



## editorial

On the verge of the year 2000, the European Regions have hefty challenges to face: they must assert themselves as the key institutional actors of economic, social and cultural development, training and employment in the eyes of States and the European Union, and in line with the principle of subsidiarity. They must be open to Regions from Central and Eastern Europe and help them advance along the road to European integration, strengthening their cooperation networks in a spirit of solidarity and reciprocity.

The Rhône-Alpes Region, a founding member of the AER in 1985, has been chairing COTRAO since October and is about to take on the presidency of the Four Motors for Europe in January 2000. This year, we have decided to take part in AER's Eurodysssey programme to enhance the European dimension of training young people. We have also supported humanitarian forces in the Kosovo crisis. Inter-regional cooperation is, more than ever and in a number of fields, one of the political priorities of the Region I lead.

All these themes will be on the agenda at our next General Assembly and I am particularly pleased to welcome all the European Regions to Rhône-Alpes within this context, along with several European VIPs.

In the successful wake of G7 and CNUCED, this event will be held in our regional capital, Lyon, an international city recently listed under UNESCO's world heritage.

I hope this important Assembly, the last of this millennium, will be an opportunity for the European Regions to give our Continent a message of peace and solidarity. I also hope that all AER members present will carry home a bright memory of their stay in Rhône-Alpes on 2nd and 3rd December.

Anne-Marie Comparini  
President of the Regional  
Council of Rhône-Alpes

### Conference

## > "The Regions' contribution to the Enlargement process"

AER's Conference - 21st October 1999 - Wroclaw - Woj. Dolnoslaskie (PL)

Over 250 representatives from 64 Regions in 20 countries took part in this Conference which gave speakers from the European institutions, interregional organisations, EU and CEEC Regions the opportunity of giving their point of view on the role that the European Regions can or must play in the enlargement process.

Chaired by L. Van den Brande, President of the AER, and J. Waszkiewicz, President of Woj. Dolnoslaskie, the host Region, the conference proved that the issue of Enlargement and European integration arouses great interest in all European Regions. This was made clear by the very high participation rate and the commitment shown by many speakers from the East and West during the debates. The speeches addressed three key questions: how the territorial units within the applicant countries can be involved in this unprecedented historical process and contribute to its success; what role the EU Member Regions should play to sustain the initial impetus; and how the Regions from East and West can work together to prepare the future of an enlarged Europe.

### In the East: pursuing decentralisation, developing training and cooperation

The Regions of the applicant countries believe it is absolutely essential to broaden and reinforce the democratisation process in their countries. Regionalisation and democratisation must be actively pursued in the perspective of Enlargement. The Regions of these countries must also

convince their national Governments to involve them or their representatives in the negotiation process at a national level, since, in many fields (especially the domestic market and agriculture), the success of Enlargement will depend on regional policies implemented to smooth out restructuring problems and help economic actors in difficulty. Priority must also be given to training: regional political and administrative representatives must become more familiar with the EU's principles, operating methods and programmes in order to implement them, but also to be capable of assessing the impact of resulting changes at the regional level.

Developing cross-border and interregional cooperation with the EU regions, and even a constructive exchange of experience with those who have recently experienced accession (e.g. Sweden and Austria), constitute the keystone to the success of Enlargement and should be actively supported, especially through stepping up personal exchanges. Regions in these countries must also become more involved in communication on European integration. Their very proximity means they can convey the import of an enlarged Europe, reassure people and foster the spirit of membership. →

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## In the West: sweeping stereotypes aside and promoting enlargement

In hundreds of EU Regions, many people perceive Enlargement as a threat to their current prosperity. These Regions must learn to get to know and understand the situation of the CEECs so that they may sweep lingering stereotypes aside and provide reasoned support for accession. But above all, they must fulfil their role as advisors and experts in the field of regional development, and avoid repeating past mistakes, by fostering the transfer of know-how and exchanging experience not only before, but also after, accession.

## Preparing the enlarged Union together

On this point, the representatives from Eastern and Western Regions stressed the importance of the forum for dialogue, experience exchange and training offered by the Assembly of European Regions in the run-up to EU Enlargement, through their theme-based Committees, European training programmes (Centurio and the Summer School), Internet network and initiatives such as the Wroclaw Conference. They also showed their determination to work together, within the AER, on the perspectives of regionalism in the enlarged, reformed Europe and developing relations with non-EU European regions.

