



The AER 'Regional policy' Committee will hold its first full meeting of the year in Bodo (Nordland-N), in the north of the Arctic Circle, on 14th - 15th June. I would like to draw your attention to its very interesting agenda which puts sustainable development and the regional contribution at the heart of the debates.

The agenda starts with a look at "New governance for sustainable development: what role for the regions?". This is especially important with the upcoming Summit in Johannesburg (26th August - 4th Sept.) and the 1st AER Conference of Regional Presidents and Ministers on Spatial Planning (Baranya-H, 14th - 15th Nov.). We shall move on to debate a political response in view of a Global Action Plan for sustainable regions and towns with contributions from the CoR and the Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign. We will also discuss the new sustainable strategies for future CAP reform and the strategies for sustainable tourism at regional level. The regional representatives will give us a presentation of the surveys carried out on eco-farming and good practices on sustainable rural development.

The agenda will also deal with how to develop locally-owned renewable sources and how to promote sustainable water resource management. Both are subject areas the Committee has debated before and where the experiences of the regions coming from the "bottom up" will be most valuable.

One thing I do want to see happen this year is to launch a competition within the regions of the AER for the "best example of practical environmental action by a region". I had a very positive meeting with the European Environmental Agency which has expressed the willingness to help us with this project. It will be the opportunity for regions within the EU, accession countries, and non EU countries to share experiences and gain knowledge from one and another how to take care of environment and quality of life in enlarged Europe. I hope the meeting in Bodo, where we are expecting a great number of inclusive contributions from member regions, will give a kick-off to this project which also aims to promote at European level the regional expertise and practice in this field.

Brian Greenslade

Leader of Devon (UK)

President of the AER 'Regional Policy' Committee

CONVENTION, ENLARGEMENT, REFORM...

The Regions in action for tomorrow's Europe



Mrs Prokop hands the AER's contribution to the European Convention to Valéry Giscard d'Estaing

Since the launch of the European Convention on 1st March 2002, the AER has actively worked towards making the voice of the regions heard within this Convention whose activities will have a crucial impact on the future of Europe. The heavy commitment of the AER, with the other interregional organisations at its side (*see article on the Conference in Linz on page 3*), is more than necessary considering the scarcity of Convention members with a regional mandate, such as Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, President of the Region of Auvergne (F), elected President of the Convention and Erwin Teufel, Minister-President of Baden-Württemberg (D), nominated by the German Bundesrat. The 6 members of the Committee of the Regions will only participate as observers, without the right to vote, which is regrettable.

On 24-25th June, the European Convention will hear the proposals of local and regional authorities on the future of Europe, at a hearing organised by the European Parliament in Brussels. The AER is seriously committed to this Convention and is preparing to present at this hearing the position adopted by the AER Institutional affairs Committee, which held its Plenary session on 14th May in Madrid.

On the 7th March the AER President, Liese Prokop, met President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing at a debate organised in Valencia (E) by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR). In her speech, Mrs Prokop requested that the AER, representative organisation of the regions of the European Union and those in accession countries, be allowed to participate at the forum set up by the Convention, alongside of other interregional organisations. Mrs Prokop also insisted that "the Convention take the legal status of European regions fully into account and that executive and legislative competences be differentiated", particularly via the creation of a catalogue of competences.

continued on page 2...

NEWS PAGES 2-5

- Front page continued
- **Focus**
- Linz Conference: A successful step for giving European regions one voice
- Leaving culture to the competences of the regions
- Centurio 2002, full steam ahead!

- The development of sustainable transport goes hand in hand with the involvement of the regions
- 7th AER Summer School & the 1st Youth Summer School

COMMENTARY PAGE 6

- J. Olbrycht, Marshall (President) of Woj. Slaskie (PL)
- Front page continued

INTERREGIONS PAGE 7

- Brussels-Capital & Woj. Mazowieckie, new cooperation agreement
- Notebook / Internet**

IN BRIEF PAGE 8

- AER activities March - May
- Publications / Diary**

Front page continued...

In the "Contribution of the AER to the European Convention"* transmitted to Mr Giscard d'Estaing by Mrs Prokop, other proposals are put forward such as the drawing up of a joint constitutional treaty, the distribution of competences and the right to referral before the European Court of Justice based on the application of the principle of subsidiarity, the need for appropriate representation for the regions and their citizens in decision-making or the involvement of the regions as direct partners in cohesion policy...

In March, the AER 'Institutional affairs' Committee launched a discussion platform via internet in order to bring in the opinions of regional authorities on necessary EU reforms and on the future of regional policy in an enlarged Europe. Using the proposals sent in by AER member regions an initial summary of findings was produced for the meeting in Madrid.

