



editorial

Participants of the Conference on European governance, organised by the CPMR at the end of June and at which I represented the AER, exchanged points of view on the content and finality of the White paper – planned for 2001. Despite the assurance of the Councillor of the President of the European Commission “the idea is not simply to decentralise European administrative competences”, the AER must ensure that this new governance does not mean more governing on all levels with more administration and taxes, but better, more human governance, coming closer to the citizens. For the AER the most important factor is the citizen at the heart of his or her Region.

It is also necessary to clarify competences in virtue of the principle of subsidiarity which should use a bottom up approach (democracy from the citizens) and not the opposite. “Subsidiarity” does not mean “Subordination”. Finally, this redefinition must give the Regions the role they play in the reality of Europe.

Hans De Belder
AER Secretary General

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In brief

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ACTIVITIES...PUBLICATIONS...DIARY...

> *First European Conference of Regional Ministers for Culture*

On 25th and 26th October 2000 in Nyon (CH), the AER is organising this Conference, in the aim of allowing the Regions to debate a “catalogue of competences”, “European cultural policies” and the envisaged changes in voting in the field of culture at European level.

At a time when the issue of changing to qualified majority voting in the field of culture is included in the preparation for the IGC, it is of primordial importance that regional decision-makers in the field of culture – in particular concerning the Länder, Regions and autonomous communities with legislative and financial competences in this area – unite to underpin the role of the Regions in the drawing up of cultural policies in Europe and produce a joint standing point on the European perspective.

The Regions, cultural actors in Europe

The Regions are the anchor point of secular culture in Europe and of a rich tradition of regional cultures which have survived the foundation of nation States throughout the 19th Century. In consequence they are the best placed for continuing this cultural history, for developing and encouraging it, both in the present and the future, for the citizens and with the citizens. Among their assignments can be found not only conservation, maintenance and the transmission of cultural heritage, but also the support for contemporary artistic creativity, the cultural heritage of tomorrow.

Yes to EU funding

The Regions favourably welcome the integration of cultural aspects in European policies and programmes. They encourage Community support for regional cultural projects and even regret that funding is too limited. However, they must question the concept of an EU “European cultural policy”, evaluate its impact on regional Self-Government and prevent all attempts at consequential regulation in time.

The respect of regional diversity

Therefore, the change in voting requires indepth debate. Until now EU member States have decided to use their cultural competences unanimously (Article 151, EC Treaty). In virtue of this principle which stresses the highly valued notion of subsidiarity in the Regions of Europe, the action of EU institutions is limited to supporting the independent cultural policies of the member States, using the means given in the European Treaties, whilst respecting their national and regional diversities. The abandon of unanimous voting could go against the respect for national identity (Article 3, EU Treaty) and the regional identities which create it. It could also leave the door open to the globalisation of cultural policies and to the centralisation of European decision-making at the expense of regional authorities in particular. The Regions must therefore defend their prerogatives.

The confirmation of AER expertise

Finally, although the debate focuses on three main issues, the AER Conference also aims to allow an exchange of experience on the various cultural policies at regional level in Europe and on good practices in the field of interregional cooperation. A questionnaire is available on the AER Web site (<http://www.are-regions-europe.org/commun/A214b4.html>).

The AER takes this occasion to renew its invitation to all those interested in attending.

> Main Bureau decisions

The Bureau met on 5th May 2000 in Stuttgart, capital of Baden-Württemberg (D) and discussed the main themes in current European Affairs:

- Intergovernmental Conference

Firstly Bureau members discussed the restriction of competences between the various levels of governance in Europe. *"Before the enlargement of the Union it is indispensable to determine the fields of competences of the European authorities and those which are better handled at national, regional or communal level"* stated the Secretary of State and President of AER Committee A, Mr Willi Stächele, representing the German Länder within the IGC, whilst reporting on negotiations. The Bureau feels that the drawing up of a "catalogue of competences" should allow the principle of subsidiarity, included in the Treaty of Amsterdam, to be clarified. He also spoke in favour of the reinforcement of the Committee of the Regions which must become a real European institution

in its own right, and of greater legitimacy for the European Parliament through the long term creation of a Chamber of the Regions.

