



## editorial

### >Welcome to Oberösterreich

With the European Union (EU) presidency, Austria has been pushed to the fore on the European political scene. In this context, the region of Oberösterreich is delighted to welcome to its capital, Linz, the 300 member regions of the Assembly of European Regions on 3rd and 4th December for their summit meeting.

Europe is at a crucial stage in its development. The regions and Länder have been called upon to discuss the orientations which will determine the Europe of the XXIst century.

The region of Oberösterreich, borders on the east of the Europe of Fifteen and, therefore, offers an especially favourable framework for discussions concerning the EU enlargement process. This issue will also be discussed with prominent representatives from the European authorities who we hope to see among our guests.

Oberösterreich and its capital, Linz, are proud to be the hosts of this summit. I am sure that the participants of the AER General Assembly will find all the facilities they need to make this event a success.

I will be extremely honoured to welcome the representatives of the European regions in Oberösterreich at the beginning of December and hope that the discussions will be fruitful for the future of a common Europe.

Dr Joseph Pühringer  
Landeshauptmann of  
Oberösterreich

## >Focusing our activities on the promotion of regionalism and cooperation

The "AER Strategy" group was set up in February 1998 to prepare an action plan for the AER for the coming years and has submitted its report to the Presidium and Bureau. After decision by the Bureau in Arad, this report will be sent to all the member regions.

Chaired by Mr Hans De Belder, the plenipotentiary representative of Minister-President Luc Van den Brande, the "AER Strategy" group concluded its work on 8th September 1998 in Dalarna (S). Its final report was submitted to the Presidium, meeting on 18th September 1998 in Bremen (D), then to the members of the Bureau, to discuss during their meeting in Arad (RO), on 8th and 9th October 1998. The group recommends a total reorientation of the AER's activities in this report whilst taking account of the European evolution, regionalisation in progress in a certain number of countries and the internal situation of the organisation.

### Promotion of regionalism

The AER should return to its core task, as a political movement, namely to the promotion of regionalism with the aim of reinforcing the regions as the third level of decision-makers in Europe.

The AER, therefore, plays the role of active partner in the European Union Enlargement process, which must be accompanied by the implementation of democratic structures at regional level in the candidate countries.

The "AER Declaration on Regionalism in Europe", adopted by the General Assembly of Basel in 1996, will be the main instrument used in this task. The group proposes action plans for the short and medium terms. One of these tasks, the preparation of the next

Intergovernmental Conference in 2002, will be given top priority.

### Organising cooperation

This task, however, cannot be accomplished without the development of cooperation between the regions of Europe at all levels. The AER, in liaison with other interregional organisations, shall take part in the implementation of this type of cooperation, in the spirit of complementarity and partnership. This task should also contribute efficiently to exchanges of experience and know-how between members.

### Adapting the structures

In order to ensure the feasibility of this action plan, the group recommends adapting AER structures, an optimization of working methods and a concentration of means on priority tasks.

All AER members will receive a full version of the report following the Bureau meeting in Arad. The regions who wish to put forward amendment suggestions, are asked to do so no later than 20th November 1998. Any amendments must be submitted in English only and sent directly to the AER General Secretariat.

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### EU enlargement

#### > *The Hof Declaration*

The 2nd Conference of European Union (EU) Border Regions was held in Hof (D) last July. Its main objective was to examine the challenges which the enlargement of the EU represent for regions bordering onto and in the proximity of the acceding countries. Representatives from all the regions situated on the EU's eastern border took part.

At the end of a two-day debate, the "Hof Declaration" was published. This Declaration recognises EU enlargement as a great historical opportunity for Europe. It also draws the attention of the European authorities in charge of accession negotiations to the concerns of these regions, and proposes a series of measures to ensure that European integration in border areas is carried out in a harmonious and sustainable way.

The Declaration highlights the importance of the principle of complete adoption of Community *acquis*; this is a prerequisite to avoid economic and social disparities in the regions concerned and to encourage the acceptance of the enlargement process by the public. Areas such as the opening up of the Single Market, the respect of social and environmental norms, agricultural development and domestic security should be carefully dealt with during negotiations.

Moreover, the border regions, which will need to make special efforts to adapt have asked the EU to set up an integrated fund for this purpose. *The Declaration is available from the AER General Secretariat.*

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#### > *The start of regionalisation in the Czech Republic*

Administrative reform is under way in the Czech Republic. One of the main results will be to set up a regional level with the creation of 14 regions called "Higher Self-Governing Units" (HSGU) in accordance with a constitutional law. This law will come into force in the year 2000 when the first elections of the regional councils will take place.

