



## editorial

As an elected representative of a federal State, I can but welcome Chancellor Schröder's call for the construction of a federal Europe with its own constitution, a call which gives added impetus to the debate on the future of Europe - untouched since Nice.

I am, however, disappointed that Schröder's call concerning the future of the Union includes no reference either legally or practically speaking to the regions in European decision making. On the contrary, from a regional point of view, the call represents a possible risk of deterioration compared with the current situation as the regions have made progress, institutionally speaking, since 1994.

We, the regions of Europe, must remain particularly cautious in this debate, especially regarding the distribution of competences - we which we all heartily call for - and respect of the principle of subsidiarity. Our proposals should be actively sought for in the establishment of a clear definition of this principle should a European constitution be drawn up.

The AER institutional Committee has just set up a consultation process on this issue and I ask my colleagues of the regions of the EU and of applicant countries to make themselves heard regarding this matter. In this way the foundations of a joint position of the regions can be put in place in this historical debate.

Liese Prokop  
Vice-Minister President  
of Niederösterreich  
AER President

## > Cohesion policy in an enlarged Union?

On 21st and 22nd May 2001, Mrs Liese Prokop, AER President, and Mr Brian Greenslade, President of our Regional policy Committee, represented the AER at the Second Cohesion Forum organised by the European Commission in Brussels. In addition, the Regional policy Committee, whose last meeting was dedicated to the analysis of the second report on cohesion, had prepared an AER contribution for this Forum and addressed this contribution to Commissioner Barnier.

In this document, the AER shows its approval of the conclusions and the recommendations made in the second report on cohesion, whilst stressing that the new European cohesion policies should be more flexible and rapid reacting in order to meet the challenges of enlargement, adaption to technological change and the growing needs related to social integration, urban regeneration and sustainable rural development in member States.

### Change in focus for the aims of cohesion

Whilst accepting the priorities put forward in this report, the AER calls for a change in focus regarding the aims of these policies. Above all these policies should:

- encourage economic and social cohesion and reduce inequality between the regions,
- promote spatial planning policies which are not based on a single centre model and respect the principle of territorial cohesion,
- respect and reflect cultural diversity,
- help European citizens to have greater awareness of the size and importance of the future Europe.

### An integrated approach and greater involvement for the regions

In order to reach these objectives the AER insists on the importance of an integrated approach for EU policies, as suggested in the report, and of the role of the regions which must represent the pillars of future cohesion policy in Europe. The regions must become the key partners of the EU and national governments in the identification of needs in the field of European regional policy in order

to ensure that these policies take the great diversity existing in regional situations into account. The regions must also be included in the preparation of these policies and of programmes, in application of the principles of subsidiarity and partnership.

### Increased convergence

The AER made proposals for concrete measures aiming to encourage the convergence of slow developing regions post-enlargement. Among the fields aimed at are the development of transport networks (TENs and sub-TENs, regional aviation), integration and cooperation orientated action such as INTERREG, environmental protection, (water and waste treatment, energy saving programmes...) as well as human resources (learning, vocational training, new technology...) or policies to encourage employment and thereby skilled workers to remain in new member States.

### Structural Funds: greater flexibility

Although, at this point in time, the issue of resources is secondary, it is obvious that the Structural Funds will not be able to meet everybody's needs. According to the AER, a more flexible application of funding regulations is necessary to allow new geographical priorities to be met alongside of the continuing fight against inequality within the EU. The AER does however agree that the new cohesion policy must aim at developing, on a long term basis, the ability for slow developing regions to take control of their own development and to progressively reduce their dependence on European assistance.

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## > Bureau meeting in Oberkirch - Baden-Württemberg (D)

At the invitation of Mr Stächele, Secretary of State of Baden-Württemberg and President of the AER Institutional Committee, the new Bureau held its first meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> March in Oberkirch.

Mrs Prokop, AER President, firstly informed the Bureau on the Presidium's activities concerning the programme 2001 – 2002, in accordance with the decisions made in Strasbourg (31st January).

### The departure of Mr De Belder

The President then informed the Bureau of Mr De Belder's request to terminate his period as Secretary General, to which the Presidium had agreed. After having thanked Mr De Belder for his commitment to the AER over the last six years, Mrs Prokop pointed out that all members would be informed of Mr De Belder's departure by letter in March and that the recruitment procedure would immediately be initiated. This procedure would use the AER Web site as its main means of contacting those interested. The future Secretary General will be elected at the General Assembly (29 – 30th November 2001 – Sopron – H).

