which were the cause of some disappointment for the project holders.

Mr Pappas stressed the role of the regions and municipalities as the main actors in the area of culture and the most

important beneficiaries of the European cultural infrastructures. He also recognised that it is the European Commission's responsibility to improve procedures for invitations to tender and to explain to those submitting offers why their projects were accepted or refused.

The two parties agreed to exchange views on a regular basis in the future, especially concerning aid for integrating regions from central and eastern Europe in the area of culture.

**AER Contact:** Franz-Josef Stummann

## Social Services

### > *The concept of Partnerships makes its mark*

Since the adoption of the text "A Partnership between the Citizen, Society and the Region in the area of social, health and community care", the AER Committee for Social Affairs, Health and Employment (IV) has applied itself to the promotion of partnerships between regional representatives, associations and the beneficiaries themselves. This is indeed a new conception of the care and services offered, in particular to the elderly and the disabled, the main principles of which are: solidarity, shared responsibility, subsidiarity, empowerment and active

participation of the regional representatives and associations.

During a workshop in October 1997 in 's-Hertogenbosch, a first meeting of regional representatives and European NGOs led to a better understanding of this new concept of partnership and allowed those present to exchange experiences in this area. A dossier presenting cases of good practice was put together as well as a brochure to promote this concept among all the partners concerned in Europe. This brochure was distributed to the member regions at the

last AER General Assembly. As a follow-up to this action, Committee IV plans launching a campaign for the promotion of this partnership, among the European institutions, in close cooperation with the NGOs active in this field. It also plans to launch an officer exchange programme between coordinators of social projects, at regional level, this year.

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## >Eurodysses's contribution to the promotion of employment

The Eurodysses programme, which aims at improving young peoples' chances to integrate into the labour market, was opened to the regions of central and eastern Europe in 1997 and, this AER programme, will continue to develop in 1998. Its objectives are to increase the number of participating regions (contacts already made in the United States of America and Canada) and placements, to propose new professional fields and to ensure a wider diffusion of information, especially through multimedia technology. Young people from 18 to 30 years old - either unemployed or graduates looking for a first professional experience - can already discover Eurodysses through a CD-ROM (available from the AER General Secretariat) or on the Internet sites of the participating regions. Soon they will also be able to obtain the application dossier through the Internet.

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AER Contact: Doris Materne

## >Centurio 1998: Open for registration

Registration for Centurio 98 is open and some regions have already presented their requests to participate. This training programme, for government officers and political representatives from the regions of central and eastern Europe, was set up by the AER in 1994. Its success has been mainly due to the active contribution of the regions from central and eastern Europe which presented their candidates and those of western Europe which welcomed candidates and organised training *in situ*.

Each year, Centurio trainees have the possibility of obtaining direct experience of the functioning of regional administrations, the implementation of the principle of self-government in different institutional contexts and cooperation programmes. Their training is

completed by a seminar, organised by the AER, on European institutions and organisations with a regional vocation, on the objectives and means for regional policy within the EU and on community programmes of interregional cooperation. Centurio has efficiently contributed to the enlargement of the European Union policy for four years.

### Draft Schedule for Centurio 98

- Deadline for applications: end of April,
- Pre-selection: middle of May,
- Introduction seminar and final selection: end of July (Erfurt-Weimar),
- Centurio work placements: September-October,
- Evaluation seminar: November (Brussels).

AER Contact: Franz-Josef Stummann  
or Doris Materne

## >AER Summer School, Rendez-vous in Thüringen

After Budapest (1996) and Krakow (1997), the 1998 AER Summer School will be held in Erfurt and Weimar in Thüringen, in cooperation with the regions of Essex, Vlaanderen, Stockholm, Krakow, Istra and Pest. Set up by the Committee for East-West relations (II), this programme is intended for representatives of regional and local authorities in Europe (political and administrative levels). It offers them an opportunity to explore all the different types of regionalisation in force in Europe and the role played by the regional and local levels in exercising democracy in practical terms, in economic development and in the construction of Europe.