The administrative structure relies on two levels: the local level (over 6000 municipalities, approximately 500 towns, 13 of which have additional competencies, and Prague, the capital city with autonomous status) and the districts (76), which are decentralised administrative State bodies. Local authorities have a certain number of competencies as well as the representative bodies elected by direct universal suffrage.

The aim of the reform is to set up regional authorities and to define their competencies and financial resources but it will also affect the entire State

administrative structure. Relations between the national, regional and local levels will also be affected.

The Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Finances have been entrusted with the task of setting up the "Higher Self-Governing Units". The former is responsible for establishing the election procedures for the regional councils, the structure, the organisation and the competencies of the HSGU; the latter their financial resources, state property and taxation.

The procedure now under way in the Czech Republic represents a major reform which aims at decentralising the State administration and redistributing powers and competencies between central government and the regional and local levels.

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### Promotion of regionalism

#### > *A significant initiative carried out by Pest*

Following the initiative put forward by the Pest region (the Autonomous Assembly of the Department of Pest-H), a conference on the theme of "Perspectives of the local and regional authorities in central and eastern Europe" was held from 10th to 13th September 1998 in Budapest. The AER was invited to take an active part in this conference by promoting the fundamental principles of regionalism, as set out in its "Declaration on regionalism in Europe".

Faced with the challenge of joining the EU, the Hungarian local and regional authorities

aim at reinforcing their competencies but also increasing their economic role. Much of the debate was therefore dedicated to strategies for economic development, the assets of interregional cooperation and the financial possibilities offered by the European and international institutions (EU, with the Phare programme, and the World Bank).

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### General Assembly

Preparation of the programme for the Assembly, to be held in Linz on 3rd and 4th December 1998. Invitations for the member regions and personalities. Preparation of the 1999 budget

### Other meetings

#### Presidium

(Bremen-D, 18th Sept.)

#### Bureau

(Strasbourg-F, 11th & 12th June and Brussels-B, 2nd July)

#### Committees:

- Committee I (Münster-D, 4th & 5th June)

- Committees I and II (Iasi-RO, 24th & 25th Sept.); the latter was followed by a seminar entitled "The Romanian Regions and the Enlargement of EU".

**The AER Strategy working group** (Dalarna-S, 8th Sept.)

### Centurio 98 and the Summer School

(Erfurt-D, 27th to 31st July) (see article on page 4)

### "Visiting Cards" directory

The "Visiting Cards" directory is currently being up-dated with the help of a publicity company.

It should be finalised by the beginning of 1999. Information received by the regions is being processed and a data base set up. The introductory pages are also being up-dated.

### Regions of Europe map

Cartographic work is being carried out with a view to producing a new map which will take account of the changes in regional structures in Europe since 1994 (this concerns approximately twelve countries). Should appear in spring 1999.

### Participation in other events

- Plenary session (Strasbourg-F, 26th to 28th May) and Bureau (Strasbourg-F, 29th Sept.) of the Chamber of Regions of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe,  
- Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions' General Assembly (Lisbon-P, 18th & 19th June),  
- Plenary Assembly of the Committee of the Regions (Brussels-B, 15th & 16th July and 16th & 17th Sept.),  
- Jury for the Kaiser Maximilian Prize (Innsbruck-A, 4th July).

## AER activities: June to September 1998

## Institutional Affairs

### > *Committee I pursues the promotion of regionalism*

**A**ER's Committee I met in Münster on 4th and 5th June 1998 during the 350th anniversary of the Treaty of Westphalia. During this meeting, members laid the foundations for an east-west partnership of regional democracy.

Within this framework, it decided to organise a joint meeting with Committee II (responsible for east-west relations) on 24th and 25th September 1998 in Iasi (RO). One of the main objectives of this meeting will be to prepare the AER Conference on the contributions of the regions in the EU enlargement process and to further the concept of interregional, multilateral, east-west partnerships.

In the meantime, Committee I continues its work in the promotion of regionalism in

Europe by entrusting its network of experts with the realisation of a new edition of the "Synoptic Tables". These tables first appeared in 1997 and show the progress of regionalisation in fifteen European countries. The objective of this up-dated version is, in particular, to integrate other countries which are represented in the AER. These tables will also be integrated into the new AER "Visiting Cards" directory.

Committee I has also decided to take all necessary measures to encourage AER members to distribute the Declaration on Regionalism and to undertake other initiatives for the promotion of regionalism.