In order to allow the action plan to continue smoothly, Mrs Prokop requested, in accordance with the Presidium and the Bureau, that:

- the Vice-Presidents assist her in ensuring the continuation of the AER's political objectives and its external representation,
- the Vice-President Treasurer continue, as to date, to take care of budgetary,

financial and legal aspects,  
- the Secretariat team, under the coordination of the Secretariat director, creates the best possible conditions for the day to day management of the AER and preparation for meetings.

### A European constitutional order: member consultation

On behalf of the Vice-President Treasurer, Mr Claude Ruey, Mr Wehrli presented the situation regarding subscriptions and thanked all those regions having paid their subscription for 2001. He also confirmed the improvement concerning the evolution of the Pacte dossier.

Each Committee President took his turn in reporting on past or future activities concerning their Committee. Mr Stächele presented the two documents adopted by his Committee in Berlin (8-9 February): "Towards a European constitutional order" and "White paper on European Governance". Following the debate, the Bureau adopted these two texts as AER working documents and decided to start consulting members (currently underway). Once this consultation process has been finalised and bearing in mind the evolution of the debate within EU bodies, an official AER position will be redacted and submitted to the Bureau's and the General Assembly's approval.

Mr Kristoffersen, President of the social affairs Committee, pointed out that his Committee would consolidate current activities – civil servant exchange programmes, suicide prevention, "ALIVE",

equal opportunities... – and would begin new programmes concerning the topics of anti-violence and health (participation in the European Health Forum, "Pro-health" programme...). He also announced that the diffusion of information on Committee activities would be one of his priorities.

### Cohesion and structural funds, major issues for the General Assembly

Mr Greenslade, President of the Regional Committee, informed the Bureau of the programme for the meeting in Östersund (22-24th March, Jämtland – S) and of the preparations for the Cohesion Forum, organised by the European Commission (20 – 21st May, Brussels). He was delighted with the financing (33 000 Euros) obtained from the Commission in order to cover the travel costs for the regional representatives from the CEEC attending the meeting.

In the absence of Mr Hosp, President of the Culture Committee, Mr Scherer (Niederösterreich-A) announced that this Committee would focus on the follow-up to the conclusions of the Conference of Regional Ministers of Culture (October 2000, Nyon, Vaud – CH) whilst working on central topics such as youth, regional languages, adult education or third age universities.

Detailed minutes are available on the AER extranet (members only)

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## focus

## > Greater decentralisation in the Czech Republic

On 1st January 2001, 13 new regions or kraj were created in the Czech Republic with their own competences in education, health, social affairs, culture and regional heritage, roads and transport (Law dated 12/04/2000). The elected regional assemblies will also propose regional development strategies and vote on the budget, however, they have no financial autonomy. They may propose draft laws for the Czech Parliament and sign interregional cooperation agreements (in their fields of competence), making the Czech regions potential partners for other European regions. Czech constitutional law (3/12/1997)

divides the Czech Republic into 14 regions. Initial regional elections (Nov. 2000) affected 13 of them, the mandate of the Mayor of Prague ending in two years time. A President or Hetman, elected by the members of the regional assembly, will head this body and will ensure relations between the regional assembly and the central government.

On 3rd and 4th April 2001, Vice-President Waszkiewicz (Dolnoslaskie – PL), responsible for relations with the new Czech regions within the AER Presidium, met the Presidents of three border regions: Karlowohradecki,

Liberecki and Pardubicki Kraj. Cross-border cooperation (Universities, transport...) will be discussed, the AER will be presented as well as its action plan 2001-2002 and the training possibilities offered to the new Czech regions in terms of the AER Centurio and Summer School programmes.

For further information, read Recommendation 77F by the CLRAE of the Council of Europe (May 2000).

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## AER Regional Policy Committee

### >Seminar on “profitable environmental awareness”

On 22nd March 2001, the roughly 80 members of AER Committee C were invited to a seminar on ecological awareness organised by the region of Jämtland and taking place at the same time as the Committee Plenary session in Östersund (S). Participants discovered real life examples of good practices and initiatives undertaken by the Swedish regions for the promotion of ecological tourism and sustainable regional development. The following shows a few examples:

#### **Ecological tourism: planning for a gain-gain relation**

Thomas Carlsson, Tourist Manager of Västerbotten, explained that, alongside of international level problems such as industrial pollution, other aspects can and must be dealt with at regional level, such as the respect for cultural identities and characteristics as real sources of wealth. *“In this field the AER has an important role to play”* he stated and quoted the example of the icehotel in Lapland, *“a project on which no one would have bet, and now famous throughout the world”*.