This Summer School can also be seen as a forum for the exchange of experiences and know-how to optimise the decision-making process and the management of human and financial resources at regional and local levels. The 1998 session, which will take place from 27th to 31st July, will also concentrate on the leading role of the regions in the current transformation process in former East Germany and in central and eastern Europe, on regional development factors (universities, cultural and touristic projects etc.) and on cases of good practice in the field of interregional cooperation.

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## internet

### One in three regions uses the Internet

According to the results of a recent survey carried out by the Committee on regional policy (V) on the use of the Internet in the member regions, it emerges that out of 116 regions (40% of the member regions replied), 78.9% are connected to the Internet and 57.8% have a Web site.

Therefore, the overall result, extended to all the member regions, shows that close to one third (29.8%) communicate via the Internet and one in five (21.9%) has a Web site.

### AER E-mail addresses

From the beginning of March, there will be some changes in the AER's E-mail addresses:

aercom1\_2@sdv.fr will become  
laura.derose@sdv.fr  
aercom3\_6@sdv.fr will become  
materne.stummann@sdv.fr  
aercom4\_5@sdv.fr will become  
s.evans@sdv.fr

Addresses aeradm@sdv.fr, aerpress@sdv.fr and aerpacte@sdv.fr remain unchanged. Do not hesitate to use these addresses, especially when our telephone or fax is busy. Our E-mail boxes are checked regularly.

### <http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg16/dg16.htm>

This site is one of the numerous sub-directories from the Europa server of the European Union. As with many other sites, all information appears in English. Apart from the links with Europa, the Commission and the research function, the home page also offers access to some interesting sections :

- "Mission" : links with current affairs (Agenda 2000, submissions),
- "Key speeches of Commissioner Monika Wulf-Mathies" : speeches by President Santer concerning the areas of work of the DG XVI and speeches by Commissioner Wulf-Mathies,
- "European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)" : ERDF Guide, programmes and innovative action,
- "Cohesion Fund" : all you need to know on the Cohesion Fund,
- "Publications" : links to official publications and the possibility to register onto a mailing list.

## > Exchange of Experiences after Pacte

The Exchange of Experiences programmes (EEP), later known as Pacte, were launched in 1989 by the Commission of the European Community. Over a period of seven years more than four hundred interregional cooperation projects have been co-financed, involving more than 1,200 regional and local partners from all over Europe (see graph). These programmes, seen as initiative programmes, offered the possibility for regional and local authorities to acquire a first experience in the field of European programmes. The networks that were consequently set up enabled the reinforcement of economic and social cohesion in Europe, the establishment of a code and culture of European interregional cooperation and the creation of a new flow of cooperation between regions which, for various reasons, often historic, were not used to working together.

The European Commission has clearly announced the end of the Pacte exchange of experience programme. Indeed, it considers that the local and regional authorities have now acquired enough experience to move towards other major cooperation programmes (eg, Article 10 of the ERDF). This decision appears to be definitive and irreversible. Consequently, the Pacte II programme (1995 contract) will be the last edition of the Pacte

1/ The main task of this Committee, created in 1995 by the Directorate General XVI, is to evaluate projects and propose orientations for the programmes as a whole. It is made up of national, independent experts nominated by the European Commission.