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### Jordi Pujol, winner of the Kaiser Maximilian Prize

The 1998 Kaiser Maximilian Prize was presented to Jordi Pujol, President of the Generalitat of Catalunya and former AER President. Mr Pujol, who has been the President of Catalunya since 1980, was, in this way, rewarded for his continual battle for democracy and the recognition of the role of the regions in the European integration process.

The presentation of this award took place on 4th July 1998 in Innsbruck in the presence of Mr Klestil, President of the Austrian Republic and Mrs Fischer, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and Mr Weingartner, Landeshauptmann of Tirol who spoke very highly of Mr Pujol.

The Kaiser Maximilian Prize was created following the initiative of the Land of Tirol and the town of Innsbruck and consists of a certificate, a medal and 10.000 Euro. The prize will be awarded each year to a personality or an institution which has worked specifically in favour of regionalism or the principle of subsidiarity in Europe.

## Territorial Planning

### > *Committee V in the ESDP debate*

**W**hen it met in Strasbourg on 20th May 1998, Committee V adopted a resolution on the first official draft of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP). This resolution was well received by the ministers responsible for spatial planning, meeting in Glasgow on 8th June 1998.

Mr Richard Caborn, British Minister in charge of spatial planning who chaired the session, informed Committee V

that the regional dimension and a certain number of other concerns raised in the resolution were discussed during this informal meeting.

In its resolution, Committee V puts the emphasis on the major role played by the local and regional authorities in territorial planning and, consequently, on the importance of involving these in the consultation process at national and Community level. The Committee also highlighted the need to pay more attention to the changing function

of rural and urban areas. The impact of the next CAP reform on the rural environment should be studied in more detail. According to Committee V, the ESDP should also take account of the forthcoming EU enlargement.

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## Women in politics at regional level

*"One of the AER's objectives is to influence European society so that it becomes closer to the citizen. This goes of course for ALL citizens. We proclaim democratic ideals. However it appears that an overwhelming part of the decision-makers in regional European councils are men and the results of a recent survey carried out by the AER has proved this. Why?"*

*It can be rightly said that democracy is incomplete if half the population, namely the female part, is not entitled to the same political, economic and social rights. Moreover, society loses a lot of valuable competencies and does not take full advantage of the capacity of women which*

*means a great economic deficit. The social competence which women through thousands of years of care work have gained is very much needed in the official society.*

*For these three reasons (democratic, economic and social) we have to find ways to give more political influence to women. This is the aim of the "Women In Politics At Regional Level" conference to be held in the Incontra Congress Center, Torino on 7th November 1998 under the chairmanship of President Ragnar Kristoffersen (Akershus).*

*The AER's Vice-President Treasurer, Mr John MacDougall and the President*

*of the Piemonte Region, Mr Enzo Ghigo will open the conference. Mrs Carin Palmcrantz (Dalarna) and the spokesperson of the Norwegian Parliament, Mrs Kirsti Kolle Gröndahl will introduce some of the issues. A new scientific report on the differences in decisions made at political level between traditional male dominated decision-making bodies and the ones with more equal opportunities will be presented by Dr Lena Wängnerud."*

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## > *Exchanging Experiences: the main asset of the Summer School*

The AER's third Summer School, organised this year by the regions of Essex (GB), Istra (HR), Krakow (PL), Pest (H), Stockholm (S), Thüringen (D), Vlaanderen (B) and was supported by the European Commission, took place from 27th to 31st July in Thüringen.

Over 120 people from 20 different European countries took part in this event. The main objective was to increase cooperation between the regions of the European Union and those of Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC). The programme, which was organised by the regional Presidents concerned, comprised experts' contributions, discussion forums, workshops and study visits in the host region. It allowed for debate on several themes of regional and European interest: interregional cooperation, the enlargement of the European Union, culture and tourism, the environment and transport. The practical aspects of regional development such as the decision-making process, administrative management or the regional application of European programmes were also discussed.

The debates on crossborder, interregional and transnational cooperation, were particularly appreciated by the participants who were able to discover different forms of partnership between the regions of Europe and take an active part in the exchanges of experience. Lectures on the experience acquired during the transformation process in east Germany were very informative, especially for the regions directly concerned by the enlargement of the future European Union.

