



AER Summer School

>Come and join in!

The 6th edition of the AER Summer School will take place in Constanta, in Romania, on the Black Sea Coast, between 26th and 30th August 2001. Over 200 participants are expected by the organising Committee of this AER training programme which works in favour of the enlargement of the European Union and the development of interregional cooperation between Western and Eastern Europe.

Are you an elected political representative? a regional administrator? an expert? an entrepreneur? in charge of an association? Does the issue of enlargement and/or EU accession and regional development concern you? Then do not miss edition 2001 of the AER Summer School. Registration is still possible via the AER web site.

Main issues: enlargement / accession from the regional view point, the role of the Regions in new European governance and their joint contribution to preparations for the next IGC. Several sessions will focus on the topic of regional development: decision-making in and management of public services at regional level, the information society and transparency in public administrations, environmental protection, sustainable agriculture and food safety, tourism as a factor of sustainable regional development, determining factors for the development of interregional cooperation projects and the support of Phare and Tacis, European programmes.

The AER Summer School is also the occasion to get to know the different types of regionalisation in Europe better and to be informed on the current situation regarding regionalisation in applicant countries. It also provides a focal point for meeting people, exchanging experience and making contacts in view of new interregional partnerships. Regions from Eastern and Central Europe, Regions from the EU, come and join in!

The editor

>The Regions of Europe on the road to an enlarged Union

The Presidium of the Assembly of European Regions (AER) met on 22nd June 2001 at the headquarters of the government of Niederösterreich in St-Pölten. The meeting was chaired by the Vice-Minister President of Lower Austria and AER President, Mrs Liese Prokop. On the agenda for the debates: the institutional structure of an enlarged Union, the increased participation of the Regions in European decision-making, the opportunities for the Belgian EU Presidency and the role of the AER.

At the invitation of Liese Prokop, Vice-Minister President of Niederösterreich and AER President, the second Presidium meeting was held in St-Pölten, capital of Lower Austria. After having reported on the activities of the President and the Vice-Presidents between February and June, filled with interviews, political meetings and European Conferences which AER representatives had attended (see Activities), the AER Presidium mainly discussed the future structure of an enlarged Europe, whose foundations must be set before 2004. In this light, the Regions call for increased participation in EU decision-making and request that the distribution of competences, in due respect for the right to institutionalised co-decision-making, should be at the top of the agenda for debates.

The debate goes on between the Regions of the EU and those in applicant countries

Two documents adopted by the AER Institutional Committee at its meeting in Berlin in February: "Towards a European constitutional framework" and a resolution on "New Governance", are

currently being discussed within the AER. They should lead to the adoption of a joint position between the Regions of Europe in view of the Intergovernmental Conference in 2004. President Prokop was delighted that the Regions of roughly a dozen EU and applicant countries expressed their ideas on the two documents. She also profited from this opportunity to appeal, once again, to member Regions wishing to take part in this discussion to speak out as soon as possible in order to allow an AER position paper to be adopted at the next General Assembly in Sopron, Hungary, on 29th and 30th November 2001.

AER and initiatives by Regions with legislative powers

The AER Presidium also discussed the initiatives launched at European level by Regions with legislative powers whose second summit will take place on 16th and 17th November in Liège (B). The AER has long supported the demands of Regions with legislative powers to be further involved in the institutions at European level and the right to be represented in the European Court of Justice. →

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Due to the heterogeneity of the regional structures in Europe, the AER will act as a mediator between the stronger and the less strong Regions in order to draw up a joint position for all Regions for the IGC in 2001, including, in particular, the points of view of Regions from applicant countries.

Belgian EU Presidency, an opportunity to be taken for the regions

The AER has great expectations for the Belgian EU Presidency, whose programme includes consideration of the role of the Regions within the European structure. The Belgian AER member Regions will chair several of the various sessions within the Council of the European Union and will profit from the opportunity to discuss regional concerns. In this way, the AER has been involved, alongside of the CEMR and the CPMR, in the preparatory work of the informal ministerial Council for Regional policy and Spatial planning (13th and 14th June, Namur, B) chaired by J C Van Cauwenberghe, Minister-President of the Walloon government. *"The Belgian EU Presidency is an opportunity for the Regions of Europe to confirm their role and to give their requirements for the enlarged Union. We should work to ensure that the European Council in Laeken officially include organisations representing the Regions, such as ours, in preparation for the IGC, an IGC which must lead to a clear distribution of responsibilities between Europe, the States and the Regions"* stated Liese Prokop, AER President.