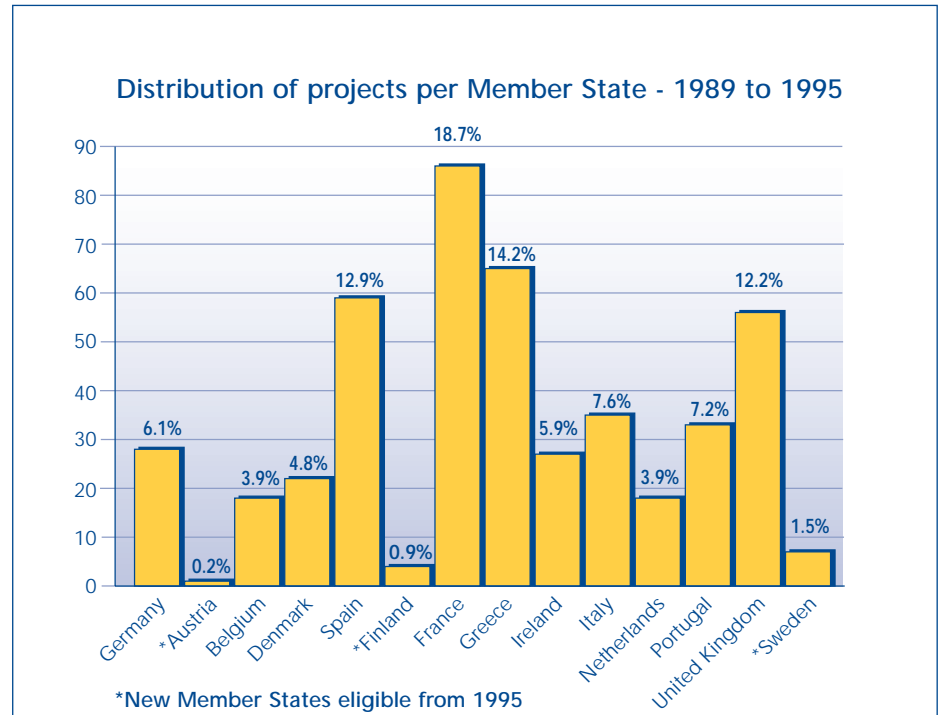
exchange of experience programme which started in 1989.

The European Commission is investigating the possibility of setting up another programme for the next programming period. This reflection could be carried out in liaison with the Evaluation and Follow-up Committee for

the Pacte/Ecos-Ouverture programmes<sup>1</sup>.

The representative bodies of regional and local authorities, as well as the authorities themselves, continue to support the concept of initiation programmes, such as Pacte.

**AER Contact:** Brigitte Fiorucci



## > What are the perspectives for decentralised cooperation?

Agenda 2000 presents the main principles which will underlie the next programming period after the year 2000. Part one on "The Policies of the Union" shows the Commission's willingness to continue with economic and social cohesion while stressing the need for "greater concentration". This is in line with the principle of good management, as seen by the European Commission. It is therefore planned to reduce the number of Community initiatives which currently exist to give priority to three areas of Community interest as from the year 2000: crossborder, transnational and interregional cooperation aimed at encouraging harmonious and balanced spatial planning, rural development and human resources in the context of equal opportunities.

### Reduction in Community Initiatives

In the same way, pilot schemes and innovative actions, for which 1% of the Structural Funds was allocated, will be reviewed to avoid the "pepper-potting" of funds and a multiplication of "mini-projects" which are difficult to manage and control. The Commission intends to study ways of concentrating aid on significant projects and achieving a simplified and transparent implementation.

### Concentration of means

The question that should be asked today is that of the future of direct decentralised cooperation. Does a reduction of Community initiatives, a review of innovative actions and pilot projects, and a concentration on significant projects mean that direct decentralised cooperation shall no longer be co-financed after the year 2000? The current decentralised cooperation projects are co-financed within the framework of innovative

actions and pilot projects. What will happen in the future? Would interregional cooperation carried out through a larger Community initiative allow direct decentralised cooperation to benefit from Community support?

### Principles of good management

Finally, what will happen to cooperation for the local and regional authorities which have not yet had the chance to take part in internal (Pacte/Recite) or external (Ecos-Ouverture) decentralised cooperation programmes? What should we understand by "concentration on significant projects"? Does this mean that small local and regional authorities, which have little experience of interregional cooperation, will no longer have the possibility to set up a cooperation project within their reach without too many risks. Is this not too high a price to pay just to simplify the implementation of programmes at EU level?

