



Priorities 2012

Assembly of European Regions (AER)

This document gives an overview of AER's key priorities for 2012 and outlines the main initiatives to be undertaken within the Committees and Programmes. Further details can be obtained from the work programmes of the Committees and the contact persons indicated.

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Economy and Regional development (1)

1. Key Priorities for 2012

The 2012 key priorities for Committee 1, Economy and Regional development, are as follows:

Cohesion policy

To lobby for a new EU cohesion policy for 2014-2020, regarding both its political and technical aspects, on the basis of the AER White Paper on future cohesion policy issued in December 2010 and other relevant AER positions.

Climate change and energy policy

To encourage regions to mainstream environmental concerns in their policy-making processes and to take measures for safeguarding their natural resources.

- *Climate change*: to draw Regions' attention on the challenges linked to climate change, to provide them with tools and good practices to face these challenges.
- *Energy policy*: to promote the development of renewable energies and to support the regions in the implementation of energy efficiency measures.

Economic development, Entrepreneurship and Innovation

To assist regions in the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy and exchange good practice, especially regarding innovation and entrepreneurship strategies.

To increase expertise and know-how within the regions, with adapted trainings and experts advices and the launch of the 7th AER Innovation Award.

To further showcase the benefits of regional airports as an asset for competitive regions.

Sustainable tourism

To foster eco-tourism and social tourism, in line with the objectives of sustainable development as well as economic, social and territorial cohesion.

Agriculture and Rural development

To lobby for an integrated territorial approach to the Common Agricultural Policy for 2013+, on the basis of the AER position on future CAP adopted in Istanbul in November 2010 and other relevant AER positions.

2. Description of Activities for 2012

Cohesion policy:

- Lobbying and communication activity to promote AER White Paper on future cohesion policy, e.g. meetings with MEPs in the context of the draft regulations published by the European Commission.

Environment and Energy:

- Pursuing the exchange of experience on the development of regional energy strategies through the AER working group on climate change and energy
- Implementing the INTERREG IVC project REGIONS4GREENGROWTH, which aims to carry out energy peer reviews in the participating regions (subject to adoption of the project proposal).



Economic development, Entrepreneurship and Innovation

- Pursuing the exchange of experience on the development of regional entrepreneurship strategies through the AER working group on entrepreneurship and innovation
- Launching the 7th edition of the AER Innovation Award, which will give an opportunity to all regions to promote their innovation projects, to get detailed feedback by recognized experts and to find out other projects and strategies developed in other regions.
- Implementing the INTERREG IVC project ECREIN+, which helps Regions of Europe work together to share experience and good practices in the areas of innovation, the knowledge economy, the environment and risk prevention.
- Implementing the INTERREG IVC project SMART EUROPE, which aims to carry out innovation peer reviews in the participating regions (subject to adoption of the project proposal).
- Pursuing the exchange of experience on the development of regional airports, through the working group

Sustainable tourism:

- Continuing the work started in the frame of the PRESERVE INTERREG IVC project (peer reviews on tourism, dissemination events), which aims at contributing to an improved effectiveness of regional policies that specifically consider cultural heritage as an endogenous factor of economic development.

Rural development:

- Implementing a lobbying plan agreed upon in 2010
- In this context, if appropriate, organising a high-level event on future CAP

Cooperation with the Youth Regional Network

- Involve the AER Youth Regional Network in activities of the AER Committee on Economy and Regional Development and include contributions of the AER Youth Regional Network in official positions presented by the AER Committee on Economy and Regional Development.

3. Meetings

Committee 1 members meet twice a year in plenary meetings. These meetings are coupled with the meetings of the working groups where appropriate (Task force on cohesion, working groups on climate change and energy, rural development, regional airports, entrepreneurship and innovation). Ad hoc working group meetings can also be organised apart from these plenary meetings. In addition, seminars and conferences can be planned according to the demand of the members and the issues at stake.

4. Timeline

Month	Activity	Location
21 March 2012	Joint presidency meeting of Committee 1 and 3	Denizli (TR)
April 2012	Committee 1 spring plenary meeting	Jönköping (S)
September 2012	Committee 1 fall plenary meeting	



Please note that the activities of the working groups (meetings, participation in external events), possible peer reviews or meetings linked to funded projects (ECREIN+, etc.) are not mentioned in this table.

