



The Convention in view of future reform of the EU will allow for specification of the room for manoeuvre and the ability to act for the Regions in the context of the future European constitutional framework.

The main lines of the Convention's work were defined in the decisions taken in Nice. At the Summit in Laeken, a wide range of issues, which the Convention is entrusted with clarifying, were identified. The Convention has plenty of room for manoeuvre including the possible drawing up of a full "European Constitution". One of the main themes involves the creation of a catalogue of competences which would clearly lay out the distribution of competences between European and national level and strengthen the principle of subsidiarity within the EU. The Regions consider that the respect for the great diversity of regional structures, the competences of Regions with legislative powers and local self-government play an important role. Moreover democratic legitimacy and institutional cohesion in respect of the right to regional governance must also be borne in mind. The adoption of the Charter of Fundamental Rights announced in Nice, also on the agenda, alongside of the planned simplification of the European Treaties, will represent an important step forward on the road to a European Constitution.

The nomination of Mr Erwin Teufel, Minister-President of Baden-Württemberg, as member of the Convention on the future of Europe by the Bundesrat, the German Chamber of the Länder, is an opportunity for the AER. His long standing commitment to regionalism guarantees the defence of our interests concerning the new direction to be taken by the EU regarding the principle of subsidiarity on the basis of a "Europe of the Regions". We therefore continue the aims consolidated in the Maastricht Treaty at the initiative of the AER. The protection of regional competences aims to strengthen both efficiency and democratic legitimacy. Both aims are a priority for the citizen of Europe. Only the achievement of the latter will allow the EU, which will enlarge considerably in the coming years, to survive on a long-term basis. The inhabitants of Regions in accession countries must also therefore hope that this Convention will be a success.

Europe, today, is changing in direction, and I am delighted with this change in direction. I am convinced that we will make important progress in this way, including concerning the AER's objectives, i.e. the reinforcement of the Regions in the interests of the citizens of Europe.

Dr Christoph E Palmer Mdl

Minister of the State Ministry and of European affairs in Baden-Württemberg (D)
President of the AER Institutional affairs Committee

AER Priorities 2002 stick to the European Agenda

At the meeting in Strasbourg on 1st February 2002, the Presidium of the Assembly of European Regions (AER) welcomed the outcome of the Belgian Presidency of the European Union which led to the increased involvement of the Regions in the European decision-making process. The AER Presidium did, however, regret the absence of Regional policy on the list of priorities for the new Spanish Presidency.

The AER Presidium was surprised to note that Regional policy was not on the list of priorities in the "More Europe" programme of the EU Spanish Presidency. *"The future of European regional policy and common agricultural policy are two poles of strength behind the implementation of new governance in an enlarged Europe. It is surprising to find that the Spanish Prime Minister, Mr José Aznar, makes no reference to Regional policy in the programme of the Spanish Presidency, particularly bearing in mind that Spain has been one of the main beneficiaries of European Structural funds ever since it joined the EU. The Spanish Regions have been able to develop rapidly thanks to European subsidies. They once again take full advantage of the European market and the common development of the enlarged Europe"* stressed Liese Prokop, AER President.

The Future of Regional policy and the CAP

The AER Presidium demands that the future Danish Presidency - 2nd half 2002 - include these two priorities in its programme. The AER Presidium also made comments on the European Commission proposal's concerning the financing of enlargement, published on 31st January by Commissioner Fischler and Commissioner Barnier. The Presidium calls for fundamental reform of these two EU policies in order to avoid discrimination against applicant countries. *"The CAP reform must be increasingly based on the principles of environmentally friendly sustainable*



Mrs Liese Prokop with Mr Walter Schwimmer, Secretary General of the Council of Europe and Mr Rokas Bernotas, Ambassador for Lithuania in Strasbourg

rural development and meet consumer requirements in terms of quality and safety. Without fundamental change, I feel it will be difficult to construct a united enlarged Europe close to the citizens. This reform must not, however, act as justification for slowing down the enlargement process and European integration" added the AER President.

