

# AER MANIFESTO FOR THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS 2019

The AER believes that inter-regional cooperation and best practice exchange are vital in strengthening a democratic Europe where citizens are meaningfully engaged in their common future. With this in mind the AER has formulated five key recommendations ahead of the European Elections 2019.

## Key recommendations

- **Greater Confidence in Regions**
- **Strengthened Cohesion Policy**
- **A Greener Europe**
- **A Balanced and Fair Europe**
- **A More Democratic Europe**

## Greater Confidence in Regions

The AER Observatory on Regionalisation has highlighted, in its latest edition, that centralisation in Europe is continuing while research clearly indicates that decentralisation leads to increased economic development and prosperity.

Regions are often labs for innovation. In all areas AER deals with - Economic and Regional Development; Social Policy and Public Health and Culture, Education and Youth - the AER urges all representatives to look to the regions as a source of best practice in several areas, to actively apply the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, enabling regional authorities to contribute effectively to EU policy-making and to engage meaningfully in the design of EU legislation and implementation of policies in practice.

Supporting regions' role in forging a revitalised European project is instrumental in bringing the 2030 Agenda and its sustainable development goals forward and in building-up the smart, sustainable and inclusive Europe that citizens want to see.



**AER**  
Assembly of European Regions

## Strengthened Cohesion Policy

A strong renewed cohesion policy for all regions is central to the EU's future.

Cohesion policy is and should remain at the core of the EU. The added value of Europe's largest investment policy is undeniable: no other EU policy has a comparable capacity to leverage for investment and support for European priorities. No other EU policy tackles territorial cooperation between various types of stakeholders at different levels of government. Multi-level governance is key and adds value to cohesion policy. No other EU policy sees solidarity as a key principle in achieving European goals.

Maintaining and building upon these achievements will be essential if the future cohesion policy is to successfully address the challenges confronting the EU today. Especially if it is to deliver the results for a greater economic, social and territorial cohesion beyond 2020. This renewed policy must therefore continue to push for reduced disparities between EU regions and for inclusive and sustainable growth, for the EU and its citizens.

The meaningful engagement of regional authorities in future policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation is critical in delivering an ambitious cohesion policy at a challenging time for European cohesion. Regions, not the member states, are the primary level of government taking on the challenges that cohesion policy addresses. Regional authorities are fundamental in making cohesion policy effective. They are best placed to guide the EU on regional contexts, needs, and to communicate its added value to EU citizens.

## A Greener Europe

Growing climate and environmental pressures are a major challenge of our time. Transitioning to a more efficient energy system and circular economy is essential for sustainable change and therefore, must be at the heart of the EU efforts towards a sustainable European future, contribution to global action on climate change and implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement.

Regions are at the forefront of the fight against climate change. We have seen improvement in the way cities, municipalities and regions are taken into account in the design of related European policies and programmes. The AER calls for this positive trend to be accelerated and continued.

Europe must lead the way at a time when there is no time and other powers are less inclined to take the lead. Europe can count on the support of the AER and the regions to drive action forward and advance national, European and global climate goals.

## A Balanced and Fair Europe

The AER believes that a better balance is needed between the Europe of the cities and the Europe of the rural areas, which can often seem disadvantaged when viewed from the capitals of the EU. With more than 50% of its members categorized as rural areas, the AER has a justifiable interest in defending cooperation between urban and rural Europe.

The AER believes that a fairer Europe, in terms of social protection and an effective migration policy, is essential to the continuity of the EU. Because of their proximity to citizens, regions can offer a greater alignment of EU policies with their needs and a more effective implementation on the ground, bringing Europe closer to its citizens.

In order to change the unfavourable trajectory that Europe appears to be on, the AER calls on our democratically elected representatives to listen and engage with the Regions to advance equality, diversity and inclusion.

Regions deal - on a daily basis - with social, health, youth, education and migration issues. They can serve as valuable benchmarks when dealing with these most important issues and the AER urges that these are taken into account when making political decisions.

# #EP2019

## A More Democratic Europe

Human rights are at the very core of European values. The AER believes it is essential to encourage opportunities for citizens, especially young people, to engage in society and actively participate in decision-making, through stronger European regions.

Further, through the sharing of best practices and decentralisation models, the AER supports the enlargement process and believes that the accession countries should have a smoother entry and contribute more meaningfully to the political debate from the very beginning. The AER urges that this is taken into account when accession talks reconvene.

Finally, the AER stresses the very important role that Regional diplomacy can play in bringing about greater economic change. It is worth remembering that what is often not feasible at a National level can more easily be facilitated at Regional level.

**The Assembly of European Regions (AER) is the largest independent network of regions in wider Europe, gathering regions from 35 countries – from Norway to Turkey and from Russia to Portugal.**

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