Adopted by the AER General Assembly in Ponta Delgada, 24 November 2011

Social Policy & Public Health Committee (2)

Overarching theme: Active and Healthy Ageing – adapting to changing realities

Cross-cutting principles

- Equal opportunities: consider the gender perspective in the Committee's work and encourage regions to respect this principle in their work
- Youth inclusion: cooperation with the AER Youth Regional Network and regular input in each other's work
- Identifying synergies: increase cooperation with other AER Committees, for example through joint events

Priority 1: Innovation in Health and Social services

- E-health: implementing e-health tools and services across the regions
- Building capacity in the regions as regards: change management, new models for financing services, strategic planning.
- Cross-border healthcare and patients' mobility: assessing the impact of the new European legislation and helping regions implement the necessary changes

Proposed Actions

- Contribute to the European Union e-Health Ministerial conference: AER to organise a session on the regional perspective to e-health
- Organise 1 meeting of the AER e-he@lth network
- Organise 1 capacity-building event for regions on how to adapt their systems and open up to innovative service design and delivery
- Draft an inventory of regions' competences in the field of e-he@lth
- Create a new technical working group on cross-border healthcare

Links to European Union level developments:

European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIP on AHA); European e-he@lth action plan; Europe 2020 strategy; European Directive on patient mobility in cross-border healthcare; European financing opportunities, in particular European Cohesion Policy.

Priority 2: Building inclusive societies

- Disabilities: supporting regions in the implementation of the UN Convention on the rights of people with disabilities
- Roma inclusion: contribute to the AER strategy for the integration of Roma people
- Combating poverty and social exclusion

Proposed Actions

- 2 seminars of the AER working group "Equal Europe for People with Disabilities"



- Secure financing for an interregional cooperation project on the implementation of the UN Convention, support the project's implementation and disseminate the project outcomes.
- Update the AER publication "A Regions' Handbook to Understanding and Implementing the UN Convention" Disabilities (last edition: November 2010)
- Contribute to the activities foreseen under the AER action plan for Roma integration, lead by AER Committee 3
- Contribute to the organisation of a conference of regional and local authorities on successful policies for migrant integration

Links to European Union level developments:

Europe 2020; European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion; European Disability Strategy; EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies; related provisions in the future Cohesion Policy

Priority 3: Active and Healthy Ageing

Support regions to commit to regional reform in favour of active and healthy ageing

Proposed Actions:

- Organise a conference in spring 2012 to showcase the possible actions that regions can take to promote healthy and active ageing (ranging from developing a regional active and healthy ageing policy to creating independent living facilities)
- Draft and adopt an AER declaration listing the commitments AER member regions make to promote active and healthy ageing in their territories.
- Draft an AER report to monitor regions' progress to satisfying their commitments by the end of 2012.
- The AER Secretariat will officially join and contribute to the meetings of the EY2012 coalition of stakeholders in order to liaise with other stakeholders, identify experts and partners for AER members and raise the regions' profile in this area.

Links to European Union level developments:

European Year 2012: Active Ageing; European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIP on AHA).

Priority 4: support regional networking in the field of health and social affairs

Regularly update members on relevant developments and support increased cooperation and exchange between member regions

Proposed actions:

- "What's new Committee 2" newsletter to update members (every 2 months)
- Liaise with other stakeholders and interregional networks; in particular, develop a stronger cooperation with ELISAN network by contributing to each other's events (ELISAN = European Local Inclusion and Social Action Network)
- Maintain regular dialogue with the European institutions
- Increase cooperation with members' Brussels representation offices
- Represent AER at key stakeholder fora: European Health Policy Forum (stakeholders and European Commission); European Platform against poverty and social exclusion (stakeholder and European commission dialogue); Committee of the Regions Technical Platform for cooperation in Health.