Competence distribution reform

Whilst the first Convention working session (21-22nd March) dealt with expectations from Europe, the second (16-17th April) focused on a more delicate topic, EU assignments and the distribution of competences. Mr Teufel's proposals on this subject, concerning the creation of a catalogue of competences and a clear distribution of competences between the EU, members states and regions, which reflect

the AER's position, were not unanimously accepted. Most Convention members spoke in favour of an open and flexible system, capable of evolving and defining the EU's competences, but not those of member states or the regions which would be, *de facto*, clear.

The Regions as a 3rd level of power

Minister-President Teufel and Dr Palmer, Minister for European affairs of Baden-Württemberg and President of the AER 'Institutional affairs' Committee, met President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing on 5th May in Stuttgart, to convince him of the need for clear reform in competence distribution within the EU, reform which is absolutely necessary if Europe is actually to come closer to its citizens.

"The Regions must be considered as more than mere administrative units, they are essential bodies and authorities in a democratic Union" proclaimed Dr. Palmer to Committee members in Madrid. *"This aim can only be reached via strengthening the existing principle of subsidiarity and via control by an independent EU body. This would lead to the establishment of the regions as a 3rd level of power. The Convention must be capable of creating a legal and political framework for a solid, united and strong Europe in the future. The AER would like to see the EU leave room for the development of regionalisation in order to ensure that the enlarged*

Europe be governed in an efficient and democratic manner, close to the citizen. The reality of regional policy must be institutionalised and find its place in the Treaties. The strengthening of the role of the CoR in the decision-making process at European level is essential in this line of thought, this institution must be brought up in ranking to that of a decision-making body" continued Dr. Palmer. These proposals were mostly reiterated in the position adopted by the Committee in Madrid and to be presented at the hearing in June.

*Available at www.are-regions-europe.org (index)



Members of the AER 'Institutional affairs' Committee debating in Madrid (14th May) on the AER position to be presented at the hearing of the European convention in June

continued on page 6...

focus

AER BUREAU

Exeter, capital of regional Europe for a day

The Executive Board of the AER met on 11th April at Devon County Hall and made several decisions concerning the forthcoming AER activities.

Lobbying within the European Convention

A political discussion platform on the future of Europe has been launched on the AER web site. The contributions received from the Regions will be considered as background for an AER position to be presented during the hearing organised by the Convention in Brussels on 24th - 25th June.

Follow-up to Linz Conference

The AER commits itself to communicating the joint Declaration of the Presidents of European interregional organisations, drawn up in Linz on 21st March 2002, to the European institutions. The interregional organisations took a significant step forward towards giving European regions one united voice at this meeting (see article opposite).

Organising three major Conferences in 2002

- Conference on Public Health and Social Affairs between regional Ministers and political leaders. Major topics for this Conference are the

improvement of training of professionals in the sector of elderly care with a certain harmonisation of qualification standards. Lombardia-I will host this Conference on 8th November in Milano.

- Conference on Spatial planning between regional Presidents, Ministers and political leaders: *"Towards a common regional project for a new cohesion policy; from Region's experience to new strategies of sustainable development in an enlarged Europe"*. This event will take place in Pécs, capital city of Baranya-H on 14th - 15th November 2002.
- Conference on Culture with regional Ministers and political leaders focusing on *"The globalisation process in culture and education - WTO and the impact of GATS negotiations on public services in the fields of culture and education"*. This event will be held in Brixen (I) on 18th October 2002, in Italian region of Bozen-Südtirol.

AER CONTACT:

Eric Milesi, e.milesi@are-regions-europe.org

LINZ CONFERENCE

A successful step for giving European regions one voice



Photo: Heinz Kraml

On 21st March 2002 in Linz (A), the Assembly of European Regions brought together the Presidents of the European interregional organisations, AER members (*see photograph*), to decide on positions for a common policy in four areas. The Linz Conference allowed them to take a major step forward in joining their forces to defend the interests of the regions in the future of Europe. The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), the Committee of the Regions (CoR) of the European Union and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CLRAE) of the Council of Europe were also actively involved in the debates.

A common position – “Linz Declaration” – was unanimously adopted at the end of this meeting. Furthermore the participants of the Linz Conference also decided to invite their respective governments to support the draft European Charter on Regional Self-Government in order to have this text adopted as an international convention by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

Below are the main extracts from the Linz Declaration*.

Governance and the Future of Europe

We:

- demand that, along with the CoR, the large European representative organisations of local and regional authorities be heard by the Convention and be involved in its activities in order to deal with issues linked to the role of the Regions and local authorities in the EU;
- recommend the drawing up of a Code of Conduct by which the Commission would commit itself to cooperation with the Regions and their representative bodies in the decision-making process;
- stress that good European governance should be built on representative and participation-based democracy;
- reiterate that the discussion on Governance did not concern further competences, but rather a clear and correct distribution of competences between the Union, the States, the regions and local authorities and call for a more precise definition of the distribution of competences between the Union, member States and their regional and local authorities;
- insist on the possibility of legal control via either a specialised Chamber of the European Court of Justice or a specific organ, when competence distribution is not respected;
- call for the reinforcement of the role of the Committee of the Regions.

