



editorial

On the 10th March 2000, I was present at a meeting with the Commissioner Barnier in which he explored the three possibilities for regional policy in an enlarged Union:

- continue with the current policies by increasing budgetary limits, which seems impossible,
- propose a multi-track policy with different criteria for the Regions of the 15 EU members than for the Regions of candidate countries,
- or consider a new strategy for territorial cohesion, on the basis of a draft enlarged EU territorial planning policy, which would rely on the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP).

Preparation for the new policy would be impossible without the implication of the Regions and I invite all of the members to debate, within the AER, in view of a joint contribution for the Forum on cohesion in Europe, announced by Mr Barnier for the beginning of the year 2001.

Hans De Belder
AER Secretary General

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> Priorities for Regional Policies in the year 2000

Michel Barnier, the new Commissioner in charge of regional policies and the IGC, announced his priorities for the year 2000. In five points he aims to increase coherence, understandability and visibility in Community regional policies, through a more strategic and integral approach to programming and greater distribution of information. The Commissioner also commits himself to the preparation of regional policies in an enlarged Europe.

Strengthening of programmes

The idea is to reinforce the strategic content of ESDP financed programmes and to increase the coherence with other funds (Cohesion Funds) and Community instruments (PHARE, ISPA, TACIS, MEDA). The definitive guidelines of these two community initiatives, which work under this Directorate – INTERREG III and URBAN – should be adopted in the near future and become operational at the beginning of the year 2001 (see our article on pg 5).

Preparation of regional policies for an enlarged Europe

In the context of drawing up the second report "Economic and social cohesion" (publication end 2000), the Commissioner would like to begin consideration, in the immediate future, of future regional and territorial policies in an enlarged Europe. This report will also allow the Commission to take a preliminary overall view of the implementation of agenda 2000 and to present the guidelines for the period 2007 – 2012. It will also serve as the basis of an in-depth debate with all partners, in particular candidate countries. The Commissioner also announced that he wished to ensure greater coherence between Regional policies and other EU policies and the integration of the ESDP in territorial and urban policies, in particular in view of enlargement. Several seminars are planned on sustainable territorial planning, with the participation of the relevant parties.

Alongside of pre-accession

The Instrument for Structural Policies for pre-Accession (ISPA) has just been launched; this instrument will finance

transport structure projects and environmental protection projects in candidate countries where political expectations are high. The Commission will ensure the coherence between these projects and other pre-accession instruments – PHARE (technical – economical cooperation) and SAPARD (agricultural and rural development) – but also with INTERREG III financing (cooperation).

Bringing Europe closer to its citizens

Cohesion policies, in which regional policies are included, are well placed for demonstrating that Europe acts for the good of all. However, information on these policies should be increased and action is currently underway to explain the management of structural funds and the ISPA to a greater extent, present the new programmes and encourage the use of good practices. The commissioner will also pay great attention to ensuring that information is accessible and that there is permanent dialogue with the European institutions, in particular the European Parliament.

Improvement of management and control

In order to deal with the concerns of institutional partners (Parliament, Court of Auditors), new provisions will be drawn up to improve the management and control of structural fund income. Cooperation with the European Investment Bank and the European Investment Funds will be reinforced in order to ensure the coherence between the financial assistance and the loans from these institutions.

>New forms of European Governance

With the recent launch of the idea of a White Paper on the new forms of European governance, Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, has, in a certain way, challenged the AER. The idea is to rethink relations between the European institutions and the various levels of government (Member states, Regions, Local authorities) and to apply the Principle of subsidiarity in a concrete fashion.

The construction of Europe is a new and unique form of political integration which has not yet found an equal balance between the various levels of government of which it is made up (European, national, regional and local). The Commission's White Paper aims to suggest the ideal nature of tomorrow's political, economical and social make-up for the European citizen. In this way this paper represents a unique forum for the expression of ideas and proposals which will contribute to the birth of this democratic political union with its pluralistic and yet respectful attitude towards its diversity which its citizens choose of their own free will.

Therefore, the AER asks its members to make concrete proposals on this subject, in the near future, in view of a debate at the next General Assembly in Seinäjoki (FIN).

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>Main Presidium decisions

The AER Presidium met on 18th February and welcomed with satisfaction the announcement made by the President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, concerning the drawing up of a White Paper on European governance and decided to commit AER member Regions to considering this issue in the interest of regional authorities. The question of new forms of governance in Europe was chosen as the main theme for the debates of the AER General Assembly in Seinäjoki – FIN (7-8th December 2000).

