



Assemblée des Régions d'Europe
Assembly of European Regions
Versammlung der Regionen Europas
Asamblea de las Regiones de Europa
Assemblea delle Regioni d'Europa

AER QUARTERLY REPORT (JANUARY - MARCH 2011)

ECONOMIC AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (1)

COHESION POLICY

5th Cohesion Forum, 31 January and 01 February 2011

The main goal of this event organised by the European Commission, was to discuss the orientations for the future EU Cohesion Policy and its contribution to the Europe 2020 strategy with stakeholders. The Forum corresponded also with the closure of the public consultation on the policy proposals of the 5th Report on Economic, Social and Territorial cohesion presented by the Commission in November 2010.

Contact: e.delangle@aer.eu

Joint meeting of the task Force on Cohesion and the working group on European Funding 01 January 2011

The two working groups met together in Brussels to discuss the conclusions of the cohesion forum, present the report on the survey on "European Regions and European Funding: improving access, efficiency, and value for money", present the issues related with financial engineering and what this could mean for regions. They adopted their working plans. A feedback was also provided on the Conference on future cohesion policy that AER organised on 7th December 2010.

Contact: e.delangle@aer.eu

More information on the Task Force on cohesion:

<http://www.aer.eu/main-issues/cohesion-regional-policy/cohesion-policy-post-2013.html>

More information on the working group on funding (Standing Committee on Institutional Affairs): <http://www.aer.eu/main-issues/aer-working-group-on-european-funding.html>

CLIMATE CHANGE & ENERGY

Meeting with Commissioner Connie Hedegaard, 13 January 2011

AER President Michèle Sabban met EC Commissioner Connie Hedegaard in Brussels. Among other themes they talked about the link of climate action and Cohesion Policy and how Europe can keep and strengthen its leading position in the world. To this end, the AER President and the Commissioner share the opinion that climate action and regional

development go hand in hand and that solutions for both have to be developed in an integrated way. The recognition of the climate change issue and of the other fields pertaining to energy is a requirement for sustainable development in European territories
Contact j.podralska@aer.eu

More information: <http://www.aer.eu/en/news/2011/2011011302.html>

MORE4NRG extraordinary steering committee and monitoring board meeting, 13&14 January 2011

A MORE4NRG extraordinary steering committee and monitoring board meeting was organised in Lelystad (NL) and offered the opportunity to discuss about the outcomes of the peer review in Western Greece and preparation of the More4nrg final conference, which will be held in Flevoland at the beginning of June. The guidelines for redaction of regional energy strategies and an online tool for evaluation of the quality of regional energy policies were also presented. Furthermore, the meeting allowed for identification for another good regional energy practice called “bag bubble”, meant to facilitate the reuse of environmentally harmful plastic bags.

Contact j.podralska@aer.eu

More information: <http://www.more4nrg.eu/>

Study visit, GE smart grid center and meeting of the working group on energy & climate change, 01 February 2011

The event in Bracknell started with a seminar on the challenges behind the EU energy 2020 strategy, with Mel Kendal, County Councillor, Hampshire (UK), Kenneth Backgaard, Chairman of the Board, Norrbotten (S), Magued Eldaief, GE UK Executive Director and Barbara Sellier, EC administrator. The seminar was followed by a study visit to GE smart demonstration center was organised where AER members learned how smart grids and smart meters concretely work, why they are important for the use of renewable energies and what kind of benefits regional authorities can draw from their implementation. On the occasion of the meeting the working group on energy and climate change adopted its 2011 work plan and followed a presentation of the Regional Climat Confidence Index.

Contact: c.diegelmann@aer.eu and j.podralska@aer.eu

More information: <http://www.aer.eu/news/2011/2011020101.html>

Debriefing on the energy peer review in Vojvodina, 09 February 2011

During the meeting the AER peer review team presented a series of recommendations on how to improve the energy policy of the province of Vojvodina. Based on the observations made during an October 2010 audit, the report identifies the major strengths and challenges for the development of a green economy in the region.

Contact j.podralska@aer.eu

More information: <http://www.aer.eu/news/2011/2011020901.html>

INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ECREIN+ meeting, 7-8 March 2011

Cross-examination of the difficulties faced by the partners in the administrative management of the project (financial report in particular) and debate on policy tools for eco-innovation. A number of presentations on Eco-parks in Île-de-France were given and gave the participants the opportunity to share experiences in this field.