Regional Policy and Cohesion

We feel that:

- with regard to the impact of European unification and globalisation, this policy must encourage the polycentric development of the Community, particularly via EU Community Initiatives;
- such a policy not only requires common objectives, but also the recognition that the diverse socio-cultural basic structures in Europe as well as transeuropean cooperation are the basis for sustainable economic development;
- GDP seems to be unsuitable as the only or essential scale for European structural and cohesion policy. A new allocation of European funds should therefore consider the actual competitive ability of the Regions;
- a harmonisation of the currently different criteria for the individual EU policies (ESDP, Structural Funds) is possible: key criteria – GDP and employment – need to be complemented by other factors (economic structure, innovation, accessibility);
- “Community Initiatives” imply that the EU assumes responsibility for all issues which are of major importance for the Union and for its future development. This is why INTERREG must continue to cover all parts of Europe and address all types of problems (and not only those of an economic nature), which continue to exist or newly arise;
- one solution would be to separate community initiatives from the structural funds as from 2007 and to define them as an independent EU task.

Transport networks in Europe

We consider that:

- the measures which are suggested in the White Paper on Transport do not meet the increasing need for intermodality and do not take into sufficient account the transport needs of specific regions and areas;
- regions have to be recognised as “statutory consultees” of European and national authorities in this field: they already have – to varying degrees – competences for transport planning, road transport infrastructure, traffic management and road safety. They usually also have responsibility for complementary social, environmental and land use policies;
- due to transport’s huge impact on social, economic and territorial cohesion, regions should ask that the development of balanced and integrated transport be a key objective for future structural funds.

* Full document available on the AER web site www.are-regions-europe.org (index)

From left to right: Francisco Javier ERRO URRUTIA, Secretary General of the Assembly of Wine Producing Regions (AREV), Pedro SANZ ALONSO, President of the Association of European Wine Producing Regions (AREV), Carlo-Alberto TESSERIN, representative of the President of the Working Community of the Adriatic Alps (ALPEN ADRIA), Dr. Josef PÜHRINGER, representative of the President of the Committee of the Regions and Minister-President of the Land of Oberösterreich, host of the Conference, Liese PROKOP, President of the Assembly of European Regions (AER), Peter SCHÖNBERGER, President of the Working Community of the Alpine Counties (ARGE-ALP), Joan VALLVE I RIBERA, President of the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), Hakan BLOMBERG, Vice-President of the Association of European Regions of Industry and Technology (RETI), Guylaine RIONDEL-BESSON, representative of the President of the Working Community of the Eastern Alps (COTRAO) and Dr. Werner SEIF, representative of the President of the Working Community of the Danube countries (ARGE DONAULÄNDER).

Sustainable agricultural policy and the protection of rural areas

We also consider that:

- multi-functional agriculture must make an essential contribution to environmental conservation and rural planning. These are missions of public interest which must be supported by public funding as the market will not take them into account;
- cohesion, multi-functionality, competitiveness and sustainability must represent the foundations of the new model for agriculture. Alongside of quality and food safety standards, these elements could help the future CAP to gain credibility with European tax payers;
- Europe must protect its wealth of rural landscape, characterised by the diversity of its regions. In order to preserve the social and economic importance of the rural world in the European context, future policies must make full use of regional potential;
- in order to reach these objectives, regional authorities which are close to territorial realities must be included in the drawing up and implementation of future common agricultural and rural policies.

We call on the EU Commission to declare the period 2003-2012 the “European decade for sustainable development” and 14th June as “European sustainable development day”.

AER CONTACT: Klaus Klipp
k.klipp@are-regions-europe.org



CENTURIO 2002 Full steam ahead!

Launched at the beginning of March, the 2002 edition of Centurio headed straight for unprecedented success. Applications are flooding in and around one hundred candidates from 13 countries have currently contacted the Secretariat (Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Croatia, Ex-Yugoslavia, Lithuania, Hungary, Moldavia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Romania, Russia, Georgia and the Ukraine). Internet may well be to blame... Both applicants and host Regions can now register and answer the questionnaire on the AER web site (<http://www.are-regions-europe.org/GB/A3/A31new.html>). It is now

possible to visit the Centurio web pages and check out current applications as they arrive.

'Centurio in the Balkans' is also making headway. The Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA), a network of local and regional authorities supported by the Council of Europe via the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe (CLRAE), is helping to promote this branch of Centurio.

The North-South dimension plays an increasingly important role in European integration, the AER would now like to extend Centurio to the Mediterranean area ('Euro-Mediterranean Centurio'). We are currently looking for contacts in this area, so if you are interested, please contact the AER Secretariat.

