



editorial

The proposal put forward by Mr Joschka Fischer, President of the EU Council of Ministers, to continue the elaboration of a European Charter on fundamental rights has provoked an animated debate on the perspectives of a European constitution.

More and more, discussions on the implications of the objectives of European integration raises the issue of combining EU institutional reform with the constitutional issue. Even in some of the member States with centralised structures, opinions in favour of a "Constitutional Europe" and a "Federal Europe" are developing.

It is the regional voice, above all, which leads this debate, concerned about the impact an EU institutional reform could have on the, already fragile, equilibrium between the European, national and regional levels.

This is why Wolfgang Clement, Minister-President of Nordrhein-Westfalen, an AER member Region, insists on the need for implementing precise rules concerning the distribution of competencies between the different levels, on the recognition of the Regions as entities with rights and the principle of regional autonomy. For Mr Clement, only federalism in its different forms can meet the diversity and plurilism of Europe as it is capable of politically and institutionally supporting "the spontaneity of the non-spontaneous".

In view of the major importance of the concept of the European constitution, the AER Bureau decided to lead an indepth political debate on this issue during its meeting on 12th May 1999.

The Editors

Council of Europe

>50 years' service for democracy

On 5th May 1999, the Council of Europe celebrated its 50th anniversary. A number of commemorations have already taken place, and more are planned, to highlight its contribution to the unification of the European continent and the reinforcement of the fundamental values of our society, such as democracy, freedom and solidarity.

Created in 1949 by ten western European countries in view of the European reconstruction process, the Council of Europe has become, over the last ten years, not only a pan-European institution - 40 member States - but above all the advocate of the main interests of close to 800 million citizens. Indeed, the European Convention on Human Rights, which came into force in 1953, is a major contribution from the Council for the protection and freedom of the inalienable rights of the individual. Its European Court of Human Rights has delivered over 900 judgements since 1959 which often went on to change national legislation.

Recognition of Local and Regional Authorities

As early on as 1957, the Council of Europe also recognised the importance of democracy at local and regional levels. Its Charter on local autonomy, adopted in 1985, serves as a model for legislative reforms in the new democracies of central and eastern Europe. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE), set up in 1994, has become the venue for privileged dialogue between representatives and municipalities, Regions and governments. In 1997, the CLRAE adopted the draft European Charter for Regional Self-government which was supported by the AER.

Towards a genuine "Council of Europeans"

On the eve of the new millennium, whilst increasing its action to uphold the ideals

and principles that constitute our shared heritage, the Council of Europe will expand its activities to promote social cohesion, education for democracy, the quality of life and the respect of cultural diversity to build a genuine Europe of the Citizens.

Reinforced cooperation between the AER and the CLRAE

The AER has been involved in the actions of the CLRAE, and in particular its Chamber of Regions, which has pursued the promotion of regional democracy since its creation.

At the beginning of the year, the two bodies decided to reinforce their collaboration and to undertake joint actions in specific areas such as: offering advice and assistance to countries wishing to reinforce their regional structures, the creation of a working group of Regions with legislative power, the revision of the Statutory Charter and especially the reform of the composition of the Chamber of Regions.

In the framework of this cooperation, the AER will participate in the CLRAE delegations responsible for supervising regional elections in the member countries as well as the creation of agencies for regional democracy, for example, in Montenegro and Georgia.

The AER will play an active role in the Council of Europe's 50th anniversary celebrations and President Van den Brande will take part in a round table organised by the CLRAE on 17th June 1999 in Strasbourg.

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>AER's Action Programme for 1999

>EU report on "Better Lawmaking"

On 11th March 1999, J. Santer, President of the European Commission, presented the Committee of the Regions (CoR) with the report entitled "Better Lawmaking/ A shared responsibility". This report highlighted the important role of the Regions in the application and explanation of Community law. According to Mr Santer, with Article 3b of the Maastricht Treaty and the Protocol on subsidiarity and proportionality annexed to the Amsterdam Treaty, the EU now has "clear rules" for European legislation. These rules have contributed to the withdrawal of 233 legislative proposals, between 1995 and 1998, which did not conform to this principle.

>CoR report on subsidiarity

Following an intense and controversial debate, characterised by the number of proposed amendments, the CoR finally adopted the report entitled "Toward a real culture of subsidiarity" on 11th March (Stoiber/Delebarre report). This report, which critically analyses the current application of the principle of subsidiarity, calls for a delimitation of powers at different levels (Commission, States and Regions) and a clear distribution of responsibilities. It also requests a larger consultation with local and regional authorities in the elaboration of European policies. This is a reference text for the AER for political action in this area.