Ingvar Åhrén, Manager of South Sami Cultural Centre Gaaltije, stressed the protection of natural resources, *“we must create links between Lapland and the outside world, whilst maintaining the respect of our own values”*. Tourism has only existed in Lapland for the last ten years, since the Lapps have realised the importance of this industry. According to I Åhrén, past attempts have failed due to *“Lapps being passive subjects in the overall picture”*.

The gained awareness of the possible negative effects of tourism allowed Lapland to change this tendency. The Lapps cannot reject tourism, but have decided to become the star players and control the show. The outcome has been rewarding: *“the ability to make their own decisions concerning the application of EU subsidies is a big step forward”*.

#### **Ecology as a basis for sustainable regional development**

Claes Jürss, Dairy Manager, described his experience concerning the reintroduction of artisanal cheeses in Sweden. *“Traditional production methods had been lost, they had to be found, learnt and taught after having been adapted*

*to local circumstances and preferences”*. A partnership with french cheesemakers has been set up. Generally speaking, the experience has been positive because *“today, even the tourists purchase our cheeses and other products (jam, fruit juice...) to take home”*.

A second project, the Nordic Green Belt, brings together Sweden, Finland and Norway and was created from the awareness of environmental resources, including forests, and their immense value. Partners from all sources, companies, regions, local authorities... moved into action. Speakers stressed that *“the population must be made more aware of the ecology. Today, 15% of the population of Jämtland is actively involved in this project, showing real grass roots impact”*.

#### **Environmental Care as a Key factor in development and spatial planning**

The example given by Jämtkraft, Jämtlandish Energy Company, has been widely imitated. Claes-Goran Bergh, Environment coordinator, explained that Jämtkraft, who developed the electricity sector in 96, had immediately made clear commitments towards the environment. The company assessed the negative environmental impact and the price of pollution. The annual investment needed for obtaining one unit of bio-combustible is high, however, *“the company must act as an example in environmental protection and contribute to the development of tourism. From a social point of view, all of our employees are proud to work for this company”*.

Jämtkraft has developed a concept which it calls *“green electricity”* – green because it respects the environment – in collaboration with the winter sports station of Åre and the Swedish rail company, in order to use the ecological energy it produces from timber biomass. Can we just mention that this electricity is the cheapest in Sweden!

Tourism is rapidly changing in nature throughout the world and brings additional economic power and employment, however, tourism can turn into a risk for the environment if it is overexploited. The aim is, via the AER, to put this experience at the disposal of the regions of Europe.

### >Committee C conclusions

#### **Second cohesion report**

See article on the front page

#### **6th Environment Action Programme (EAP)**

The AER welcomes this 6th plan whilst suggesting introducing the idea of tranquillity in the “acceptable noise pollution” branch and the full application of the “polluter pays” principle in environmental legislation. The AER is delighted with the extension of the idea of environmental protection to all sustainability categories (health, climatic change, biodiversity...). The AER considers that the EU must play a leading role in the implementation of the Kyoto protocol.

#### **Commun Agricultural Policy (CAP)**

It was decided to list and assess CAP experience. The extremely worrying BSE and foot and mouth crises led to the creation of a network, directed by Donegal (IRL).

#### **Regional Aviation**

Concentration on gigantic international airports must stop and regional airports must be developed, however, the regions do not have the necessary funds to undertake these projects. All regional airports should pull together to find force in numbers.

#### **Environment and tourism**

Under the environmental standards for tourism management, set by the AER two years ago, members decided to keep each other informed of their respective actions on the ground in order to exchange their experience and profit from the practices of other regions.

#### **Solidarity**

Committee C is aware of the problems due to flooding in the regions of the CEEC and has taken note of the proposals of the region of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg (H) which it will forward to the European Commission along with the request for assistance.

Detailed information is available on the AER web site: <http://www.are-regions-europe.org>

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## Centurio

### > *Launch of edition 2001*

The launch of Centurio 2001 has been largely publicised. In order to encourage the development of local and regional democracy, all regional authorities of Eastern and Central Europe, members of the Council of Europe, have been invited to apply to participate in this programme. The AER has received the active assistance of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe (CLRAE) for Centurio.

In addition, just like last year, Centurio is active in the Balkans. The AER works in cooperation with the Association of Regional and local democracy Agencies, created within the Council of Europe and whose aim is to promote democracy and cooperation at local and regional level in the Balkans.