The Centurio opening and evaluation seminars have now been merged into one single event called the 'Centurio Forum'. This rendez-vous will allow former and new trainees and coordinators to meet

up, get to know each other and discuss their experience of Centurio. This year the 'Centurio Forum' will be held in Wien (A) on 13th December.

Since its creation in 1994, Centurio's aim is to promote dialogue and the exchange of experience between the regions of Europe in view of developing democratic institutions and encouraging sustainable development and economic integration in the four corners of the European continent, as well as extending regionalism/regionalisation in Europe and setting up democratic and efficient regional administrations.

AER CONTACT:

Laura De Rose or Agnès Ciccarone
l.derose@are-regions-europe.org
a.ciccarone@are-regions-europe.org



National Museum in Kielce,
capital city of Woj. Swietokrzyskie

'CULTURE, EDUCATION & TRAINING' COMMITTEE Leaving culture and education to the competences of the regions

Regional experts from 12 European countries, members of the AER 'Culture, Education & Training, Youth, Media and Sport' Committee, met in Kielce on 28th February and 1st March 2002, at the invitation of Mr Kwiecien, President of Woj. Swietokrzyskie (PL).

Opened by Mr Pokrzepa, President of the Regional Assembly and Bruno Hosp, Committee President, this two day session was devoted to preparing the 2nd Conference of Regional Ministers of Culture and Education organised by the AER and scheduled on the 18th October 2002 in Brixen, Bozen-Südtirol (I). "*The globalisation process in culture and education - WTO and the effects of GATS on public services in these fields*" was approved as the major theme for this Conference, in the aim of undertaking joint action between the Regions of Europe towards maintaining the specific nature of the cultural sector in trade.

Considering the European Convention as an opportunity to achieve the comprehensive and fully-fledged application of the principle of subsidiarity, the AER 'Culture' Committee has decided to draw attention to the AER position on the revision of Art. 149-151 of the European

Treaties. The Committee is also considering launching further lobbying action in order to insist that the EU reviews on this occasion its involvement in certain areas of cultural and education policies. "*We should do all we can to ensure that these domains remain in the competences of Member states and Regions, with the obligation of unanimous voting in order to protect cultural diversity in Europe*" stressed B. Hosp.

Education & training policies for minorities and immigrants were at the heart of the debate in the sub-Committee 'Education & training' which, under the directions of Baranya (H) Region, proposed extending the use of 'eLearning' at European level, particularly for Roma and Sinti communities, and perhaps creating a prize for the best "eLearning Region".

The members of the 'Youth' sub-Committee expressed their reservations regarding the European Commission's White paper on Youth which, despite a good overview and scientific expertise of the existing problems, remains too general and fails to offer any strategic information on how young people should be involved in the participatory process. Examples from the regions of Nordland (N), Vestfold (N) and

Sörmland (S) provided the participants with evidence of how this could be achieved. The sub-Committee proposed beginning consultation with AER members on the issue of European programmes for young people. The members also discussed the setting up of the 1st ever Youth Summer School within the traditional AER Summer School (*see article page 5*).

In its unanimously adopted final Declaration the Committee called on the Regions of Europe to enhance and strengthen the integration process by joint projects in the field of culture, education and training with the regions from EU candidate countries.

On behalf of the AER, Mr Hosp thanked the regional authorities of Woj. Swietokrzyskie for their warm welcome and excellent organisation.

The meeting received good media coverage in terms of the written press, TV and radio (outcome available on www.are-regions-europe.org/COMMUN/A22-Press.html).

AER CONTACT:

Franz-Josef Stummann or Doris Materne
d.materne@are-regions-europe.org

'REGIONAL POLICY' COMMITTEE

The development of sustainable transport goes hand in hand with the involvement of the Regions



L. Caveri (European Parliament), P. Meyer (Alsace) and L. De Rose (AER) at the Workshop in Florence

The AER 'Regional policy' Committee organised a workshop on "The Regions and sustainable transport" on 19th April 2002 in Florence, Toscana (I), in the aim of demonstrating the role which the Regions play in the future European Common Transport policy.

Several examples of good regional practices in the field of sustainable transport, and their impact and added value in comparison to European and national initiatives in particular, were looked at by over fifty participants*. Regional representatives exchanged their experience in the implementation of European and national policies and of European

programmes (INTERREG IIIB, PHARE, ISPA...), gave their point of view on the advantages and drawbacks of these programmes and current legislation, and laid out the content and objectives of the policies used towards sustainable development in transport by the regions.