*The Proceedings of the Conference will be available on AER's Web site - [www.are-regions-europe.org](http://www.are-regions-europe.org) - as soon as they have been translated.*

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## >Major decisions by the Presidium and the Bureau

### Presidium

In their meeting of 10 Sept. 1999 in Brussels chaired by Mr Luc Van den Brande, the members of the Presidium duly noted with satisfaction that the financial situation of the AER had improved, even if efforts to collect subscriptions fees still owing must be pursued. Concerning the pre-draft budget 2000, the Presidium decided to limit the increase in subscription fees to 1.7% (compared to 3.3% initially envisaged at Linz) and, from 2001, to propose an automatic adjustment system based on the inflation rate in France or the EU. As for expenditure, the Presidium agreed to limit operating costs in order to inject available funds into the AER's political activities, especially the work of the Committees.

The Presidium took due note of the report on the Committees' activities and focused on preparations for future meetings and events, especially AER's Conference in Wroclaw and the General Assembly (2-3 Dec. in Lyon).

The members of the Presidium enjoyed a preview of AER's web site, which became operational on 2nd Oct. 1999. AER's site is in English, but French and German versions should be available by the end of the year.

In accordance with the decisions taken at the last Bureau meeting (Brussels, 12th May) concerning the recruitment procedure for the General Secretariat, the members of the Presidium interviewed the five candidates short-listed

by the Selection Committee. At the end of the interviews, three candidates were put forward to the Bureau (22 Oct. Wroclaw).

President Van den Brande informed the members of the Presidium that following the elections of 13th June 1999 and the ensuing political changes in Vlaanderen (coalition government formed by the Socialist, Liberal, Green and Volksunie parties), he was now in the Opposition and was hoping to obtain the position of President of the Committee on European and International Affairs within the Flemish Parliament (Ed.: the President has since been elected to this position). He said he felt it was his duty to continue presiding the AER until the General Assembly in Lyon. Moreover, he confirmed he was available to pursue his mandate until its term in Dec. 2000, should the General Assembly so decide.

### Bureau

Meeting in Wroclaw (22 Oct. 1999), the Bureau adopted the pre-draft budget 2000 and the agenda for the General Assembly and then conducted interviews with the three short-listed candidates for the position of General Secretary of the AER. The Bureau unanimously decided to put forward Hans de Belder (Vlaanderen) as candidate at the General Assembly. Aged 61 and a former senator, Mr De Belder's entire career has been in service of diplomacy. He was, notably, Director General of the Flemish Office for Foreign Trade.

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## AER activities: July-October 1999

### Meetings

**Presidium**  
(Brussels, 10th Sept.)

**Bureau**  
(Wroclaw, 22nd Oct.)

### Committees and Working Groups:

- Committee A (Porec, 27 Aug.)
- Strategy Group (Porec, 28 Aug. & Brussels 12th Oct.)
- Committee D (Barcelona, 27-28 Sept.)
- Committee B (S'Hertogenbosch, 7-8 Oct.)
- Committee C (Strasbourg, 28-29 Oct.)

### Training programmes

**Centurio - Introductory meeting** (Porec, 29 Aug.)

**Summer School**  
(Porec 29 Aug. - 3 Sept.)

### General Assembly

A delegation from the General Secretariat went to Lyon (7 Sept.) to prepare the material organisation of the Assembly. The programme was finalised and all the documents have already been sent to Members. Concerning the recruitment of the AER's Secretary General, the Selection Committee (made

up of representatives of the First Vice-President and the Vice-President Treasurer) short-listed 5 candidates (out of 32 applications) each of whom was interviewed by the Presidium (10 Sept.). Three candidates were selected for a further interview with the Bureau (22 Oct.) who decided to submit one candidate to the General Assembly in Lyon in accordance with the Statutes.

### Communication

Publication of the "Visiting Cards of the European Regions 1999" and "Tabula Regionum

Europae 1999", and AER's Web site going on line.

### Participation in other events

(list not exhaustive)

**RETI's GA**  
(Brussels, 17 Sept.)

**CPRM's GA**  
(Vaasa, 21-24 Sept.)

**Meeting of the CLRAE on cross-border cooperation and subsidiarity**  
(Ancona, 15 Oct.)

**Steering Committee of the CEMR**  
(Poitiers, 18 Oct.)

## Committee A

### > *“Interregional East-West Cooperation”*

Porec, 27-08-1999

**35** European Regions took part in this Committee meeting held in Porec on the eve of the Summer School. Work focused on:

- reinforcing the AER's role in terms of interregional cooperation,
- the Committee's training programmes,
- “caravans” on regionalism,
- Committee A's institutional activities, in particular the AER's action in Kosovo.

With regard to strengthening the AER's role in developing interregional cooperation, the Committee decided to launch concrete actions in the field of practical interregional cooperation, especially through setting up a project pool on the AER's Web site with the help of the General Secretariat.