Other initiatives

The AER Presidium also decided on a series of activities to be undertaken, and, in particular, on the creation of a prize for the most youth friendly Region. This competition is run by the AER "Culture, Education and Training, Youth, Media and Sport" Committee and aims to collect in, reward and later distribute information on best practices in regional policy for young people in Europe. This competition is open to both AER member Regions and non-member Regions. The conditions for participation have been specified by Niederösterreich (A) and Südtirol (I). Further information will shortly be available on the AER web site or directly from Committee D at the Secretariat.

> Increased cooperation with the CLRAE, the CoR and the interregional organisations

Over the last few months, Liese Prokop, AER President, has undertaken several initiatives aiming at consolidating and strengthening cooperation between the AER and the main institutions and interregional organisations in Europe.

At the Plenary session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe (CLRAE) at the Council of Europe (29th-31st May, Strasbourg), Mrs Prokop, in a speech before the Chamber of the Regions, stressed the importance of joint action between the CLRAE and the AER to enhance the influence of the Regions at European level.

CLRAE-AER relations on an upbeat

The AER actively supports the draft CLRAE European Charter on Regional Self-Government whilst the Congress supports the AER training programmes for Eastern and Central Europe (Centurio and the Summer School) and includes our organisation in its programme for Local Democracy Agencies in the Balkans. Several other potential fields for cooperation are currently being looked at, in particular in the field of culture. Mrs Prokop has stated that she hopes that, in the near future, the four AER Committees will establish close relations with their homologue Committees in the CLRAE, in the same way as cooperation has developed between the two Secretariats.

AER-CoR: Better synergy in action desired

On 13th June Mrs Prokop was invited to the CoR Plenary session in Brussels as a special guest and was able to speak with Mr Chabert and Mr Dammeyer, President and Vice-President of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) of the EU respectively. All three parties agreed on the need for better coordination between the activities of the two organisations, in particular concerning EU enlargement. A rapprochement between the two Secretariats and the setting up

of a mutual consultation process were decided upon.

The initiative of Lord P Hanningfield, President of the CoR-Applicant countries Liaison group, follows the same line of thought. He invited the AER to a meeting focused on the exchange of experience in the field of cooperation with regional authorities in applicant countries (Brussels, 20th June). The AER was represented by Prof. J Waszkiewicz (Dolnoslaskie-PL), AER Vice-President charged with training programmes for Regions in Eastern and Central Europe. Following this interview, the liaison group took note of the importance of the AER Centurio programme as a reference for action for training programmes for territorial authorities in applicant countries, which could lead to CoR support for this AER programme.

Towards a "Vienna II" Summit

The AER President also met representatives from nearly all AER sister interregional organisations during the two Plenary sessions. Mrs Prokop suggested organising a 2nd Summit of interregional organisations in Spring 2002: "Vienna II", in order to draw up a joint declaration for the IGC in 2004. With this in mind, the AER President invited the Secretaries General of the twelve interregional organisations, founder members of the AER, to a preparatory meeting on 5th July in Strasbourg. The Secretaries General of the CLRAE, the CoR and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) have also been invited to this working session.

AER contact:

Eric Milesi
emilesi@are-regions-europe.org

Committee B

> *The Regions of Europe and public health*

At the invitation of Mr R Formigoni, President of the Region of Lombardia, the AER Social cohesion, Social services, Public health and Employment Committee met on 17 - 18th May 2001 in Milan (I). Over 80 participants from 40 Regions and associate interregional networks took part in the activities which focused on the role of the Regions in the fields of public health, the family and the fight for social inclusion.

This two day meeting, chaired by Mr R Kristoffersen, AER Committee B President, was rich in content and exchanges of experience between the Regions of the European Union and those from applicant countries. At the opening of the Plenary session, following the welcome speech by President Formigoni and Mr A Fontana, President of the Regional Council, Mr C Borsani, Regional Health Minister, presented regional policy on health. This regional policy exists since 1997 on which date these competences were transferred to the Italian regional authorities. Thanks to subsidiarity, a system using local health agencies (ASL) has been installed for the last two years in Lombardia with successful results, in particular in terms of the number of hospital patients and waiting times for housebound patients. Opinion surveys concerning the quality of health care show growing satisfaction from citizens since the implementation of this reform.

Domestic violence, a major social problem

Mrs S Gruselle from Surrey (GB) and Dr T Olariu from Timis (RO) led a workshop on domestic violence, a social burden in Europe, causing more deaths or disability in women aged between 15 and 40 than cancer or accidents. The situation in Eastern and Central Europe is very alarming, in these countries poverty and alcohol abuse appear as essential factors in the statistics on violence: 29% of Romanian women declare to have been physically attacked, whilst 45% have been victims of verbal aggression.