Cohesion and enlargement

Mr B. Greenslade, President of the AER Regional policy Committee, reiterated the basic recommendations made by its Committee in the document "What cohesion policy for an enlarged Europe?" (May 2001): the need for a new definition of objectives for cohesion and for a more flexible management of structural funding in order to allow the polycentric development of the EU in due respect of the principle of territorial cohesion and the new geographical priorities

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fighting against inequality after enlargement. *"The cohesion in an enlarged Europe will also depend on the impetus for the development of the Regions towards real decision-making abilities and the capability to efficiently meet the expectations of all Europeans"* concluded Brian Greenslade.

Regional involvement in decision-making in Europe

The AER Presidium also took note of the Spanish central government's reluctance to involve its own Regions in decision-making at European level. *"In Spain, important competences have been transferred to the Regions and regional issues are increasing in importance in today's European debates. All Europeans now carry the Euro in their pockets which only shows how close Europe has become to citizens. It would be the right moment for the Spanish Government to allow regional governments to represent their citizens in areas coming under their competences like Health, Social matters, Education or Culture"* declared Mrs Prokop.

Dr. C. Palmer, President of the AER Institutional affairs Committee, committed himself to ensuring the representation of the interests of the Regions

in the Convention on the Future of Europe created by the European Council in Laeken (Dec. 2001). The Presidium congratulated Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, President of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), for his nomination as President of this Convention, as well as Erwin Teufel, Minister-President of the Land of Baden-Württemberg, represented on the AER Presidium, who has been nominated as a member of the Convention.

Strengthening interregional collaboration

The AER Presidium discussed the priorities and the working programme for 2002 for the organisation. *"At the AER General Assembly in Sopron (Nov. 2001), we adopted positions concerning the European constitution, new governance, enlargement, cohesion policy in an enlarged Europe and the setting up of environmentally friendly European transport networks. In 2002, we aim to debate and compare these positions with those of other interregional organisations in order to act together at European level. The 2nd Conference between the Presidents of the Interregional organisations in Europe, organised by the AER, will take place on 21st*

March 2002 in Linz (Austria). It aims to bring the interregional organisations closer together and to cooperate in a joint effort. I hope that this event will lead to a major contribution in strengthening the role of the Regions in Europe and making their expectations heard in the Convention on the future of Europe" said Liese Prokop, AER President, at the press conference following the meeting.

The AER Presidium also gave the kick off for the activity programmes of the four Committees: - Institutional affairs, Social Affairs & Health, Regional policy and Culture & Education - and its three training programmes - Centurio, Eurodyssey and the Summer School.

It entrusted the AER Committees with organising three Conferences on important issues for the Regions and for the development of interregional cooperation in Europe:

- the 2nd Conference of Regional Ministers of Culture (17-18 Oct., Brixen-I),
- the 2nd Conference of regional political leaders in the field of on Health,
- the 1st Conference of Presidents and Regional Ministers on Spatial planning (14-15 Nov., Baranya-H).

focus

THREE QUESTIONS FOR MR KLAUS KLIPP, THE NEW AER SECRETARY GENERAL



Redaction: *Upon your election as AER Secretary General last November, you told the AER General Assembly in Sopron that you considered yourself to be a convinced European and above all, a believer for a Europe with strong Regions. How do you think we could achieve this objective and enhance the role of the regions in the European decision-making process?*

Even with the arrival of the Euro, European integration has not been achieved. Much remains to be done, not only regarding foreign

and defence policy, but in common security and legal policies, cohesion policies or the integration of minorities. Most of these policies can only be effectively implemented with the participation and the cooperation of the Regions and their citizens. In its White paper on Governance in Europe, the European Commission encourages the Regions to begin a new phase of collaboration. I am convinced that this represents an opportunity for the Regions that must be taken. Moreover, the activities of the Convention on the future of Europe, which should lead to a fundamental Treaty for an enlarged Europe, will represent, I hope, a historical opportunity for reinforcing the Europe of the Regions: in this context, the Regions must bring their points of view to this Convention and confirm their faith in a federal Europe or, should agreement not be found concerning federalism, in a decentralised Europe. This will be one of my priorities.

