



Are culture and education barriers to free trade at international level or key factors of national and regional identity to be protected?

The 2nd European Conference of Regional Ministers of Culture and Education, organised by the AER, and to be held in Brixen, in my Region (Bozen-Sudtirol-I) in the north of Italy, on 18th October 2002, will focus on this very question. Experts will attempt to analyse the impact of globalisation and GATS negotiations on our schools and universities, on our education systems and programmes, on our libraries and museum, etc., but also on national and regional policies on assistance in these areas. Participants will also be invited to participate in the above analysis.

Between now and 2005, the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) will be extended to roughly 160 service sectors, many of which are currently regulated by national or regional governments. This may lead to the domination of all sectors - culture and education included - by multi-national firms and a loss of democratic control over public services in general, not forgetting the risk to cultural diversity at large in Europe.

Current GATS negotiations appear technical, complicated and far from transparent. The European Commission is the main negotiator for member states within the WTO and no consultation process with regional authorities has, as yet, been set up. Common action by the Regions of Europe is necessary to ensure their involvement in this process and to avoid any negative impact on citizens.

The Brixen conference provides a unique opportunity to contribute to this joint strategy for the preservation of cultural diversity and quality in free education in Europe. As President of the AER Culture, Education & Training Committee and host of this conference, I personally invite all regional Presidents and Ministers to our event and I hope to see you all in Brixen this autumn.

Bruno Hosp
*Minister for Culture of the Province
Sud-Tirol-Bolzano
President of the AER Culture,
Education & Training Committee*

EUROPEAN CONVENTION

The future of Europe must be rooted in the Regions

At its meeting in Stuttgart on 21st June, the Presidium adopted the AER contribution to the hearing of the European Convention as drawn up by the Institutional Affairs Committee, and charged Vice-President Lambert Van Nistelrooij with presenting the contribution to Convention members at the hearing on 25th June.

During June and July, the AER launched several initiatives aimed at putting across its opinion and ideas on the future of Europe to the European Convention. Ana Palacio, chairwoman of the contact group of Regions and local authorities and a member of the Convention Presidium, invited the AER to a meeting of the contact group (Brussels, 10th June). The AER brought along some forty member Regions to this preliminary hearing. The opportunity was used to underline the fact that local and regional authorities are part and parcel of the system of governance in Europe - unlike civil society, whose representative organisations were also due to be heard on 25th June - and are responsible for implementing Community legislation.

Interregional consensus equals strength

Among the areas of agreement mentioned by Mrs Palacio in her subsequent report on this meeting were the AER's proposals on the involvement of the Regions in the Constitutional Treaty, the clarification and delineation of EU powers, the principle of economic, social and territorial cohesion and the need for a code of conduct to ensure early



Presidium in Stuttgart

consultation in the decision-making processes of the European institutions.

The issues raised at the hearing had been shared out in advance between the AER, the CEMR, the CPMR, the AEBR and Eurocities. The AER was specifically responsible for presenting the Regions' position on subsidiarity and the distribution of competences.

Three key principles: distribution of competences, subsidiarity and proportionality

In his address to the Convention, Vice-President Lambert Van Nistelrooij highlighted

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the fact that "even if there is general agreement on the need to create a European Union that enjoys the support of its citizens, such a European Union can only flourish if it is firmly rooted in the Regions and local authorities as they exist in the Member States". He also stressed that "the Constitutional Treaty must only cover the powers the EU requires in order to achieve its goals and values; this would create greater clarity for its citizens". The AER feels that this distribution of powers must be supplemented by a series of principles, particularly those of limited empowerment, subsidiarity - in which Regions and local authorities must be mentioned in the future - and proportionality. This new catalogue of powers would clarify the allocation of tasks with a view to protecting certain essential areas of responsibility of the Member States such as regional organisation, local administrative independence, culture or the implementation of EU regulations. In addition, the AER stresses the need for the distribution of competences to be

monitored by a mixed body - for example one made up of representatives of national parliaments and delegates from regional parliaments - in parallel to the European Court of Justice.