Contact: e.delangle@aer.eu

More information: <http://www.aer.eu/main-issues/economic-development/ecreinplus.html>

Launch of the AER Regional Innovation Award 2011 edition

The 6th edition of the Regional Innovation Award is open to all AER member regions who have taken action to bring innovation to their region. This year, the award aims at gathering example of innovative projects in a wide range of themes, ranging from R&D, health, education or governance, to name but a few. Application deadline: 1 June 2011.

Contact: c.dawans@aer.eu

More information: <http://www.aer.eu/main-issues/economic-development/aer-innovation-award.html>

Conference on entrepreneurship and innovation, 25 March 2011

This thematic conference started by setting a baseline for the concepts at hand with keynote speeches from various experts, including the OECD and the Norwegian Telemark Research Institute. The debate was then divided in 4 thematic sessions to look at entrepreneurship and innovation in the context of broader concepts highly relevant to regions: energy and climate change; regional development ; rural development; education.

Contact: c.dawans@aer.eu

More information: <http://www.aer.eu/news/2011/2011032501.html>

Launch of the new AER working group on entrepreneurship and innovation

On the occasion of the AER Committee 1 plenary meeting in Østfold on 24 March a new working group was created on entrepreneurship. The aim of the Group is to reinforce entrepreneurship and innovation as a holistic approach for today's regional development, growth, and employment strategies taking into account the territorial diversity. Orhan Albayrak, Vice Governor of the Province of Istanbul was elected chairman of this working group. Member regions that wish to join the new working group are cordially invited to contact the AER secretariat.

Contact: c.diegelmann@aer.eu

Tales from Europe on innovation, 28 March 2011

3 winners of the RIA from Slaskie (PO), Västra Götaland (SE) and Noord Brabant (NL) met with a small group of Brussels-based journalists to share their "Tales" and illustrate what actions are taking place outside of Brussels. The three projects have benefited from added visibility and recognition since they won the RIA.

Contact: c.dawans@aer.eu

Breakfast Briefing on the Innovation Union, 29 March 2011

The March edition of the Breakfast Briefing covered the issue of the Innovation Union in two parts; first, the EU policy level with presentations from DG INFSO and DG Research and Innovation of the European Commission, followed by the presentation of the project "Industrial Dynamics" (Västra Götaland (SE)), winner of the 2009 RIA. Participants were also informed on the practicalities for participating in the 2011 Regional Innovation Award.

Contact: c.dawans@aer.eu

COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

AER answer to the EC consultation on CAP, 25 January 2011

AER participated in the EC Consultation for the Impact Assessment on the "Common Agricultural Policy towards 2020" proposals. The AER contribution was based on its position adopted in Istanbul in November 2010. AER reaffirmed the importance of an integrated territorial approach to rural development. It expressed its worries concerning a lack of democracy in the reform process and insisted on the need to involve regions at an early stage of policy definition and implementation. AER underlined the importance of clear consumers information, short supply chains, partnerships between cities, peri-urban areas and more isolated locations, and increased recognition of the role of regions.

Contact: j.mente@aer.eu

More information: <http://www.aer.eu/en/news/2010/2010111901.html>

AER working group on agriculture and rural development, 2 February 2011

The working group on agriculture and rural development met in Brussels to discuss on the contributions the regions individually and AER as an organisation sent to the EC consultation on CAP reform. The region of Gelderland presented its rural development strategy, since October working group meetings indeed always include a regional example in order to improve mutual knowledge and comprehension and foster opportunities for cooperation. The group discussed on the main activities to come in 2011 on the basis of the work plan.

Contacts: e.delangle@aer.eu and j.mente@aer.eu

More information available at:

<http://www.aer.eu/main-issues/agriculture-rural-development.html>

AER seminar "The EU Common Agricultural Policy & non-EU member regions:



Impacts, interactions, perspectives”, 24 March 2011

EEA-EFTA members such as Norway or Switzerland and candidates or potential candidates, such as Croatia or Bosnia-Herzegovina share the fact of being influenced by a policy that is not initially designed for them. The seminar sought to examine how these regions are impacted by CAP and how they can in turn voice their interests. The seminar provided participants with a wealth of information on the situation in EEA-EFTA regions and pre-accession issues linked with agriculture and rural development and ended with a fruitful discussion which led to the formulation of key messages. The results of the seminar will also feed the AER contribution to the EC consultation on IPA, and especially IPARD.