AER Contact: Franz-Josef Stummann

When the Presidium met in Brussels on 12th February, it finalised an action programme for the AER for 1999 on the basis of proposals put forward by the Committee Presidents. This programme comes within the framework of the new strategy defined in Linz and turns the general orientations, which were adopted, into concrete actions. It stresses the new priorities for the AER such as:

- the promotion of regionalism and the role of the Regions in the European integration process: organisation of "caravans", initiatives aimed at evoking the debate on the role of the Regions in the different countries of Europe, organisation of the debate on the principle of subsidiarity, the next Inter-governmental Conference and the idea of a European constitution (Committee A, Co-President W. Stächele);
- the development of east-west co-operation: organisation of a Conference on "Regions and the EU enlargement process" (Wroclaw, 21st and 22nd October), support for the Summer School (Istria, 28th August/3rd September) and the Centurio programme (Committee A, Co-President I. Jakovcic);
- exchanges of experience, cooperation, common action with the member Regions in the area of:
 - policy for the prevention of accidents, policy for the elderly, organisation and management of the hospital sector, employment (Committee B, President R. Kristoffersen),
 - regional policy, structural funds, territorial development, tourism, regional twinning (Committee C, President R. Savy),
 - participation in European programmes in the area of culture and follow-up to EU cultural policy, development of partnerships in the areas of education and training, organisation of a conference on youth (Odessa, Spring 2000), analysis of

the consequences of the information society, promotion of the regional dimension in sport (Committee D, President L. Prokop),

- promotion of sex equality, minorities, inter-Mediterranean relations (Working Groups), cooperation with the OSCE (Special assignment: relations with the OSCE, Vice-President O. Kretschmer).

The objective, in general, is to encourage Regions to take part in EU interregional cooperation programmes (Special assignment for interregional cooperation, J.-P. Heider).

The action programme aims also at better integrating the AER in its environment especially in connection with the:

- Council of Europe (CLRAE) and the European Union (CoR)
 - CLRAE (see article on front page)
 - CoR: participation and common initiatives in the areas of enlargement, subsidiarity and the preparations for the next Intergovernmental Conference
- Interregional organisation members
 - The action programme aims, notably, at developing complementarity and synergy between the AER and the CPMR (through V. Chiti, President of the CPMR and J. MacDougall, Vice-President of the AER). Contacts have also been made with AEBR. Similar steps have been undertaken with the other interregional organisation members.
- CEMR and local authorities
 - A cooperation agreement between the AER and the CEMR is currently being drawn up in order to reinforce and increase areas of cooperation (Special assignment, relations with local authorities, L. Van Nistelrooij).

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Follow-up to the General Assembly:

Mailing of the resolution "AER-Strategy 2000 for the Regions of Europe", the minutes from the General Assembly and the 1999 subscription forms to all member Regions. Organisation of the General Secretariat in the interim period before the election of the new Secretary General (December 1999). Implementation of the Committees and special assignments.

Meetings

Presidium

(Brussels, 12th February)
Mailing of the minutes to the

Bureau members for their reactions

Committees and working groups

- Presidency of Committee B (Strasbourg, 21st January and Oslo, 27th-29th March)
- Strategy Group (Brussels, 4th February, 15th March and 26th April)
- Working group on the Summer School (Brussels, 12th February and 31st March)
- Working group on Minorities (Strasbourg, 16th March)
- Committee C (Umeå, 18th-19th March)
- Committee D (Nyborg, 19th-20th April)
- Committee B (Trondheim, 6th - 7th May)

Participation in other events

- Conference "Border Regions of ESDP" (AEBR-Berlin, 19th-21st February)
- Hearing on the future of EU regional policy (EP-Brussels, 23rd February)
- Conference "Polish local and regional authorities and enlargement" (CoR-Warsaw, 24th-25th February),
- Governmental conference "l'Italia, regione per regione" (Rome, 25th-27th February),
- General Assembly of the Hungarian Counties (Pest, 11th-12th March)
- Seminar on federalism in

Europe (CLRAE-Bologna, 18th-19th March)

- Forum of Polish Regions (EP-Brussels, 24th March)
- Governmental conference "La Suisse et la coopération en Europe" (Lugano, 24th-27th March)
- Conference on Interreg III (AEBR-Trieste, 8th-10th April)
- Ministerial conference on Euro-Mediterranean partnership (Stuttgart, 15th-16th April)
- 6th Economic Forum of the Regions of Europe (Weimar, 3rd-5th May)
- Elections in Scotland and Wales (GB): delegation of observers from the AER