### **A permanent event**

The session which concentrated on European Cultural Capitals was also a great success. The speakers from Antwerp, Stockholm, Weimar (Cultural Capitals in 1993, 1998, 1999 respectively), Krakow and Avignon (Capitals in 2000) presented, in turn, their experiences or expressed their expectations. The discussion which followed emphasised how diverse each situation was; there are no rules to be followed and when it comes to comparing past experiences, the information must be adapted to the capacity of each town.

The variety of themes discussed, the quality of the speakers' contributions and the excellent organisation meant that the

Summer School was a great success despite the very tight schedule. The progress report following the week's activities confirms the growing role of this event in the exchange and distribution of ideas and experiences at regional level. The AER must make the Summer School an annual event in order to promote the regional level to a larger and larger public and ought to launch an appeal for candidates for the 1999 session already.

### **Synergy with the Centurio Programme**

For the first time this year, the Summer School and the introduction seminar for the AER's Centurio Programme (training programme for regional officers from CEEC) were held together. This joint venture encouraged complementarity on the one hand and a great synergy and efficiency of AER programmes on the other.

Thirteen Centurio trainees from regions in Hungary, Poland and Romania took part in the Seminar followed by a work placement during the months of September and October in two different host regions. Amongst these were: Salzburg, Wien (A), Vlaanderen (B), Solothurn, St. Gallen, Vaud (CH), Baden-Württemberg, Hessen, Saarland, Thüringen (D), Vejle (DK), Catalunya, Islas Baleares, Pais Vasco (E), Alsace (F), Essex (GB), Trento (I), Noord-Brabant (NL) and Norte (P).

### **Encouraging exchanges from both sides**

The Centurio Programme is in full evolution and a few meetings with the trainees allowed for a better knowledge of their evaluation and expectations. Several of them expressed the need to encourage the exchange of experience aspect at ground level. They insisted on the importance of preparing the placements well in advance and in full liaison with the coordinator, for the smooth running of the traineeship. They appreciate in general the opportunity offered by these two AER initiatives for encouraging contacts, even partnerships. With reference to the Summer School, a suggestion was made that more interactivity between the speakers and participants should be encouraged.

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## internet

**<http://europe.eu.int/eurostat.html>**

The site for the Statistical Office of the European Communities offers the latest Community statistics in three languages (GB, F, D).

**The home page gives access to seven main sections:**

- Presentation of Eurostat, its role, its organisation,
- Products and data bases available; this section contains a synthesis of reference products and services as well as the presentation by theme of the main publications, CD-ROM and data bases,
- On-line statistical indicators which you can down-load free of charge (Euro-indicators, EU indicators and Euro yield curve),
- On-line catalogues with the possibility of immediate consultation,
- Statistical information service and Data shop network which shows the distribution of European statistics; this also shows you how to choose an information centre proposed in the list of Data shops and to make your request using the form provided,
- Eurostat press service with the latest press releases,
- Statistical news where you will find, apart from the bulletin of European statistics (latest environmental pressure indices project) as well as various information concerning statistics and statisticians (conferences and seminars, research and development etc.),
- Links and contacts on the Internet for researching national and international statistics and European statistical Systems offices. Finally, you will also find on this page a "Flash Info".

You can also order Eurostat publications or request the statistical information you need by using order forms which can be down-loaded.

**Overall, a very easy site to consult.**

# Exchange of Experience Programme

## > Positive assessment for Pacte II

At the end of September, the Pacte EIG submitted its final report on the Pacte II programme (1996-1998) to the European Commission. The report, which gave details of the activities and finances of the 67 projects which made up this last programme, was drawn up in February of this year.

### The steps undertaken by the management body

The single management body created by the AER and CEMR<sup>1)</sup> to manage the Pacte II programme, the Pacte EIG, played the role of interlocutor for the projects and for the European Commission. In view of the programme's evolution over the last few years, the experience acquired and the stringent management which was requested for the last edition of Pacte, we developed a specific working method and tools. These allowed the projects' evolution to be closely followed and contractual reports to be drawn up on the activities and finances at the intermediary and final stages of the projects. This management method reflects our role as interface: while meeting the contractual obligations, it matches the need to follow up and control, if necessary, the management of the project.

### A range of specific tools

As soon as the projects for 1996 were underway, a range of tools was established so that the project leaders could have some theoretical training and give them the practical tools needed to lead their projects and to evaluate them, when necessary, so as to keep control. This range of tools consists of:  
- a practical guide and manual of

procedures approved by the European Commission (DG XVI) which aimed at defining the rules and to show administrative and financial procedures,  
- standard formats for the progress and assessment reports, which were set up around two fundamental notions: the technical project and its network,  
- financial tables on computer allowing for an accurate input of accounting elements,  
- meetings with the project leaders at strategic moments: launch days, information meetings, bilateral meetings etc.