Many regions from Eastern and Central Europe have already replied to the AER's call for applications: Haskovo (BG), Istra, Krapinsko-Zagorsica (HR), Adjara (GEO), Pest, Veszprém (H), Chisinau, Cahul (MOL),

Swietokrzyskie, Mazowieckie, Zachodnio-Pomorskie (PL), Praha (Czech Republic), Alba, Arad, Bacau, Bistrita-Nasaud, Calarasi, Constanta, Covasna, Dambovita, Galati, Mures, Valcea (RO), Tatarstan (RUS) and Ivano-Frankivsk (UKR).

As to Centurio host regions, the AER can count on most of the coordinating regions having participated last year (Centurio standing Committee). However, we hope to receive additional offers from western regions in order to accept as many trainees as possible.

The introductory seminar will take place on 28th August 2001 in Constanta, at the same time as the Summer School. Following the programme, an evaluation seminar will be held in Brussels on 14th December 2001.

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## Caravan on regionalism in Hungary

### > *"Regionalism, culture and youth"*

The third caravan on regionalism was held in Pécs, capital of the county of Baranya (H), on 19th and 20th April 2001. Roughly 100 delegates from the Hungarian counties, the Romanian border regions, the Slovakian regional authorities and the Croatian regions actively participated in the programme which focused on regionalism, culture and youth.

The Conference was split into four working groups: "Regionalism", "International relations and Interregional cooperation", "Region and Culture" and "Youth" whose conclusions were presented at the Plenary sessions. The dynamic involvement of delegates allowed their particular experience in each field to be stressed and a joint search for solutions to be undertaken. Each subject was reported on prior to the group meetings by: Alsace, Baranya, The Interarts foundation of Barcelona, Niederösterreich, Niedersachsen, Steiermark, Pájját-Häme, the Working Community of the Adriatic Alps and of the Danube countries, London Borough Council, the Hungarian Ministers of Sport and Youth and Cultural heritage and the AER Secretariat.

Participants concluded that the process of regionalisation in Hungary should be built on existing structures within the traditional counties and not on the "Development and Planning regions" which lack democratic decision-making and the control of constitutionally established regions. Various programmes in the fields of culture, youth and interregional cooperation were introduced, leading to exchanges of experience between the regions present.

AER Committee D will look into some of the questions raised.

The conclusions from this Conference are available on the AER web site:  
[www.are-regions-europe.org](http://www.are-regions-europe.org).

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## Summer School

### > *Constanta, host region for 2001*

The 6th AER Summer School will be held in Constanta, Romania, on the Black Sea Coast, from Sunday 26th to Thursday 30th August 2001. Over 160 regional politicians and administrators from applicant countries and around 50 representatives from the regions of the European Union are expected.

The AER Summer School will continue to focus on the crucial topic of EU enlargement. Under the title "Our Future: European Regions and European Expansion", the Summer School will insist on more specific issues related both to the Regions' institutional role in the construction of Europe and to more concrete aspects of regional development.

The main issues to be looked at this year are:

- Regions towards EU enlargement:
  - The Regions' contribution to the new European Governance;
  - The Evolution of Regionalism in candidate countries;
- Environmental Protection:
  - Regions towards sustainable agriculture and Food Safety;
  - The Regions' implementation of the 6th EAP
- Tourism at regional level as a motor of economic sustainable development;
- European Spatial Planning and Future European Regional Policy"

The Summer School 2001 will consist of a number of Plenary sessions, followed by smaller workshops that will deal with the abovementioned issues in more detail and on the practicalities of Phare and Tacis projects.

The AER launched its Summer School programme in 1996. Previous editions were held in Hungary, Poland, Germany, Croatia and Lithuania. The organising Committee, which makes this event possible each year, is made up of 7 regions: Constanta (RO), Friuli-Venezia-Giulia (I), Gloucestershire (GB), Noord-Brabant (NL), Thüringen (D), Uppsala (S), Wien (A).

Over the years, this event has become one of the pillars of AER policies in favour of EU enlargement and East-West interregional cooperation.

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## > Gender equality: slowly but surely!

**A**ER action in favour of equal opportunities for men and women goes on. The Statutes of our organisation were amended at the General Assembly in Seinäjoki (Dec. 2000) and now include, under article 5-5, a provision which encourages member regions "to apply the principle of equality for men and women regarding their representation in the Bureau, in view of reaching a balanced gender composition".

The regions of certain countries have already applied this recommendation by nominating women as both full Bureau members and alternates (Ireland, Hungary, Holland, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom), however, the situation is still far from satisfactory. Women only represent 13% of Bureau members and we

must improve in 2002 and establish an equal gender balance following the next elections for Bureau members.