- Charter of fundamental rights

The Bureau congratulated the European Council for its decision to draw up a Charter of fundamental rights and took note that, at the initiative of Committee B, an AER standing point was currently being drawn up. Members felt that, in parallel with Human rights and Citizen's rights, rights concerning regional identity should be included in this Charter. As representatives of the Conference of the Presidents of legislative Assemblies of the Regions of Europe, Mr José María García Leira, President of the regional Parliament of Galicia (E) and Mr Helmut Schreiner, President of the regional Parliament of Salzburg (A), participated in the debate.

In addition, a strategic document called "AER: The way ahead", which defines the

AER's political guidelines and activities for the coming years, was adopted. This document should also serve as a basis for the membership campaign to be undertaken by Bureau members for the AER.

The Bureau gave its agreement in principle with the proposals submitted by the advisory group for selective amendments to the AER Statutes. The idea is to reinforce the political efficacy of the AER through a certain number of adaptations.

Finally, the Bureau has begun preparation for elections which will take place on 7th and 8th December 2000 in Seinäjoki (FIN) at the General Assembly. Regions are invited to make their candidatures before the 2nd October 2000.

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> AER Conference on equal opportunities for men and women

The 2nd AER Conference was held on 12th May in Bálványos at the invitation of the Region Harghita (RO). Although the almost 80 delegates attending were delighted with the progress made in certain countries (Spain, France, Finland, Italy and Scotland), they were obliged to remark that the situation regarding women remains critical in many countries, in particular in Eastern and Central Europe. Dina Loghin, from the Foundation for equal opportunities, thereby pointed out that the average salary for a woman in Romania was 25% less than that of a man. Lucia Briscan of

the Liga Pro Europa stressed the problems with which women from ethnic minorities in this country were faced with.

Even within the EU, despite the efforts of community and national authorities, women are still marginalised in decision-making, regional or local level included. On this subject, Maj Britt Theorin, President of the Commission on Women's rights and equal opportunities of the European Parliament reminded those present *"that a society which, in a general manner, only takes into account the values of half of the population is weaker, deficient and less democratic"*.

In their final declaration, participants requested that at future AER Bureau elections (Seinäjoki, 7th and 8th December 2000), member Regions ensure that there be an equal share of male and female candidates. Carin Palmcrantz, Leader of the "equal opportunities for men and women" AER group encouraged women to make their candidatures for the chairmanship of the various bodies and working structures of the AER.

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> 7th CLRAE Plenary session (23-25th May 2000)

Over 20 Regions from 11 countries participated in the preparatory meeting organised by the AER just before the annual session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe (CLRAE). This exchange of opinions prior to the Plenary session allowed the AER to strengthen its role in the debates on major issues such as the evolution of regionalisation in Eastern and Central Europe, the adoption of the draft European Charter on Regional Self-Government, the Regions' contribution to stability in Europe and the adoption of new regulations for the Chamber of the Regions. The AER was delighted with the new regulations concerning the running

of this Chamber, according to which only Regions with elected Assemblies and legislative competences have the right to vote within the Congress (the others having an advisory capacity), and feels that this will contribute to increasing the role of regional elected representatives within the Council of Europe.

The AER also participated in the CLRAE elections by supporting the candidatures of Mr Cuatrecasas (Catalunya - E), Mr Koivisto (Pirkanmaa - FIN) and Mr Kolumban (Harghita - RO). These candidates were unanimously elected Congress, Chamber of the Regions and Culture Committee (Regions) Presidents respectively.

Mr Cuatrecasas becomes *de facto* AER Vice-President responsible for relations with the CLRAE.

In addition, during this session the AER and the CEMR held a joint meeting which led to a shared approach concerning their support for the adoption of the draft European Charter on Regional Self-Government. Bearing in mind members' interest for this initiative, it was decided that joint AER/CEMR meetings would be held before each CLRAE Plenary session.

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Committee C

>Launch of the debate on the future of regional policies

The representatives of 57 Regions of 17 countries participated in the latest AER Committee C meeting (Florence, 5th and 6th June) at which the major issues of current regional policy affairs such as transeuropean networks (TENs), Agricultural policy, communications (regional airports in particular), the implementation of INTERREG III, and environment (mainly the preparation of the 6th Environmental Action Programme - EAP) were discussed.

On this occasion Committee C also officially opened the debate on the future of European regional policies (2007-2013). This debate will be continued on the AER discussion forum which will be available on its Web site as of the beginning of September (<http://www.are-regions-europe.org>).