### Not so easily accessible

As it is keen to put into practice good management procedures, the EU runs the risk of restricting direct relations between local and regions authorities in the construction of Europe. It can also, by concentrating and simplifying the implementation of projects, make it impossible for certain authorities to have access to programmes, especially those which cannot take financial risks above their means, notably when it is a first experience.

These questions may be unfounded insofar as the text of Agenda 2000 could not be too detailed, but they nevertheless concern all the local and regional authorities, ie, ourselves.

**AER Contact:** Brigitte Fiorucci



### Reinforcing the Regions

European unification within the "Europe of the Regions" is one of the principles of the Baden-Württemberg Constitution, which has always given a particular importance to crossborder cooperation, especially with French and Swiss regions.

The role of the regions in Europe is not sufficiently acknowledged by the public, which is more interested in activities of the state. The future of European integration however, also depends on a construction from the bottom (regions, municipalities) up (states, EU).

The words of the sociologist, Daniel Bell "*the state is too small to solve the big problems and too big to solve the small ones*" are still valid today. This does not mean that the states are superfluous, but internationalization leads to problems that can only be resolved through supranational cooperation. The fields of action for the states, therefore, tend to be reduced,

their structures being, often, too rigid to solve the essential problems facing the citizen (education, infrastructure, culture, health etc.)

The future belongs as much to the European supranational community as to the regional and municipal unities. Reinforcing one does not mean weakening the other; the best solution would be to have a good combination of both.

Crossborder cooperation plays a key role in European integration because each experience can become a model to be followed at European level. Common agreements and successes reinforce the regions. Regionalism leads to a greater proximity to the citizen. Regionalism and European integration form two sides of a coin and it is, therefore, crucial that crossborder cooperation be supported by the European Union.

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### Rural regions

#### > *Information*

### *Technology for small rural businesses*

The Regions of Dorset (GB), Arhus (DK), Hedmark (N) and Värmland (S), which created a working group within the AER, met in November 1997 in Dorchester to consider the question of how information technology could be used to support and develop microenterprises in rural areas.

Each of these regions which share similar economic structures - majority of companies being microenterprises, sparsely populated areas, considerable distances from major cities etc. - could take advantage of information technology to overcome the disadvantages of rural areas and allow small businesses to benefit from joint working, marketing and training which might otherwise be denied to them.

Moreover, access to the Internet (E-mail, Web sites) enables them to communicate instantly with their clients and suppliers and provides the opportunity to market services and attract customers.

According to those who take part in the working group, many small businesses only use one tenth of what their computer systems are capable of and the challenge would be to help them to unlock the potential in their existing machines.

The meeting provided an excellent opportunity for exchanging expertise and, to prove the use of new technology, the region of Västerbotten joined the meeting by videolink!

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### The Danube-Mures-Tisa (DMT) Euro-region

#### > *Towards interregional cooperation in various fields*

In 1997, after five years of successful bilateral, transborder cooperation, nine regions from the Great Plain of the Carpathian Basin - Arad, Caras-Severin, Hunedoara, Timis (RO), Bács-Kiskun, Békés, Csongrád, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok (H), the Autonomous Province of Voivodina (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) - signed a protocol for interregional cooperation.

This agreement concerns the development of relations and common projects in several areas (economy, transport and telecommunications, spatial planning and the protection of the environment, culture and education, health, science and sport) with the aim of encouraging, in the middle and long terms, European harmonization and

integration. Priority cooperation projects for this new Euro-region (77 500 Km<sup>2</sup>, 6 millions inhabitants) aim mainly at setting up common strategies for regional planning and the protection of essential resources such as water, the development of regional systems for connections with international railway lines, the opening of new border posts or the modernizing of existing ones, the construction of a common technology centre in Szeged and the setting up of university exchanges.