The Committee also focused on the training programmes: Centurio and the Summer School. It took due note of the success of these programmes in terms of the number of registrations and centred

its discussions on how to improve these initiatives even further.

As to the “caravans” on regionalism, it was decided that priority should be given to organising a “caravan” in Hungary. This will probably take place in Spring 2000.

Finally, concerning the AER's activity in Kosovo, the Committee suggested that the Centurio Programme should be used to help the new local authorities there. Furthermore, insofar as greater commitment on the part of the AER in the Balkan issue would seem to be absolutely essential, it was suggested that the AER should be involved, if possible, in the Round Table talks (especially the “Democracy and Minorities” Round Table) within the framework of the Stability Pact.

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## Committee B

### > *Debate on Fundamental Rights, the Information Society and the fight against exclusion*

In its meeting at S'Hertogenbosch on 7th & 8th October 1999, Committee B launched a debate on the EU's draft Charter on Fundamental Rights and decided to take an active part in the definition of these rights (see “Focus”). So as to have a clearer picture of the ethical problems posed by the information society, it assigned Mr Göran Carlsson (Västernorrland) the role of rapporteur on this issue. The fight against exclusion, with special focus on the elderly, took up a large part of the debate with the problems stemming from our ageing population - care, adaptation to living conditions, professional training in the field, the labour market and retirement. In the Committee's opinion, what is needed above all is a change in mentalities.

A delegation from the AER will soon be contacting the new European Commissioners (David Byrne and Anna Diamantopoulou) to inform them of the latest resolutions voted by Committee B and underline the importance of extending the response deadlines for calls for applications to the programmes.

Invited by the Autonomous Region of the Açores, the next meeting of Committee B will be held at the end of March 2000 in Ponta Delgada (P).

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## Committee D

### > *Increasing the participation of young people in political life*

During its meeting on 27th and 28th Sept. 99 in Barcelona, Committee D set two important dates for next year. The Region of Odessa (UKR) has invited Committee D to organise a conference at the end of April/beginning of May on the participation of young people in regional political life. Whenever possible, young people (representatives from youth parliaments or similar initiatives) will accompany the regional delegations as observers. This initiative is the perfect response to

the request expressed at the Summer School (Porec/HR, 29th August - 3rd September 99) and addressed to AER's Bureau, that a “Youth Bureau” should be set up within our Assembly, with members participating in a structured fashion in the work of the AER's instruments.

For Autumn 2000, Committee D is envisaging organising the first Pan-European Conference of Regional Ministers for Culture. In addition to specific questions such as the ratification of the Council of

## Towards an EU Charter on Fundamental Rights

Launched in 1996, the draft for this Charter comes under the European Commission's Social Action Programme 1998-2000. The Commission assigned the preliminary study to a Group of independent experts on Fundamental Rights and their Report “Affirming Fundamental Rights in the EU - Time to act” was published in February 99.

The European Council in Cologne (June 1999) launched the process of drawing up this Charter. The last “General Affairs” Council (Luxembourg, 11 Oct.) decided on the make-up of the Group in charge of drawing up the Charter. It will be composed of a representative for each Head of State or Government, a representative of the President of the European Commission, sixteen representatives from the European Parliament (selected by the Parliament itself) and thirty representatives from national Parliaments (2 per Parliament).

During its meeting at S'Hertogenbosch on 7th October, AER's Committee B discussed the draft Charter and setting up an “AER task force” to take part in the drafting process. It also requested the Bureau to have the AER acknowledged as a representative body for the Regions with a consultative status for the Group.

The fact that the Council has accepted the presence of observers and bodies, who will be invited to express their point of view, is a step in the right direction for the AER, which also wishes to work in this field with other interregional organisations.

Europe's Charter on Regional and Minority Languages, the Conference aims to have the autonomy and exclusive competence of the Regions recognised in terms of culture. This should then be taken into account in the Council of Europe's and the EU's policies.