Redaction: *In your opinion what role can the AER play in this context?*

From all of the various European organisations - the Committee of the Regions, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe (CLRAE) or the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) - the AER is the only

organisation to include exclusively Regions and in which the Regions are, themselves, directly members. The AER is the only organisation in which all Regions can work together, whether they come from the EU or an applicant country or from the new periphery of Europe. All of these Regions can contribute to the construction of tomorrow's Europe via our working Committees. The Institutional affairs Committee is responsible for drawing up a catalogue of competences and for lobbying within the Convention. The Regional policy Committee must both provide proposals for the reform concerning Regional policy and for that concerning the CAP. Cooperation between our Regions does not however remain theoretical, it has real, tangible and practical impact, as can be seen, for example, with our programmes Centurio and Eurodyssey. I am sure that these real efforts in favour of European integration enhance the credibility of AER political action.

Redaction: *You have been with the AER Secretariat for the last month, what changes do you plan to make for all these challenges?*

Firstly, I would like to stress that I have found all of the members of the Secretariat team in Strasbourg and Brussels, both highly skilled and informed on European affairs. I had the impression of being faced with a "cage full of tigers just dying to fight for a cause". I set the cause when I arrived. The AER must open up to the outside world and learn to communicate. We, the Secretariat, must contribute to proving that the AER exists not only through its meetings and bodies, but that it has valuable positions to make heard by various target audiences in Europe and that the AER has new ideas to put forward for this future Europe which we hope to see close to the citizens.

Redaction : *Mr Klipp, thank you for your time and cooperation.*

Liese Prokop awards the Cup for the "Most Youth-friendly Region" for 2001 to Eskil Johansen, President of the Youth Council of the Region of Nordland



AER GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2001

Two days of dialogue between the East and the West

320 representatives from 25 European countries attended at the first ever AER General Assembly in a Central and Eastern European accession country, on 29-30th November 2001, in Sopron, Hungary. "The choice of the Hungarian County of Győr-Moson-Sopron as the venue for our General Assembly reflects the importance we attach to the enlargement of the Union and the debate on in Europe" stressed Mrs Liese Prokop, AER President, in her opening speech.

Enlargement, acceptable for the people of Europe

EU enlargement policy and its effects on the Regions of Europe and the contribution of the "Europe of the Regions" to new European Governance were therefore among the centre points of discussion. A round table led to a lively exchange of view points and experience between Regions in accession countries, EU Regions and Regions on the future periphery of Europe.

Following debate, the AER General Assembly adopted the "Sopron Declaration" in which the Regions of Europe ask for "the enlargement process to be pursued in a way which is acceptable for peoples both within the EU and in the accession

countries" and for the Regions to be included in this process. They also request for particular attention to be paid to Regions on the new periphery of Europe and in the Mediterranean area.

Transparent and legitimate European Governance

The AER has recognised the possibility for cooperation with the regions which is proposed in the White Paper on European governance. The AER therefore suggests the creation of "a code of conduct in which the Commission commits itself to cooperation with the Regions and their representative bodies in order to take their expertise into account at early stages of the decision-making process when decisions or communications are being prepared".

The Sopron Declaration also insists on the need to strengthen regionalism and decentralisation especially in Eastern and Central Europe: "regionalism and federalism may serve as a long-term solution to ensure peace between peoples of different cultures and religions", which appears as imperative in a post-September 11th context.

Nordland declared "The most Youth-friendly Region" for 2001

The General Assembly provided the occasion to award Regions with particularly innovating policies. The Region of Nordland (N), was unanimously nominated "the most Youth-friendly Region" for 2001 by the jury, made up of the Secretary Generals from the twelve AER member interregional organisations and the representatives of the AER Presidency. This Norwegian peripheral coastal Region faced severe depopulation in the early 1990s, mostly due to the exodus of young adults seeking employment. Thanks to the implementation of youth-friendly measures in favour of employment, this situation has changed: young adults now stay in the Region and the unemployment rate has dropped spectacularly, from 25% to 2.9%, in just a few years. The jury also unanimously decided to award a prize of recognition for the regions of Thüringen (D) and Timis (RO) for their pro-youth policies.