AER activities: January-April 99

Committee C "Regional Policy"

> *New methods and concrete action*

Committee C, meeting in Umeå (18th-19th March 1999) defined its work guidelines within the framework of the AER "Strategy 2000" and decided on several concrete initiatives. In the framework of future orientations, the Committee has decided to:

- encourage partnerships between its member Regions through exchanges of experience, twinnings, joint projects, the creation of associations and by replying to EU calls for proposals,
- reinforce the AER's consultative role within the European institutions to ensure that the Regions have a major influence on decision-making at European level.

The Committee also introduced new working methods aimed at a greater efficiency and to ensure an increased participation by its members. It decided in particular to:

- reorganise the work of its Sub-committees ("Territorial Planning and the Environment" and "Rural Development, Agriculture and Tourism"),
- nominate rapporteurs responsible for consulting the member Regions and coordinating their proposals for Committee C for the fundamental issues of

enlargement, reforms for the CAP and the Structural Funds,
- encourage the creation of ad hoc groups on concrete projects.

The Committee adopted proposals on:
- the Regions views on the last Environmental Action Programme (EAP) and the EU and their contribution to the next EAP; the respect of environmental norms in tourism,
- the participation of the Regions in the European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign and in the preparations for the next Earth Summit,
- the role of the Regions and inter-regional cooperation in the implementation of ESDP,
- the interests of the Regions with maritime borders in the new Interreg III Community Initiative.

Finally, President Savy informed members of the Committee that he would have to stand down as President before the end of this year. The next Committee meeting will be held on 27th and 28th September 1999 in Calabria (I).

AER Contact:
Laura De Rose

5th European Elections

Citizens of the fifteen member States of the European Union, ie, an electorate of approximately 298, will be called upon to elect their 626 representatives of the European Parliament for a five-year term, from 10th to 13th June 1999.

The AER is delighted to see that, for the first time since the election of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage in 1979, the Fifteen will vote using a system of proportional representation. The European Parliament therefore agrees with the requests made in 1993 by the AER in its "resolution on the draft uniform electoral procedure for the election of European Parliament deputies" (General Assembly of Sitges-E). It regrets, however, that this election will not be carried out on the basis of regional constituencies, apart from Germany, Belgium, Great Britain, Ireland and Italy where divisions into constituencies have been made, regrouping several Regions.

Committee D "Culture, Education & Training"

> *Increasing demands for interregional activities*

Committee D and its Subcommittees ("Culture", "Education & Training", "Youth", "Media" and "Sport") met for the first time this year on 19th and 20th April in Nyborg, capital of Fyn (DK). This was the first time the AER had held a meeting in Denmark. Discussions revealed the increasing demand for joint inter-regional activities under the aegis of the AER in the areas dealt with by the Committee.

Finally to guarantee the role of the Regions as the leading protagonists of cultural development in Europe, the Culture Subcommittee launched preparations for a pan-European Conference of Regional Cultural

Ministers planned for the year 2000. It also decided to support the initiative of creating a network for exchanging information via the Internet between regional public libraries.

The "Education & Training" Subcommittee approved several requests for amendments of Community programmes, especially following the non-admission of EU candidate countries to the pilot project "Parliaments representing the Youth of Europe". A number of members also expressed their regret that plans for regional centres, within the framework of these Education & Training programmes had been set aside by the European Commission.

The "Youth" Subcommittee unanimously approved the creation of a programme of solidarity for Romanian street children and orphans organised by the Region of Piemonte (I) and welcomed the proposal put forward by the Region of Odessa (UKR) to organise a conference on the "Participation of Youth in management and public life at regional level" (spring 2000).

These decisions were adopted by Committee D, meeting in Plenary Session. The next meeting is planned for September in Barcelona (E).