At the same time, a data base for operational management was set up allowing for all the information on the progress of the projects to be recorded during these two years. This information was then analysed and evaluated with the aim of giving it the necessary evaluation, especially in its final stages (establishment of the financial report and justification of expenditure). This work constituted the essence of the reports submitted to the European Commission and the monitoring of the projects. This is how Pacte II can today show examples of good practice in the area of cooperation and can contribute to a veritable exchange of partnerships for future cooperations.

### A positive assessment

The stringent management which was set up has borne fruit; the final assessment is good (see diagrams): out of 81% of satisfactory projects, 25% are excellent. On the financial side, the programme has been well controlled. The accounts and the documentary proof for Pacte II were revised by KPMG-Fiduciaire de France who concluded that the management of

Pacte II presented no financial risk for the AER<sup>2)</sup>.

The opinions given by the experts of the Follow-up and Evaluation Committee for the Pacte/Ecos-Ouverture Programmes of the European Commission underlined the professionalism shown in the management of Pacte II and regretted that such a programme will not be re-run.

The partnership authorities stressed, in their final assessment, the importance of the steps set up in view of the numerous monthly reports to be submitted to the European Commission and the need for a closer technical assistance at the submission phase.

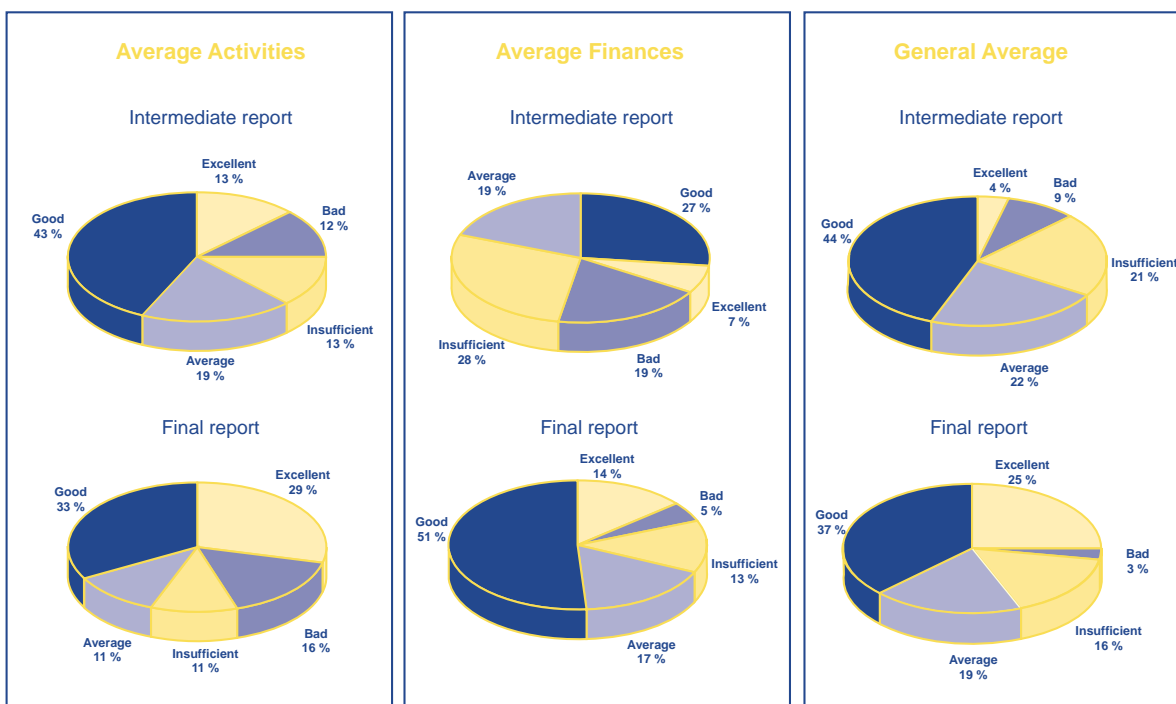
In this way, the Pacte II programme has allowed all the partners to regain trust.

### Distributing the acquired experience

Today, now that the programme has finished, we can use our Pacte data base and expertise (that is to say your achievements and experiences) on the Internet site to enhance the know-how accumulated by the local and regional authorities during these pioneer years of cooperation. This site, which illustrates all the projects and functioning as a veritable exchange of partners, will be available during the autumn of 1998 on the Inforegio server of the DG XVI.