"The President of Győr-Moson-Sopron, Mr Ferenc Ivanics, and his team were excellent hosts of this year's General Assembly. I would like to thank them again for their great hospitality, commitment and top quality organisation"

stated Mrs Prokop in her closing speech for the XVII AER General Assembly. The AER Secretariat would like to add its thanks to Mrs Mariana Varga for her contribution to the success of the organisation of this event.

notebook

ELECTION RESULTS

- **Dr. Christoph-E Palmer** (D-CDU), Minister for European affairs of the State Ministry of the Land of Baden-Württemberg, elected Vice-President of the AER and President of its Institutional affairs Committee (30/11).
- **Valéry Giscard d'Estaing** (F), President of the CEMR, nominated President of the Convention on the future of Europe at the European Summit in Laeken (12/12). Giuliano Amato (I) and **Jean-Luc Dehaene** (B) nominated Vice-Presidents. **Erwin Teufel**, Minister-President of the Land of Baden-Württemberg (D), member of the AER Presidium, nominated member of the Convention.
- **Peter Schieder** (A-SP) elected President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (21/01).
- **Pat Cox** (IRL-L) elected President of the European Parliament (23/01)
- **Sir Albert Bore** (UK-SP) elected President of the CoR and **Edouardo Zaplana** (E-EPP) his First Vice-President (6/02).
- **Klaus Klipp** (D), former Director of European Affairs of City of Frankfurt elected Secretary General of the AER (30/11).

The list of Members of the Convention on the future of Europe is available on the AER Web site (Activities/Committee A/Secretariat Notes)

NO MORE VISAS FOR ROMANIAN VISITORS!

Since the 1st January 2002, Romanian visitors to the European Union no longer require entry visas, with the exception of Great Britain and Ireland, which have not signed the Schengen agreement. Romania was the last EU accession country to need visas (see Press releases on the AER web site).

FLOODING IN POLAND

AER members continue their support of the Polish Region of Swietokrzyskie, affected by flooding. The Belgian Regions of Deutschsprachige Gemeinschaft and Wallonia have provided financial assistance for the Region (see "AER on-line"/Autumn 2001).

OTHER ADOPTED DOCUMENTS

Other Declarations and Resolutions, mostly leading from the activities of the four AER Committees, were adopted by the General Assembly in Sopron:

- Declaration on the United Nations Conference on Afghanistan,
- Declaration on European Governance,
- Declaration on enlargement,
- Resolution on a European Constitution,
- Resolution on visas for elected representatives or administrators from other European countries wishing to enter the EU,
- Final Declaration "Regions and new Transport governance",
- Report on regional aviation,
- Resolution on transparency in the European Union.

Documents (full version) available at

www.are-regions-europe.org

(Activities/General Assembly/Resolutions 2001).

AER ACTIVITIES: November 2001 - February 2002

Political meetings

- Participation at the CLRAE Forum "Towns and Regions in South-East Europe" (Mr L. van Nistelrooij, Istanbul, 2-3/11)
- Participation at the Conference of Regions with legislative powers (Mrs L. Prokop, Mr F. Stummann, Ms L. De Rose - Liège, 17/11)
- Dinner between AER Presidium members and Mr W. Schwimmer, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr A. Zeller, President of the Regional Council of Alsace, Mr P. Mangin, Vice-Maire of Strasbourg, and editors (30/01)
- Participation in the CoR Plenary session (Mr K. Klipp - Brussels, 7-8/02)
- Meeting with Mr R. Locatelli, Executive director of the CLRAE (Mr K. Klipp - Strasbourg, 12/02)
- Meeting with Mr C. Leygues, DG Regional policy, European Commission (Mr K. Klipp - Brussels, 21/02)
- Meeting with Mr V. Falcone, Secretary General of the CoR (Mr K. Klipp - Brussels, 22/02)
- Meeting with Mr L. Caverini, President of the Regional policy Committee of the European Parliament (Mr K. Klipp - Brussels, 22/02)