The regional dimension - crucial for the future of Europe

At its meeting in Stuttgart, the AER Presidium had suggested the creation of a working group on the regional dimension within the Convention in order to better cater for the expectations of the Regions regarding the construction of Europe. However several Member States, all of whom are represented on the Presidium of the Convention, expressed strong reservations about the creation of such a working group at recent meetings. On 4th July the AER, CEMR, CPMR and Eurocities sent a letter to the four leading Presidium members - President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, G. Amato, J. L. Dehaene and A. Palacio - reiterating their call for the creation of this group and stressing that

it would allow the Regions to be more closely involved in the activities of the Convention, which are, after all, aimed at reinforcing "bottom up" democracy and creating a Europe that is closer to its citizens.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

www.are-regions-europe.org or, in brief, www.a-e-r.org (Latest news)



The Convention, enlargement, AER ministerial conferences and regional twinning were discussed by the Presidium in Stuttgart

focus

PECS, BARANYA (H), 14-15th NOVEMBER 2002

Conference of Presidents and regional Ministers on the future of regional policy in Europe

With reference to the current review of the functioning of the Structural Funds and the debate on the future of regional policy after 2006 in view of enlargement, the conference will try to consider the following main questions:

- Is a new cohesion policy necessary for all European Regions?
- How to cope with the so-called 'statistical effect' that will affect some of the EU Regions that are currently eligible under Objective 1?
- What is the future of regional policy? How to avoid re-nationalisation and ensure the Regions' interests are protected in this context?
- New objectives for regional policy?
- What role for the Regions in new EU policies?
- What governance for new EU policies?

The AER's answer

In order to provide an answer to all these questions, the AER is organising the 1st ever conference of regional Presidents and Ministers on the future of regional policy in Europe, which will be held on 14th and 15th November 2002 in Pecs, Hungary. "The Regions' project for a new cohesion policy: regional policy's contribution to sustainable development in tomorrow's Europe", will be the theme for this event. Participating in the discussions will be L. Caveri, President of the Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism Committee of the European Parliament and G. Crauser, Director General of the Regional Policy Committee of the European Commission (to be confirmed) and representatives of the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee.

Including the Regions in defining new regional and cohesion policy in Europe

The conference is intended to enable the Regions to define their ideas for a new regional and cohesion policy in Europe. To this end, EU Regions - i.e. those that have benefited or are still benefiting from structural funds - and Regions in candidate and even non-candidate European countries, will be invited to exchange their views, know-how and expectations regarding the aims and means of a new cohesion policy. The experience of those Regions that are or have been eligible for funding with managing structural funds and their assessment of the added value of Community measures and the role of national States in this context will be a major focus of discussion.

Influencing decision-making at European level

The conference aims to draw the attention of European and national authorities to the proposals of regional authorities concerning a new cohesion policy and, in this way, to influence decision-making processes. This event hopes to encourage an exchange on innovative regional practices aimed at promoting sustainable development - via presentation of representative success stories - and transmit useful know-how to future EU partners as well as promoting interregional projects.

AER CONTACTS:

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

Successful co-operation between regional offices in Brussels



Enlargement is already underway in Brussels, with several EU Regions assisting Regions from candidate countries with the process of EU integration. The region of Rhône-Alpes (F), for example, is currently allowing Woj. Malopolskie (PL) to use its premises under a decentralised co-operation agreement signed by both Regions in 2001. This type of collaboration aims to bring Regions from candidate countries closer to the European institutions and to share the experience of existing Regions with regard to the way they function. Other regional representative offices are playing their role in the European integration

process by taking in Centurio participants. The AER strongly encourages these Regions to continue their involvement in the 2002 edition of the Centurio programme. Regional representative offices in Brussels possess a wide range of useful knowledge and are able to provide first hand experience of the Brussels networking.

Under the auspices of the Danish EU Presidency, the representative offices of the Danish counties in Brussels organised a conference on enlargement from a local and regional perspective (5th July, Brussels) with the same objective. As part of this event the AER organised a workshop on access to EU funding, led by regional experts from Alsace-F, Jämtland-S, Toscana-I, and Tulcea-RO and followed by an open discussion. The workshop provided top-quality reports on concrete experience in managing EU funding.

AER CONTACT:

Stéphane Cools: s.cools@mrw.wallonie.be

Milan hosts the 2nd European Conference of Regional Ministers of Health and Social Affairs

Most European Regions are faced with an ageing society and the problem of elderly care. The 2nd European Conference of Regional Ministers of Health and Social Affairs will focus on the following subjects:

- basic qualifications, training curricula for professionals of elderly care,
- cross-border cooperation in elderly care,
- proposals for interregional projects in the field of training with regard to funding by the European Union,
- the competences of Regions in the field of elderly care and the challenges of the European integration process.

Participants will discuss the means of ensuring that the Regions, particularly those with legislative competences in the field of health, become a future source of proposals vis-à-vis the European Institutions.