AER Contact:
Franz-Josef Stummann

Working Group on "Minorities"

> *Closer cooperation with the CLRAE*

Following the initiative of Mr Kolumban, President of Harghita (RO), President of the AER working group on "Minorities" and President of the group on "Federalism, Regionalism, Local Autonomy and Minorities" of the CLRAE, the AER took part in a meeting of the CLRAE group on 16th March 1999 in Strasbourg. The AER's objective was to establish a close cooperation with the CLRAE in the area and to explore the possibilities of introducing an AER

representative for Minorities. The AER proposals were welcomed by the CLRAE group, which is involved with, among other things, the implementation of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. This highlights, in particular, the importance of the AER's contribution in the identification of the problems of Minorities and in the management of "high risk" situations in cooperation with the European institutions

concerned (Council of Europe, OSCE). With this in mind, the next meeting of the AER "Minorities" working group, due to meet during the month of June, will concentrate on drafting a working proposal in this area as well as organising a seminar on the theme "Civil Society, Regions and the protection of Minorities", in cooperation with the CLRAE and the OSCE.

AER Contact: Laura De Rose



> <http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/>

The SCADPlus database is a source of useful information for the professionals and general public interested in Community activities and is accessible free of charge via the Europa server of the European Commission (in 11 languages). Its strong point: data is up-dated daily.

The database is divided into seven parts:

- 1) Calendar: dates of recent or forthcoming meetings, of the Council of Ministers, European Parliament, Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, with details of the subjects discussed.
- 2) European Union policies: summaries and legislative follow-up for each EU policy and access to specific items concerning the enlargement process.
- 3) Practical guide to the free movement of persons: practical information on each EU and EEA country concerning seeking employment, residence rights, social security etc.
- 4) Programmes, networks and observatories concerned with social affairs and education with access either by subject area (social affairs, health, education & training and youth) or by alphabetic list.
- 5) SCAD database: direct access to all the most up-to-date documentary references (legislation and Community publications, articles from different periodicals (in 3 languages), opinions from social partners).
- 6) Glossary on the institutional reform of the EU with 150 concepts for a better understanding of the main challenges (in alphabetic order).
- 7) The Amsterdam Treaty: a comprehensive guide which includes a series of thematic factsheets explaining the main changes resulting from the Treaty (one sheet concentrates on the principle of subsidiarity).

Improvements are being made so that Community documents can be ordered electronically.

> <http://www.aer-regions-europe.org>

We're off!!!

Following the study phase concerning the choice of IT company and equipment, the conception of the AER Web site and extranet, dedicated to the working structures of the AER, started at the end of April. We have also registered our name in this domain. A first presentation of work undertaken was made at the Bureau meeting in Brussels on 12th May 1999.

AER Contact: Barbara Thauront

Centurio and the Summer School > Launch of the 1999 edition

At the end of February the AER launched its 5th Centurio training programme. Centurio aims at promoting exchanges of experience and know-how between regional politicians and officers from western and central & eastern Europe. Since 1994 this programme has made it possible for dozens of regional representatives, each year, from central and eastern Europe (CEEC) to acquire hands-on experience of the different regional administrations in the European Union and, subsequently, to establish cooperation relations and partnerships. Centurio positively contributes, therefore, to the reinforcement of European integration and helps in the transition period as much in the EU candidate countries as in the other CEEC.

Apart from the "classic" traineeships, organised by the western regional administrations for the representatives of the CEEC Regions, this year Centurio is offering twinned traineeships and training placements in the Regions of central and eastern Europe. A first analysis of applications and contacts shows that the Regions of Poland, Hungary and Romania for CEEC and Austria, Switzerland, Sweden, France and Belgium are particularly interested in participating in the 1999 programme. The introductory days are planned for the end of June in Brussels for all the

candidates. The traineeships will be run during the summer and autumn.

As in 1998, Centurio participants are also invited to attend the AER Summer School which will be held in Istria from 28th August to 3rd September. Organised with the active support of a group of AER member Regions - Essex, Vlaanderen, Istria, Noord-Brabant, Pest, Stockholm, Thüringen, Uppsala -, this part of the training programme will deal this year with themes such as:

- Regions and the European Union enlargement process,
- regional policies and EU programmes for Regions,
- economic growth and employment at regional level,
- the Regions' contribution to social cohesion and political stability (including the issue of Minorities),
- advantages of interregional cooperation.

The interesting themes to be covered and the warm hospitality of the Region of Istria (which proposes a rich programme of exchanges and study visits, especially in the neighbouring Italian Regions) will, without doubt, make this 1999 edition a major inter-regional event.

AER Contact:
Laura De Rose

EEP/Pacte > Closure of the 1993 and 1994 contracts

The revision work for closing the EEP V and Pacte 1 interregional cooperation programmes, has shown that certain expenditure which appears in the projects' financial reports was not correctly justified. The pioneer EEP programmes were very flexible in their management systems when they were first set up in 1989 but have suffered, over the years, from the consequences of obligatory controls from the European Commission which insisted that "expenditure be justified down to the last Ecu".