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#### > *Solidarity with regions affected by natural disasters*

During its extraordinary meeting in Bruges in October 1997, the AER Bureau launched an appeal to all member regions to show solidarity with the German and Polish regions situated on the banks of the river Oder which were affected by serious flooding as well as with the victims of the earthquakes which hit the regions of Marche and Umbria in Italy.

Several regions responded to the AER appeal. Here are some examples of the ways in which regions offered their solidarity and which the General Secretariat was informed of: refurbishment of a secondary school in Opole in Poland (Rhône-Alpes), financial aid to the humanitarian associations and missions in Italy and Poland (Alsace, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Limbourg and Lorraine), aid for regenerating

dairy cattle herds in the Voivodeship of Opole (Franche-Comté), provisions of basic household utensils and appliances to Polish families (Sønderjylland), refurbishment of an orphanage in Wrocław (Oberösterreich). So many examples that show that, when in need, interregional solidarity really means something.

**AER Contact:** Eric Milesi

## Aquitaine - Euskadi - Navarra

### >Over 350 Crossborder Projects

The regions of Aquitaine (F), Euskadi and Navarra (E) are geographically and historically close so it is quite natural that they got together. Aquitaine and Euskadi established a cooperation protocol in 1989 and Navarra joined them in 1992, thus sealing a fruitful institutional collaboration.

The main objectives of this cooperation are:

- to exchange information on respective economic and social policies, on actions for the promotion and the development of communications, training, research and infrastructures as well as the value of cultural and linguistic heritage,
- to harmonise policies in the above mentioned areas,
- to consult each other on the definition and implementation of projects of common interest,
- to encourage all forms of cooperation between the different public,

professional and private bodies from each region.

Over 350 transborder projects, 50 of which were introduced in 1997, have in this way been set up in a variety of fields: higher education, scientific research, the environment, economic development, tourism, agriculture, culture, training, social care, diffusion of the Basque language etc.

These projects are financed by a common intervention fund. The three regions invest each year close to 300 million Pesetas so that this collaboration may realise an even greater number of common projects on both sides of the border.

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## The Baltic Sea

### >A new Phare/Interreg programme

The Baltic Sea region, which includes coastal regions from roughly ten countries, has a long tradition of crossborder, interregional and transnational cooperation which is illustrated through the large number and the variety of initiatives and programmes set up in this area.

Following the success of the mechanism in favour of small projects in this region, set up in 1995 through the Phare programme, the European Commission has launched a new programme. The aim of the Phare/Interreg programme is to finance crossborder cooperation for the Baltic Sea; it is open to local and regional authorities. There needs to be a minimum of two partners, one of which must be from a Baltic region eligible for Interreg II C or II A, which will be entrusted with the submission

of the project, and the other from eligible regions within Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the coastal voivodeships in Poland.

The areas of eligible cooperation are the environment, human resources, economic development, tourism, transport, social services, local democracy, education, culture and the strengthening of institutions.

The projects, which last 18 months, must have a budget of between 100 000 and 300 000 Ecus, the co-financing representing a maximum of 80% of the total cost of the project.

**Contact:** Phare/Tacis CBC Project Facility Office (Vestjaellands Amt)  
Tel: +45 57 87 23 15  
Fax: +45 57 87 23 25  
E-mail: vec@vestamt.dk

## partnerships

### Creation of information centres on regionalism

The regions of Iasi and Arad (RO) are seeking partners for the creation of a "European Information and Promotion of Regionalism Centre". The objective of this project, for which the regions envisage requesting financial aid from the Ecos-Ouverture programme, is:

- to provide information on the activities of European organisations and regional partners,
- to promote regionalism and to encourage interregional cooperation, especially with the regions from the EU candidate countries.

The regions of Istra (HR) and Karelia (RUS) intend to create similar centres. The AER member regions are invited to support these initiatives by submitting ideas, sharing experiences or in other ways.