The most important event at the General Assembly in 2000 was, without a doubt, the election of a woman as AER President: Mrs Liese Prokop, Vice-Minister President of the Land of Niederösterreich (A). In second place was the unanimous adoption of a resolution on the trade in women and children from Eastern and Central Europe by the General Assembly which required members to fully realise the extent of this plague which threatens the fundamental rights and the very dignity of human beings.

Female representation made important progress in many countries. In France, in

particular, thanks to the implementation of a new law on equality, the percentage of women on municipal Councils of over 3500 inhabitants has increased from 22% to 47.5%. The law on equality will progressively be applied to regional Councils, to the two chambers in the national Parliament and to European elections. The situation, despite having greatly improved, is not yet satisfactory, the number of male mayors remains significantly superior to that of their female equivalents. However, this positive change proves the efficiency of binding measures in order to obtain an equal political representation of both sexes.

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## > Hearings on European Governance

**O**n 13th and 14th March 2001 an initial public hearing on decentralisation was held at the European Commission. The hearing was based on a vertical approach to governance: can the application of EU legislation be controlled by national jurisdiction? how can civil society participate in decentralisation?

Interventions focused on the idea which implies that regional participation in the implementation of EU policies could help to inform European and national authorities on real problems.

Lisa Pavan (Governance team) pointed out that the Treaties should be institutionally improved via an agreement between, on the one hand, the regions and the European Institutions and, on the other hand, member States. This question should

appear on the agenda for the IGC in 2004. Finally, networking between the European Commission and regions/towns was discussed.

On 16th March 2001, a second public hearing aroused wide public interest – roughly 400 people turned up (NGOs, Regions, towns...). This hearing, which dealt with governance based on a horizontal approach (interregional cooperation, implementation of competences and cooperation between regions and institutions), focused on subsidiarity and proportionality working towards European governance.

With reference to EU competences, the following suggestions were made:

- better application of the Amsterdam protocol through new structures or

procedures.

- standardisation which would allow decision-making at lower levels.
- a stronger role for national Parliaments towards greater acceptability for European initiatives.

The idea of a separate chamber for regions with legislative powers was brought up. In conclusion, the renaissance of governance does not only lie in the creation of new institutions and procedures, but also in the intensive use of interactive policy-making.

The complete report is available at [www.are-regions-europe.org](http://www.are-regions-europe.org)

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## internet

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

## > Ever on the increase

Since the creation of the AER Web site at the end of 1999, the number of visitors has consistently grown. This month we have beaten the 50 000.

998 visits were counted in Nov. 1999 (510 visitors). When new services were added in Oct. 2000, the figures shot up, reaching 4497 visits (1783 visitors) per month one year later. This tendency is continuing into 2001: 5670 visits (2636 visitors) were counted in March 2001, with hot spots of 300 visits per day. In eighteen months the number of visits (average: 15 mins) and visitors has been multiplied by five.

Most people using the Web site come from France, Belgium, the United States, Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Romania, Finland, Poland, Spain, Hungary and Italy.

The most popular pages are those on the extranet service. This section of the Web site represents a real source of documents for members, particularly coming up to AER meetings. Other popular pages are: "What's new", "Visiting Cards of the European Regions", the presentation of the AER, "Declaration on regionalism", "Member regions" – which provides

access to the "Visiting Cards" and to the regional Web sites – Diary and contacts.

Subscriptions to "What's new" and "Newsletter" – which keep you informed on updates – are proving to be sought after and new names are added to our mailing list every day. The only down point would appear to be the discussion forum... Despite the large number of people having signed up to the forums launched in Oct. 2000, no one has exchanged any messages...

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### > *Real regions for a modern France*

by *Adrien Zeller*

**O**n 23rd February 2001 the regional Council of Alsace published a report "Real regions for a modern France" drawn up by a working group made up of elected regional politicians on the future of decentralisation in France - created at the initiative of President A Zeller. In the context of a fresh drive in the debate on decentralisation in France and the creation of a specialist Commission on the issue by the French Prime Minister, this group works with the support of the Robert Schuman University in Strasbourg. The group looks at the possibilities for further expansion of regional decentralisation on the basis of the experience of the region of Alsace and the French regions in general. Which main recommendations would be necessary? The following represents President Zeller's reply.

*In the year 2000 the future of decentralisation in France was debated at length. What was so special about the initiatives undertaken by the regional Council of Alsace?*

Our initiatives were mainly based on the distribution of competences between the State and the regions, and an increase in the regions' powers - the reform of the politico-administrative bodies in France requires a better distribution of responsibilities in favour of territorial authorities and the regions in particular.

The aim of this new distribution is to increase coherence, efficiency and the control at grass roots level as well as to improve the understandability of public action at regional level, and, in the context of the parallel need for State reform, the re-distribution of responsibilities and the clarification of roles in the implementation of public policies.