Decisions were made by the AER Presidium regarding other current events. Starting with the AER's concern over the difficulties facing the peace process in Northern Ireland, the Presidium asked the relevant parties to commit themselves to establishing conditions in which regional democracy and autonomy can be fully implemented, and as quickly as possible.

Concerning the crisis in Chechnya, the Presidium stressed that only the values of regionalism, such as the respect for people's rights and diversities, interregional and cross-border cooperation, as well as the principle of regional autonomy, can offer a constructive solution to the current problems. The expertise and structures of the AER are at the disposal of the relevant parties and the institutions in charge of mediation.

The Presidium also discussed the contribution of the AER to the stability pact in Kosovo and the Balkans: the first real initiative in this field will concern the enlargement of the Centurio programme, along with greater publicity in this part of Europe.

Following its alert to the ecological catastrophe of the Danube by the effected member Regions, the Presidium decided to support the initiatives undertaken by ARGE DONAULÄNDER, one of its member organisations. It suggested that the relevant Regions, contact specialist organisations such as the International Commission for the protection of the Rhine in order to obtain the necessary expertise and technical know-how for dealing with the situation.

In addition, on this occasion the members of the Presidium committed themselves to giving AER support to the new Polish Regions which are preparing their development strategy for the enlargement process.

The holding of the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), the draft Charter of fundamental rights and the relaunch of the draft Charter on regional Self-Government are all reasons for which the Presidium decided to reorganise Committee A of the AER; from now on this Committee will concentrate its action on the implementation of initiatives in the institutional field. The Secretariat will be responsible for coordinating activities in the field of interregional cooperation.

The desire to offer the best possible service to its members led to the Presidium asking itself if the Secretariat needed to continue using five written languages. President Luc Van den Brande, at this point, reminded those present that the Secretariat must give priority to political action as well as to the field of interregional cooperation.

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telex

AER activities: January-April 2000

Meetings

Presidium
(Brussels, 18/02)

Committees and Groups

- Advisory group (Brussels, 18/01)
- Caravan on regionalism in Hungary (Győr-Moson-Sopron, 27/01)
- Committee C Presidium (Strasbourg, 31/01)
- Sub-Committee "Public Health and Safer Communities" (Västmanland, 21-22/02)
- Group "Regional airports" (Wien, 25/02)
- Committee B (Ponta Delgada, Açores, 30-31/03)
- Advisory group (Arad, 10-11/04)

- Committee C Presidium (Strasbourg, 25/04)

Programmes

- Eurodyssey - pilot Committee (Brussels, 4/02)
- Centurio 2000 – launch and publicity campaign in the Balkans (February – April)
- Summer School 2000 - Pre-draft programme (Vilnius, 6-11/08)

Communication

- All technical equipment renewed
- Restructuration of the Web site (easier running and updating); French version up

and running, start of work on the German site
- Work begun in view of putting the "Visiting cards of the Regions" on to the Web site, new mailing list for "What's new", setting up of discussion forums and other data base projects (Hub of interregional partnerships, Interregional network, European programmes...)

Other events

- CLRAE – Bureau (Mr De Belder, Strasbourg, 14/01)
- CoR report on the IGC (Mr De Belder, Brussels, 17/01)
- Forum – "More women in regional administrations"

- (Mrs Palmcrantz, Pisa-I, 19/01)
- European Bureau on lesser-used languages – meeting (Mr Stummann, Brussels, 19/01)
- CLRAE – Standing Committee (Ms De Rose, Strasbourg, 25/02)
- European Policy Centre – meeting with the Commissioner Barnier (Mr De Belder, Brussels, 10/03)
- Assembly of European Fruit and Vegetable growing Regions – founding General Assembly (Mr Milesi, Agen-F, 15/03)
- CoR - meeting with Mr Falcone, Secretary General (Mr De Belder, Brussels, 3/04)

Regionalism and Regionalisation in Europe

> *AER initiatives in Hungary and Portugal*

On 27th January 2000 in Győr, in the Hungarian County of Győr-Moson-Sopron, the AER organised, in collaboration with the host Region and ARGE Donauländer, the first "caravan" for the promotion of regionalism and regionalisation across Europe. 120 people, from all of the Hungarian counties and neighbouring Regions, took part in this AER Conference whose objective was to show the various types of regionalism and regionalisation existing in Europe and to answer questions, in particular from the Hungarian counties, concerning the draft administrative reform which is planned in preparation for Hungary joining the EU.