The President of the "Regional policy, Transport and Tourism" Committee of the European Parliament, Luciano Caveri, spoke on the theme "What future for Common Transport Policy? The European Parliament's contribution to the definition of new Governance". *"Subsidiarity only currently exists at state level, and it is up to the Convention to give the regions a real role" he declared. "There will be no sustainable development in any field as long as both local and regional levels of government are not the main actors. The reform of Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T) and the incorporation of new routes on these networks requires the involvement of the regions"* he concluded.

Riccardo Conti, coordinator for AER sub-Committee "Sustainable Transport Development & the Environment", and Assessore (Minister) for the Toscana Region, host of the event, stressed that *"Common Transport Policy is only an*

instrument for harmonisation, and the regions must develop their own transport policies". He added that *"the transport network must allow for sustainable economic development and not simply turn the regions into transit zones"*.

This AER workshop is the first step towards a long-term strategy for the Committee aiming to draw the attention of national and European authorities to the efficient role of the regions in the field of transport. The Committee also requests legal and financial resources for the implementation of the policies in this field by the regions; it intends to encourage the exchange of good practices and experience as well as cooperation between regions in the EU and regions in accession countries.

This successful initiative will continue in Spring 2003 in the French region of Rhône-Alpes.

AER CONTACT:

Laura De Rose or Agnès Ciccarone
l.derose@are-regions-europe.org
a.ciccarone@are-regions-europe.org

* Contributions available on the AER web site (Committee C activities)

7th AER Summer School and the 1st ever Youth Summer School

The Croatian Region of Primorje-Gorski Kotar will host the 7th AER Summer School, due to be held between the 8th and the 12th September 2002 in Opatija on the Adriatic coast.

Because of the World Summit on Sustainable development (Johannesburg, 26th August - 4th September), this AER event will focus on the issue of "The Regions' contribution to sustainability: Innovative practices for innovative policies in regional development".

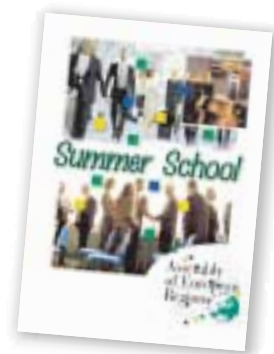
Various aspects of sustainable development will be considered by participants:

- Social dimension, particularly the protection of minorities and Human Rights,
- Economic aspects, in areas such as the development of sustainable transport infrastructures or the development of knowledge based economy,
- The role of the regions in sustainable environmental protection by examples of good practices,
- Sustainable rural development, particularly

eco-farming and sustainable agriculture (safe food production).

The Summer School for 2002 is organised in cooperation with three other regions from the Adriatic coast: Friuli-Venezia-Giulia (I), Istra and Dubrovnik & Neretva (HR). The event is supported by an organising Committee made up of Brussels-Capital and Wallonie (B), Gloucestershire (GB), Noord-Brabant (NL), Thüringen (D), Wien (A), with the contribution of the CLRAE (Council of Europe) and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

The 7th edition of the Summer School will differ from previous editions - the creation of the Youth Summer School provides a new opportunity for young adults to discuss their participation in public life with regional political leaders. This event, to be held at the same time as the traditional AER Summer School (9-11th September), is open to young adults of between 18 and 21 and will focus on "The concept of environmental sustainability".



Due to hotel availabilities, roughly 200 people will be able to participate in the Summer School in Opatija. In order to register rapidly, please download the practical information from <http://www.are-regions-europe.org/COMMUN/A32ter.html>.

AER CONTACT:

Laura De Rose or Agnès Ciccarone
l.derose@are-regions-europe.org
a.ciccarone@are-regions-europe.org

YOUTH SUMMER SCHOOL CONTACT:

Mattias Ask - Tel: +46 155 245 410
Mattias.Ask@lk.dll.se

European Convention, the Regions' expectations

BY JAN OLBRYCHT, MARSZALEK (PRESIDENT) OF WOJ. SLASKIE (PL)



"The role of the regions in Europe is a multi-dimensional issue. On the one hand, it is a question of economic and social cohesion policy and the administration of regional policy in the Union, and, on the other hand, it is a question

of respect of the principle of subsidiarity which requires public policies closer to the citizen.

Applying cohesion policy means applying subsidiarity first and foremost

When cohesion policy is mentioned, we often think of financial assistance, allocation criteria and the management of structural funds. However, when the application of the principle of subsidiarity is mentioned, we tend to refer to the distribution of competences and responsibilities as well as to the decentralisation of public financing. Neither of the former can function without the other, which means that cohesion policy cannot be applied without the principle of subsidiarity working in parallel and at all levels of governance.

This growing need for subsidiarity, which local authorities and their experience all favour, led to the creation of regions in EU candidate countries. Local and regional populations realise that,

today, policy and financial decentralisation go hand in hand with efficient action, increased transparency and greater control over public initiatives. The creation of regions comes in reply to these real ambitions and not, as some may think, in reply to politicians' strong-mindedness. The construction of these regions taking place in the context of enlargement, solutions must act in accordance with current EU regulations. This explains the interest shown in the regions of candidate countries for the debate on decentralisation and the distribution of competences which can currently be heard within the Union.