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## AER's 4th Summer School

### > *Exchanging experience and know-how*

The AER's 4th Summer School was held in Porec (HR) from 29th August to 3rd September 1999, following an invitation by Stevo Zufic, President of the Region of Istra and Ivan Jakovcic, President of the AER's Committee A "East-West Cooperation". With over 200 delegates from 66 regions and 18 European countries, this Summer School presented an excellent opportunity for exchanging experience and know-how. A number of themes were tackled, including interregional cooperation, the contribution of the regions to EU enlargement, the fight against social exclusion and culture and tourism as factors of regional development, all in the presence of representatives from the European Commission, Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Analysis of the evaluation questionnaires has proved encouraging. Many delegates appreciated the quality of debate and

exchanges which, for some of them, led to the first steps in setting up concrete cooperation projects. Regional representatives from the Central and East European Countries (CEEC) underlined their interest in both the positive and negative aspects of the experience acquired by the Western regions, while the Western regions benefited greatly from exchanges on the problems of transition and how the Regions are preparing for accession, giving them a new perspective on the issue. Overall, the delegates stressed the need to develop even greater interactivity, since it enables everyone to broaden the scope of debate and exchanges between the regions of Europe. This will be brought into action at the next Summer School, to be held in Vilnius (LT). Preparations for the event are already underway.

Founded by "the regions for the regions", the AER's Summer School aims to foster dialogue between regional representatives

from the CEEC and Western Europe in the field of regional development and the enlargement process in the EU. Launched by the County of Essex in 1994, its first venues over the last three years were Pest (H), Krakow (PL), and Thüringen (D). Ten regions, all members of the AER, actively take part in organising this annual event - Essex, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Istra, Noord-Brabant, Stockholm, Thüringen, Uppsala, Veneto, Vilnius and Vlaanderen - in which a number of regional political and administrative representatives and experts participate. The AER's Summer School also welcomes delegates from the AER's Centurio programme - another training programme for Regional officers from the CEEC.

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## internet

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

Since 2nd October 1999, the AER's Web site has been available on line. For the time being, only the English version can be consulted, but work on the French and German versions is underway and they may be available on line by the end of the year. The pre-draft Budget 2000 also provides for versions in Italian and Spanish.

The site already offers the following:

- "**Who are we?**": origins, statutes, mission & objectives, structures, list of AER members,
- "**Current Activities**": 1999-2000 action plan and activities of the Committees,
- "**Cooperation programmes**": information on Centurio, the Summer School, Eurodissey and Pacte,
- "**Publications**": possibility of downloading documents in PDF format (Declaration on Regionalism in Europe, AER newsletter, etc.),
- "**What's new**": the latest press releases, resolutions and publications (an on-line subscription service under this heading will be set up in the Spring 2000).

- "**Agenda**": calendar of events likely to be of interest to the Regions,

- "**Contacts**": e-mail addresses of your contacts at the AER's General Secretariat and the AER Bureau in Brussels.

Coming up in November 1999: the Extranet - a hub for exchanging information and experiences reserved for AER members only. You will soon receive a password so that you may access the Extranet. The AER's various structures will have the opportunity of communicating working documents via the Internet and accessing a debate forum, a list of members' e-mail contacts and archive space. Initially, only the "General Assembly" and the "Bureau" will benefit from documents sent over the AER's Extranet (downloadable PDF format), with a view to preparing the meetings in Lyon. However, from January 2000, once staff at the General Secretariat have received proper training, all the AER's structures, we hope, will be able to use this new communications tool efficiently and effectively.

To keep you informed on developments on the Web site, the availability of documents on the Extranet and the

launching of debate forums, a database with the e-mail addresses of the persons concerned in the member Regions has been set up using data collected for the new edition of the "Visiting Cards of the European Regions 1999". At the present time, nearly 80% of Member Regions are connected to the Internet and have electronic mailboxes and nearly 50% have a Web site. Many of you were informed that the AER's Web site was going on line through this medium. Moreover, if you have an e-mail address and you are not yet in our e-mail database, please let us know if you want to be included.

The AER's Press & Communications Department has also launched work to put the "Visiting Cards of the European Regions" database on line. From early on in the year 2000, this will enable us to link up the Web sites of our Member Regions to the AER's site (through hypertext links). And that means we will possess a genuine interregional web on the Net, as we move into the third millennium.

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## Structural funds 2000-2006

### > Eligible regions and financial share-out

On 1st July 1999, the European Commission adopted a series of decisions so that the Structural Funds for the programming period 2000-2006 could be rapidly implemented. Using geographical criteria, the Commission has drawn up a list of areas eligible for Objective 1 between 2000 and 2006 and has set ceilings per country for the areas eligible for Objective 2 during the same period. On a financial level, the Commission has fixed the budgetary allocation per Member State for each of the priority Objectives as well as the amounts to be granted for the four future Community initiatives.