As soon as this was announced, (December 1998), the AER contacted all the local authorities' project leaders to go through the files and produce the

additional documentary proof required. Following this initiative, 30% of the uncertain expenditure was validated (as at 22nd February 1999). We would like to thank all the authorities concerned for their commitment which enabled us to achieve this result.

The AER continues its action and counts on the collective commitment of its members to finalise this validation period as soon as possible. The first hearings for the projects still concerned will take place in Brussels in due course. The AER is working in close liaison with the European Commission to finalise this file.

AER Contact:
Brigitte Fiorucci

Interreg III

>A first common position of the interregional organisations

During the Conference held on 9th and 10th April 1999 in Grado (Italy), and with the support of the Autonomous Region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, the three interregional organisations - the Assembly of European Regions (AER), the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR) and the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) - adopted a common position on the Community Initiative, Interreg III (2000-2006). The AER was delighted with the results of this Conference especially as it is the first time that the interregional organisations have achieved a common position in an area of major interest for the Regions which are members. The three organisations also decided to systematically coordinate their policies and to inform each other of the results of their actions with the European institutions, especially concerning Interreg III.

See below the text of the Final Declaration*:

1. Crossborder, transnational and interregional cooperation on a local, regional and national level is a prerequisite for the establishment of close links between regions; it also represents a building block for extensive networks throughout Europe, in the perspective of a more polycentric model for the European territory.

2. Because of the geographical and cultural diversity, European regions need to be able to choose the forms of cooperation that are best suited to their specific needs (all three, two or just one). The various forms of European cooperation – local, regional and national – are not to be seen as competitive, but as complementary to one another.

3. For this reason, the Conference welcomes the fact that the Interreg initiative will be continued over the period 2000-2006 and that these various forms of cooperation will be joined together within the common framework of Interreg III, while maintaining their specific identities in the form of three different sectors.

4. The Conference strongly supports the regulation according to which Interreg III will henceforth be financially supported through one single European fund, the European Fund for Regional Development, retaining the possibility of supporting a wide array of actions, including those that have so far been

financed through the social and agricultural funds.

5. The participants unanimously favour the envisaged strengthening of a "bottom-up" approach in all three sectors, which involves greater responsibility of regional and local levels. The political will to enable the creation of transnational and interregional structures, guaranteeing at the same time a real responsible management of the specific programmes, is welcomed.

6. The allocation to a common account of EU funds to be used for different individual operational programmes under Interreg IIIA, B, or C, represents a major prerequisite for the successful implementation of cross-border, transnational and interregional projects.

7. The participants consider that operational programmes should be developed and set up at local and regional levels, though in collaboration with national levels, and that they should have a true cross-border, transnational or interregional character. The operational programmes, therefore, are to be set up from the very beginning in view of the various common criteria and rules for eligibility.

8. If the financial implementation is to be done at local level in the framework of cross-border and transnational/ interregional cooperation, it is indispensable that agreements be worked out for the various operational programmes as well as for the various regional/local and national/European set-ups, agreements that provide clear indications with regard

to liability, monitoring, control, etc. The importance of taking into consideration the programmes for territories linked by maritime borders and involving them in an adequate manner and with real cross-border and transnational contents, is also stressed.

9. In view of the development and enlargement of the Union towards the south, the east and the north, it is essential to ensure a strong coordination and harmonisation of the project and financial aspects between the PHARE-CBC, TACIS-CBC and MEDA, on the one hand, and the programmes of management systems of Interreg III, on the other.

10. Although the areas are quite clearly defined and differentiated (cross-border vs. transnational vs. interregional), in a number of specific cases, where common projects are devised combining Interreg III A and Interreg B/C projects, it is recommended that efforts be made to achieve a greater harmonisation in terms of contents and financial coverage.

11. With regard to Interreg III development and contents the Conference recommends:
- the permanent coordination between the various European regional organisations;
- a continuous exchange of experiences with the institutions of the EU.

**Original in Italian
Translation Region Friuli-Venezia Giulia*

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>Closure of the Pacte II Programme

On 21st January 1999, a ceremony was organised in Brussels by the European Commission (DG XVI) for the end of the Exchange of Experience Programmes EEP-Pacte. Under the presidency of Mr Messina, Head of Section in charge of Programmes, an extremely positive evaluation of the last Action Programme, run jointly between the AER and the CEMR within the framework of the EIG Pacte, was carried out in the presence of the responsible officers of the European Commission, the CEMR and the AER. Congratulations and

thanks were addressed to the technical teams responsible for managing these programmes.