Adopted by the AER General Assembly in Ponta Delgada, 24 November 2011



Standing Committee on Equal Opportunities

- Develop an AER Inclusion Strategy in cooperation with all AER bodies
- Mainstream Equal Opportunities across all AER bodies
- Undertake a review of regional competences in the field of equal opportunities

Guiding Principles:

Cooperation with all AER bodies – create synergies and add value

Youth inclusion – strong cooperation with AER Youth Regional Network

Gender equality – continue to promote gender equality within AER bodies and AER's work

Priority 1: Develop and implement an AER Inclusion Strategy

Following the discussions in the AER 2011 General Assembly (Azores, 24-25 November 2011) regarding the development of an AER action plan on Roma Inclusion and the need for a broader strategy on inclusion issues within AER, SCEO will take the lead in developing an AER Inclusion strategy for all. Roma inclusion will be an important aspect of this strategy, but its scope will be broader and cover inclusion of all persons, irrespective of nationality, sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

This strategy will be developed based on the knowledge and experience of all AER member regions. SCEO will liaise with the other AER bodies to ensure that it covers all policy areas in which AER is active and that all AER members engage in its implementation, both within AER and in the regions.

Priority 2: Mainstream Equal Opportunities across all AER bodies

Identify areas of common interest with all AER thematic Committees, organise joint events and draft joint guidelines and declarations.

Possible areas for cooperation include:

Committee 1: women entrepreneurship; equal opportunities and non-discrimination principles in the future cohesion policy

Committee 2: combating ageism (in the context of 2012 - European Year on Active and Healthy Ageing); health inequalities

Committee 3: youth inclusion; equal rights for LGBT; Roma inclusion

Standing Committee on Institutional Affairs: promoting equal opportunities as an integral part of regional democracy; promoting equal opportunities within the European neighbourhood policy

Priority 3: Undertake a review of regional competences in the field of equal opportunities

Regional competences in the field of equal opportunities vary, with some regions having powers in a wide range of areas (gender equality, disability, youth, elderly) while others adopting a more limited approach. Some regions implement equal opportunities policies without having a direct competence in the field. AER SCEO will map regional competences and actions in this field, to create a basis for supporting exchange of knowledge and expertise among members in this area.



Planned actions

The SCEO plans to organise 3 events in 2012, focusing around the themes of:

- Gender equality
- Comparing and evaluating regional competences in equal opportunities across Europe
- Promoting LGBT rights, in particular among young people

The SCEO President will attend at least one meeting of each Committee to identify areas of joint interest and increase synergies with the SCEO's work.

The SCEO Secretariat will cooperate with the Secretariats of the other AER bodies to further promote the inclusion of the equal opportunities perspective in their work and will develop the SCEO membership base.

The SCEO Secretariat will organise a survey among AER members on regional competences in the field of equal opportunities and will complete this with a literature review, with the purpose of publishing an AER report on regional competences in equal opportunities by autumn 2012. The outcomes of this survey will also feed into the the AER Inclusion Strategy.

Committee on Culture, Education, Youth, Media, Interregional and International cooperation (3)

Key priorities 2011 - 2012

- Culture: raise awareness about the strong link between culture and regional development among cultural practitioners and policy makers, especially in less developed regions.
- International cooperation: promote international cooperation on all aspects of regionalism with the Mediterranean, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe and make a special effort for culture, education and youth to be particularly represented in the AER international cooperation work.
- Education/Training: assist regions in adapting their education and training policies to promote increased opportunities for all and equip their populations with the right skills to enter the labour market.
- Youth: to further integrate the work of the Youth Regional Network into the AER structure to ensure that young people play an active role in political processes and that their views are accounted for in the European decision making process.