The AER wishes to make this highly successful initiative - created in 2001 and organised with the support of the Italian Consortium for



Medical Research (CIRM) - an annual event to be held alongside of Well Europe. As with the 1st edition, the Conference will be held in Milan on 8th November 2002, in parallel to the Mosan-EuroSalute salon (6th -9th November).

The programme and practical information will shortly be available on the AER web site: www.are-regions-europe.org/COMMUN/A212b8.html

AER CONTACTS:

Franz Stummann:

f.stummann@are-regions-europe.org or

Doris Materne:

d.materne@are-regions-europe.org

notebook

BERTIE AHERN HOLDS ON TO HIS MANDATE

Fianna Fáil (centre right) has become the dominant party in the Republic of Ireland with 81 out of 166 seats in the Dáil. Bertie Ahern, aged 50, is the first government leader to obtain a second consecutive mandate since 1969.

FRANCE MOVES RIGHT ...

The UMP (right), Jacques Chirac's party, obtained an absolute majority within the National Assembly in the legislative elections in June. The right now controls the government, the National Assembly, the Senate and the Constitutional Council. Jean-Pierre Raffarin, confirmed as Prime Minister, has reiterated his willingness to give more competences to the regions.

... ALONG WITH THE NETHERLANDS

In the elections on 25th May, the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) came first with 43 seats. The Pim Fortuyn List (populist party), running for the first time, reached second place in terms of seats (26), and the VVD (liberals) came third. At the time of going to press, negotiations are still in progress, but it seems likely that Jan Peter Balkenende will become prime minister at the head of a government coalition consisting of the three parties.

THE CZECH REPUBLIC:

VICTORY FOR THE LEFT

The Social Democratic Party (CSSD) of Vladimír Špidla, won the legislative elections with 30.2% of the votes, beating the Civil Democratic Party (ODS, centre right) of Vaclav Klaus (24.5 %). The proportional representation system will not allow the CSSD to obtain an overall majority in government.

NEW CLRAE (COUNCIL OF EUROPE) TEAM

At its plenary session in June, the CLRAE re-elected its Presidency and Bureau. Dr Herwig Van Staa, Mayor of Innsbruck (A), was elected President of the Congress. Giovanni Di Stasi, Regional Councillor for Molise (I), was elected President of the Chamber of Regions. Four of the newly elected Chamber Vice-Presidents represent AER member regions: Helena Pihlajassarari (Keski-Suomi/FIN), Peter Rabe (Niedersachsen/D), Hans-Martin Tschudi (Basel-Ville/CH) and Léon Kieres (Woj. Dolnoslaskie/PL).

UNEXPECTED DEPARTURE

IN BRANDENBURG

Manfred Stolpe (66) resigned as Minister President in June in order to allow a younger person to take over his position. He was replaced by Social Democrat, Matthias Platzeck (48).

NEW PRIME MINISTER FOR CAPE PROVINCE

Marthinus C. J. van Schalkwyk was nominated Prime Minister of Cape Province (South Africa).

AER Summer School 2002

Last call for registrations!

Participants may still register for the Summer School. This year's edition will be held between 8th and 12th September in Opatija, a Croatian town on the Adriatic coast. You can find all the necessary practical information on the AER Web site: www.are-regions-europe.org/COMMUN/A32ter.html. The 7th edition of the Summer School will focus on "The Regions' contribution to sustainable development: innovative practices for innovative regional development policies".

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

AER ACTIVITIES: June - July 2002

Political meetings and events

- Participation in the 9th CLRAE plenary session (K. Klipp, L. De Rose, Strasbourg, 4-6/06)
- Preparatory meeting for the hearing of the European Convention (K. Klipp, F. Stummman, A. Mavroudi, Brussels, 10/06)
- Participation in the International Benchmark Forum "Success Factors of European Regions" (K. Klipp, L. Brien, Basel, 11-12/06)
- Participation in the "Europe of the Regions" Congress (K. Klipp, L. Brien, Karlsruhe, 20/06)
- Report on the position of the AER at the hearing of the European Convention (L. Van Nistelrooij, K. Klipp, Brussels, 25/06)
- Participation in the conference of European ministers of local and regional authorities organised by the Council of Europe (R. Kristoffersen, Helsinki, 27-28/06)
- Participation in the CoR Bureau and plenary session (K. Klipp, Brussels, 2-4/07)
- Participation in the CoR hearing of associations of regions and towns (K. Klipp, Brussels, 4/07)
- Organisation of a workshop within the framework of the conference on "Enlargement in the Local and Regional Perspective" (K. Klipp, S. Cools, Brussels, 5/07)
- Participation in the Bureau of the CLRAE Chamber of Regions (E. Milesi, L. De Rose, Strasbourg, 5/07)