#### Objective 1 127,543 million euro

The following regions are eligible for Objective 1 for the programming period 2000-2006:

- **Germany:** Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt, Thüringen
- **Greece:** Anatoliki Makedonia, Thraki, Kentriki Makedonia, Dytiki Makedonia, Thessalia, Ipeiros, Ionia Nisia, Dytiki Ellada, Sterea Ellada, Peloponnisos, Attiki, Vório Aigaio, Nótio Aigaio, Kriti (i.e. the entire country)
- **Spain:** Galicia, Principado de Asturias, Castillas y León, Castilla-La Mancha, Extremadura, Comunidad Valenciana, Andalucía, Región de Murcia, Ceuta y Melilla, Canarias
- **France:** Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guyane, Réunion
- **Italy:** Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria, Sicilia, Sardegna
- **Ireland:** Border Midlands and Western
- **Austria:** Burgenland
- **Portugal:** Norte, Centro, Alentejo, Algarve, Açores, Madeira
- **Finland:** Itä-Suomi, Väli Suomi (partially), Pohjois-Suomi (partially)
- **Sweden:** Norra Mellansverige (partially), Mellersta Norrland (partially), Övre Norrland (partially)
- **United Kingdom:** South Yorkshire, West Wales & the Valleys, Cornwall & Isles of Scilly, Merseyside.\*

Phasing-out support is scheduled for the areas currently eligible for Objective 1, but which no longer come under this heading between 2000 and 2006, namely:

- **Germany:** Ostberlin
- **Belgium:** Hainaut
- **Spain:** Cantabria
- **France:** Corse and the districts of Valenciennes, Douai and Avesnes
- **Italy:** Molise
- **Ireland:** Southern, Eastern
- **Netherlands:** Flevoland
- **Portugal:** Lisboa e Vale do Tejo
- **United Kingdom:** Northern Ireland, Highlands and Islands

#### Objective 2: 19,733 million euro

To ensure that the new Objective 2 remains within the regulation ceiling of 18% of total population of the European Union, the Commission has set population ceilings eligible for Objective 2 per country. On the basis of these ceilings, the Member States are invited to send in their proposals for area breakdown with regards to Objective 2, which will then be used by the Commission to draw up the definitive list of eligible areas:

- **Belgium:** 1,269,000 inhab. (12%)

- **Denmark:** 538,000 inhab. (10%)
- **Germany:** 10,296,000 inhab. (13%)
- **Spain:** 8,809 000 inhab. (22%)
- **France:** 18,768,000 inhab. (31%)
- **Italy:** 7,402,000 inhab. (13%)
- **Luxembourg:** 118,000 inhab. (28%)
- **Netherlands:** 2 333 000 inhab. (15%)
- **Austria:** 1,995,000 inhab. (25%)
- **Finland:** 1,582,000 inhab. (31%)
- **Sweden:** 1,223,000 inhab. (14%)
- **United Kingdom:** 13,836,000 inhab. (24%)

i.e. **Eur-15:** 68,170,000 inhab. (18%)

It should be remembered that phasing-out aid is also scheduled for areas which are eligible now under Objective 2 or 5b and which will no longer be eligible under the new Objective 2 from the year 2000.

#### Financial breakdown

The financial allocations for **Objectives 1 and 2** have been drawn up on the basis of the eligible population, regional and national prosperity and the relative seriousness of structural problems with particular reference to unemployment. For **Objective 3**, allocations have been set according to the eligible population, the unemployment situation and the gravity of problems such as social exclusion, levels of education and training and the proportion of women in work.

The Commission's breakdown also provides for grants for areas formerly

under Objectives 1, 2 and 5b which will benefit from phasing-out support and structural actions for fishing not included in Objective 1 (see Table 1 below; this does not take into account Community Initiatives and innovative actions).

#### Community Initiatives

The Commission has divided the overall financial allocation determined at the European Council in Berlin as follows:

- **4,875 million euros to INTERREG** (cross-border, trans-national and interregional cooperation aimed at furthering harmonious and well-balanced development over the entire European territory),
- **700 million euros to URBAN** (social and economic rehabilitation of towns and districts in a crisis situation, so as to promote sustainable urban development),
- **2,020 million euros to LEADER** (rural development through initiatives by local action groups),
- **2,847 million euros to EQUAL** (trans-national cooperation for the promotion of new practices to combat discrimination and inequality of all types on the labour market).

\*The regions in italics were not eligible under Objectives 1 or 6 from 1994 to 1999.