**AER Contact:** Laura de Rose

### Comparative study on medical care in Europe

The region of Nordrhein-Westfalen (D) has just launched a comparative study on health services in Europe and is seeking partner regions, particularly in Italy, Spain and Denmark.

The health services in Europe are called upon to carry out major structural reforms. In this context, the goal of the Nordrhein-Westfalen initiative is to evaluate existing systems, to propose comparative analysis methods and then to carry out studies on the priority issues. The results obtained will be used in a European forum for discussions at regional level and as a practical framework for the implementation of these reforms.

The region has already established a cooperation with the AER's Committee for Social, Health and Employment Affairs (IV) which plans on organising a seminar on this theme.

**Contact:** Dr Hans Sandler (Nordrhein-Westfalen)  
Tel: +49 211 855 35 40  
Fax: +49 211 855 32 39

## notebook

### The AER welcomes new members

During the General Assembly of Montpellier, the AER welcomed some thirty regions as new members:

#### Finland

Varsinais-Suomen Liitto, Pirkanmaan Liitto, Savon Liitto, Keski-Suomen Liitto, Etelä-Pohjanmaan Liitto, Uudenmaan Liitto, Pohjanmaan Liitto, Hämeen Liitto, Etelä-Karjalan Liitto, Satakunta Liitto, Kainuun Liitto, Lapin Liitto, Pohjois-Pohjanmaan Liitto and Pohjois-Karjalan Liitto.

Following the reorganisation of the regional level in Finland, the Provinces, which were previously members of the AER, ceased to exist in their current form as from 1st September 1997.

#### Georgia

Adjara, the first Georgian region to join the AER.

#### Poland

The Voivodeships of Suwalki and Zamosc.

#### Romania

Arges, Bacau, Clarasi, Caras-Severin, Constanta, Covasna, Dambovita, Dolj, Galati, Iasi, Mures, Salaj, Sibiu, Suceava, Tulcea, Valcea, Vaslui.

#### United Kingdom

The East of Scotland Consortium

The AER also welcomes the Lithuanian county of Marijampolė as an observer and the Moldavian region of Chisinau as a full member. Chisinau has, up to now, taken part in the AER's activities as an observer.

The AER also takes note, with regret, of the withdrawal of the regions of Bornholm (DK), Merseyside and Nottinghamshire (GB).

The AER sends all its new members a very warm welcome!



## > Limburg, the 'Flavour region of Europe 1998'

The Region of Languedoc-Roussillon (F) held the 2nd European Cup of Regional Flavours from 2nd to 4th February 1998.

Created in 1995 by the region of Poitou-Charentes and sponsored by the AER, this event aims at promoting regional gastronomy in Europe, highlighting the diversity, the richness and quality of regional products and reviving traditional recipes. For this 2nd edition of the Cup, 64 regions from 16 countries took part, in four categories. Out of the 159 recipes prepared by regional chefs, in the competition, 32 prizes were awarded by a European jury and presented by President Jacques Blanc. The region of Limburg (NL) obtained the most prizes and was proclaimed the "Flavour region of Europe 1998".

### Prizes in the different categories

#### Starter:

Gold: Limburg (NL) - Silver: Salzburg (A) - Bronze: Hessen (D)

Other prize-winners: Galicia (E) - Poitou-Charentes (F) - Utrecht (NL) - Basse & Haute Normandie (F) - Pais Vasco (E)

#### Fish:

Gold: Languedoc-Roussillon (F) - Silver: Grampian (GB) - Bronze: Alsace (F)

Other prize-winners: Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (F) - Østfold (N) - Midi-Pyrénées (F) - Wales (GB) - Basse & Haute Normandie (F)

#### Meat:

Gold: Limburg (NL) - Silver: Warszawa (PL) - Bronze: Northwest Cumbria (GB)

Other prize-winners: Wales (GB) - Alsace (F) - Tayside-Perthshire (GB) - Campania (I) - Dumfries and Galloway (GB)

#### Dessert:

Gold: South Yorkshire (GB) - Silver: Alsace (F) - Bronze: Limburg (NL)

Other prize-winners: Warszawa (PL) - Salzburg (A) - Utrecht (NL) - Hessen (D) - Flevoland (NL)

Congratulations to the prize winners and all the participants.