In particular, the Committee decided to:

- create an international working group (made up of Regions from Ireland, Italy, Great Britain, Norway, Finland and Romania) which will be responsible for drawing up a report explaining the AER point of view on the future of regional policies; to be presented to Mr Barnier before the adoption of the next report on social and economic cohesion;
- actively participate in the revision of the TENs, in view of the recognition of the importance of the regional view point in the development of these networks;
- contribute to the drawing up of the next EAP and send these recommendations

Committee D

>AER Youth Conference

On 19th May 2000 in Odessa (UKR), AER Committee D invited young europeans from all backgrounds to debate the problems faced by their generation, in particular socio-political problems, with the AER, in view of their concerns being included in AER policies to a greater extent.

Participants discussed issues going from education and training to drugs, social exclusion, inter-generation conflicts and their solutions, young people and their alienation from politics, participation methods and their implementation with various degrees of independence, communication and internet. Although adopting a critical attitude towards internet, it was considered as a means to be used in future contact with young people (email network) and a specific Web page should be set up. To this end, cooperation will be started under the aegis of Odessa (UKR), and Sörmland (S) and in collaboration with the AER Secretariat.

to the organisers of the next Earth Summit (2003);

- produce a directory of good regional practices in the field of sustainable rural development and in close cooperation with NGOs which are active in this area;
- draw up a map of regional airports in the context of a strategy for the promotion of their role and their future, in particular regarding their contribution to regional economies and the reduction of isolated areas;
- set up an interregional project in the field of sustainable tourism;
- reinforce cooperation with other interregional organisations involved in regional policies (mainly the CPMR and the AEBR) in order to ensure that the Regions' interests are taken into account in INTERREG III and its observatory on cross-border cooperation.

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Whilst recognising that, perhaps more than in any other area, action for young people needs to be undertaken in the field in order to gain trust and indepth knowledge, the need to transfer this experience to a higher level has become obvious. In this perspective three young participants will report on the Conference at the next AER General Assembly in December and the first Conference representing young people will be organised by the AER in 2001.

Among the other decisions made, the following should be mentioned:

- the encouragement of participation and young people exchange programmes such as the AER Eurodyssey programme, in particular in the East-West context,
- the launch of a "the most youth friendly Region" competition.

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>Centurio 2000

Here are the first work placements of edition 2000 of the AER training programme for representatives from the Regions of Eastern and Central Europe:

- Bács-Kiskun (H): 1 work placement in Salzburg and then in Vorarlberg (A)
- Hajdú-Bihar (H): 2 work placements in St Gall (CH)
- Veszprém (H): 1 work placement in Bern (CH) and then in Trento (I)
- Istra (HR): 1 work placement in Bern (CH)
- Pest (H): 1 work placement in Västernorrland (S)
- Somogy (H): 1 work placement in Västernorrland (S)
- Tatarstan (RUS): 1 work placement in Salzburg (A)
- Lodz (PL): 1 work placement in Norte (P)
- Covasna (RO): 1 work placement in Trento (I)
- Békés (H): 1 work placement in Worcestershire (GB) and then in West Vlaanderen (B)

13 other Regions of Western Europe have confirmed their wish to receive trainees: Fyn (DK), Catalonia, Galicia (E), Alsace, Upper Normandy, Rhône-Alpes (F), Etelä-Pohjanmaa, Uusimaa (FIN), Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Lombardy (I), Västerbotten, Västra Götaland (S), Gateshead, Somerset (UK). However, these offers do not cover the totality of candidatures received and around forty must still be satisfied. For this reason the AER appeals to its Western members to come and join in in this programme.

The new initiative "Centurio for the Balkans" received 15 candidatures from the Cantons of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Both Swedish and Italian Regions have shown interest in accepting trainees.

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>AER Summer School Edition 2000

6-11th August - Vilnius-(LT)

The programme of edition 2000 of the AER Summer School is available on the Web site of the Vilnius Region: <http://www.vilnius.lt/summerschool>, the registration form is also downloadable from this site.

The AER Web site is linked to the Vilnius Web site (<http://www.are-regions-europe.org>). Access is via the AER Summer School page under "Programmes".

Register now, numbers limited!