*Since 1983 and the laws on decentralisation the French regions have competences in five areas: secondary school - "lycée" (construction, equipment and upkeep), adult education and training,*

*economic planning and development, urbanism, the environment and heritage as well as transport. What are the main extensions that you would like to see?*

Firstly, we concluded that there was still a lot to be done for basic competences and for a real application of the principle of subsidiarity. The second step in decentralisation in France must allow several ambiguous points in the distribution of competences in these areas - a frequent source of inconsistency, waste of energy and even lack of responsibility - to be cleared up.

I could give the field of vocational training as an example, in this area the basic principle of decentralisation is mined with exceptions which led to a rather vague application of the laws. The State and the region therefore often develop their own policies in this sector.

Bearing in mind the experience having been gained by the region in 20 years of practice, we could request legal competences in this field, and that of employment, at regional level, without any hesitation. For each of the basic assignments given to regions in France, the group sketched out the necessary short and medium term changes to be made, alongside of practical proposals for better meeting the need for the grass roots politics that the citizens are calling for.

*According to your conclusions, what are the new fields to which regional decentralisation could be extended as a priority?*

Over the years the French regions have been asked to be involved in areas which were not originally planned for: tourism, environment and energy management, technological learning, culture, universities, housing, health, sport and the list goes on.

In tourism, for example, the region is currently only responsible for tourism, communication and the search for foreign markets through the regional tourism Committee. Why not officially recognise the French regions by giving them competences and a role as leader in the

field of economic development and the promotion of tourism? Without a shadow of a doubt this would allow economic development to be better coordinated, in an overall manner, between the various regional, departmental and local bodies.

We also identified the fields in which the regions have no responsibilities and in which the delegation or transfer of competences would be more appropriate in the current situation. This applies to agriculture - a vital sector which is currently in an unprecedented crisis period - in which regionalisation would allow the quality to be improved, increased respect for the environment, and the various branches and markets to be better organised.

*A large part of your activities were focused on changes to be made in the means of public involvement in the region, should competences be extended in the future. Could you give us a general idea of what you plan to suggest?*

A well established regional assembly is necessary in order for extended regional responsibilities to be completely fulfilled and, on a long term basis, the conditions for a regional mandate must be adapted. The main step forward which we would like to see is regulations guiding regional competences in the various fields.

Regarding sectors in which the Assembly of European Regions is directly involved, we suggest transferring the responsibility for managing the structural funds which come under their fields of competences, to the regions. Should the French State retain control of cross-border cooperation methods, we request that procedures be undertaken at regional level, and request the creation of a European legal body for cross-border cooperation in order to reduce time delays and bring the whole process closer to the citizen.

*Thank you President Zeller*

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## >Cooperation between Wielkopolska (PL) and Noord-Brabant (NL)



The first ties between the provinces of Poznan (PL), and Noord-Brabant (NL), were established in the late 1980s.

However, relations between Poland and Noord-Brabant stretch back much further. Their friendship is largely based on the fact that Polish troops were involved in the liberation of Noord-Brabant at the end of WW II. These amicable relations provided the foundations for an official pact signed by the two regions in 1992. The scope of this cooperation was wide-scale, with projects being set up in the areas of economics, the environment, public health, education and culture.

One of the initial moves was the establishment of a Trade and Communication Centre between both regions. In the meantime, trade delegations have paid regular visits to both regions, thereby initiating a substantial increase in mutual trade. In the environmental field, too, a great deal of support and knowledge has been exchanged.

In recent years, regional authorities have come under much discussion in Poland. This ultimately led to a substantial reduction in the number of regions, from 49 to 16. The Poznan region was consequently integrated into the much larger Wielkopolska region of western Poland. This new region has drawn up an inventory of all its existing international activities, and is still deciding which are to be continued. Its cooperation with Noord-Brabant was given high priority. End 2000, the pact between the two regions was reconfirmed. The scope of cooperation remains far-reaching, and shall focus for the next few years on Poland's entry into the European Union (EU), and the role of Wielkopolska in this process.

Wielkopolska has already established a general trade centre to assume the duties of the Brabant Trade Centre. Noord-Brabant shall continue to support this

initiative. Financial support will be offered for the next two years, while an annual plan is to be drawn up on the basis of the cooperation pact recently concluded.

### Support for accession to the EU

During the period preceding Poland's accession to the EU, Noord-Brabant shall provide expertise in the areas of economic affairs and EU financing, as well as in the environmental field, in cooperation with the Land Hessen (D), which also has a pact with Wielkopolska and shall play a pivotal role during the pre-accession period.