Member contact

- AER preparatory meeting for the 9th CLRAE plenary session (Strasbourg, 3/06)
- Visit by B. Ladon, representative of Woj. Slaskie (PL) to the AER Secretariat (Strasbourg, 27/06)

Other AER meetings

- Extraordinary meeting of the Eurodyssey Pilot Committee (Paris, 10-11/06)
- Regional Policy Committee (C) (Bodö, 14-15/06)
- Presidium (Stuttgart, 21/06)
- Presidency of the Culture, Education and Youth Committee (D) (Brussels, 25-26/06)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

www.are-regions-europe.org

publications

CONVENTION: COMPARATIVE TABLE OF REGIONAL POSITIONS

In preparation for the hearing of the European Convention on 25th June, the AER Institutional Affairs Committee has produced a comparative table including the positions on the future of Europe adopted between April and June 2002 by the main organisations representing local and regional authorities (AER, CEMR, CPMR and Eurocities) and the Committee of the Regions. The document offers a brief overview of the differences and similarities in the positions of these organisations on topics such as a European constitution, the principle of subsidiarity, institutional reform, competences and EU policies, with special emphasis on economic, social and territorial cohesion and the role of the CoR... not to mention the status of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the principle of local self-government.

The document "Comparative table of positions of interregional organisations concerning the activities of the European Convention on the future of Europe" (PDF, 14 pages) is available on the AER web site: www.are-regions-europe.org/index (AER discussion forum - Discussion platform on the European Convention - Contributions)

AER CONTACT: Athene Mavroudi: are@are-regions-europe.org

agenda

AUGUST

Friday 2nd
Working group on the "Future of Europe",
AER Institutional Affairs Committee
Salzburg (A)

Friday 30th
AER Advisory Group - *Strasbourg (F)*

SEPTEMBER

Thursday 5th - Friday 6th
AER Education & Training Sub-committee
Pécs (H)

Sunday 8th - Thursday 12th
AER Summer School - *Opatija (HR)*

Tuesday 10th - Thursday 12th
AER Youth Summer School - *Opatija (HR)*

Wednesday 11th - Friday 13th
Convention Presidium and plenary session
Brussels (B)

Friday 13th
CoR extraordinary Bureau meeting - *Denmark*

Wednesday 18th - Friday 20th
CPMR General Assembly - *Ioannina (GR)*

Thursday 19th
CLRAE Bureau - *Luxembourg*

Thursday 26th - Friday 27th
Eurodyssey Forum - *Istra (HR)*

Friday 27th
AER Presidium - *Brussels (B)*

OCTOBER

Wednesday 2nd - Friday 4th
Convention Presidium and plenary session
Brussels (B)

Wednesday 9th - Thursday 10th
CoR Bureau meeting & plenary session
Brussels (B)

Friday 11th
Conference of government leaders,
ARGE Donauländer - *Bucharest or Giurgiu (RO)*

Friday 11th - Saturday 12th
30th Anniversary of ARGE ALP - *Telfs (A)*

Thursday 17th
AER Culture-Education-Youth Committee
& Bureau - *Brixen (I)*

Friday 18th
AER Conference of Regional Ministers
of Culture and Education - *Brixen (I)*

Thursday 17th - Friday 18th
AEBR General Assembly and Annual Conference
Papenburg (D)

Thursday 24th - Friday 25th
European Council - *Brussels (B)*

Thursday 24th - Saturday 26th
BSSSC Conference - *Lillehammer (N)*

Friday 25th - Saturday 26th
AER Conference on equal opportunities for
men and women - *Barcelona (E)*

Monday 28th - Tuesday 29th
Convention Presidium and plenary session
Brussels (B)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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



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MANAGING EDITOR:
Klaus Klipp

EDITOR:
Barbara Skoczylas-Thauront

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:
Agnès Ciccarone, Stéphane Cools,

Araceli Gomez, Francine
Huhardeaux, Doris Materne,
Athene Mavroudi, Eric Milesi,
Laura de Rose, Franz-Josef
Stummman, Hinde Youssouf

EDITORIAL SECRETARIAT:
Barbara Skoczylas-Thauront,
Francine Huhardeaux, Sabine
Seubert, Hugh Keith

TRANSLATION:
Juce Evans (GB),
Claudia Meschede (D)

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