Contact: e.delangle@aer.eu and j.mente@aer.eu

More information: <http://www.aer.eu/en/news/2010/2010111901.html>

SOCIAL POLICY AND PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE (2)

POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

AER contributes to European Innovation Partnerships – Innovation Union

The European Commission is currently developing a concept for a European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing. The purpose of this initiative is to support and stimulate innovation in Europe so as to respond to the challenges posed by demographic change, improve Europeans' health and contribute to economic growth. The initiative will first identify the barriers to innovation in this area. It will then align European policies and financial instruments in order to support the creation of multi-stakeholder partnerships at all levels (regional, national, European) that will allow the quicker deployment of research outcomes to the market. AER's response to the EC contribution emphasised the need to innovate not only terms of products and services, but also in terms of processes and mentalities. Within the framework of the Active and Healthy Ageing Innovation Partnership, AER is looking to develop a capacity-building programme for regions.

Further information: <http://www.aer.eu/main-issues/health/active-and-healthy-ageing-innovation-partnership.html> Contact: Ourania Georgoutsakou, Senior Policy Coordinator, g.ourania@aer.eu; +32 2 880 95 65

Structural Funds and Health

The Euregio III project (co-financed by the European Public Health Programme – AER is a collaborating partner) has identified a number of barriers to sustainable investments in health under the current structural funds programmes. During a workshop in Brussels on 3 February 2011, participants were asked to comment on the findings of the project to date and to put forward suggestions on how to overcome the challenges we have identified today during the next European programming period. www.euregio3.eu

The AER Committee 2 Presidium will be meeting with MEP Danuta Hübner, Chair of the European Parliament Committee on Regional Development, in April 2011 to discuss the position of health in the future cohesion policy and how the future programming period could be improved to increase structural fund investment in health. Contact: Ourania Georgoutsakou, Senior Policy Coordinator, g.ourania@aer.eu; +32 2 880 95 65

EQUAL EUROPE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

This AER network aims to support regions in guaranteeing equal rights for all citizens, including people with disabilities, and creating inclusive societies. Its focus is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities' provisions on awareness-raising, accessibility, health and

habilitation/rehabilitation. It aims to support regions to learn from each other what policies are successful in the above areas and how to implement them.

EU adopts UN Convention

In January 2011, the European Union has ratified the UN Convention on the rights of people with Disabilities – the first time the EU becomes party to an international human rights treaty. This means that all EU policies and laws must respect and contribute to implementing the fundamental rights of people with disabilities. It also means that all national, regional and local governments within the EU have to respect and promote these rights.

AER to focus on employment and disability

The next AER network meeting will take place in Valencia (E) on 16-17 June 2011 and will look at how regions can create sustainable employment opportunities for people with disabilities, in particular in a time of slow economic growth.

Further information: <http://www.aer.eu/events/health-social/2011/disabilities-employment.html>
Contact: Claudia Meschede, Policy Coordinator, [c.meschede@aer.eu](mailto:c.meschede@ aer.eu), +33 3 88 22 74 35

E-HE@LTH

The AER e-he@lth network facilitates the exchange of knowledge among regions on how to integrate ICT into the management and delivery of health and social services.

AER to contribute to European e-health week

The AER e-he@lth network has been invited to organise a regional forum at the occasion of European e-health week, a major annual event in Europe that will also hold an EU Ministerial conference on e-health. AER will showcase how regions are already actively deploying e-health in their territories, focusing on the use of telehealth tools to manage and prevent chronic diseases. The aim of this event is to illustrate the role of the regions in this sector as incubators for innovation and growth.

Ms **Error! Contact not defined.**, Chairperson of the AER e-he@lth network and Committee 2 Vice-President (Norrbotten, S) has also been invited to speak at a series of other sessions and to present the AER perspective on what needs to be done next to further deploy e-health policies and tools across Europe.

Further information: <http://www.aer.eu/events/health-social/2011/ehealthweek2011.html>
Contact: Ms Camille Bulloot, c.bulloot@aer.eu, +33 3 68 46 00 87

EMERGENCY PLANNING

FLINKMAN project

AER is partner to the Flinkman project, a 2-year project co-financed under the EC Civil Protection Mechanism and aiming to develop mechanisms for increased coordination among stakeholders involved in flood management and prevention. The 2nd partners meeting took place in Wiesbaden (Hessen-D) on 3-4 March 2011 and was an opportunity to monitor the project's progress. AER has invited partners to contribute to the Summer 2011 AER Thematic Dossier that will be dedicated to the role of the regions in preventing and managing natural disasters and will be an opportunity to showcase the participating regions' work. For further information on the project: <http://www.aer.eu/main-issues/emergency-planning.html>

The AER Secretariat is also currently in the process of drafting the 2nd progress report for the project and will be organising and hosting the next partners' meeting in Strasbourg on 9-10 June



2011.