However, few women dare to speak out. Roughly two thirds of victims have never considered asking for help. Solutions for bringing this taboo subject, which can also be considered as a paediatric issue, out of the closet, exist at regional level. The "Domestic Violence Project" launched by Surrey (GB) is an example to follow. Thanks to its networking between associations able to help victims and awareness campaigns (see: www.surreydvproject.org.uk) the services available for victims

have been improved and made more efficient, and, above all, people have realised that violence in the home is unacceptable.

SUPPORT: mobilisation of European opinion

Another serious problem in public health was discussed: suicide. According to Mr G Aström from Västerbotten (S), coordinating Region for the interregional network: SUPPORT (16 participating Regions), 150 000 people commit suicide each year in Europe and the figures are going up for young people. Political involvement at European level is needed in order to undertake further preventative action and to reduce the number of deaths and tragedies affecting families. In this aim, the SUPPORT network is organising a Conference, supported by the AER, on suicide prevention on 12 - 13th October in Cork (IRL). This Conference aims to bring together politicians and regional experts, medical personnel, NGOs, media and the families of victims in order to share their experience and to work towards making this problem better known at Community level. Committee B has adopted a draft resolution along these lines.

Assistance for elderly people and the fight against exclusion

Mrs N Colombaro of Noord-Brabant (NL) informed Committee B members on the activities of the interregional network ALIVE (10 partner Regions), created in 1999 within AER Committee B and which works towards the introduction of European policies capable of dealing with the problem of aging populations at medium and long term.

Carine Jensen of Wallonia and Mr J Mostinckx of Vlaanderen (B) talked about their considerations and experience in fighting against exclusion. Mr Mostinckx presented the study entitled "the Five dimensions of the welfare policy" - social protection, education, employment, housing, health - which defined the main elements behind social exclusion and integration as well as the political responsibilities in this field. Mrs Jansen of the

> *AER, MosanEuroSalute partner*

Research - Technology - Health administration

2-6 October 2001 - Milan Fair (I)

A major European event in the field of Health and Social affairs, the **MosanEuroSalute** Exhibition-Conference, organised by the Region of Lombardia and the Italian Consortium for Medical Research (CIRM), with the support of the European Commission, asked the AER to become a special partner of the 19th edition of this event. The Region of Lombardia wishes to give the Congress, which aims to bring politicians, experts, industrial specialists and scientists together with consumers, an European dimension and a regional perspective.

Well Europe-Biotech, Health and Welfare - European Regions towards integration will be an exhibition space dedicated to organisations, industry and authorities working in the field of health at regional level. The AER and MosanEuroSalute hope that this event will become the biggest annual meeting between the Regions of Europe concerning Health and Welfare.

AER contacts: Mr F J Stummann
fstummann@are-regions-europe.org
or Mrs D Materne
dmaterne@are-regions-europe.org
MosanEuroSalute contact:
Mr P Farneti peter@upservice.com

Interdepartmental Direction of Social Integration assessed the action plan which had been successfully implemented in Wallonia and based on integrated social plans, small social infrastructures and local events' programmes (see: http://mrw.wallonie.be/sg/secgen/Html/org_divSG_DirIntSoc.htm).

The next Committee B meeting will take place in Noord-Brabant on 25th and 26th October 2001.

AER contacts: Mr F J Stummann,
fstummann@are-regions-europe.org
or Mrs D Materne
dmaterne@are-regions-europe.org
You can also try our web site (Current activities/Committee B and AER member Regions).



>AER activities: May - July 2001

Political meetings and events

- Participation at the Cohesion forum organised by the European Commission (Mrs L Prokop and Mr B Greenslade, Brussels, 21/05)
- Participation in the CLRAE Plenary session and meeting with CLRAE representatives: Mr L Cuatrecasas - President, Mr J Olbrycht - President of the Institutional Committee of the Chamber of the Regions, Mr J Rabbe - Rapporteur on the Charter of Regional Self-Government, Mr R Locatelli, Secretariat Director (Mrs L Prokop, Strasbourg, 29-30/05)
- Meetings with Mrs F Keller - Mayor of Strasbourg, Mr K Möller - President of the Parliament of the Land of Hessen, Mr Kittelmann - Member of Parliament in Berlin and his assistant, Mr Reinhard, Mr E Nolan - President of the Association of Irish Counties, Mrs E Gateau - Secretary General of the CEMR (Mrs L Prokop, Strasbourg, 29-30/05)
- Participation in the 4th Ukrainian/Polish/Lithuanian economic summit (Mr J Waszkiewicz, Dniepropietrowsk, 3-4/06)
- Participation in the European Conference of Social services (Mr R Kristoffersen, Göteborg, 6/06)
- Participation in the CoR Plenary session (Brussels, 12-14/06)
- Meetings with Mr Klär - President of CoR Commission 1, Mr Van Cauwenberghe - Minister President of Wallonia, Mr J Chabert - CoR President, Mr Dammeyer - Vice-President and President of the CoR Institutional affairs Commission, Mr Hall - Deputy Director of the Cabinet of Mr M Barnier, Mr Tindemans - RETI President (Mrs L Prokop, Brussels, 12-14/06)
- Reception for the representatives of the Association of County Councils in Ireland, held in the Secretariat premises (Mr J McHugh, Mr F Stummann, Strasbourg, 25/06)
- Meeting between the Secretaries General of AER member interregional organisations (Strasbourg, 5/07)