Culture

- Set up training activities for cultural managers
- Help regions in preserving and promoting their tangible or intangible cultural heritage
- Set up and build on existing relationships with key players in the field of culture (cultural networks, training bodies, international organisations, NGOs) in order to help implement the points mentioned above and to turn AER into a recognised stakeholder in the field of culture
- Support the working group on Culture and Health: organisation of a conference and design follow up activities
- Continue to voice the regional point of view at the occasion of relevant debates/consultations



Interregional and International Cooperation

- Continue to be the first stop shop for international cooperation initiatives: Committee 3 deals with all the requests for cooperation / proposes new cooperation and is the interface between external bodies asking for cooperation on topics outside its remit and the relevant AER committee(s)
- Make sure that the “core” activities of committee 3 gain in visibility in the international cooperation work
- Develop the existing links with relevant international organisations (UNDP/ILO/UNEP/ART GOLD/UNOPS/UNESCO...) to promote the thematic issues important to AER with a focus on:
 - o The Mediterranean regions
 - o Eastern and South-Eastern Europe
- Develop initiatives in new regions within the aforementioned areas
- Support decentralisation and regionalisation efforts in countries with no or limited regional structures e.g. in South-Eastern Europe
- Continue to collaborate with existing networks and make sure AER’s priorities are taken into account:
 - o R20
 - o European Platform of Local and Regional Authorities for Development
- Identify potential new partnerships for AER’s international work

Education and Training

- Create a “school passport” in particular for pupils who change school during the term (e.g. travelling and migrant children, ...), in order to describe achievements beyond the school record and to accelerate and improve adaptation and integration in the new class
- Promote mobility through the AER Eurodisney Programme and put in place a quality approach concerning the programme and its functioning
- Develop the regions expertise in the school to work transition with youth employment peer reviews and enrich the tools at their disposal by developing, fostering and promoting
- Youth Entrepreneurship concepts
- Contribute and take advantage of the Youth on the Move initiative by the European Commission to promote the aforementioned priorities.
- Identify a joint initiative with the Standing Committee on Equal Opportunities in the field of education

Youth

- Enhance cooperation between the AER Youth Regional Network and the Assembly of European Regions by including the voice of young people in AER’s official positions and involving the relevant Youth Committees in AER’s activities
- Continue to support the AER Youth Regional Network and continue to target regional youth councils, parliaments and organisations from all AER Member Regions in order to promote regional youth participation in wider Europe
- Help regions in establishing and developing their youth employment policies
- Promote the inclusion of disadvantaged young people with fewer opportunities in regional policies

N.B. Committee 3 will keep the other AER committees’ priorities in mind when working on the aforementioned points to seek cooperation whenever possible.

Adopted by the AER General Assembly in Istanbul, 11 November 2010



1. Key priorities 2012

Priority 1: The multi-annual financial framework

A budget that allows regions, cities and local level to be an active part in the European integration project and play their role as key actors of the Europe 2020 Strategy will be of mutual benefit for all actors in the multi-level governance of Europe.

Proposed actions:

Influence: Approach relevant actors on national and European level to ensure that the forthcoming draft regulations which will detail the MFF proposals be based on the key principles of multilevel governance and partnership

Knowledge: collect, monitor, analyse and disseminate information on the different regulations and policies from a regional perspectives

Action: arrange seminar(s), meeting(s), training session(s) among decision makers on the basis of the knowledge generated.

Priority 2: The impact of the economic crisis on regional democracy, subsidiarity and decentralisation

In times of crisis, regional democracy, decentralisation and regionalisation can be a tool for growth and good management of resources. At the same time, the regional level can provide a political “closeness” to its citizens and keep an open dialogue. A relevant question to address is how does the economic crisis affect regionalisation, decentralisation in different parts of the EU?

Proposed actions:

Influence: Enhance awareness among national and EU decision-makers about the importance of a regional dimension in efforts to handle the crisis and its effects.

Knowledge: Increase knowledge by collecting information on the situation in different countries and sharing this information with relevant partners, stakeholders, and decision-makers.

Action: arrange seminar(s) on the development in different EU member countries.

Suggestions

- A comparative approach in a North/South perspective between for ex. Spain, Italy, the UK and Sweden
- Show how regions can contribute, with examples, in creating growth, competitiveness and cohesion in the EU through good governance

Priority 3: Regionalisation and interregional cooperation in the EU, its Neighbours and Potential Member States

The promotion of regional democracy, regionalisation and decentralisation is vital for the further integration of the EU and its future enlargement (see AER Draft Position on the European Neighbourhood Policy). The development of interregional cooperation among regions from neighbouring countries also appears crucial to help maintain peace and dialogue throughout Europe.