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1) Council of European Municipalities and Regions  
2) Report drawn up by the KPMG "AER-Pacte, Details of discrepancies EEP V, Pacte I and Pacte II" (June 1998)



## Pacte II final assessment

## commentary

### The role of the Regions in the Europe of the XXIst century

Joaquim Llimona

"The Presidents of the "Four motors for Europe" (Baden-Württemberg, Catalunya, Lombardia, Rhône-Alpes) and the regions of Piemonte and Veneto met in June 1998 in Milan to adopt a declaration on the role of the regions in the Europe of the XXIst century. The objective of this declaration, which reflects the regions' commitment in Europe, is to reinforce the dialogue mechanism between the European Union and the regions. Three main ideas emerge:

- Increasing the regions' participation in European integration is not only a

political demand. The Regions contribute to the integration process in a variety of areas. They help Europe to face the challenges of global competition and modernisation and the citizens to become more European-minded. Regional participation is also a key factor in promoting efficiency and raising the democratic legitimacy of the EU. To achieve this, it is necessary to set up mechanisms which will allow a real and effective participation of the Regions in the decision-making process of the EU. This is an important challenge for the Europe of tomorrow.

- The second idea which concerns structural policies, highlights a double necessity: to improve the dialogue between the Institutions of the EU and those of the Regions when implementing these policies and to give clear support

to interregional and crossborder activities. These should be clearly distinct from the objectives of the Structural funds.

- The structural policies of the EU should promote cohesion and economic development as well as the responsibility of regional actors. This proposal does not oppose the fact that the Union is responsible for correcting the imbalances between the territories in Europe and restoring the competitiveness of the most dynamic sectors. It is these sectors which will guarantee European growth.

The Milan Declaration represents the first step in the debate on the Regions and the Europe of the XXIst century. Any contributions, ideas or concepts by other Regions would be very welcome."

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## Sustainable development

### > *An increasingly important concept*

The concept of sustainable development is little known amongst European regional political authorities and executives. This is why seven regions from six European countries - Baden-Württemberg (D), Bohus (S), Emilia Romagna (I), Midi-Pyrénées and Rhône-Alpes (F), Vorarlberg (A) and Wallonia (B) - set out to gather, within the framework of a Pacte<sup>1)</sup> interregional cooperation project, experiences of sustainable development from the different partner regions, in order to design evaluation criteria/indicators and produce a methodological guide for regionally-elected officials<sup>2)</sup>.

The partner regions were not surprised to notice that the experiences gathered<sup>3)</sup> were so dissimilar that it has been, up to now, impossible to compare them. This activity nonetheless enabled the partners to develop joint methods for analysing projects, establish criteria for evaluating sustainable development and issue a series of recommendations for political decision-makers with regard to their implementation.

#### A dynamic network for a successful cooperation

By debating and analysing new and original experiences, the participating

regions learnt a great deal about each other and discovered the value of policies with which they were previously unfamiliar. The cooperation established through the programme encouraged the partners to commit themselves fully to the network, forge a consensus acceptable to all and develop contacts with other European regional authorities in order to promote sustainable development.

Presentations of the experiences of each region during a series of meetings enabled partners to exchange experience and learn about their respective approaches. By understanding different interpretations of the notion of sustainable development, the partners were able to enrich their own approaches, for example by introducing other evaluation criteria relating to the environment, the economy, society, culture, equality, diversity, subsidiarity, partnership and participation.

The realization of the concept and its efficiency remain to be seen but the project played a major part in the implementation of Community policy thanks to its objective: sustainable development in the regions.

#### And after Pacte?

In the short term, the methodological guide "Towards sustainable development" along with a presentation of the two pilot projects carried out in each region concerned will be translated and published in English, Italian and German (only the main section will be translated into German).

Workshops on the subject will also be organised in Vorarlberg, and a project on water management in Emilia Romagna.

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1) PACTE: "Action Programme for Local and Regional Authorities in Europe" Initiation programme for a cooperation co-financed by the Directorate General XVI

2) "Towards sustainable development: experiences and recommendations of seven European regions"

3) Work was carried out through the "Sustainable development" project, coordinated by the Midi-Pyrénées Region

## Pays de la Loire - Balaton

### > A two year cooperation

The first progress report on the cooperation agreement signed in 1996 between the Pays de la Loire (F) and the region of Balaton (H) which regroups the departments of Somogy, Veszprém and Zala is very satisfactory. Several projects have been set up in the areas of EU integration into education and training, tourism, economic development and culture.