Contact: Claudia Meschede, Policy Coordinator, c.meschede@aer.eu, +33 3 88 22 74 35

Regular Committee 2 updates

Want to receive regular updates on Committee 2 work and policy developments? Register for the Committee 2 newsletter- "What's new, Committee 2?" (contact c.bulot@aer.eu). Also available online: <http://www.aer.eu/about-aer/committee-2-social-policy-and-public-health/newsletter-of-committee-2.html>

CULTURE, EDUCATION AND TRAINING, YOUTH AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

COMMITTEE (3)

COMMITTEE PRESIDIUM

The newly elected members of the Committee Presidium met for the first time on 15 February in Strasbourg (F) in order to discuss the work plan 2011, notably the participation in and input to AER training academies, a joint conference on health and culture with Committee 2, entrepreneurship education and the AER programmes (Summer Schools, Eurodissey).

The Presidium exchanged its views on current policy issues and looked also at the topics on the horizon for 2012. Committee 3 will be consulted on potential priorities in due course.

CULTURE

Culture and Health conference takes shape

The Culture and Health Working Group has continued its work for the organization of the conference, which will take place on 20 September in Istanbul. Members worked mainly through telephone conferences in order to agree on the draft programme, the list of speakers and all logistic issues. First invitations have been sent to them and the draft programme will be released soon. Please stay tuned to: <http://www.aer.eu/events/committee-3-culture-education-interregional-cooperation/2011.html>.

EDUCATION & TRAINING

YES: Youth Entrepreneurship Strategies' on the move

While the Breakfast Briefing on Entrepreneurship education planned for January had to be postponed to June, the Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy (YES) project partners met in Opole (PL) on 2 & 3 February and discussed the advancement of the project as well as the feedback from the first reporting period. Most partners had held meetings with their regional reference panels, and used their feedback to finalise the methodology to be used in the mapping of regional strategies and policies on entrepreneurship education.

Participants agreed on a set of core questions for the survey, depending on each target group (students, key stakeholders, decision makers...). The meeting was also the opportunity to finalise a leaflet to present the project as well as a first newsletter to which Committee President Hande Bozatli contributed with an interview. The event ended with a field visit to an innovative private school, Szkoła Podstawowa TAK in Opole (<http://tak.opole.pl>), which provides a broad set of incentives for creative learning and participates in the "Odyssey of the mind" programme (<http://www.odysseyofthemind.com/>).

1st YES newsletter: <http://www.portavoz.net/clientes/yes/15500NEWLETTERPDF.pdf>
 YES project website: www.young-entrepreneurs.eu.

Entrepreneurship education in focus

Entrepreneurship education will be the focus of the next AER thematic quarterly dossier. On top of the opportunity for committee 3 to make its work in this field known to a wider audience, we are glad that we will inaugurate the new format of AER thematic dossiers, which include two additional pages. The dossier will not only feature our work in the YES project but will also highlight two best practices from Baden-Württemberg and Nordland as well as experiences from AER's Eurodissey programme.

AER's thematic Spring dossier:

http://www.aer.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/PressComm/Publications/AER-ARE-VRE-Dossier/2010/DEF-FR-DOSSIER27.pdf

YOUTH

Youth Regional Network Presidium gathers for the 1st time in Strasbourg

Youth Regional Network (YRN) Presidium members met with members of the AER secretariat on 21-22 February 2011 in Strasbourg. Participants identified concrete synergies between AER and the YRN for 2011 and discussed the means to strengthen the cooperation. The YRN governing body also agreed on the next steps regarding the calendar of activities for 2011, including the creation of the 1st list of YRN member regions.

Minutes - Presidium meeting: <http://www.aer.eu/events/committee-3-culture-education-interregional-cooperation/2011/yrn-presidium.html>

YRN membership form & rules: <http://www.aer.eu/events/committee-3-culture-education-interregional-cooperation/2011/yrn-spring-plenary.html>

Do YOU live in a youth-friendly region?

On 23 March AER & YRN Committee on Healthcare & Social Affairs launched the 10th edition of the AER Most Youth Friendly European Region Award. MYFER 2011 will reward policies and projects which are aimed at social inclusion of disadvantaged youth. The deadline to submit the applications to the AER Secretariat is 15 July 2011.