The next "caravan", which will take place on 15-16th June in Braga (Norte Region - P),

will be on the issue "Comparative decentralisation". The situation of decentralisation in three countries – Portugal, France and the United Kingdom – will be analysed through a selection of programmed speeches. This Conference is open to the public and organised by the AER and the University of Minho for their Praxis project XXI: "The regionalisation of the Portuguese state and the new transnational dynamics". The AER reminds members that the Portuguese population rejected the idea of regionalisation in a referendum.

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Committee B

> *The Charter of Fundamental rights, at the heart of the debate*

At the invitation of the autonomous Region of Açores (P), the Committee B meeting took place on 30-31st March in Ponta Delgada. After the presentation of the reports and the projects of the three Sub-Committees, the Commission focused its activities on the EU Charter of Fundamental rights, decided by the European Council in Köln (June 1999).

Mr J Mostinckx, representative of Vlaanderen (B), traced back the history of the evolution of civil rights, human rights and social rights in Europe (text

available, in full, in English on the AER Web site). The conclusions plead in favour of the reinforcement of social rights within the EU.

This multi-disciplinary debate will continue within the other AER Committees in order to decide on a joint standing point for the next General Assembly.

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> *The representation of women in regional politics*

At the invitation of the Region Harghita (RO), the second annual Conference on the representation of women in regional politics will be held on 12th May 2000 in Bálványos.

Organised by the group "Equal opportunities for men and women" and chaired by Mrs C Palmcrantz (Dalarna – S), this Conference aims to discuss the evolution of the representation of women in regional politics since the "Turin Declaration" which was adopted by the AER in 1998. Amongst others, the following issues will be discussed: the role of the EU and the Council of Europe in the promotion of women's rights, the situation of women in Romania and in the Regions of the CEEC, consideration of the

implementation of statistical means of evaluating equal opportunities for the two sexes. Maj Britt Theorin, President of the Committee on women's rights and equal opportunities of the European Parliament, has already confirmed her participation in this Conference.

The AER group "Equal opportunities for men and women" was represented at the forum organised by the CLRAE and the Region Toscana-I (19/01, Pisa) "More women in regional administrations" by its President. In her speech Mrs Palmcrantz stressed that "The current situation in many regions of Europe with low female representation in decisionmaking bodies and in leading positions in administration goes against

Crisis in Chechnya

> *AER Standpoint*

The AER deplores the suffering of the Chechnyan civil population and supports the appeal launched by the international community in view of restoring peace and the respect of human rights in Chechnya. It stresses the importance of the action undertaken by the EU and especially by the Council of Europe within the Russian Federal authorities.

The AER warns against the dangers of the systematic violation of people's rights for the stability of our continent. It states, once again, as it did regarding the crisis in Kosovo, that the values of regionalism - such as the respect for people's rights and diversities, interregional and cross-border cooperation as a factor of political stability and the principle of political autonomy on a regional level - are the basis of a democratic federalism and can therefore offer an efficient solution to the current problems and prevent new conflicts from arising. In addition, the AER "Declaration on Regionalism" was adopted by all of the member Regions to ensure the implementation of these values at European level.

As an independent and democratic forum for dialogue and cooperation between regional bodies, the AER puts this instrument at the disposition of interested parties in order to contribute to the peace process. Member Regions are requested to put their institutional and political experience, as well as their numerous achievements in interregional cooperation, at the service of those involved. The Russian Regions are invited to rejoin the community of the Regions of Europe, side by side with those which are already AER members.

The AER supports the message of the EU to the Russian Government in view of international observers being put in place through the Council of Europe and the OSCE.

all democratic principles and leaves many female competences and experience unused". Therefore, it should be remembered that the last AER General Assembly adopted a resolution aiming to deal with the issue of equal opportunities within all of the structures and programmes of the AER.

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Centurio

> *Edition 2000 opens up to the Balkans*

Centurio began in February and at the beginning of April, 30 Regions from 12 countries of Western Europe offered to take in 35 trainees.

This year, in addition to the three types of Centurio traineeship which have existed until now (classic, twinning and Eastern and Central Europe), the AER is setting up a new challenge "Centurio in the Balkans". This AER initiative is part of its action in favour of stability and democracy in Europe. The idea is to allow territorial authorities, in particular regional authorities, from the Balkan area to undergo traineeships in the Regions of Western Europe. The targeted countries are: Bosnia-Herzegovina (Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Srpska Republic), Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Kosovo and Montenegro in particular) and the ex-Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia and Albania, even if their current territorial structures are limited to local level.