Member contact

- Meeting with the Croatian Regions (Istra, 3/11)
- Meeting with the Italian Regions (Liège, 17/11)
- Meeting with the Norwegian Regions (Brussels, 11/01)
- Meeting with the Secretary Generals of AER member interregional organisations (Strasbourg, 14/01)
- Meeting with representatives of the Regional offices in Brussels (Brussels, 7-8/02)
- Meeting with Mr X. Gizard, Secretary General of the CPMR (Rennes, 11/02)
- Meeting with President Bassolino (Campania-I) in view of the organisation of the next AER General Assembly in Naples (25/02)

AER meetings

- Conference of the "Equal opportunities for men and women" group (Stockholm/Dalarna-S, 1-2/11)
- Committee C (Istra-HR 2-3/11)
- AER General Assembly (Sopron-H, 29-30/11)
- Eurodysssey pilot Committee (Paris, 24-25/01)
- Committee C Presidency (Strasbourg, 31/01)
- AER Presidium (Strasbourg, 31/01-01/02)
- Committee D (Kielce-PL, 28/02-1/03)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
www.are-regions-europe.org

publications



ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT 2001

This 16-page publication presents the initiatives which President Liese Prokop undertook to strengthen the regional dimension of European politics and to help the Regions to work together. Several pages focus on the outcome of the AER Committees and training programmes (Eurodysssey, Centurio and the Summer School). The report is available in three languages (GB, D, F). For a copy of the activity report, please send your request to infopresse@are-regions-europe.org. You can also find it on the AER Web site (Press & Publications/Activity report).

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A GUIDE FOR AER MEMBERS

This presentation of the AER in CD-Rom format is intended principally for new AER member Regions. It also allows newly elected representatives or administrative leaders in AER member Regions or interregional organisations to better get to know our organisation. The CD-Rom is available in three languages (GB, F, D). With just a few clicks, you can access the reference documents, the structure and

organisation, training programmes and the other services offered to members. For a copy of this CD-Rom, please contact: infopresse@are-regions-europe.org.

diary

MARCH

Thursday 7th
CEMR political Committee + participation AER/CPMR/Eurocities - Valencia (E)

Friday 8th
AER Institutional affairs Committee Presidency - Stuttgart (D)

Tuesday 12th
CoR Bureau - Brussels (B)

Friday 15th
European Council - Barcelona (E)

Monday 18th
AER advisory group - Brussels (B)

Thursday 21st
Conference of Presidents of Interregional organisations - Linz (A)

Wednesday 20th - Friday 22nd
CLRAE Bureau + mini session + Standing Committee - Strasbourg (F)

APRIL

Monday 8th
AER working group "Social affairs Conference" Brussels (B)

Monday 8th or Tuesday 9th
Organising Committee of the AER Summer School - Amsterdam (NL) or Brussels (B)

Thursday 11th
AER Bureau - Exeter (GB)

Monday 15th to Tuesday 16th

Conference on the consequences of enlargement for local and regional authorities organised by the Spanish EU Presidency - Segovia (E)

Friday 19th
AER Sub-Committee "Spatial planning and the environment" meeting - Firenze (I)

Friday 26th
Eurodysssey pilot Committee - Açores (P)

Saturday 27th
Preparatory meeting for the Equal opportunities group - Venezia (I)

MAY

Tuesday 14th (to be confirmed)
Plenary session of the AER Institutional affairs Committee - Madrid (E)

Tuesday 14th - Thursday 16th
CoR Bureau + Plenary session - Brussels (B)

Thursday 23rd - Friday 24th
Plenary meeting of the AER Social affairs Committee - Timisoara (RO)

Monday 27th to Tuesday 28th
European Commission Seminar on EU priorities for the Regions - define the added Community value - Bruxelles (B)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
www.are-regions-europe.org (diary)



AER en direct - AER on line
VRE direkt -
WINTER 2001/2002
The Assembly of European Regions' newsletter

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TRANSLATION:
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DESIGN AND LAYOUT:
Agence Contexte - Strasbourg (F)

PRINTING:
Imprimerie OTT - rue Pins - 67310 Wasselonne (F)
Published in three languages: 4500 copies

Reproduction authorised with mention of the source.

February 2002

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