Proposed actions:

Influence: Participate in arenas for discussion on democracy, subsidiarity, regionalisation and interregional cooperation, in particular in countries bordering the EU.

Knowledge: Promote discussions and dissemination of knowledge on regionalisation in current member states/regions, but also in candidate and third countries. Collect and disseminate information on relevant tools and programmes for interregional cooperation, in particular towards regions from neighbouring countries. Update the AER report on regionalisation, when needed.

Action: co-arrange relevant seminars/forums in different candidate and third neighbouring countries as well as in Brussels. Actions can also include the possibilities of visits on a bilateral level between regions from candidate and third neighbouring countries to regions located in EU member states.

Priority 4: European funding

In 2010 and 2011, the Working Group on European Funding sought to maximise synergies and joint working opportunities with other areas of AER, and notably with the Task Force on Cohesion (from Committee 1). This has proven to be successful and beneficial. It is therefore proposed to continue with this approach. In 2012, the working group will follow up on three main objectives:

- Monitoring and influencing future EU funding programmes
- Understanding innovative EU financial instruments of increased importance post 2014 and influence their design for the benefit of the regions
- Building AER members general understanding of and capacity to access EU funding.

☞ For further details, in particular of proposed actions, please see separate work programme for the working group.

Priority 5: Empowering regions as key actors of the Europe 2020 initiative

In 2012, the Standing Committee will continue to organise, in cooperation with the other AER Committees, training academies to equip regional officers and decision-makers with tools and knowledge useful in their everyday work. An ad hoc Training Academy is planned in the context of the current territorial reform affecting Hungary, which implies that, from 2012, Hungarian counties will be responsible for regional development and able to manage EU funds.

Otherwise, the main focus of the training sessions for 2012 will be in line with the activities planned in the frame of the REALM project (which is co-financed in the frame of the European programme for education and lifelong learning). This project, run by Hampshire and which AER is involved in, foresees 4 half-day training seminars on Europe 2020 flagship initiatives in Brussels:

- Active ageing and European Platform against poverty
- Youth on the move and new skills for new jobs
- Innovation union and digital agenda
- Resource efficient Europe and an industrial policy for the globalisation era

☞ Further details on the project are available at the AER General Secretariat.

Priority 6: Communicating about Europe

The Standing Committee will pursue its activities aimed at informing the wider public about the EU and EU policies. Citizens Forums will be organised in cooperation with the other AER Committees, at the occasion of their plenary meetings.

2. Calendar 2012

The table below entails the main events linked to the actions proposed for each priority above and does not aim at being exhaustive. Meetings of the working group on funding, in particular, are not included, Please refer to the separate work plan for the group.



When?	Where?	What?
January	Czech Republic	AER promotional event and Training Academy
January	Brussels (BE)	TA Europe 2020 (REALM) project
28/29 February (tbc)	Yerevan, Armenia	AER meeting of regions from Turkey, Azerbaidjan, Armenia and Georgia (or Third AER Regional Black Sea Summit)
March	Brussels (BE)	TA Europe 2020 (REALM) project
Spring	Budapest (Hungary)	Training Academy on the management of Structural Funds following the territorial reform in Hungary
April	tbc	AER Bureau and Standing Committee Institutional Affairs meeting
Spring	Venues of the Committee meetings	Citizens' Fora at the occasion of AER Committees' plenary meetings
June	Brussels (BE)	TA Europe 2020 (REALM) project
Autumn	Venues of the Committee meetings	Citizens' Fora at the occasion of AER Committees' plenary meetings
October		AER Bureau and Standing Committee Institutional Affairs plenary meeting
October	Nikosia (Cyprus)	TA Cyprus project ¹
October	Brussels (BE)	TA Europe 2020 (REALM) project
November	tbc	AER General Assembly
December	Brussels (BE)	TA Cyprus project

¹ AER is involved in this project run by the Union of Municipalities of Cyprus, and which aims at disseminating information on EU funding. The Standing Committee is involved in the project both through its funding working group and through its Secretariat staff, who will co-organise 2 training sessions.

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