Application form and information brochure are available on: <http://www.aer.eu/main-issues/youth/most-youth-friendlyeuropean-region-award.html>

YRN stand at the Council of Europe

AER Youth Regional Network was present with a stand during the 20th Plenary Session of the Congress of Local & Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg (22-24 March 2011). YRN promoted its upcoming activities and the survey on youth participation in regional decision-making. The survey questionnaire is available on, please take a few minutes to fill it in: <http://www.aer.eu/main-issues/youth.html>

YRN and AER Committee 1

YRN President Olov Oskarsson participated in the Committee 1 Plenary Meeting. He expressed the YRN's readiness to join forces especially with its Taskforce on Cohesion Policy and a newly launched working-group on Innovation and Entrepreneurship. The first step to the enhanced cooperation will be a youth session on Cohesion Policy during the YRN Plenary in Orléans (F) – 19-20 April 2011 (<http://www.aer.eu/events/committee-3-culture-education-interregional-cooperation/2011/yrn-spring-plenary.html>).



INTERREGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

President Sabban represents AER in 2nd ARLEM plenary meeting

AER President Michèle Sabban participated in the 2nd plenary meeting of the local and regional authorities for the Mediterranean on 28 & 29 January in Agadir (MA), which, with the starting and spreading unrests in the Maghreb States and Egypt, took place at a very crucial moment.

The meeting examined and approved the draft reports on local water management and urban development in the Mediterranean as well as on the territorial dimension of the Union for the Mediterranean. It also discussed the availability of funds in order to support the urban development in the Euro-Mediterranean Region.

PLATFORMA assesses first two years of existence

Mr Jacek Pilawa, President of AER sub-committee on international cooperation opened the PLATFORMA (Platform of local and regional authorities for development) conference on 29 March which was taking place before the opening of the 2nd conference on decentralised cooperation organized by the Committee of the Regions. The PLATFORMA conference highlighted the achievements of the past two years and discussed the projects for the next programming period. AER and PLATFORMA have discussed ways of furthering their cooperation on decentralized cooperation issues and have agreed: (1) that a political representative from an AER member region would be nominated to help lobby the EU institutions, (2) that a decentralized cooperation specialist from an AER member region will participate in the Platforma working groups and (3) that AER will design with the Platforma secretariat a series of peer reviews to exchange on best practices.

For more information on Platforma: <http://www.platforma-dev.eu/en/homepage.htm>

For further information, please contact the secretariat of Committee 3 (Mathieu Mori, Senior Policy coordinator, [m.mori\(at\)aer.eu](mailto:m.mori(at)aer.eu), Tel./Fax +33 (0)3 88 22 74 47; Doris Materne, Policy coordinator, [d.materne\(at\)aer.eu](mailto:d.materne(at)aer.eu), Tel./Fax +33 (0)3 88 22 74 43; Justyna Hejman, Youth & Citizenship Officer, [j.hejman\(at\)aer.eu](mailto:j.hejman(at)aer.eu), Tel./Fax +33 (0)3 88 22 74 46.

EURODYSSEY

The members of the Eurodyssey steering group met on 7 & 8 February in Paris. They reviewed current activities and developments and set up a working group which will explore the possibilities for cross-funding.

The meeting was dedicated to the preparation of the 2011 annual Forum: "European regions mobilize for jobs and the future of their youth" which will take place on 8 & 9 September in Aosta (I). For regional presidents and high level political representatives who will attend, it is planned to organise, in parallel to the technical session, a seminar on a hot topic.

A big part of the session was dedicated to the feedback and experiences from the first months of functioning of the new website. The conclusions will lead to further improvements of both the public section and the intranet.



For further information, please go to the Eurodyssey website: <http://www.eurodyssee.eu/>, or contact André Craveiro, Operational coordinator of the Eurodyssey programme, andre.LM.craveiro@azores.gov.pt, Tel. +351/296/ 30 80 23, or Doris Materne, Policy coordinator, d.materne@aer.eu, Tel./Fax +33 (0)3 88 22 74 43

AER partners with FREREF, the European Foundation for research, education and training

On 28 January, Committee 3 secretariat met the director of FREREF (www.freref.eu) in order to discuss possibilities for cooperation. Following a fruitful exchange of views, AER decided to become an associate partner in a FREREF Leonardo application which aims at demonstrating how European mobility contributes to the development of key competences that, for example, are needed in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy. Furthermore, the project intends to reinforce regional policies for mobility and improve their convergence.

For further information, please contact Mathieu Mori, Senior Policy Coordinator, m.mori@aer.eu, Tel./Fax +33 (0)3 88 22 74 47 or Doris Materne, Policy coordinator, d.materne@aer.eu, Tel./Fax +33 (0)3 88 22 74 43

SUMMER SCHOOLS

AER Summer Schools 2011 on "Youth in a changing society"

Preparations for the 16th Summer School and 10th Youth Summer School continue. A meeting of the Organising Committee took place on 18 & 19 January in Almere. Participants discussed the programme and visited the facilities proposed by Flevoland for accommodation and the venue.