In order to ensure the success of this project the AER works in close collaboration with organisations "in the field" such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe (CLRAE). The AER asks all the Regions of Western Europe to actively commit themselves in this matter by offering work placements to civil servants and elected representatives of territorial authorities from the Balkans.

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Summer School

> *Vilnius hosts edition 2000*

The fifth AER Summer School will take place on 6-11th August in Vilnius, Lithuania. The event aims to stimulate exchange and debate between representatives of regions from Eastern, Central and Western Europe on issues related to regional development and EU enlargement.

The topics to be explored this year will include:

- Regional institutions and the EU
- The EU as a motor for job creation
- Regions as lobbyists
- Regions as the driving force behind democratic consolidation

In order to encourage interactivity between the participants, Summer School 2000 will consist of the plenary sessions followed by smaller workshops which will explore each of these topics in more detail. The final programme is currently being drawn up and will be available on the AER

Web site - <http://www.are-regions-europe.org> – as soon as all of the speakers contacted to take part in this Summer School (representatives of regional authorities, European institutions and universities) confirm their participation.

The four previous editions – Pest (H), Krakow (PL), Thuringia (D) and Istria (HR) – confirmed the Summer School's role in the field of training, exchanges of experience and the development of interregional cooperation in Europe. The AER invites its Regions to send several participants to this event.

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Eurodysey

> *Give your young people the opportunity to go abroad*

Eurodysey, which celebrates its 15 years of existence this year, allows young people from Regions which are enrolled in this AER training programme to gain professional experience abroad. 23 AER member Regions are involved: Wallonia (B), Jura, Ticino, Valais (CH), Istra (HR), Asturias, Catalunya, Valencia (E), Bourgogne, Champagne-Ardenne, Franche-Comté, Limousin, Poitou-Charentes, Rhône-Alpes (F), Baden-Württemberg (D), Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok (H), Açores (P), Arad, Caras-Severin, Harghita, Hunedora, Satu Mare (RO). At the beginning of the year 2000 Lombardia (I) and Andalucía (E) joined the programme and three other Regions are currently in the process of joining.

In this anniversary year, Eurodysey wishes to increase or even double the number of participating Regions. Indeed, the many requests from young people from all over Europe cannot be met, Eurodysey traineeships being open only to young

people coming from Regions which are enrolled in the programme.

If, in view of its youth policies, training programmes or employment promotion, your Region wishes to join this programme, do not hesitate to contact the Eurodysey Secretariat which will help you to find a partner Region: the first indispensable step in the trainee exchanges. The Eurodysey pilot Committee regularly meets – next meetings on 18th and 19th May, 10th July and 6th September 2000 – and can supply the necessary assistance for setting up your exchange programme. The Eurodysey Forum, which will be held this year on 7th and 8th September in Ponta Delgada (Açores/P), also represents an opportunity to discover this programme and its advantages to a greater extent.

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internet

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

Since the end of March the AER Web site has been up and running in English and French. The German version will be available before the end of June.

The site is regularly updated and the section "What's new" gives direct access to the latest AER news for our regulars. A similar procedure has been put in

place on the Extranet ("News"), access restricted to member Regions.

Despite a few complications – a hard disk breakdown of our server deleted a fair amount of files and delayed the development schedule – work goes on towards putting the promised services at your disposition, as soon as possible.

This especially concerns the data base "Visiting cards of the Regions of Europe", the discussion forum(s) and the online subscription to "What's new". Thank you for your understanding.

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Structural action 2000 – 2006

> *Imminent adoption of the final guidelines for Interreg III*

Over the first three months of this year the European Commission approved the first new Objective 1 programmes as well as the list of eligible Objective 2 areas in six member States. The guidelines for the four initiatives : INTERREG III, URBAN, LEADER+ and EQUAL should be adopted just before Easter. Watch this space because, as of the publication date, the relevant authorities will only have 6 months in which to finalise their projects.

Between January and mid-April, the Commission signed the Community Support Framework (CSF) for Portugal where all 7 Regions are eligible under Objective 1, with one exception which will receive transitional aid. This is the first CSF in a series of six which the Commission must approve before the end of June. The Commission also adopted the first three single programming documents (SPD) – out of the 20 expected SPDs – for Burgenland-A and two Regions from northern and eastern Finland. All of the SPDs of Objective 1 must be signed before the second half of 2000 and Regions from the 13 member States are involved*; 70% of funds are allocated to this end.