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#### Structural Funds 2000-2006 Breakdown per Member State for the period (in millions of euros at the 1999 rate)

Member State	Objective 1	Ex-Objective 1 phasing-out support	Objective 2	Ex-Objective 2 and 5b phasing-out support	Objective 3	Fishing instrument (not included in Objective 1)	Total
B	0	625	368	65	737	34	1829
DK	0	0	156	27	365	197	745
D	19229	729	2984	526	4581	107	28156
EL	20961	0	0	0	0	0	20961
E	37744	352	2553	98	2140	200	43087
F	3254	551	5437	613	4540	225	14620
IRL (1)	1315	1773	0	0	0	0	3088
I	21935	187	2145	377	3744	96	28484
L	0	0	34	6	38	0	78
NL	0	123	676	119	1686	31	2635
A	261	0	578	102	528	4	1473
P	16124	2905	0	0	0	0	19029
FIN	913	0	459	30	403	31	1836
S (2)	722	0	354	52	720	60	1908
UK (1)	5085	1166	3989	706	4568	121	15635
EUR15	127543	8411	19733	2721	24050	1106	183564

1. Including PEACE (2000-2004)
2. Including the special programme for Swedish coastal areas

## > 14th General Assembly of the European Regions

2-3 December 1999 Lyon - Rhône-Alpes (F)

Invited by Mrs Anne-Marie Comparini, President of the Region of Rhône-Alpes, representatives from 300 regions in 26 European countries, all members of the Assembly of European Regions (AER), will convene in Lyon on 2nd and 3rd December 1999 to hold their General Assembly.

During this Assembly, on the eve of the European Council in Helsinki (10-11 December), the Regions will draw up their common standpoint in view of the next Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), which will be tackling how the institutions making up the EU can be organised more efficiently and discussing the decision-

making process at European level. The Regions will also be preparing their proposal for the draft European Constitution.

As a forum for exchange between European Regions and debate with representatives from European organisations, the General Assembly also provides an opportunity to broach other core themes for the Regions of Europe, such as their role in the enlargement process and European integration for the Regions of Central and East Europe, training and employment and strengthening interregional cooperation networks for greater peace and solidarity in Europe.

## Draft programme

### > Thursday 2nd December 1999

9:00 - 12:00

Meeting of the political Bureau of the AER

12:30-13:00

Press conference

15:00-19:00

General Assembly (internal issues)

- Progress Report by the General Secretariat
- The Committees' Progress Reports and working programmes 2000
- Election of the Secretary General
- Membership situation report
- Approval of the administrative account 1998
- Voting the draft budget 2000

21:00

Official reception at the Georges Brasserie in Lyon.

### > Friday 3rd December 1999

9:00-13:00

General Assembly (public meeting)

### Three themes will be put forward for debate:

- "Strengthening the role of the Regions within the European Institutions: adoption of common standpoints by the European Regions with regard

to the next Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), the draft European Constitution, and the EU Charter on Fundamental Rights".

With the participation of the European Commissioner in charge of Regional Policies, the President of the Institutional Committee of the European Parliament and other representatives of political authorities in Europe.

- "The contribution of the European Regions in the European Union enlargement process and strengthening democracy in Central and Eastern Europe".

With the participation of the President of the EU's Committee of the Regions, the President of the CLRAE, the President of the Chamber of Regions, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Secretary General of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

- "The role of the Regions in professional training and promoting employment".

With the participation of representatives from the partner Regions in the AER's Eurodysey, Summer School and Centurio programmes.

13:00

Lunch (buffet)

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## Welcome to Rhône-Alpes

Rhône-Alpes is the second-ranking region in France and one of the largest Regions in Europe. It lies in ninth position out of the 176 Regions making up the European Union with a GDP 10% higher than the average.

The Region boasts a central position in Europe geographically speaking. It is located at the cross-roads of the major routes linking highly industrialised Northern Europe and fast-growing Southern Europe, occupying a strategic position at the heart of European exchanges.

In addition to its active contribution to the AER, of which it is a founder member, Rhône-Alpes has stepped up cooperation with Baden-Württemberg (D), Catalunya (E) and Lombardia (I). Together, these Regions form the "4 motors for Europe". The Region is also a member of the Working Community of the Western Alps (COTRAO), which brings together the border regions of the Alps, and of the South European Arc.

The Region is not just active on a European level, but also has dynamic partnerships with the rest of the world: the Mediterranean area, North America, Africa and Asia.



Rhône-Alpes covers a surface area of 43,000 km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of 5.5 million. It is home to nearly 10% of the entire French population and 10% of the country's working population. The youth element is strong, since one inhabitant out of three is under 20.

Lyon is the capital of the Region and the second largest conurbation in France with 1,260,000 inhabitants. Rhône-Alpes also boasts two towns with over 300,000 inhabitants and several medium-sized towns which make up its dense, dynamic, economic fabric. The breakdown per sector is as follows: Agriculture 2%, Industry 27%, Construction, civil and rural engineering 8%, Services 63%.

