

AER General Assembly (Lyon, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1999)

Original in French  
Ref. 11 (426)

Document submitted for:

INFORMATION

**ACTIVITIES REPORT 1999**

**COMMITTEE A "INSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS - INTERREGIONAL COOPERATION"**

Working structure

- Committee Presidents: Mr. Willi Stachele and Mr. Ivan Jakovic

Main objectives

- Committee A "Institutional Affairs"  
The project of a "European Constitution"  
The role of the AER and its declaration on the regionalism in Europe in the current discussion in sight of the adoption of the European Charter on the regional autonomy of CLRAE;
- Committee A "Interregional Cooperation"  
Questions relating to the enlargement of the EU  
Develop the Centurio programs and the summer School  
Favour the information exchanges between the East/West regions.

Majors results and current projects

The Committee A has had two meetings, in Stuttgart (part "Institutional Affairs", May 99) and in Porec (Istrie) (part "Interregional Cooperation", August 99).

These meetings have given respectively following results<sup>1</sup>:

- Necessity for the AER to develop its own action in favour of the implementation of the subsidiarity principle towards the european institutions and the national authorities.
- Specific contribution of the AER to the next IGC, particularly in sight of the recognition at the Regions' Committee of the full institution status, and in sight of the taking into account of cultural aspects in the different competence areas of the Union and the respect of linguistic varieties.
- Support of the AER to the CLRAE in sight of the adoption of the european Charter on regional autonomy.
- Launching of a concrete action plan in the area of practical interregional cooperation (partnership networks, projects grant, organisation of the lobbying function of the AER...).
- Discussion on the summer School in order to improve the program and the reception structure of participants.
- Discussion on the implication of the AER concerning the Kosovo crisis.

SLP/DS, Strasbourg, 15<sup>th</sup> November 1999

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<sup>1</sup> See the enclosed meeting report, as well as the resolutions, for a more detailed survey.



ASSEMBLÉE DES RÉGIONS D'EUROPE  
ASSEMBLY OF EUROPEAN REGIONS  
VERSAMMLUNG DER REGIONEN EUROPAS  
ASAMBLEA DE LAS REGIONES DE EUROPA  
ASSEMBLEA DELLE REGIONI D'EUROPA

**Committee B**  
**Activity Report 1999**

The Committee President refers to the conclusions and reports of the meetings and sessions of Committee B which deal both with the plenary sessions and the events and meetings of the Sub-Committees (see attached).

**1. Membership – Organisation and structure of Committee B**

The Committee successfully completed its internal reorganisation with the setting up of three Sub-Committees to which several Working Groups are linked. The Committee was also successful in strengthening its collaboration with other interregional groups, covering the political fields for which it takes responsibility, e. g. Veneto Initiative.

The regular organisation of meetings of the chairpersons of the Committee (three times a year) between the plenary sessions contributed greatly to the internal coherence and the streamlining of its political activities.

Close and intimate working relations with the General Secretariat and the officers serving the Committee chairpersons have been established.

Successful improvements have been made to obtain immediate reports on the work available to all members in the shortest delay possible.

The Committee has also been able to increase active participation of members, particularly from Italian and Spanish regions, but still sees much scope to obtain a more balanced repartition. The participation of Central and Eastern European Regions has improved considerably, due to efforts of the Committee to respond in a particular way to the problems of these regions.

The Committee held two successful plenary sessions, a number of Working Group meetings and also organised a major Conference in Trondheim.

**2. Political work**

Besides its own sessions, the Committee was associated over the past year with two major AER events: The Committee was entrusted with the organisation of a working session on social cohesion and partnership at the AER Summer School in Porec (29<sup>th</sup> August – 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1999) and the Committee President presented a report on "Health and Enlargement" during the Enlargement Conference in Wroclaw (21<sup>st</sup> October 1999).

The Committee succeeded in establishing the issues in the remit of the Committee, e. g. Public Health, Social Services, Social Inclusion, as being of particular relevance for increased interregional cooperation. The Committee can claim that, through its combination of political and



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theoretical work with concrete action in its projects, it is no longer regarded as a kind of "technical group" but as the political voice of regions in an area in which the European dimension gains more and more importance.

This is reflected through regular contact with officials on the European level both of the Commission and the Parliament.

The Committee succeeded in drafting a number of concrete projects in response to EU programmes.

Internationally, the Committee is also recognised as the representative organisation of the Regions. This is reflected through participation at major conferences of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the increasing demand of NGO's to obtain the patronage of the AER.