The Commission approved the maps of eligible areas for Objective 2 for six member States (out of 12): France, United Kingdom, Spain – the three main beneficiaries – and Austria, Sweden and Luxembourg. Each country has 4 months in which to draw up its SPD, in collaboration with the relevant regional authorities. 100 SPDs should be approved before the end of the year (around 12% of funding).

The final guidelines for the four community initiatives – INTERREG III, URBAN (DG Regional policy), LEADER+ (DG Agriculture) and EQUAL (DG Employment and Social Affairs) – should be published at the beginning of May at the latest. The local authorities, project leaders, will then have little time to finalise their projects as member States must submit their proposals to the Commission in under 6 months. The Commission will then make its final decision at the end of the year 2000/ beginning of 2001.

More strategy and management in the projects

For INTERREG – which aims to reinforce economic and social cohesion within the EU through the promotion of cross-border (branch A), transnational (branch B) and interregional (branch C) cooperation – the Commission will pay particular attention to the developed strategy, to partnerships (institutional and socio-economical) and to the proposed management structure for the programmes, as well as to the cohesion and complementary nature with other community policies and funding (PHARE, ISPA, TACIS, MEDA), or even other community programmes with an external political aspect (Mr Barnier promised to look into pragmatic solutions with his

colleague, Mr Verheugen, in order to improve the coordination between, for example, INTERREG and PHARE).

In fact, the idea is to set up joint structures responsible for drawing up and animating the programmes, selecting procedures, overall running, coordination, follow-up etc. Running costs could, however, be included in the programme financing.

In addition, the Commission would like the selection of procedures and the follow-up to their implementation to be carried out by a pilot Committee and the overall running of the programme to be supervised by a follow-up Committee made up of representatives of regional and local authorities, economical and social partners, and NGOs...

Greater, but renationalised financing

Regarding INTERREG III C, which particularly interests the AER and its work, priority will be given to:
- *“the exchange of experience and good practice throughout the Union and with the non-member countries involved in cross-border and transnational cooperation (...)*
- *cooperation actions related to other topics to be defined by the Commission such as research, technological development and SMEs; the information society, tourism, culture and employment; entrepreneurship and environment etc. Particular attention should be paid to participation by the insular and most remote Regions and the applicant countries in the various networks”.*

One unique programme should be drawn up per cooperation programme by the regional authorities or other, as nominated by the member States. The Commission itself will be responsible for the coordination of selection procedures.

The amount of 4 875 million Euros has been allocated to INTERREG for the period 2000-2006 (as compared with 2 200 million Euros between 1994-1999) and will be shared out between member States on the basis of the population rate of the EU internal border areas, ultra-peripheral Regions and CEEC border Regions. Therefore, the majority will come back to the development of cross-border cooperation (50 – 80 % of national budgets), 6% will be put into interregional cooperation programmes and the rest into transnational cooperation.

According to the budget guidelines which were recently published by the Commission for INTERREG and URBAN, Spain, Germany, Greece, Italy and Portugal will receive the largest portion.

Creation of an Observatory for cross-border cooperation

Just like LEADER, the Directorate “Regional Policy” of the European Commission announced the setting up of an Observatory on cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation. Objective: stimulate the exchange of experience and good practices within INTERREG III. This observatory will be responsible for, in particular, the coordination, the technical assistance and the running of the joint programming structures (branches A and B). This observatory will also be responsible for the coordination of calls for proposals within INTERREG III C for the Commission.

With reference to the payment of Community funds (50% of costs and up to 75% in late Regions), the relevant authorities could receive a global subsidy from the ERDF and to the project management. On the basis of the decisions of the follow-up and pilot Committees the project management will make a payment to the relevant organisms which will then ensure that these funds reach their final beneficiaries. In the case of partnerships in different member States, the final beneficiary will thereby become the “head of the line” and will be financially responsible for the financial management and coordination of the project.

For further information:

- INTERREG III or URBAN: <http://www.inforegio.cec.eu.int/webnews/new/> (the definitive guidelines should be available in the near future)
- LEADER+: <http://www.rural-europe.aeid.be> (the most advanced project, the definitive guidelines should be available at time of going to press)
- EQUAL: <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/dg05/key> (see “key documents” in PDF)

*See “AER on line” – Autumn 1999



> *What future for the European Charter of Regional Self-Government?*

by *Rinaldo Locatelli*

In 1997, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe (CLRAE) adopted the draft European Charter of regional Self-Government which is destined to become, as far as the Regions are concerned, the fundamental convention of the Council of Europe, just like the European Charter of local Self-Government. The latter was adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 1995 and is, today, ratified by 33 out of the 44 member States of the Council of Europe and represents the foundation of local democracy in Europe.