A varied landscape and cultural wealth are tremendous assets for the Region, which each year welcomes 8 million tourists from around the world.

## Limousin (F) - Pomerania (PL)

### > Nearly 10 years of East-West cooperation

The interregional partnership between Limousin (F) and Pomerania (PL) was first set up in 1989 and made official by the signing of an international cooperation agreement in January 1991. The twinning of these two European regions, which have very different profiles and are geographically far apart, is marked by the growing number of exchanges on both economic and cultural levels. Thus, in almost 10 years of cooperation, dozens of assignments involving economic prospecting or participating in professional trade shows (Europartenariat, House-Building, Limoges Fair etc.) have been organised for companies from the twinned regions. Some initiatives have led to the setting-up of mixed companies. An example of this type of cooperation is the joint venture "Limousine-Baltique" set up to breed and promote the Limousine race of cattle in Pomerania.

Cooperation is particularly intense in two areas. Firstly, the agricultural field, where

there have been a number of exchanges between agricultural co-operatives, Chambers of Agriculture and firms in the timber industries. Secondly, in terms of the protection of the environment - the International Water Board in Limoges is twinned with the Water Foundation in Gdansk, playing an important role in training Polish technicians in water-related jobs. Cultural exchanges operate in several fields and are structured to fit in with the perspective of the enlargement of the European Union.

Since 1994, this cooperation has become tripartite, with Mittelfranken (Bayern - D) joining in the partnership. And we should not forget to mention the symbolic reach of the call for peace launched jointly for the people of ex-Yugoslavia.

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## Franche-Comté (F)

### > A resource centre for decentralised cooperation

To foster innovative and efficient cooperation projects and also to set up networks of all the local and regional actors (authorities, associations and companies), the Region of Franche-Comté (F) has set up a Resource Centre for decentralised cooperation (Cercop).

The Centre offers assessment programmes and methodological assistance for project leaders at every stage: set-up, finding financial support, implementation, follow-up etc. It is also

a centre for consultation, exchange, reflection and information on cooperation actions which have already been concluded or are still underway.

Today, good intentions alone are no longer enough in the field of cooperation: know-how, technical skills - especially in the field of assessing feasibility - and long-term commitment are essential for projects to survive. In setting up Cercop, the Region of Franche-Comté and its co-founding

partner are not only aiming to step up existing exchanges with less privileged regions, but, above all, to develop long-term partnerships based on the transfer of know-how and a new approach to solidarity.

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## partnerships



### "Bistro" Programme

#### The Region of Imereti is seeking an EU partner

Within the framework of a bid for tenders by the European Programme "Bistro", which aims to foster economic reforms for small and medium-sized companies in the former Soviet Union (Takis Programme), the Georgian Region of Imereti is seeking a partner in the European Union. They are looking for a public or private training organisation specialised in the issues facing small and medium-sized companies (company management and human resource management).

The purpose behind Imereti's project is to set up study trips and training seminars for managers and directors of small and medium-sized firms in Georgia in order to stimulate economic and structural reforms in this sector. Its long-term ambition is to set up a Regional Management Centre which would be particularly in charge of developing cooperation with foreign companies.

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## notebook

### Election results

Regional elections were held recently in various European countries. Here are the main results:

#### Germany

Peter Müller (CDU) was elected Minister-President of Saarland. Bernhard Vogel (CDU) was re-elected Minister-President of Thüringen.

#### Belgium

The following were elected President: Bruxelles-Capitale: Jacques Simonet (Liberal)

German-speaking community: Karl-Heinz Lambertz (SP)  
Vlaanderen: Patrick Dewael (VLD)  
Wallonie: Elio di Rupo (PS)

#### Spain

Elections were only held in the Autonomous Communities with ordinary status. The following were re-elected as President of the Regional Government: José Joaquín Martínez Sieso (PP, Cantabria), Juan José Lucas Giménez (PP, Castilla y León), José Bono Martínez (PSOE, Castilla-La Mancha), Alberto Ruiz

Gallardón Jiménez (PP, Comunidad autónoma de Madrid), Miguel Sanz Sesma (UPN, Navarra), Eduardo Zaplana Hernández-Soro (PP, Comunidad Valenciana), Juan Carlos Rodríguez Ibarra (PSOE, Extremadura), Pedro Sanz Alonso (PP, La Rioja), Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso (PP, Comunidad autónoma de Murcia). The following were elected as President of the Regional Government: Francesc Antich i Oliver (PSOE, Islas Baleares), Román Rodríguez Rodríguez (Canarias), Marcelino Iglesias (PSOE, Aragón), Vicente Álvarez Areces (PSOE, Asturias).