Member contact

- Interviews with Mr Gnauck, Regional Minister for Federal and European Affairs and Leader of the State Chancellery, and with Mrs Lieberknecht, President of the Regional Parliament of Thüringen (Mrs L Prokop, 9/05)
- Participation at the AREV Plenary session (Mr E Milesi, Logroño, 24-26/05)
- Meeting with the Romanian Regions and with the representatives of other member Regions present (Mrs L Prokop, Strasbourg, 29/05)
- Meeting with Mr J Gabbe, AEBR Secretary General

Other AER meetings

- Committee B (Milan, 17-18/05)
- Preparatory meeting for the CLRAE session (Strasbourg, 28/05)
- Opening of the refurbished Secretariat premises (Strasbourg, 30/05)
- Committee D (Batumi, 6-7/06)
- Presidium (St-Pölten, 22/06)
- Working group "European governance and a European constitution" (Stuttgart, 3/07)

Press and Communications

- Production of new means for AER promotion and documentation
- Press conference in Brussels (13/06)

For further information:

<http://www.are-regions-europe.org> (current activities)

A new AER brochure

At the end of May 2001 the AER Press and Communications service published a new AER institutional brochure - "10 AER assets" - available in three languages (English, French and German,) either in print or downloadable in PDF format (273 Ko per copy) from the AER Web site (<http://www.are-regions-europe.org/COMMUN/A48bis.html> - AER Brochure-05-01). 7500 copies have been printed (3500 in English, 2000 in French and 2000 in German).

The promotion campaign for the distribution of this brochure is currently being prepared. Before mid-September both member Regions, the AER's institutional public and European media should possess a copy.

In parallel, the AER has produced a Powerpoint document to be used as a support for presentations of the AER. Available on a CD-Rom and at simple request from the Secretariat, the English, French and German versions are now available.

The AER Vice-President Treasurer, Mr Claude Ruey, Vaud-CH, in collaboration with the Secretariat, is currently looking into the possibilities of producing a Web version of the brochure in other AER member Region languages (making a total of around 20 languages). The AER Press and Communications service does not possess either enough manpower or financial resources to tackle this project. A note will be submitted to the next AER Bureau for decision.

AER contact:

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



diary

AUGUST

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

Tuesday 28th
Introductory seminar to the AER Centurio programme - Constanta (RO)

SEPTEMBER

Tuesday 18th to Thursday 20th
CoR Bureau and Plenary session - Brussels (B)

Thursday 20th to Friday 21st
CPMR General Assembly - Porto (P)

Friday 21st
AER Bureau - Karlstad (S)

Thursday 27th to Friday 28th
Eurodissey Forum - Lugano (CH)

OCTOBER

Friday 12th
Conference of Government Leaders of Arge Donauländer - Russe (BG)

Thursday 25th to Friday 26th
AER Committee B meeting - Noord-Brabant (NL)

Friday 26th
CoR Bureau - Brussels (B)

Date to be determined
AER caravan "Enlargement, Interregional cooperation" - Valcea (RO)

AER contact:

Francine Huhardeaux
infopresse@are-regions-europe.org



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Managing Editor:
Liese Prokop

Editor:
Barbara Skoczylas-Thauront

Editorial Committee:
Stéphane Cools, Araceli Gomez, Francine Huhardeaux, Stéphanie

Lecaux-Poiriel, Doris Materne, Eric Milesi, Laura de Rose, Franz-Josef Stummann

Editorial Secretariat:
Barbara Skoczylas-Thauront (version F), Francine Huhardeaux (versions D and GB)

Translation:
Juce Evans (GB), Claudia Meschede and Annette Demaret (D)

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