Regional authorities are increasingly aware that the direction and rapidity of administrative reforms in their countries will be a direct effect of EU reform.

Proximity via greater involvement for regional authorities

As representatives of the regions, we are keeping a close eye on the debate on new governance and the initiatives launched in the EU. Although the Declaration of Laeken does not refer directly to the role of the regions in Europe, it emphasises the values of the Union and the fact that the construction of the EU requires the enhanced involvement of local and regional authorities. Among other things this Declaration states that "the Union must become more democratic, more transparent, more efficient (...)."

If the European Convention is to answer questions such as how to bring the EU closer to its citizens, how to reform its institutions and how to define relations between the Union and its member states, the solutions put forward will influence regionalisation without any doubt, particularly in candidate countries where this process is currently underway.

As representatives of the regions, we expect this Convention to distribute competences and responsibilities, to take the role of sub-national structures into consideration and to show the way forward for a real application of the principle of subsidiarity without damaging the rights of member states. If the EU is to work closer to its citizens, proximity must be applied both via the European institutions and at national, regional and local level. We expect the voice of the regions to be taken into account and interregional organisations such as the AER to be heard on our behalf, whilst protecting regional diversity both in terms of competences and legal status.

Personally, I am convinced that Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, President of the Convention, fully understands regional concerns. As President of the Region of Auvergne, he is perfectly aware of the functioning of European regions. Polish regions, just like those in other candidate countries, are actively preparing for EU membership and wish to work on the future of Europe together with other European Regions".

Page 2 continued

Enlargement rethink in view of cohesion

The AER Institutional Committee also organised a hearing on EU enlargement in Madrid. The aim was to identify problems faced by regions in applicant countries and to determine what help the AER can provide. The AER considers enlargement as a political and economic necessity to be incorporated into economic, social and territorial cohesion policy throughout Europe. *"Enlargement must take place rapidly and deadlines must be set in order to ensure controlled progress"*, declared Philip Johnsson, Vice-President of the Committee. *"It is also vital to differentiate between candidate countries according to the progress of each individual state*

and to allow those meeting accession criteria to join the EU without any hesitation" added the Vice-President. The AER also considers that EU agricultural and structural financing should be subject to reform from 2006.

Involve the young in the debate

In its March and April sessions, the Convention on the future of Europe decided to create a Youth Convention to allow members of the younger generation to participate in the debate. Made up of 210 members, this Youth Convention will meet for a Plenary session from 10th to 12th July 2002 in Brussels. Whilst delighted with this decision, the AER has launched an appeal for this Youth Convention to

include people from all types of background and not merely members of official youth organisations, political groups and parties. The AER also calls for all regions and regional youth networks to lobby their national representatives to ensure that young people from the regions can take part in this Convention and express their local and regional concerns.

AER CONTACT:

Stéphanie Poirel
s.poirel@are-regions-europe.org
or Araceli Gomez
a.gomez@are-regions-europe.org

BRUSSELS-CAPITAL AND WOJ. MAZOWIECKIE

New interregional cooperation agreement

Brussels-Capital and Woj. Mazowieckie, Capital Regions of Belgium and Poland, signed a cooperation agreement in October 2001 and the AER is delighted with this new partnership between an EU Region and a candidate country Region.

On 15th April 2002, Guy Vanhengel, Minister of Foreign Relations for Brussels-Capital and his Polish counterpart, Jolanta Gontarczyk, Vice-President in charge of International relations of

Woj. Mazowieckie (*see photograph*), jointly decided on an action plan due to be put into effect over the coming three years in accordance with the cooperation agreement. The agreement focuses on the exchange of experience and administrators in the fields of:

- the environment and water management in particular (conception and construction of water treatment plants, licencing, transfer of Community acquis and European standards in water treatment);

- economic development, with help and support for SMEs and policies aiming to encourage investment, to promote, and to provide technical assistance for development in international trade and commerce;

- European integration - research, analysis and information transfer in particular - concerning Community programmes set up under regional policy.

CONTACT:

Pierre Gérard, Brussels-Capital
pgerard@mrbc.irisnet.be



notebook

ELECTIONS IN SACHSEN-ANHALT

The party in opposition, Christian-Democrats (CDU), won the regional elections in the German Region of Sachsen-Anhalt, making the Social-Democrat party led by Chancellor Gerhard Schröder vulnerable in the run up to legislative elections on 22nd September 2002. With a final result of 20% to 37.5%, the SPD lost almost half of its voters. **Wolfgang Böhmer** (CDU) is likely to form a government coalition with the FDP liberals.

LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS IN HUNGARY

After a first round victory beating the Conservative Prime Minister, Mr Orbán, the socialists and the Free Democratic Alliance won the second round of elections. Socialists won 178 seats, their liberal allies of the Free Democratic Alliance (SZDSZ) won 19, one joint left candidate won 1 seat and the Fidesz party of Mr Orbán won 188 seats. The President of the Republic, Ferenc Madl, will begin consultation with all Parties in order to appoint the new Parliament and officially announce the new Prime Minister in the next few days.

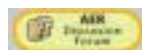
FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

The high level of votes for the far right dominated the first round of the French Presidential elections. Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the National Front, went through to the second round against Jacques Chirac for the Rassemblement pour la République (RPR). The Socialist party (PS) led by Lionel Jospin played the losing hand in these elections. The second round led to a massive overall victory by Jacques Chirac with over 82% of votes. The RPR had the support of all French Democratic political parties, from left and right, in the fight against the National Front.

Jean-Pierre Raffarin, aged 53, Senator (Liberal Democrat), President of the Region of Poitou-Charentes, was appointed as Prime Minister. In a letter sent to Mr Raffarin immediately following his appointment, Liese Prokop, AER President, expressed her delight with a member of the AER Bureau, who is consistently active within European and national interregional organisations (CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission, President of the Association of French Regions until January 2002), being nominated to such an important position. *"The experience gained in regional realities on the ground, mixed with the strength of your conviction in Europe will allow you to apply the principles of new Governance, which I know you are highly committed to, and to achieve the important mission assigned to you by President Jacques Chirac"* stressed President Prokop.

We would also like to remind you that the AER European Cup of Regional Flavours, to be hosted in March 2003 by the Portuguese Region of Alentejo, was originally launched at the initiative of Mr Raffarin.

internet



Forums on the Future of Europe

In March, the AER launched a discussion platform on the Future of Europe on its web site www.ere-regions-europe.org (access via the home page/ Discussion Forum). AER member Regions have been asked to use this forum to make their opinions known concerning the various questions put forward in view of preparing an initial AER position for discussion at the 'Institutional affairs' Committee meeting in Madrid on 14th May.

The discussion platform has been pushed back to the 10th June (in order to prepare the hearing of the European Convention) and will most probably remain open beyond this date for amendments.

You can also give your opinion on, or quite simply consult, other forums which seem important to us:

- Committee of the Regions Forum "European Convention – Votre avis nous intéresse" (Currently available in French only). You can access this site via the CoR web page (www.cor.eu.int) or directly at http://www.cor.eu.int/convention/index_fr.htm.

- European Commission Forum – Futurum - for institutions only <http://europa.eu.int/futurum>. To make sure that the ideas of the Regions on the Future of Europe are heard from far and wide, do not hesitate to surf the web and join the debate!

Elections

The AER General Assembly for 2002 will be held on 28th and 29th November in Napoli (Region of Campania, Italy). Among the main points to be looked at during this meeting are the renewal of the ruling AER bodies (President, Vice-President, Vice-President Treasurer, Committee Presidents, Bureau members) whose mandate is due to end in November. We reiterate that the last elections took place two years ago at the General Assembly in Seinäjoki (7th and 8th December 2000).

AER CONTACT: Eric Milesi
e.milesi@are-regions-europe.org

AER ACTIVITIES

March - May 2002

Political meetings and events

- Meeting with V. Giscard d'Estaing, European Convention President (*L. Prokop, K. Klipp, Valencia, 7/03*)
- Conference of the President of European interregional Organisations (*L. Prokop, K. Klipp, Linz, 21/03*)
- Participation at the CoR Bureau (*K. Klipp, Brussels, 12-14/03*)
- Reception of a representative from the Province of Quebec (*L. De Rose, Strasbourg, 11/04*)
- Participation at the Eurocities Conference on new European Governance at local level (*K. Klipp, Wien, 15/04*)
- Meeting with V. Falcone, CoR Secretary General and other leaders of interregional organisations and Eurocities (*K. Klipp, Bruxelles, 30/04*)
- Meeting of the Secretary Generals of the CoR, CEMR, CPMR, Eurocities, BSSSC and the AER (*K. Klipp, Brussels, 30/04*)
- Meeting with V. Giscard d'Estaing, Convention President (*E. Teufel, C. Palmer, Stuttgart, 5/05*)
- Participation at the CLRAE Bureau (*K. Klipp, Strasbourg, 7/05*)
- Visit to ECTARC (*K. Klipp, F. J. Stummam, Llangollen, 17/05*)

Member contact

- Meeting with A. Zeller, President of the French Region of Alsace (*Strasbourg, 16/04*)
- Reception of a delegation from the Finnish Region of Tampere (*Strasbourg, 17/04*)
- Meeting with J. Pujol, President of the Spanish Region of Catalunya (*K. Klipp, Barcelona, 6/05*)