In this way the Europe-Balaton Information Centre - a pilot centre in Hungary - was set up in March 1998 and benefits from a transfer of know-how from the Pays de la Loire. Fifteen exchanges of trainers and 120 student exchanges were carried out in the areas of tourism, hotel and catering and the food industry. Thanks to the AER Centurio programme, an exchange of officers was carried out with the department of Veszprém. A Regional Tourist Office was created with the objective of establishing a marketing plan for tourism in Balaton. Joint activities have been carried out in the development of rural tourism and for the economic information network on tourism.

The implementation of economic cooperation has enabled four partnerships to be set up between different companies of the two regions, the organisation of an audit and training for the staff of the three Hungarian Chambers of Commerce and Industry as well as the publishing of economic promotion documents in two languages.

The diversity of cultural exchanges (colloquia, exhibitions, publications, shows etc.) has helped to bring together the five departments of the Pays de la Loire and the Hungarian departments; two of which have already signed a specific cooperation agreement.

In view of the positive results of this cooperation, the two regions are determined to continue in the years to come especially with regard to Hungary's entry into the European Union.

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## Baltic Sea

### > An example to be followed

The meeting of AER's Committee II in Stockholm in May 1998 offered participants the opportunity to learn more about crossborder, interregional and transnational cooperation between the Regions on the Baltic Sea.

Interregional exchanges in this area are particularly dense since the fall of the Iron Curtain. First of all, it is important to mention the existence of a common platform such as the Baltic States Subregional Conference, whose members are regions. Alongside the Council of the Baltic Sea States, it gives political and institutional impetus to this cooperation. At the economic level, the setting up of the Baltic Sea Business Summit in 1996 helped to improve the dialogue between political and economic decision-makers and stimulated the economic transformation and free trading with neighbouring countries in eastern Europe.

A large number of public and private organisations are carrying out concrete

cooperation projects in the fields which are essential for guaranteeing both the stability in this area (many projects in favour of regional and local democracy) and its sustainable development (in particular in the fields of transport, environment and tourism). Cooperation in the fields of culture and social affairs is also flourishing.

According to the advice of experts, cooperation in the Baltic Sea area owes its success to its acceptance by the citizens, to the participation of all the political levels as well as to the involvement of public authorities, economic organisations and associations. The experience and knowledge acquired by the Regions can be used as an example for Regions which are already, or are willing to be, involved in east-west cooperation projects.

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## notebook

### **Bavaria (D)**

The Christian Social Union (CSU), the political party which is affiliated to the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in Bavaria got 52,9% of the votes in the regional elections on 13 September 1998. Mr Edmund Stoiber was confirmed as Minister-President of Bavaria.

### **Poland**

Last July the Polish Parliament voted on the creation of 16 voivodships (there

were previously 49). The regional elections will take place at the end of October. The voivodes in the capitals of the new voivodships will be in charge of implementing the reform which is due to come into effect in January 1999.

### **Sweden**

On 20 September 1998, the Swedes elected their County Council representatives, as well as the representatives of the two new regional assemblies of Skåne

## partnerships

### **Disaster areas in Romania Call for solidarity**

The floods which took place in May-June 1998 have caused considerable damage in several Romanian counties, which has been estimated at more than 125 billion lei. The county of Alba, one of the hardest hit, is calling for material and financial assistance for its disaster areas. Food (cereals, sugar, oil, etc.), medical assistance (drugs and blankets) and reconstruction assistance (building material) are the most urgently needed.

The County of Alba has opened several accounts at the Romanian Commercial Bank - Alba Iulia agency (account numbers: 4721 4100 1090 DEM, 4721 7160 1090 USD and 4721 2500 1090 ECU), to which you may transfer funds for those in need.

### **Compilation of European authors' residences**

The "Maison du Livre et des Ecrivains de Montpellier" which carried out the project "Books and reading in Europe of the Regions" in cooperation with the "Centre Régional des Lettres du Languedoc-Roussillon" and the AER is compiling a list of European authors' residences. The objective of this initiative is to list the locations where those involved in literary creation are working (writers, poets, translators, art critics, and authors in the field of humanities etc) with a view to promoting exchanges and cooperation between the different centres.