Pacte is, therefore, formally finished despite the fact that the Regions continue to show an interest in projects for the promotion of regional and local authority cooperation. The experience acquired should be integrated into the Interreg III, which is currently under discussion.

To find out more about the value of this programme for the development of

interregional cooperation, three publications are available from the AER General Secretariat: "Final Conference Proceedings" (Brussels, July 1998), two brochures "Success stories" (September 1998) and "Programme over the past 10 years" (December 1998) as well as the two Pacte Newsletters "The Outcome of Pacte II" (N°5/June 1998) and "What has become of them?" (N°6/July-August 1998). You can also consult the Pacte Web site: <http://www.inforegio.cec.eu.int/pacte/>

AER Contact: Brigitte Fiorucci

commentary

Strong Regions for a strong Europe *Willi Stächele*

"We can only respond to the challenges of our time if we have a United Europe. This is why the Europe of tomorrow must be more than an economic area to meet social and ecological requirements.

European Union is not something already accomplished, it needs to be worked on without respite in order to succeed. As Chancellor Helmut Kohl and President François Mitterrand said, respectively, "the issue of the Union is an issue of war or peace" and "nationalism is war!".

A common Europe must be based on two solid pillars: the approval of the

citizens who form it and the conviction of common values marked by Christianity. If Europe only talks about rules and regulations, it loses its soul. Jean Monnet, one of the founders of the European Community, expressed this in his memoirs: "If I were able to start again, I would not start with the economy but with culture".

To incite enthusiasm and convince citizens of the urgency of a united Europe, there is a need for more partnerships between towns, more meetings, more school exchanges and concrete cooperation between the municipalities and Regions of Europe.

As the level closest to the citizens, the Regions can better meet their needs, strictly respecting the principle of subsidiarity. This being the case, I do not consider subsidiarity as a one-way

system. This principle, which is based on the social-Christian doctrine, has already been put to the test in Germany and other Federal States. An essential objective of all the regional organisations which operate at European level, such as the AER, is to enshrine this principle in a united Europe. This is the best way for Europe to obtain the support of all the citizens.

Internationalisation compelled us to find supra-national solutions. This should not, however, lead to the transfer of all the tasks towards "the top". Political decisions must be made at the level closest to the citizen, by decision-makers who are known by the people they affect and by the assemblies on which they can have a direct influence. This is why we need strong European Regions to build a strong Europe."

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The Lower Danube >A new Euroregion

Seven Regions from three countries - Braila, Galati, Tulcea (RO), Cahul, Cantemir, Vulcanesti (MOL) and Odessa (UKR) - have recently created the Lower Danube Euroregion. The types of interregional cooperation envisaged are in the economic sector, the protection of the environment and tourism but also in the areas of science, culture, legislation and sport. Common programmes will be set up to encourage direct contacts between the institutions, NGO and experts in the different areas.

Mr Angheluta, President of Galati, was elected President of the Euroregion of the Lower Danube, Mr Grinevetsky, President of Odessa and Mr Vladarciuc, President of Cahul, as Vice-Presidents. The structure and functioning of the Euroregion is supported by a permanent secretariat and comprises nine committees on specific themes.

The new Euroregion hopes to be supported by the experts of the Council of Europe in the implementation of its cooperation programmes.

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>Action for cooperation in the Mediterranean

Following an initiative of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR), a conference entitled "European Regions for Euro-Mediterranean partnerships" was held in January 1999 in Syracuse. The peripheral Regions and those outside of the Mediterranean area called for a re-launching of decentralised cooperation in this area which has made little progress since the launch of the process in Barcelona in November 1995.

These Regions request, in particular, that an adequate consultation and exchange of information be set up between the Regions, the States of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and the EU institutions so that the Regions can take part in the preparation and implementation of the decentralised cooperation chapter of MEDA. The Syracuse Declaration also insists that the competencies of the European Regions be taken more into consideration along with their capacity

to mobilize local authorities in various areas, when the programme is renewed.

The representatives of the Regions which met also wished to bring the attention of the EU German Presidency to the need to include an additional chapter on Mediterranean Partner Countries in the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), in the same spirit as that which was set up for the CEEC. Moreover, in the framework of the future Community initiative Interreg III (2000-2006), it has been requested that a single programme be envisaged for the Mediterranean Basin instead of the existing three.