Since the meeting, the AER Secretariat, in cooperation with the Youth Regional Network, has submitted a proposal for the workshop sessions. The regions involved in the Organising Committee have been invited to put forward their proposals for speakers on this basis.

Given the topic, communication and social media will play an important role. You will be able to follow us soon on Facebook, Twitter etc.

For further information: <http://www.aer.eu/events/summer-school/2010-2019/aer-summer-schools-2011.html> or please contact the secretariat of Committee 3 (Mathieu Mori, Senior Policy coordinator, m.mori@aer.eu, Tel./Fax +33 (0)3 88 22 74 47; Doris Materne, Policy coordinator, d.materne@aer.eu, Tel./Fax +33 (0)3 88 22 74 43; Justyna Hejman, Youth & Citizenship Officer, j.hejman@aer.eu, Tel./Fax +33 (0)3 88 22 74 46).

Standing committee on Institutional affairs

Regional Democracy – Interregional cooperation

AER at the Plenary Session of the Congress - AER President Michèle SABBAN took part in the March plenary session of the Congress. AER Vice-President Hande BOZATLI addressed the Chamber of the Regions on 23 March, to present the contribution of AER to the challenges which Regions are facing and will be facing until 2020/ 2030. Her intervention was based on the AER Position on the Europe2030 report, adopted at the General Assembly in Istanbul. The video clip of her intervention will be available via the AER website.

Reform of the European Neighbourhood Policy – Which place for the Black Sea Strategy?



Towards a second AER Black Sea Regions Conference – Following the first Black Sea Regions Conference (February 2010, Paris), the Standing Committee will hold a second Conference on 5-6 April in Batumi, Ajara a.R. (Georgia). This Conference, which shall gather more than 120 participants, is a very timely event for two reasons:

- on 18 April, a call for projects will be launched under the Black Sea ENPI CBC Programme, which aims at promoting interregional cooperation in the Black Sea area through funding of relevant projects. Organised a few days before this call, our Conference will allow the stakeholders from the Black Sea Basin to get to learn more about this programme, renowned for its complexity, and to meet potential partners.
- In the course of April, the European Commission will publish a Communication about the reform of the Neighbourhood policy. The place of the Black Sea Strategy in the context of the future Neighbourhood policy 2014+ is, following the events in Northern Africa and the stronger attention to the North-south dimension of EU external policies, rather uncertain. Our Conference will be the occasion for decision-makers from the Black Sea Regions to join forces to underline the geo-strategic character of the Black Sea Region, and to call for the development of a strong EU Black Sea Strategy

Lobbying for a strong EU Black Sea Strategy – Bearing in mind the on-going talks about the future reform of the EU Neighbouring Policy, the Standing Committee organised ad hoc meetings with the MEPs who worked as rapporteurs on the Black Sea Strategy – one of the pillars of the Neighbourhood policy near the Mediterranean and Eastern Partnership dimensions. These meetings, which took place in Strasbourg during the EP plenary session early March, aimed at discussing with the MEPs their view about the role of regional authorities in bringing further international cooperation and dialogue in the Black Sea, and their opinion regarding the place of the EU Black Sea Strategy in the future Neighbourhood policy. They all underlined the need for bottom-up approaches to release dialogue in the Region, and their concern regarding future EU funding for the Black Sea. The Press and Communication service of the AER Secretariat has produced a video of these interviews, which will be shown at the Conference in Batumi (see above). The EP report on the EU Black Sea Strategy, adopted end January 2011, is available under:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&reference=A7-2010-0378&language=EN>

Similar meetings will be organised with the MEPs rapporteurs on the Neighbourhood policy.

Communicating Europe and Citizenship

AER European Citizens' Forum – The Forum *Youth Entrepreneurship Education – a stepping stone to regional innovation?* took place on 25 March on the occasion of the AER Committee 1 Spring Plenary and Conference on Entrepreneurship and Innovation. The Panel of Speakers was composed of representatives of regions of Ostfold and Akhersus (NO), Opolskie (PL), Confederation of Norwegian Enterprises representing the private sector as well as young entrepreneurs who presented their success stories. All participants supported the idea that Entrepreneurship Education should be compulsory. It was pointed out the contemporary challenge is not the lack of motivation among pupils, but among teachers. Therefore teachers and trainers should be given more training opportunities, especially through learning by doing.