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and Västra Götaland. The social democrats, in alliance with the ex-communists, got a majority of votes in the Northern counties as well as in Sörmland, Blekinge, Värmland, Örebro, Västmanland and Dalarna. The conservatives are in the majority in Stockholm and Halland. In the Counties of Uppsala, Östergötland, Kronoberg, Kalmar, Gotland, and in the new Regions of Skåne and Västra Götaland, the ecologists and the local parties will have a role to play in forming majorities.

## > *A Convention for an Ecos-Ouverture Partnership*

The Ecos-Ouverture Partnership Convention was held at the end of June 1998 in Budapest (H). Over a thousand regional and local authorities within the European Union (EU) and from central and eastern European countries (CEEC) took part in this event which followed a call for proposals for the external interregional cooperation programme, Ecos-Ouverture (1998-2001) launched by DGIA and DGXVI (see article in the previous newsletter). The AER was present at this event and also had an information stand.

Organised along the same lines as Directoria (last edition in Strasbourg 1997), this Convention enabled European officers and associated experts to present the political context of this programme and the call for proposals. The European Commission's intention is to show its commitment to helping the local and regional authorities of central and eastern European countries through their economic and political transition and in their EU pre-accession preparations, by providing them with appropriate and efficient tools.

The technical aspects of the cooperation were discussed during the workshops, on the basis of the completed application forms: how to create a dynamic partnership; the role of the project leader; how to manage a network or a technical project; management and financial methods. This event also enabled the regional and local authorities present to establish their first contacts with a view to establishing partnerships in the eligible cooperation fields.

The proposed schemes, based on the previous experience acquired during the 1989-1998 programming period, are, however, quite laborious. Participants are often put off by the complicated procedures and the numerous stages from the conception of the cooperation idea to the final approval of the project by the selection panel (end of 1998). This was noticeable by the questions asked at the time and by the comments we have since then received from our members. The initiation programmes have, undoubtedly, become an affair for the initiated. Will the regional and local authorities, which have often only recently been established, be able to set up quality projects, without the help of an advisor for procedures, before the fixed deadline (15th November 1998)?

**AER contact:** Brigitte Fiorucci

## "Visiting Cards" - 1999 edition

In the spring of 1999 the AER will be re-editing its directory "Visiting Cards" which helps to inform people about the AER and is a useful source of contacts.

Up-dating the data on member regions began on 18th June 1998 and has progressed very well. Although the fixed deadline for returning the forms was short (and the post sometimes long) more than a hundred regions replied in time to our appeal.

Electronic communication methods were widely used as many member regions preferred this method which proved to work well. We would also like to thank the regions

which informed us that they will reply later. The 1999 edition will be open, for the first time, to publicity thereby offering the regions and their economic partners the opportunity of putting forward their institutional messages. The company "Recherches et Communication", which has been entrusted with this task, will make contact with you (or may already have done so) to propose your participation or assistance in the identification of those interested in your region. Thank you in advance to all those who have accepted to contribute to this project.

**AER Contact:** Barbara Thauront



## diary

### OCTOBER

Thursday 22nd and Friday 23rd  
**European Commission and Council of European Municipalities and Regions Conference on the information society Brussels (B)**

Friday 23rd  
**Committee of the Regions, Extraordinary Bureau Austria**

Wednesday 28th to Saturday 31st  
**Euregia Leipzig (D)**

Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th  
**Extraordinary European Council Pörtlach (A)**

Monday 26th and Tuesday 27th  
**European Commission/DG XVI ESDP Seminar - Environmentally sensitive areas Göteborg (S)**

Thursday 29th and Friday 30th  
**AER, Committee IV meeting Turin (I)**

### NOVEMBER

Wednesday 4th and Thursday 5th  
**European Parliament, Plenary Session Brussels (B)**

Saturday 7th  
**AER conference "Women in Politics at Regional Level" Turin (I)**

Monday 16th to Friday 20th  
**European Parliament, Plenary Session Strasbourg (F)**

Wednesday 18th and Thursday 19th  
**Committee of the Regions, Bureau and Plenary Session Brussels (B)**

### DECEMBER

Wednesday 2nd  
**AER Presidium and Bureau Linz (A)**

Wednesday 2nd and Thursday 3rd  
**European Parliament, Plenary Session Brussels (B)**

Thursday 3rd and Friday 4th  
**AER, General Assembly Linz (A)**

Friday 11th and Saturday 12th  
**European Council Vienna (A)**

Monday 14th to Friday 18th  
**European Parliament, Plenary Session Strasbourg (F)**

**AER Contact:** Francine Huhardeaux



**ARE en direct - on line - direkt - Autumn 1998**

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