### Public health

One of the main aspects of this cooperation is the Alive programme: a public health programme set up in a number of European regions, including Wielkopolska and Noord-Brabant. In coming years, a series of conferences will be organised to promote the exchange of knowledge in such areas as public health services and hospital management.

Special attention shall also be devoted to the project: 'Cross-border Care: Nursing throughout Europe'. The continuing ageing and dejuvenation taking place in Noord-Brabant has led to a shortage of nurses. In Wielkopolska, a surplus of highly qualified nursing staff exists therefore nurses from Wielkopolska might play a (temporary) role in reducing this shortage. The project also comprises Dutch lessons and any necessary further training. Initial findings are expected to be published in 2001.

It can be concluded that the reconfirmed pact will provide a shot in the arm for practical cooperation between regions in Central and Western Europe, one of the AER's main objectives.

### Contact:

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## AER on line partnership pool

This pool can be accessed via the home page of the AER Web site or directly at <http://www.are-regions-europe.org/DATABASE/partnership/index.html>, and helps regional actors – institutions, universities, companies, associations... - to find partners for cooperation projects at European level. On a mid-term basis, this pool aims to become the hot point for interregional and cross-border cooperation in Europe.

You may publish information concerning your project(s), for which you are seeking partners, or check out the information given by other project leaders – sorted by country, European programme and field. In order to appear on this pool try the following simple steps: click on "form", fill it in. English is the advised language, however, if you are looking for partners from a specific country or area, you may fill in the form in the appropriate language.

Please follow the instructions given with the form. There are now less boxes with asterisks, however, these boxes must be filled in and dates must be written in the following format: 01/12/2001 (no dots or dashes or 00/00/00). This is imperative for the deadline date which is used to automatically delete the message.

Many messages have not been published over the last few months due to this box being incorrectly filled in.

The AER reserves the right to not publish any messages which it considers to be inappropriate.

### AER contact:

Barbara Skoczylas-Thauront  
bthauront@are-regions-europe.org

## notebook

### Election results

#### Portugal

The Socialist President, Jorge Fernando Branco de Sampaio won the presidential elections on 14th January 2001 with 55% of votes.

#### Baden-Württemberg (Germany)

The Christian-Democrat Alliance (CDU) won the Landtag elections on 25th March 2001 with 63 out of 128 seats. The SPD retains 45 seats. President Prokop congratulated President E Teufel who has been an active AER member for many years.

#### Wien (Austria)

The SPÖ won the elections on 25th March 2001 with 46.9% of votes and 52 mandates (out of 100). Mayor Dr. Häupl took his seat at the head of the municipal and regional government ("Stadtsenat") on 27th April 2001.

#### Stop press from Euskadi/País Vasco (Spain)

The turnout in the regional elections that took place in the Basque country on 13th May reached a record level of nearly

80%. The Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) and Eusko Alkartasuna (EA) emerged as the winners of these elections (33 seats), the Popular Party (PP-19 seats) and the Socialist Party (PSE-13 seats) have remained stable. The looser is Euskal Herritarrok (EH-ETA's "political wing") which lost half of the 14 seats it held. Izquierda unida got 3 seats.

### AER contact:

infopresse@are-regions-europe.org



## >AER Activities : January - April 2001

### Political meetings and events

- Meeting between the Austrian Ambassador, Mr Schwimmer (Council of Europe), Mr Zeller and Mr Heider, region of Alsace (Mrs L Prokop, Mr H De Belder, Strasbourg, 31/01)
- Press Conference, interview with Mr R Locatelli (CLRAE), participation in the CLRAE Bureau, interview with Mr G Andreyev, Latvian Ambassador (Current President of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe), interview with Mr R Ries, "Premier Adjoint" of the Mayor of Strasbourg (Mrs L Prokop, Mr H De Belder, Strasbourg, 01/02)
- Meeting with a delegation of Slovakian local elected representatives (Mr E Milesi, Ms L De Rose, Mr F Stummman, 09/02)
- European Social Network (Mr F Stummman, Brussels, 14/02)
- Participation at the launch of the EU innovative action (Ms L De Rose, Brussels, 19/02)
- CoR hearing – Memorandum on life long learning (Mrs H Burningham, Mr F Stummman, Brussels, 21/02)
- EC hearing – Governance (Mr H De Belder, Mrs S Poirel, Brussels, 13 – 16/03)
- Conference on "Linguistic diversity: A challenge for Europe's Cities and Regions" (Mrs L Bogliun-Debeljuh, Rovinj, 22-23/03)
- Conference on regionalism in Europe (Mr H De Belder, Veurne, 26/03)
- Meeting with the delegation from Cape, South Africa (Mr H De Belder, Brussels 26/03)
- Conference on "Municipalities and Regions in a growing EU" (Mr L Van Nistelrooij, Ronneby, 2-3/04)
- Meeting with the Croatian regions (Mrs L Prokop, 6/04)
- EuroSalute – Scientific Committee (Mr F Stummman, Milan, 10/04)