One element which these two Charters have in common is the principle of subsidiarity; in the texts of the Council of Europe this is seen as a general principle which controls relations between the various levels of public authorities and not only between European institutions and the nation States as in the Maastricht Treaty. This principle is defined in the European Charter of local Self-Government and also clearly explained in the draft European Charter of regional Self-Government (Art. 3 § 1 – concerning the definition of regional Self-Government and Art.7 § 2 concerning relations between the various levels of authority).

A decision, expected since 1997

Bearing in mind the differing opinions in the various European States, the draft version of this Charter has not defined the concept of "Region", however Art. 3 states that a Region is *"the largest territorial authorities within each State, having elected bodies, being administratively placed between central government and local authorities and enjoying prerogatives either of self-organisation or of a type normally associated with the central authority"*.

In order to become a convention of the Council of Europe this draft must be adopted as such by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, by at least two thirds of the 41 member States. Since 1997, no definite decision has been made by the Committee of Ministers on this matter.

Main problems facing the adoption

Among these problems, two main arguments can be identified:

1. Certain governments consider that the Council of Europe already has several conventions whose application is not

always easy for member States. These countries would, therefore, feel excessively bound by an overrestrictive conventional text. Faced with this situation the Congress put forward, for the second time, the idea proposed in the preparatory works, of a multi-level conventional text which would not force member States to adopt all of the provisions in the text.

2. For certain States the idea of a conventional European text interfering in their internal constitutional structure appears impossible. The simple idea of Self-Government is often easily associated with separatism or independence, even if the draft is very clear on this point: it states, in particular, that *"regional self-government entails loyalty towards the State to which the Regions belong, with due regard to its sovereignty and territorial integrity"* (Preamble, §8). The fact that in federal countries the federal States or Regions effectively have a constitutional role in the internal structure of the State scares other States that would not wish to feel pushed, through a European text, towards a federal set up, thereby implying abandoning a unified State. In order to solve this problem the draft Charter is based on concepts which are wide enough to be applied in any possibility without putting undue pressure on all member States to become federal.

In reality, the draft version of the Congress's Charter has already been recognised in Europe due to the countries of Eastern and Central Europe, wishing to create Regions – if only in order to adapt to the political realities of the EU more easily and therefore help their candidatures – having used this text as inspiration for their territorial structures. This is the case in Poland and Slovakia for example.

In the same line of thought, when the Congress studies the situation of Regions in member States and candidate countries, in order to produce country by country reports on the situation of local and regional democracy, it obviously uses the principles of the European Charter of regional Self-Government as inspiration. However, it must be pointed out that this "monitoring" puts no restrictions on member States, although the Congress's recommendations can sometimes lead to heated debates in the relevant Regions.

Towards a new text...

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has examined this draft several times, the two latest times being on the basis of the opinion of the competent Steering Committee on Local and Regional Democracy (CDLR). On the basis of the last mandate accorded to the CDLR at the beginning of the year 2000, a drafting Committee had been set up within the CDLR; this Committee is responsible for drawing up a text – at the present time it has not been decided whether this text will be a simple recommendation or a Convention – and for presenting its conclusions to the Committee of Ministers before the end of the year 2001. Research on the various types of Regions existing in the member States is currently underway, in order to identify the elements which could be included in the text to be put to the Committee of Ministers.

....or increased active support for the initial draft version

Drawing up a new text would be a tedious process and, despite the fact that the Congress is participating in the work of the special group and that the parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe as well as the Assembly of European Regions (AER) fully support the Congress's text, there exists a high risk of "losing" the original version

Therefore, there remains a large amount of work to be done in convincing governments, with diplomacy, to participate in work in which the AER and other organisations with regional influence could be useful and appreciated. We are also counting on the support of the Committee of the Regions (EU) which has decided to draw up a document giving its opinion on the Congress's initial draft version.

In addition, the Congress proposes to organise, in November 2000, a Conference for government leaders of Regions with legislative powers; this could be a good point in favour of the draft European Charter of regional Self-Government proposed by the Congress.