AER meetings

- Advisory Group meeting (*Brussels, 18/03*)
- Bureau meeting (*Exeter, 11/04*)
- Workshop "Regions and sustainable transport", 'Regional policy' Committee (*Florence, 19/04*)
- 'Institutional affairs' Committee meeting (*Madrid, 14/05*)
- 'Social affairs' Committee meeting (*Timisoara, 23-24/05*)
- Advisory group meeting (*Strasbourg, 31/05*)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

www.are-regions-europe.org

publications

LA FRANCE ENFIN FORTE DE SES RÉGIONS



With this "glossary devoted to decentralisation", Adrien Zeller, President of the Region of Alsace and co-President of the French Institute of Decentralisation, makes his contribution to the debate on the future of France in the context of the election campaigns (Presidential and legislative). A. Zeller expresses his solid conviction that institutional reform is necessary – France is currently the most centralised and the least regionalised large country in Europe – along with a significant transfer of responsibility, competences, power and budget to local and regional authorities. Introduced by R. Barre, former French Prime Minister, this both educational and political reference work presents an accurate description of problems which political representatives in France have to face; at the same time, it attempts to prove that the recognition of real Regions with wide ranging responsibilities and a redistribution of powers are the best means to meet the needs of a society which expects ever greater levels of democracy and proximity. 2002, Collection Fidecita, Gualino éditeur, 295 pages. In French only. Price: 20 €.

CONTACT: hpo@worldnet.fr

L'EUROPE SANS TERRITOIRE

In this magnificent "essay on the concept of territorial cohesion", with a preface by Robert Savy, President of the Region of Limousin (F) and Michel Barnier, European Commissioner, Claude Husson relaunches his long-standing struggle for increased recognition for territorial cohesion in the European Treaties, which he also ran within and with the support of the AER. At a time of decisive change, Claude Husson considers that the European Union must insist on this essential aspect of its future. Territorial cohesion must take its place alongside social and economic cohesion as the very condition of an enlarged Europe. Collection "Monde en cours", Bibliothèque des territoires, Éditions de l'Aube/DATAR, 203 pages. In French only. 18€.

CONTACT: info@datar.gouv.fr



diary

JUNE

Monday 3rd

AER preparatory meeting for the CLRAE
Plenary session - *Strasbourg (F)*

Monday 3rd - Thursday 6th

CLRAE Bureau & Plenary Session - *Strasbourg (F)*

Wednesday 5th - Friday 7th

European Social Network Conference
"Shaping the future of social services in Europe" with AER support - *Barcelona (E)*

Wednesday 5th - Friday 7th

Convention Presidium and Plenary session
Brussels (B)

Tuesday 11th - Wednesday 12th

International benchmark Club Forum
"European Regions: the keys to success"
with AER support - *Basel (CH)*

Thursday 13th

Convention Presidium - *Brussels (B)*

Friday 14th

CoR extraordinary Bureau - *Spain*

Friday 14th - Saturday 15th

AER 'Regional policy' Committee (C)
Plenary meeting - *Bodö (N)*

Friday 21st

AER Presidium - *Stuttgart (D)*

Friday 21st - Saturday 22nd

European Council - *Sevilla (E)*

Monday 24th - Tuesday 25th

Convention hearing for Regions and local authorities - *Brussels (B)*

Monday 24th - Wednesday 26th

Convention Presidium and Plenary Session
Brussels (B)

Thursday 27th - Friday 28th

Council of Europe Conference of European Ministers from local and regional authorities
Helsinki (FIN)

Thursday 27th - Friday 28th

ARGE ALP Conference of Government leaders

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

www.are-regions-europe.org (diary)



AER en direct - AER on line

VRE direkt - SPRING 2002
The Assembly of European Regions' newsletter

MANAGING EDITOR

Klaus Klipp

EDITOR

Barbara Skoczylas-Thauront

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Agnès Ciccarone, Stéphane Cools, Araceli Gomez, Francine

Huhardeaux, Stéphanie
Lecaux-Poirel, Doris Materne,
Eric Milesi, Laura de Rose,
Franz-Josef Stummam,
Hinde Youssouf

EDITORIAL SECRETARIAT

Barbara Skoczylas-Thauront (F & GB versions), Francine Huhardeaux and Laure Brien (D version)

TRANSLATION

Juce Evans (GB), Claudia Meschede, Laure Brien and Philippe Jaeger (D)

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.

May 2002

AER - GENERAL SECRETARIAT - Immeuble Europe, 20 Place des Halles F- 67054 Strasbourg cedex. Tel: +33 3 88 22 07 07 - Fax: +33 3 88 75 67 19
E-mail: infopresse@are-regions-europe.org (information-communication)
This newsletter is also available on the AER Web site: <http://www.are-regions-europe.org/GB/A4/A42.html>