>AER activities: May-June 2000

Political meetings and events

- Meeting with Mr Teufel, Minister President of Baden-Württemberg (President Luc Van den Brande, Stuttgart, 05/05)
- AREV General Assembly (18-20/05 <http://www.arev.org>)
- Meeting with the AREV President (Porto, Hans De Belder, 09/06)
- Meeting with W Schwimmer, Secretary General of the Council of Europe (Hans De Belder, Strasbourg, 24/05)
- Conference on interregional cooperation (L Van den Brande, San Sebastian, 26/05)
- CoR Plenary session (Hans De Belder, Brussels, 14-15/06)
- ARGE ALP General Assembly (F Stummann, Locarno, 15-16/06)
- CPMR Conference on European governance (L Van den Brande, Hans De Belder, Lisbon, 22-24/06)
- Emperor Maximilian 2000 prize awarded to L Van den Brande, AER President (Innsbruck, 7/07)

Member contact

- Meeting with the French Regions (Hans De Belder, Paris, 17/05)
- Meeting with the Swedish Regions (Hans De Belder, Stockholm, 30-31/05)

Other AER meetings

- Working group "Civil servant exchange programmes" (Østfold, 17-19/05)
- Caravan on regionalism in Portugal (H De Belder, E Milesi, A Gómez, Braga, 15-16/06)
- Preparatory visit for the General Assembly (Hans De Belder and Eric Milesi, Seinäjoki, FIN, 19-20/06)

Programmes

- Centurio: registrations continue
- Eurodyssey: Pilot Committee (Valencia, 17/06)
- Summer School: Beginning of registrations (see <http://www.are-regions-europe.org> – Summer School/link with the Vilnius site-LT)

Technical

- Launch of the Web site in German
- Implementation of the new version of the AER data base which will be used to revitalise the Web site
- Opening of the first AER on line data base "Visiting Cards of the European Regions"
- Technical finalisation of the "AER discussion forums"
- Continuation of the creation of three other data bases which will soon be available on line: "Data base of regionalism in Europe", "Pool of interregional partnerships" and "Useful links"
- Overall development of the Web site which will become more interactive and informative as of September

Press

Distribution of press releases following the Bureau meeting, from the speech of Mr J Fischer, German Minister of Foreign Affairs "From confederation to federation", to CLRAE elections, to the Committee C meeting and the Emperor Maximilian prize.

For further information:

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

Regional and local democracy in the EU

This study was undertaken by Mr J Loughlin (Wales – UK), in collaboration with five other students and published by the CoR. It gives a panorama of the evolution and the current situation regarding local and regional democracy in the 15 member States.

According to the study, the EU has played an important role in the restructuring of relations between central and regional/local levels by encouraging greater involvement of infranational authorities in European policies through the use of its programmes. However, although europeanisation and regionalisation go together, the level of democratic practices is affected. European activities seem distant from the average citizen and increase

the tendency towards alienation from public life.

The main challenge for the local/regional authorities of today is to fight the deficit in democratic participation and to set up the necessary means for reintegrating civil society. The authors of the study list around fifteen innovative methods which go from the creation of a Youth Council – which the AER promotes to its members – to the use of direct democracy via internet. They also stress the importance of the exchange of experience between the Regions of Europe and a mutual apprenticeship in helping to find new forms of governance in Europe which better correspond to the reality of the 21st Century.

To be read without fail!

Available from EUR-OP outlets (52 Euros)



diary

AUGUST

Sunday 6th to Friday 11th
AER Summer School - Vilnius (LT)

Monday 7th
Working group: priorities for Committee A, within the Summer School - Vilnius (LT)

Saturday 19th to Monday 21st
Festival of traditional folk games and sports
Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok (H)

SEPTEMBER

Friday 8th
AER Presidium - Brussels (B)

Tuesday 19th to Thursday 21st
CoR Bureau and Plenary session
Brussels (B)

Friday 22nd to Saturday 23rd
AER Committee C - Tulcea (RO)

Monday 25th to Thursday 28th
European Cup of Regional Flavours
Limburg (NL)

Wednesday 27th
RETI Bureau - Brussels (B)

Thursday 28th to Friday 29th
AER Committee B – Skellefteå (S)

Thursday 28th to Friday 29th
Centurio introductory seminar
Brussels (B)

OCTOBER

Tuesday 10th to Friday 13th
CPMR General Assembly
Firenze (I)

Thursday 19th to Friday 20th
AEBR General Assembly
Drama (GR)

Tuesday 24th
AER Committee D - Nyon (CH)

Wednesday 25th to Thursday 26th
AER European Conference of Regional Ministers for Culture
Nyon (CH)

Friday 27th
AER Bureau - Nyon (CH)

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