<http://www.aer.eu/events/standing-committee-on-institutional-affairs/2011/ecf-ostfold.html>

Capacity building and training

AER Training Academy on 'How to set up an EGTC' – AER has committed itself to promote the



EGTC amongst its member regions, and giving practical assistance to those regions which would like to set up this new instrument. Therefore it set up together with the host region of Hradec Kralove a training course on the EGTC on 28 February/1 March. With over 20 participants from the regions of Hradec-Kralove, Liberec, Pardubice, Olomouc, Moravia-Silesia and Dolny Slaskie, participants listened and learned from other territories' EGTCs such as Brussels-Capital region, Luxembourg and Ister Granum. Participants discussed challenges and the next steps of setting up an EGTC and strengthened their already existing cooperation.

AER Training Academy on Institutional Lobbying – On 22/23 March another training session on understanding the European institutional set up and on how to represent regional interests in Brussels took place in the AER Brussels office. Participants got a practitioners view about the role regions can play in the EU decision making process. They also got a better understanding of how regions can promote their interests in the Brussels environment.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

European Union adopts Gender Pact

In March 2011, the European Union has adopted a new Pact for Gender Equality 2011-2012. This strategic documents sets out the EU objectives for achieving gender equality as regards:

- ▶ Employment and social protection, including closing the gender pay gap;
- ▶ Promote better work-life balance, through flexible work arrangements and increasing the availability of affordable child-care
- ▶ Combating all forms of violence against women, through the adoption and implementation of national and EU strategies.

Contact: Ourania Georgoutsakou, Committee 2 Senior Policy Coordinator, g.ourania@aer.eu; +32 2 880 95 65

GENDER HEALTH

SCEO is hosting a seminar on gender health – applying the gender perspective to medical- and healthcare on 11 April 2011 in Novi Sad, at the kind invitation of the Autonomous Province Vojvodina (SRB). This will be an opportunity for regions to look at the organisation and delivery of their health services, as well as their citizens' health, from a different perspective: the gender perspective. Regions across Europe are applying this filter to the evaluation of their services and are coming up with very interesting and often surprising outcomes not only as regards the gender imbalance in our health workforces or the way we manage our health services, but also on our population's health. By learning from regions that have already worked in this area, we can improve both the efficiency and quality of our healthcare services and our populations' levels of health.

Further information: <http://www.aer.eu/en/events/standing-committee-on-equal-opportunities/2011/genderandhealth.html>

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AER BRUSSELS OFFICE

OFFERING AER MEMBERS THE LATEST IN BRUSSELS

A key mission of the AER Brussels office is to regularly liaise with our members' Brussels representation offices and to keep them up to date with the latest developments in the EU and the



regions.

To this end, the AER Brussels office sends out to members a Daily Monitoring of news articles on the various policy areas AER is active in.

AER Breakfast Briefings

We also organise AER Breakfast Briefings – this is a series of monthly events addressed to members' Brussels offices that:

- ▶ Provide an opportunity for AER members' Brussels officers to liaise with each other in an informal manner
- ▶ Inform them about the latest developments in specific policy areas and allow them to speak directly with EU representatives working in these policy areas.

January 2011 AER Breakfast Briefing - Priorities of the Hungarian EU Presidency

The AER Brussels office regularly dedicates a Breakfast Briefing to the priorities of the incoming EU Presidency. At this occasion a representative from the Hungarian Representation to the EU in Brussels presented the priorities of Hungary for the period January – June 2011. Special emphasis was placed on the debate on the future European cohesion policy and AER presented its policy position on this area. AER thanks the Representation of Eszak-Alfold Region in Brussels Bld for their kind hospitality.

February 2011 AER Breakfast Briefing – Exploring what regions do on bio-economy

This event was held at the occasion of the consultation launched by the European Commission on “Bio-based economy for Europe: state of play and future potential”. It was an opportunity to see what the concept of a bio-based economy encompasses, to understand how this is relevant to regions and to learn from other regions that have already developed bio-based economies. AER thanks the House of Dutch Provinces for their kind hospitality.

March 2011 AER Breakfast Briefing- Regions and the Innovation Union

At a time when the European Commission is putting the finishing touches on the new European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing, this event allowed AER member Brussels offices to learn about the latest developments in this process and to understand how regions can contribute to innovation in Europe. AER presented the 2011 edition of the Regional Innovation Award and showcased the 2009 winner Västtra-Götaland (S).

Further information on the AER Breakfast Briefings: <http://www.aer.eu/events/aer-breakfast-briefings/2011.html> *Contact: Regine Kramer, Policy Coordinator, [r.kramer@aer.eu](mailto:r.kramer@ aer.eu); +32 2 880 9563*

Support members' activities in Brussels

The AER Brussels office supports members' activities in Brussels, by publicising and contributing to members' events: Valencia (E), Hampshire (UK), Saxen-Anhalt (D), Ile-de-France (F) events have been promoted.