The AER Presidium supports wholeheartedly this CPMR initiative and the two sister organisations have decided to put forward a joint delegation for the Ministerial Conference in Stuttgart in April.

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Interregional organisations

> Working together for joint action

Since the General Assembly in Linz, the General Secretariat has undergone a series of steps to further relations between the AER and other interregional authorities.

Firstly, contacts have been made with the Committee of the Regions (CoR) of the European Union and with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) of the Council of Europe in order to reinforce cooperation, especially at Secretary General level. The CoR action programme is based, this year, on the themes of subsidiarity, enlargement and preparations for the next Intergovernmental Conference. The idea of a European constitution was recently added to the list of priority themes. As we are looking towards a complementarity between the two bodies, the AER has decided not to draft its own document on subsidiarity but to support the work of the CoR in this area (Stoiber/Delebarre). The same applies for the institutional aspects of enlargement (White report) and the new Intergovernmental Conference (Van den Brande report).

The main working orientations in 1999 of the Chamber of Regions of the CLRAE also offer a number of perspectives for cooperation with the AER (see *article on front page*). Moreover the respective Secretaries General have made commitments in favour of a structured institutional cooperation.

Meetings and/or exchanges of views have also taken place with sister organisations: the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR) and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR). In the framework of cooperation between the AER and the CPMR, meetings have already been planned between the Presidents of the two organisations and the Secretaries General, as well as the

reciprocal participation in the Bureau meetings and the work of the Committees. It has also been decided to form a joint AER/CPMR delegation for the Interministerial Conference on the Euro-Mediterranean partnership (April, Stuttgart) and to closely cooperate in the debate on the European constitution.

The same cooperation perspectives are being investigated between the AER and the CEMR. An agreement based on the CPMR model is being prepared following contacts made between the General Secretariats.

With the interregional organisation members of the AER, relations are being re-examined one at a time. This is why, for example, contacts have been made with AEBR in the framework of the seminars on ESDP (February in Berlin) and Interreg (April, Trieste): AEBR initiatives supported by the AER.

Finally, the possibilities of a cooperation with the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has also been studied. Cooperation possibilities exist in the area of the prevention of conflict. The Summer School and Centurio, for example, could be useful tools for this type of cooperation.

During the meeting of the Presidium (12th February in Brussels), President Van den Brande highlighted the importance of the collegial atmosphere which reigns again in the relations between the AER and other interregional authorities. The AER will try more and more to develop common positions with some of these authorities and to undertake joint steps in favour of regionalism within the European institutions and national governments.

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Programme Culture 2000

The AER launches a cultural cooperation network

In December 1998, the AER carried out a survey of its members to prepare for future calls for proposals for the Programme Culture 2000. Its main objective was to identify the areas where Regions would like to run cultural cooperation projects.

Over thirty Regions and different bodies replied by involving, in several cases, different concerned services. The analysis of the data shows that the Regions are generally interested in the following areas:

- cultural heritage/former Raphaël programme (77%),
- the performing arts, especially theatre and dance (71%),
- literature, books and reading/former Ariane Programme (69%),
- music and activities associated with other EU programmes (66%),
- the fine arts, visual and decorative (60%),
- synergy with transversal activities (57%),
- other forms of expressive arts and projects of major, symbolic importance (51%).

From this data, we can see that half of the Regions indicated more specific themes, even individual subjects, on which they wished to cooperate. However, only three Regions stated the names of other Regions with which they already had, or hoped to have, contacts with for cultural cooperation.

AER Contact: Doris Materne

 **notebook**

Elections

From February to May, regional elections have taken/will take place in Hessen (D), Kärnten, Salzburg, Tirol (A), Corse (F), the Dutch Provinces, Scotland and Wales (GB). The results of these elections will be printed in the next issue.

New members of the Presidium

Willi Stächele

Member of the German Christian Democratic party, Mr Stächele (48 years old) has been a deputy of the Regional Parliament of Baden-Württemberg since 1992 and the Mayor of Oberkirch since

1981. Since 1998, he has been the Secretary of State for European Affairs of the Regional Government and plenipotentiary representative of his "Land" within the German Republic.

Mr Stächele is also the President of the Bundesrat's Commission for European Union Affairs.

Ragnar Kristoffersen

Member of the Norwegian Social Democratic Party, Mr Kristoffersen (57 years old) has been President of Akershus County Council since 1992. Prior to this, he was Vice-President of the Assembly (1988-92), Head of the Secretariat of the Norwegian Council

of Ministers (1981-87) and Political Advisor to the Norwegian Minister of local administration and regional development (1976-1979).