Contact : Anne Maennlein (Languedoc-Roussillon) - Tel : +33 4 67 22 80 54  
Fax +33 4 67 92 30 78

## > The AER's headquarters are to remain in Strasbourg

After the envisaged possibility of a move to Bonn, the AER Presidium and Bureau decided to maintain the headquarters of the organisation in Strasbourg. Thanks to the support of the Regional Council of Alsace and the City of Strasbourg, the AER will move to one of the European Parliament buildings (IPE3), once its present occupants move to the new hemicycle. In this way the new AER headquarters will be situated at the heart of the European institutions based in Strasbourg.

## The AER Declaration on Regionalism

The process for publishing the Declaration on Regionalism started in the middle of September 1997 and was finalised in January 1998. Thanks to the cooperation of the member regions, which provided us with the translations, and the region of Thüringen which kindly printed 55 000 copies of the Declaration, it is now available in 18 languages.

In order to publish this document in the languages of central and eastern Europe, we had to overcome several problems linked to the incompatibility of computer systems and the different characters.

We were, however, sadly, unable to publish the Declaration in Croat and Tatar, despite the translations being available, and would like to apologise to the regions which provided these translations.

The Declaration was printed in the following languages and number of copies: English (8000), German (6500), French (6000), Russian (5000), Spanish (4000), Italian (4000), Hungarian (2500), Dutch (2500), Polish (2500), Romanian (2500), Ukrainian (2500), Portuguese (2000), Swedish (2000), Finnish (1500), Lithuanian (1500), Basque (1000), Catalan (1000) and Norwegian (1000).

You can order copies in the languages required from the General Secretariat. A contribution for postage costs will be requested for large quantities.

**AER Contact:** Barbara Thauront or Francine Huhardeaux

## diary

### APRIL

Monday 20th to Friday 24th  
Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly, Strasbourg (F)

Thursday 23rd to Saturday 25th  
Conference on "Education and training Partnerships", Miskolc (H)

Friday 24th  
Meeting of Committee IV, Székesfehérvár (H)

Wednesday 29th and Thursday 30th  
European Parliament, Plenary Session Brussels (B)

### MAY

Monday 4th and Tuesday 5th  
Meeting of Committee II, Stockholm (S)

Monday 11th to Friday 15th  
European Parliament, Plenary Session, Strasbourg (B)

Wednesday 13th and Thursday 14th  
Committee of the Regions, Plenary Assembly, Brussels (B)

Thursday 14th  
Meeting of the Presidium, Brussels (B)

Thursday 21st to Monday 25th  
Book Fair, Participation of Committee VI Turin (I)

Monday 25th

Meeting of Committee I during the CLRAE session, Strasbourg (F)

Tuesday 26th to Thursday 28  
Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe (CLRAE), Plenary Session, Strasbourg (F)

Wednesday 27th and Thursday 28th  
European Parliament, Plenary Session, Brussels (B)

### JUNE

Thursday 4th and Friday 5th  
Meeting of Committee I, Münster (D)

Thursday 11th and Friday 12th  
Meeting of the Presidium and Bureau, Dalarna (S) or Strasbourg (F)

Monday 15th and Tuesday 16th  
European Council, Cardiff (GB)

Monday 15th to Friday 19th  
European Parliament, Cardiff (GB)

Wednesday 17th to Friday 19th  
CPMR, General Assembly Lisbon (P)

Monday 22nd to Friday 26th  
Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly, Strasbourg (F)



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March 1998