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Started by Mr M Rudloff and Mr J Zaleski (President of the "Conseil régional" of Alsace (F) and the "Voivode" of Wroclaw (PL) respectively) in 1994, relations between these two Regions were formalised with a cooperation agreement in June of 1998. Various action has been taken in the fields of economical development, civil servant exchange programmes, tourism, culture and further education.

For example:

- The annual Alsace week for the promotion of Alsace in Wroclaw and Wroclaw week in Alsace, since 1997/8;
- Alsatian solidarity action following the rise in the river Oder in July 1997 (financial and humanitarian aid) through the Association "Amitié franco-polonaise" (Franco-Polish friendship);
- Student exchange agreement (post-university level) between the institute of political science in Strasbourg and the law faculty of the university of Wroclaw;
- The organisation of several thematic seminars such as "France-Poland-Europe" which was organised in June of 1998 in Strasbourg and to which the political representatives of both Regions made a major contribution.

Following the regional reforms in Poland (Jan. 1999), this cooperation agreement was drawn up for the second time (Dec. 1999) with the new Voivodie of Dolnoslaskie (Lower Silesia) which includes the former Voivode of Wroclaw, as well as those of Jelenia Gora, Walbrzych and Legnica.

The action begun in the year 2000 includes a large and important branch which is dedicated to the training of civil servants from the Voivodie of Lower

Silesia in the field of regional community policies:

- the taking in of trainees both by the Conseil régional and the Bureau in Brussels;
- training seminars, in Wroclaw, for a future Euro-Regio-Centre;
- a Lower Silesia week in Alsace;
- the organisation of an Autumn School in Lower Silesia;
- an offer of help from Lower Silesia to Alsace following the extensive storm damage last December.

In addition, Alsace, among other Regions, reacted favourably to the AER initiative for Lower Silesia – project "ODRA" – which aims to mobilise the expertise of its member Regions in the field of Regional development and establish indepth cooperation with this Polish Region.

Indeed, Mr J Waszkiewicz, Marshall of Lower Silesia, requested the advice and support of the AER in the preparations for the development plan of his Region on a long and medium term basis. This request was put before the AER Presidium in Feb. 2000 and mobilisation for this project is currently underway within Committee C. The AER would like to thank the Regions which have already given their contributions to this initiative.

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- Woj. Dolnoslaskie: Teresa Lis-Pienkowska
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AER Contact ("ODRA" project):

- Laura De Rose or Konstantin Korolev
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Institute of European Studies – "Regional politics" department (Varsovie)

This institute was created at the end of 1999 and is currently developing quickly, it is therefore looking to set up institutional partnerships with Universities and Institutes having a department or a chair of regional policies in Europe in order to:

- exchange experience on the content of training programmes set up not only for students, but also for managers of territorial planning,
- encourage exchanges between lecturers, managers and students (work placements)

This institute is also looking for partners for the development of two internet projects: "Information highways for Polish towns and Regions" and "Regional observatory", a data base for Polish Regions in order to encourage the exchange of experience between them, in the context of joining the EU, and in collaboration with other European Regions. This institute is also at the basis of a cooperation project between local and regional authorities in Lithuania, Latvia, Bielorussia, the Ukraine and Poland, which aims, above all, at encouraging policies which integrate young people in Europe.

- Contact:** Dorota Popowska
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IRES – Interregional Recreative Sports event

The Flemish Association of regional civil servants has asked us to announce the organisation of an interregional sports event which will take place between the 30th June and the 3rd July 2000 in Brugge – Vlaanderen-B to which all civil servants from other European Regions are invited. In 1998, over 100 participants from the Belgian, Dutch and German Regions took part in this event which aims to bring Regions closer through sport. For more information: www.ires.be

- Contact:**
ires@lin.vlaanderen.be



Elections

Spain

- Catalunya: end of 1999, Jordi Pujol (CiU) was re-elected President of his Region (6th term)
- Andalucia: 12th March 2000, Manuel Chaves (PSOE) was re-elected President of his Region (6th term)

Italy

Regional elections took place on 16th April 2000 and involved the 15 Regions with ordinary status. For the first time, the Presidents of the Italian Regions were directly elected by the citizens (direct universal suffrage) for a 5 year term. On the basis of the fundamental criteria of regional democracy, the Presidents must answer to the regional assemblies, which have the power to revoke them.

(Results were not available at time of going to press and will be announced in the next edition)

Germany

Land of Nordrhein-Westfalen: regional elections planned for the 14th May 2000.