Farewell Jordi Ventura

Professor Jordi Ventura passed away on 15th January 1999 at the age of 66. Jordi Ventura was a professor of economic history at the University of Barcelona and the President of the AER Scientific Committee since its creation in 1994. He contributed enormously to this Committee by sharing his great erudition and his deep European and regionalist convictions.



AER Conference > "Regions and the EU enlargement process"

The General Assembly of Linz decided that a conference should be organised within the framework of the AER policies in favour of European Union enlargement, as set out in the "Strategy 2000 for the Regions of Europe".

At the invitation of the new Polish Region of Lower Silesia, this conference will be held on **21st and 22nd October 1999 in Wroclaw (PL)** and will specifically target the Regions of central and eastern European countries (CEEC) which are candidates for EU accession. One of the goals of this conference is to encourage the CEEC Regions to become more involved in the enlargement process. Through open dialogue with the competent authorities of the EU, and exchanges of experience with the EU member Regions, the representatives of the regional authorities concerned could obtain information on the progress of negotiations, evaluate their preparations in view of their Community "acquis" and identify the means for reinforcing their contribution to this process.

A reflection will also be undertaken in the area of the current competencies of the Regions and their reinforcement in their respective countries. Moreover, the conference will cover other important subjects for the CEEC Regions, such as access to Community programmes like PHARE or TACIS and the training of political leaders and officers at regional level.

One session will be dedicated to inter-regional and crossborder cooperation and its contribution to economic growth, to social cohesion and political stability in central and eastern Europe.

As an activity within the "caravans" campaign for the promotion of regionalism in Europe, this conference will provide information on the AER in the form of a political forum for the Regions of Europe and a tool for interregional cooperation within the local and regional authorities of the CEEC but also in the university and economic fields, community life and the media.

The draft programme has already been sent to all AER Bureau members in the CEEC in order to meet their expectations as best as possible. This programme was finalised by the Bureau when it met on 12th May in Brussels.

AER Contact: Laura De Rose

AER "Visiting Cards"

The updating process of the "Visiting Cards" came to an end in the middle of April. Over 250 member Regions took part in this process then validated their data. The directory should be edited during the month of June, results of the publicity campaign permitting (at the moment, a few Regions and approximately 20 private sponsors have accepted to support this project). Research is being carried out as to whether the collected data should be available on the AER Web site. This data will also help with the updating of the AER's internal database (to be carried out in July) as well as helping with two studies, one on the use of Internet at regional level and the other concerning interregional cooperation.

The Regions of Europe Map

In view of the success of the last edition of this map (1995), which is now out of

print, the Press and Communications Department has launched its re-edition. Following the research carried out, about a dozen countries have undergone changes. A specialised company is currently working on a new map in the form of vectorial computer files and publishing is planned for July-August. In view of available resources, the number of copies edited will be limited (5 copies free of charge for each member Region). In order to increase the number of copies printed and to reduce reproduction costs (per copy), a promotion campaign will be carried out within the Regions in June. Regions will be encouraged to order further copies and to participate in the production costs. According to the first estimates, the price per map should be between 0.75 and 2 Euros, according to the number of copies printed. Any Region interested in receiving more copies, can already inform us of their requirements (minimum order: 50 copies).

AER Contact: B. Thauront, F. Huhardeaux or A. Boutry (trainee)

diary

MAY

Thursday 6th
Elections in Scotland and Wales (GB)

Thursday 6th and Friday 7th
Committee B Seminar "The Challenges for the Political Leadership in Health and Social Care" Trondheim (N)

Wednesday 12th
Bureau Brussels (B)

Thursday 27th
Committee A Stuttgart (D)

Thursday 27th and Friday 28th
Joint AER/CLRAE/Baden-Württemberg Seminar "Strong Regions for a Strong Europe" Stuttgart (D)

JUNE

Wednesday 2nd and Thursday 3rd
European Council - Cologne (D)

Thursday 10th to Sunday 13th
European Parliament elections

Sunday 13th
Elections in Belgium

Tuesday 15th to Thursday 17th
CLRAE Plenary Session Round table on the 50th anniversary of the Council of Europe Strasbourg (F)

Monday 21st
Parliamentary Assembly Council of Europe Strasbourg (F)

End of June
Centurio - Introduction Seminar Brussels (B)

AER Contact: Francine Huhardeaux



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