PROMOTING AER IN BRUSSELS

The AER Brussels office regularly receives delegations from regions to inform them about AER's work and identify how the region can contribute to AER and profit from membership. Since January we have welcomed representatives of Sarajevo (BIH), Istria (HR), Zeeland (NL), Noord-Brabant (NL), Olomouc (CZ) and Värmland (S), as well as the Albanian Ministry for European

Integration and for Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports. If you are interested in visiting the AER Brussels office, please contact us! Contact: aer.brussels@aer.eu; +32 2 880 95 60

We also regularly meet with others stakeholders in Brussels to discuss possible synergies and to provide our members with the latest information and the expertise they need. This period we have

Date	Location	Event
5 April 2011	Brussels (B)	Tales from Europe on energy
11-12 April 2011	Brussels (B)	2 nd European regions Energy Day
14 April 2011	Brussels (B)	MORE4NRG side event during the European Sustainable Energy Week
11 May 2011	Brussels (B)	Breakfast Briefing on Financial Engineering followed by a meeting on best practices in financial engineering
19 May 2011	Brussels (B)	PRESERVE: action planning workshop
19 May 2011	Ruse (BG)	Meeting of the working group on regional airports
May (date tbc)	Brussels (B)	Breakfast Briefing on the CAP reform
27 May	Azores	Conference and site visit on renewable energies
30 June	Brussels (B)	Meeting of the working group on climate change and energy: E-Mobility - Fighting climate change – Restructuring our regions What challenges and opportunities of electric cars

had meetings with Fedarene (European Federation of Regional Energy and Environment Agencies), EN RD – European Commission’s Network for Rural Development), EASPD (European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities), COCIR (European Coordination Committee of the Radiological, Electromedical and Healthcare IT Industry), EHTEL (European Health Telematics Association).

Finally, the AER Brussels office has a key role in liaising with EU institutions in Brussels to promote AER members’ views and to ensure AER is up to date on the latest policy developments in the EU. We often meet with policy officers from the various EU institutions and we also participate to consultations and meetings organised by the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Social Policy and Public Health committee (2)

Date	Location	Event
20 April	Brussels (B)	AER Committee 2 Presidium meeting
10 May	Budapest (H)	AER e-he@lth network organises a Regional Forum during EU ehealth week and World of Health IT 2011 conference “Regions at the Forefront: this is where it happens”
17-18 May	Udine (I)	AER Committee 2 plenary meeting and A.Dri.A project final conference ‘Youth Distress and alcohol prevention: knowledge, innovation, experimentation’

16-17 June	Valencia (E)	AER 'Equal Europe for People with Disabilities' working meeting and seminar on employment for people with disabilities
20-21 September	Istanbul (TR)	AER Committee 2 autumn plenary and conference on "Culture and Health" organised jointly with AER Committee 3

CULTURE, EDUCATION AND TRAINING, YOUTH AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Committee (3)

Date	Location	Event
18 & 19 April 2011	Centre (F)	YES Dissemination conference & Committee 3 Plenary meeting with a conference on mobility
19 & 20 April 2011	Centre (F)	5th Youth Regional Network Meeting
10-13 May 2011	Tallinn (EST) & Stockholm (S)	Meeting of YES (Youth entrepreneurship strategies) project partners
June (tbc)	Brussels (B)	Breakfast Briefing on Entrepreneurship education
19 September 2011	Istanbul (TR)	Committee 3 Plenary meeting
20 September 2011	Istanbul (TR)	Joint Conference Culture and Health

Eurodysey

Date	Location	Event
17-18 May 2011	Lyon (F)	Eurodysey Steering Committee
08-09 September 2011	Aosta (I)	Eurodysey annual Forum – "Eurodysey: European Regions mobilising for the employment and future of Youth"

Summer School

Date	Location	Event
23-24 May 2011	Brussels (B)	Organising committee AER Summer School
22-27 August 2011	Lelystad (NL)	AER Summer Schools (Adult & youth) "Youth in a changing society"

Standing committee on Institutional affairs

Date	Location	Event
5-6 April 2011	Batumi, Adjara (GE)	Second AER Black Sea Regional Policy Conference
28-29 April 2011	Noord-Brabant (NL)	Bureau/Standing Committee for Institutional Affairs meeting

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Date	Location	Event
11 April	Novi Sad (SRB)	AER Seminar: The most common diseases from the gender perspective