Strasbourg, 10 November 1999

RK/FSu/FSt-dm

AER General Assembly (Lyon, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1999)

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## ACTIVITIES REPORT 1999

### COMMITTEE C "REGIONAL POLICIES"

#### Working structure

- Committee President:  
Robert Savy
- Subcommittees
  - 1- "Spatial planning" (Devon)
  - 2- "Rural and tourism development"
- Working groups
  - "Durable rural development" (Gloucestershire)
  - "Regional communications" (Norrbotten)

#### Main objectives

- Maintain and promote the Regions' contribution to European policies of territorial cohesion and territory development.
- Develop a structured cooperation with the EU, particularly the European Commission, in sight of a mutual consultation and the setting up of interregional cooperation programs.

#### Major results and current projects

The Committee C has met twice in 1999, in Umea (in March) and in Strasbourg (in October).

Approbation of resolution by the Committee C regarding the SDCS, the support to the EU and its firm attitude concerning the CAP in sight of WTO negotiations in Seattle<sup>1</sup> (text submitted for adoption by the General Assembly).

Support of the CPMR for the division of the Atlantic arc.

Maintenance and reinforcement of the action for regional twinnings: a joint audition between a delegation of the AER and the European Parliament should be organised in this way.

Creation of working groups: the group "North-South" coordinated by the Calabria region (Italy), a group for the regional airports and a group for the PAC and its follow-up.

SLP/DS, Strasbourg, 15<sup>th</sup> November 1999

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<sup>1</sup> Next meeting of the WTO in Seattle planned in December 1999.



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## **Committee D Activity Report 1999**

The President of the Committee would like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to the reports and conclusions of its two plenary sessions (as attached) which give detailed information on the political topics discussed and the actions undertaken in 1999.

### **1. Membership: participation – structure and work organisation**

The Committee can be regarded as one of the strongest with regard to participation of members at plenary sessions, Sub-Committees and Working Groups. The Committee can count on the contributions of around 50 member regions with at least 100 personalities attending the sessions. The repartition of regions, considering differentiations such as East-West, North-South or size and competences, can be regarded as balanced, although it must be said that contributions from regions with legislative powers and specific competences in culture and education (e. g. Germany, Spain, Italy) leave much to be desired.

A greater participation of the "strong regions" in the political fields of culture and education, as highly sensitive areas and of major interest on the regional level, would strengthen the political performance of the Regions on the European stage.

The organisation of the work, which encompasses a wide range of political fields, is based on the concept of a deep involvement of Sub-Committees and Working Groups following the idea of self-dependency.

The cohesion of the Committee is achieved through regular meetings of the "Committee Presidency" which assembles all chairpersons.

### **2. Political topics**

The Committee strives to combine, on the one hand, the development of the political standpoints of the AER in relation to European issues and institutional questions and, on the other hand, the support for practical actions and projects of interregional dimension.

The Committee adopted a number of resolutions commenting decisions and directives of the European institutions, e. g. on programmes, Green Papers (Media). Major efforts have been made to maintain regular contact with the European institutions like the EP and the Commission.

The Committee, with the support of the Secretariat, assisted members in the drafting of project proposals (e. g. Books and Regions) and through elaboration of data collections (e. g. Regional Adult Education centres) which are regarded as fundamental for the development of interregional cooperation.

The Committee is increasingly contacted by NGOs for assistance and support of European-wide initiatives (e. g. regional and minority languages) and educational networks.



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At all meetings of the Committee, the administrations and representative organisations of the hosting regions were able to attend the sessions. The Committee regarded the events as an excellent occasion to spread the message of the successful concept of regionalism. The local press in general responded with an excellent coverage of the proceedings.

In its meetings, the Committee also addressed issues of particular relevance to the hosting regions, thus confirming the objectives of its work that policies of each individual region and interregional cooperation can work together to the benefit of all members. Valuable excursions and study visits in the regions completed an, overall, quite successful year 1999.

Strasbourg, 10 November 1999  
LP/GS/FS-dm

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE AER****LYONS, 2<sup>nd</sup> AND 3<sup>rd</sup> DECEMBER 1999**

Agenda Ref.: 10

Original in English  
(File Ref. 426)

DOCUMENT SUBMITTED FOR DECISION

**Activity report of the Secretary General ff.**

1. At the outset of this report I would like to remind of the mandate that was given to me by the General Assembly in Linz. I was given the political responsibility of the activities of AER until the end of 1999. Whilst doing so, I was supposed to assist the treasurer and Mr. Wehrli in their financial and budgetary endeavors and, finally, I was asked to help Eric Milesi who was in charge of the workings of the secretariat in Strasbourg.
2. The first thing I did was talk to the secretariat and convince them to concentrate on the political objectives of the organization : from the outset, we agreed to change a certain number of working methods (Linz V-6).
3. This related also to the activity of the Brussels bureau of AER : the job description was agreed and service to the members could be started.
4. A better preparation of the meetings of Presidium, Bureau and Committees was geared towards a politisation of the order of business, so that more time was available for democratic debate (Linz V-2).
5. A major change was produced by permanently stressing the concentration to the two main objectives of AER activity : institutional debate and partneriats between the members. A first report was given to the bureau on February 15 (Linz VI-4).
6. In this framework everything was done to enable the bureau to approve the budget of the next year, in time. I furthermore tried to be as helpful as possible in the management of the Pacte file.
7. I was of course very much helped by the AER Strategy Group. It met six times in the course of the year, among which a meeting in Salzburg and another one in the premises of Piemonte in Brussels. We changed the name and the mandate of this group in conformity with the instructions from the Bureau : instead of concentrating on strategies, we rather dealt with the action in the course of 1999 and have now asked to be called "Advisory Group". We did not feel the necessity of an amalgamation with the former financial group yet.