## Council of Europe

### > *Walter Schwimmer elected Secretary General*

**W**alter Schwimmer (47, Austrian) was elected Secretary General of the Council of Europe last June for five years. A Doctor of Law and specialist in industrial and labour law, Mr Schwimmer worked at the Union of Employees in the private sector before moving on to the Austrian Federation of workers and employees and then on to the State Health Insurance Office in Vienna where he was Director and then Deputy Managing Director.

Mr Schwimmer has also held political office in Austria. Since 1971, he has been a Member of the National Council of the Republic of Austria and he was Vice-President of the Parliamentary Group of the Austrian People's Party for 8 years.

His responsibilities at the Council of Europe began in 1991 when he became a member of the Austrian Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly. He has also been President of the Group formed by the European People's Party and the Christian Democrats since 1996 and is a member of the Bureau of the Assembly.

## European Commission

### > *Michel Barnier, the new Commissioner for Regional Policy*

**M**ichel Barnier (48, French) was appointed Commissioner in charge of Regional Policy and Cohesion at the European Commission in September last. He takes over from Monika Wulf-Mathies. He will also be in charge of the new Intergovernmental Conference scheduled for the year 2000.

A graduate from the *Ecole Supérieure de Commerce de Paris*, Mr Barnier was first General Councillor for Savoie, Member of the French National Assembly (RPR) and, since 1982, he has been President of the General Council of Savoie. He was Minister for the Environment (1993-1995) and then Minister delegated to European Affairs (1995-1997). Elected Senator in 1997, he became President of the Senate Delegation to the European Union in 1998.

As the new Commissioner in charge of Regional Policy, Mr Barnier will manage the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund.

### > *New Director Generals*

**E**neko Landaburu (51, Spanish) Director General at the DG for Regional Policy since 1986 will be occupying the same position at the DG for Enlargement from 1st January 2000. Guy Crauser, the current Director General at DG XXIII will take over from him at Regional Policy.

### Visiting Cards of the European Regions - 1999

280 regions and all the interregional organisations which are members of the AER took part in updating the new version of this directory which has just been published. The purpose of the directory, with its preface written by Luc Van den Brande, President of the AER, is to make the AER and its members better known, to foster exchanges and develop cooperation between the regions of Europe.

For each Region presented, you will find key profile data (surface area, number of inhabitants, working population, sectors of activity and major assets) and also information relating to cooperation agreements and useful contacts in this field.

Printing costs for this publication have been funded entirely by advertising and we would like to thank all advertisers for their support, many of them being Member Regions of the AER.

The directory is published in two languages (F/GB) and is available from the General Secretariat or the AER Bureau in Brussels (please enclose 30 FF for France or 8 euros for the rest of Europe to cover packaging and postage). 2,200 copies have been printed.

The "Visiting Cards of the European Regions" will be available on the AER's Web site in the form of a database from the beginning of 2000.

### Tabula Regionum Europae

The AER has just published "Tabula Regionum Europae", the map of the Regions of Europe in 1999 showing the progress of regionalism over the last few years. It demonstrates, in particular, the changes that have occurred in Finland, Poland, Sweden and the UK.

The map is available from the AER's General Secretariat or the AER's Brussels Bureau (please enclose 2 euros to cover packaging and postage costs). 6,000 copies of the map have been printed. If a Region wishes to procure a large number of maps, the General Secretariat can provide a specific print-out on their behalf or a map in the form of a computer file so that the Region in question may take care of the printing operations itself (105 FF for France or 16 euros for the rest of Europe will be charged).

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## diary

### OCTOBER

Thursday 28th and Friday 29th  
**AER's Committee C**  
Strasbourg (F)

Thursday 28th to Saturday 30th  
**7th European Conference of Cross-Border Regions - CLRAE**  
Timisoara (RO)

### NOVEMBER

Wednesday 17th and Thursday 18th  
**Bureau and Plenary Assembly of the CoR**  
Brussels (B)

Thursday 18th  
**AER Working group "Equal opportunities between Men and Women"**  
Morpeth (GB)

Monday 29th and Tuesday 30th  
**Annual Seminar & General Assembly - ENTO**  
Florence (I)

### DECEMBER

Thursday 2nd  
**Bureau of the AER**  
Lyon (F)

Thursday 2nd and Friday 3rd  
**General Assembly of the AER**  
Lyon (F)

Friday 3rd  
**Assessment seminar of the Centurio Programme**  
Lyon (F)

Friday 10th and Saturday 11th  
**European Council**  
Helsinki (FIN)

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