Committee of the Regions (CoR)

Jozef Chabert (PPE) was elected President of the CoR on 16th February 2000; he replaces Manfred Dameyer who has become First Vice-President.

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe (CLRAE)

Presidential elections, presidential elections for the two chambers and the CLRAE Bureau will take place in the Plenary session on 23-25th May. *(Results will be announced in the next edition)*

> A new interregional organisation is born

The founding General Assembly of the Assembly of European Fruit and Vegetable growing Regions (AREFL) took place on the 15th March in Agen (F), in the context of the International fruit and vegetable fair. A dozen Regions from Spain, France and Italy have already shown their interest in this Association. Mr G Saint-Martin, Vice-President of the Aquitaine Region (F), responsible for agriculture, was elected President of the AREFL by the temporary Bureau.

This new structure, whose objective is the representation of the political interests of the Regions and the professional interests of technical organisms such as the Assembly of European Wine Producing Regions (AREV), wishes to be included in general AER politics. The AREFL aims to make the specific interests of the fruit and vegetable sector better known and taken into account to a greater extent by the EU and to prepare for negotiations with the World Trade Organisation.

The AER was represented at this General Assembly by the director of its Secretariat and welcomes this initiative which it considers to be in complete harmony with its own action.

AER Contact: Eric Milesi
emilesi@are-regions-europe.org

> The European Cup of Regional Flavours

The third edition of the European Cup of Regional flavours, organised by the Province of Limburg (NL), will take place on 25th – 28th September 2000.

This cup is, in fact, organised by two Regions: the Dutch and Belgian provinces of Limburg, and represents a demonstration of the efficiency of interregional cooperation, which the AER so cherishes. In addition to its value in the field of regional gastronomic heritage, recognised by all, edition 2000 has become a real cross-border event.

The AER wishes good luck to all participants!

For further information do not hesitate to check out the Web site:
<http://www.regional-flavours.com>
which is dedicated to the European Cup of Regional Flavours.

Contact: Project management
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"Problems and perspectives for interregional cooperation in Europe"

At the initiative of the Regional Government of Euskadi/Pais Vasco – E, a Conference on this theme will be held on 29th and 30th May 2000 in San Sebastián. Three sessions are planned:

- "Overview and perspectives of interregional cooperation in Europe" with the participation of the AER and the CPMR,
- "Cross-border cooperation" and "the need for a legal instrument for interregional and cross-border cooperation" with the participation of the AEBR and the regional University (UPV-EHU),

- "Interregional cooperation and the development of EU policies" with examples from various fields – culture, employment, training and social policies, research and development, support for SMEs – with the participation of the European Commission, actors in cooperation, academics and company heads.

The Conference will end with a round table "European institutions and interregional cooperation" to which the representatives of the European Commission, the European Parliament and the CoR have been invited.

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publication

"The European Quadrigae or the Europe through the Regions"

This brochure was published on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of Four Motors for Europe, an interregional Association which was created in 1989 by Baden-Württemberg (D), Catalunya (E), Lombardia (I) and Rhône-Alpes (F), and

presents an overview of cooperation in the main fields covered by this Association: training, research, culture, economy and territorial planning. This book also includes a comparative presentation of these four Regions as well as the main joint declarations. (By Pierre Kukawa, 127 pages)

Contact: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble
Email: pug@upmf-grenoble.fr



diary

MAY

Friday 5th
AER Bureau – Stuttgart (D)

Friday 12th
2nd Conference "Women in politics at regional level" - Bálványos (RO)

Wednesday 17th to Friday 19th
Committee B Working group "Officer's exchange programme" – Østfold (N)

Thursday 18th to Sunday 21st
International Council of AREV
Thessalonique (GR)

Thursday 18th
AER Committee D – Odessa (UKR)

Friday 19th
AER Conference on the "Participation of young people in regional affairs"
Odessa (UKR)

Friday 19th
CoR Bureau – Coimbra (P)

Monday 22nd
AER meeting prior to the CLRAE session – Strasbourg (F)

Monday 23rd to Thursday 25th
CLRAE Plenary session – Strasbourg (F)

JUNE

Monday 5th and Tuesday 6th
AER Committee C - Firenze (I)

Tuesday 13th
CoR Bureau – Brussels (B)

Wednesday 14th and Thursday 15th
CoR Plenary session – Brussels (B)

Thursday 15th and Friday 16th
AER caravan on regionalism – Braga (P)

Tuesday 27th to Friday 30th
Conference of Border Regions and Presidency of the AEBR - Bâle (CH)

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