The main activity was geared towards a correct implementation of the Linz strategy.

Let me mention some of the problems that we discussed and that will figure on our agenda in 2000 as well :

- Problems of AER Bureau : we will probably have to change the text of the statutes.
  - Dispatch of AER work : I regret that we have not managed to introduce this “gadget” in the organization of AER’s political activity, from the top to the bottom. We should already be operational on this basis for instance in the remit of Committee A and concerning some specific political problems like for instance regionalism in Russia, Georgia and about our role in the Kosovo restauration.
  - Languages : the pressure is increasing and the Advisory Group should by now give priority to this basic issue.
  - Caravans : notwithstanding considerable efforts and the contribution of several members. It has not yet been possible to start the caravan operations. By now, we are concentrating on Hungary and Poland.
  - The difficulties in organizing caravans touch very closely to the necessity for AER to react quickly to the tendencies of decreasing membership. The Advisory Group was given a specific mandate by the Bureau of Wroclaw to elaborate an urgent strategy to defend the political necessity of the existence of AER. This topic will have the highest priority of the Advisory Group. A first report should be given to the first Bureau of 2000.
8. Participation in the meetings of the four AER Committees. I personally made it my policy to participate in the preparation and the follow up of the four standing committees (Linz V-5). In each of the meetings I invited the participants to concentrate their specific activity to the two main objectives of AER and I promised them that everything will be done to enable the AER members to fully participate in the debates in the Bureau and in the General Assembly.

I have made it my permanent preoccupation to inform the four committees of the activities of the others and of the activities of the Bureau and the Presidium. I did the same in some of the AER working groups.

In doing so, I discovered some problems in the activities of Committee A and with some of the missions : these experiences enable us to do better in the future.

9. Summer School, Centurio, Eurodyssey. I personally took care of the coordination between the AER activities and the Porec Summer School and the 99 Centurio program. I took the initiative to intensify our relations with Eurodyssey.
10. A greater part of my time was dedicated to improving the relations between AER and the other members of the European “regional family”.

First of all : our relations with the European institutions have been intensified (Committee of the Regions and CPLRE). An intense program of contacts with the new European Commission and European parliament is under way.

I have personally taken care of our relations with CRPM (see General Assembly in Vaasa). Good contacts have been developed with CCRE (to the extent that a physical cohabitation can from now on be envisaged in the CCRE premises in Brussels, if we want to do so).

Personal contacts have been developed with ARFE, RETI and FEDRE.

Finally, on the basis of my personal conversations with the President of Calre (Conference of Presidents of the European Regional legislative Assemblies), it must be possible to improve AER’s cooperation with this newly created parliamentarian initiative.

Originally, we thought of a new top meeting of the leaders of the organizations I just mentioned. We said in the same time however that a re-edition of “Vienna” 1995 had to be carefully prepared : that is

what I am actually doing. In the meantime, we already managed to take some common positions, for instance about Interreg 3 (Grado), Kosovo (CCRE), Arc Atlantique (CRPM), the Committee of the Regions, etc.

11. I had the honour to represent AER in a great number of seminars and conferences. I actively participate in the programs of several European think tanks in Brussels, and I actively contributed to the organization of our own Conference in Wroclaw on October 21 on the role of regions in enlargement. The success of this conference pushes us towards a good follow up ...
12. I tried to develop as many direct contacts as possible with the members of AER separately. Some of these contacts must now be intensified.

The introduction of the AER web site has made it possible to improve contacts within the system, but with outsiders as well, for instance with the European press in Brussels.

12. Finally, AER has given its patronage to some initiatives and AER has been present in for instance the Jury of the Kaiser Maximilian price. I do regret that the Scientific Committee-idea has not been developed : I hope to discuss this with our sister organizations in the near future.

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This report does not reflect the activity of the trio that was appointed in Linz (Ruey/ Wehrli, Milesi, De Belder). The essential drive that has led to the change of AER's course came however precisely from the financial, the budgetary and the administrative side. Therefore, I hope that this (collective) energy will be available in the year 2000 as well.

Hans De Belder