### Member contact

- Meeting with Mr A Zeller, President of the region of Alsace and his team (AER Presidium and their assistants, Secretariat team, Strasbourg, 30/01)
- AEBR Presidium (Mr F Stummman, 19/04)

### Other AER meetings

- Committee C Presidium (Strasbourg, 30/01)
- Presidium (Strasbourg, 30/01)
- Committee A (Berlin, 8-9/02)
- Bureau (Oberkirch, 2/03)
- Committee B Presidium (Västerås, 7-8/03)
- Committee D Presidium (Bolzano, 19-20/03)
- Committee C (Östersund, 22-24/03)
- Advisory group (Brussels, 23/03)
- "Youth, Culture and Regionalism" caravan (Baranya, 19-20/04)

### Programmes

- Centurio participation at the CoR Forum (Brussels, 4-5/04)

### Press and Communications

- Production of the new AER brochure
- Finalisation of the on line "Visiting Cards"
- Launch of the 4th European Cup of Regional Flavours
- Media relations

For further information:  
[www.are-regions-europe.org](http://www.are-regions-europe.org)

## Visiting Cards of European Regions, edition 2002

The AER Press and Communications Service has just begun the process of seeking information for the 2002 edition of the "Visiting Cards of European Regions", a publication which introduces all of the AER member regions (key figures, assets, cooperation agreements, useful contacts...). The idea is to:

- up date the on line data base on the AER Web site,
- prepare the print edition of this directory, as in 1999, of the regions of Europe, in time for the AER General Assembly.

In order to make collecting in information and updating the data base easier, an on line form has been installed on the AER Web site. You can access this page either via the home page and then "Data bases" and "Visiting Cards", or directly at <http://www.are-regions-europe.org/VICARDS/index.html>.

For regions which are not yet included in the AER Visiting Cards, please fill in all of the entries on the form either in English or

in French or, if possible, in both languages. The name of the region must be filled in. Regions which are already included in the Visiting Cards are asked to simply fill in the boxes with the **information which needs adding or updating, in particular regarding contact people.**

Once filled in the form can be sent to us with a simple click on "Send". The new information will be gradually integrated into the data base on a first come, first dealt with, basis **in June 2001**, and with the assistance of a student.

In August-September 2001 preparation of the print edition will begin on the condition that enough advertisers are found – this publication is **entirely** financed by advertisements. Should you be interested in paying to advertise in this directory of European regions please contact: Mr Maxime Guez, Recherche et Communication, Email: [Recherche-Communication@wanadoo.fr](mailto:Recherche-Communication@wanadoo.fr)

**AER contacts:** B Skoczylas-Thauront, F Huhardeaux, C Hommel  
[secretariat@are-regions-europe.org](mailto:secretariat@are-regions-europe.org)

## diary

### MAY

Monday 21st  
**Cohesion Forum, European Commission – Brussels (B)**

Thursday 24th to Saturday 26th  
**AREV Plenary session – Logroño (E)**

Monday 28th  
**AER meeting (CLRAE session) – Strasbourg (F)**

Tuesday 29th to Thursday 31st  
**CLRAE Plenary session – Strasbourg (F)**

### JUNE

Wednesday 6th to Thursday 7th (new dates)  
**AER Committee D – Batumi (GEO)**

Tuesday 12th to Thursday 14th  
**CoR Bureau and Plenary session – Brussels (B)**

Thursday 14th to Friday 15th  
**CEMR executive Bureau – Sweden**

Friday 22nd  
**Conference of Government leaders ARGE ALP – Sankt Gallen (CH)**

Friday 22nd  
**AER Presidium – St. Pölten (A)**

Saturday 23rd to Sunday 24th  
**Europaforum "Mobility and Stability in an enlarged Europe" Niederösterreich – St. Pölten (A)**

Tuesday 26th to Wednesday 27th  
**Plenary session of the CTP – Bordeaux (F)**

### AUGUST

Sunday 26th to Thursday 30th  
**AER Summer School – Constanta (RO)**

Monday 27th  
**Introductory seminar AER Centurio – Constanta (RO)**

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