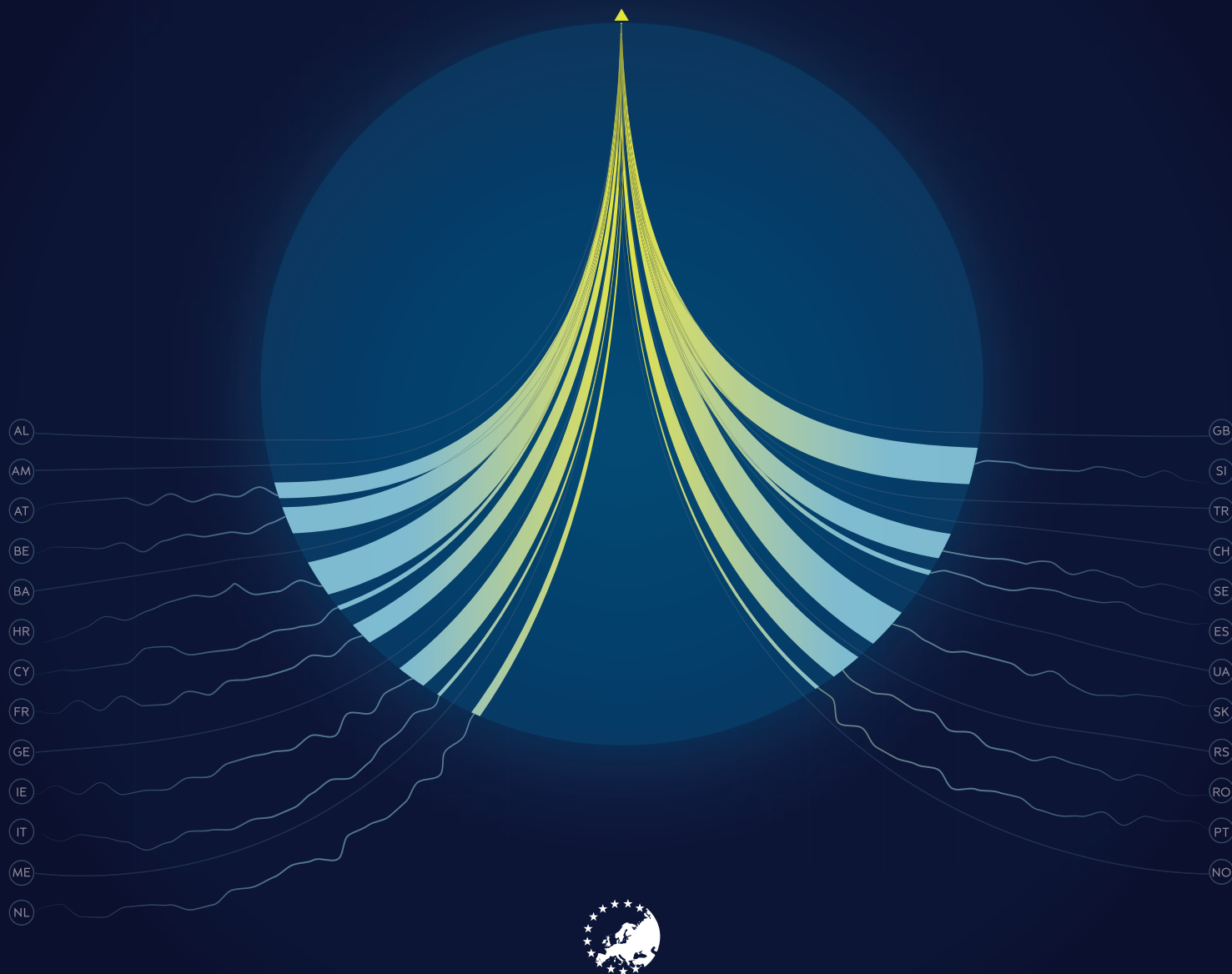


ACTIVITY REPORT 2022/2023

# REGIONS SKILLED FOR THE FUTURE



ASSEMBLY OF EUROPEAN REGIONS

# REGIONS SKILLED FOR THE FUTURE

## COVER DATA VISUALISATION

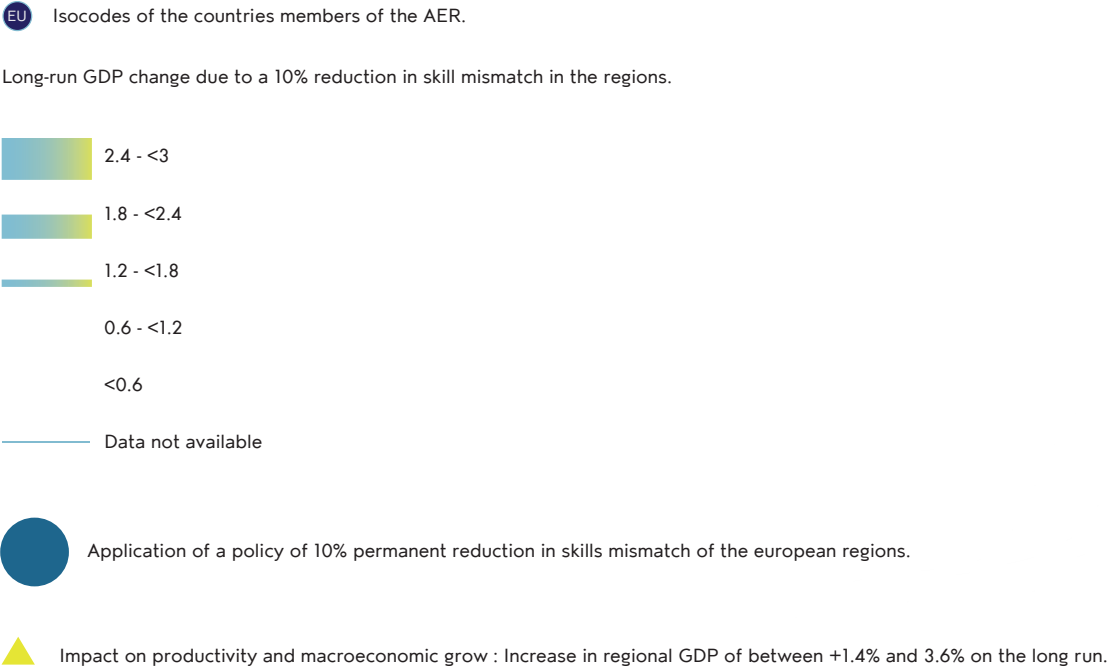


TABLE OF CONTENTS	
PRESIDENT’S VISION: FORGING A STRONG EUROPE—MORE COOPERATIVE, INCLUSIVE, AND INNOVATIVE	2
SECRETARY GENERAL’S FOREWORD - NEW OFFERINGS AND SKILLS FOR A CHANGING EUROPE	4
STRUCTURE OF THE AER	6
REGIONS SKILLED FOR THE FUTURE	10
SUBSIDIARITY IN ACTION FOR A COHESIVE EUROPE	12
PLANTING SEEDS FOR SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION	20
CULTIVATING BONDS FOR INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES	28
FROM POTENTIAL TO POWER: EMPOWERING EUROPEAN YOUTH	40
BEYOND BORDERS, WITHIN VALUES: A WIDER EUROPE FOR A WORLD IN TURMOIL	47
CONCLUSION BY AER SECRETARY GENERAL - AN EMPOWERED NETWORK	48
APPENDIXES	
EVENT LIST 2022-2023	49
EXECUTIVE BOARD	50
POLITICAL BODIES	52
AER SECRETARIAT	52
OUR MEMBERS	53
SOCIAL STATS	54



AER President Albert Castellanos Maduell

## President's Vision

# FORGING A STRONG EUROPE — MORE COOPERATIVE, INCLUSIVE, AND INNOVATIVE

This past year has been marked by transformative challenges. Throughout the year, we have faced significant changes that tested Europe's resilience. Economic transitions, climate change, and geopolitical uncertainties demanded our collective attention and adaptability. In the midst of this are the upcoming elections that will shape the European landscape and our regions for years to come.

The ongoing war against Ukraine serves as a poignant reminder of the fragility of our shared values. Democracy, freedom, and human rights are not abstract ideals, but the very foundations of our European identity. This existential challenge urges us to re-evaluate our cooperation within Europe and among regions; to foster a renewed sense of solidarity. Our commitment to a pan-European approach remains steadfast. Not only because more than a third of our members come from the EU neighbourhood, but because collaboration with non-EU countries is integral to our vision for a connected and cooperative Europe. Our growing membership in Ukraine bears witness to this; the AER's work transcends borders, and builds partnerships that strengthen our collective resilience.

Our pledge to advocate for regional decision-making is unwavering; most of all in times of crises. During the coronavirus pandemic – which has fortunately been overcome – the EU has created new aid from which the regions also benefit. However, there has been a trend towards the recentralisation of decisions, at least in parts of the EU. We are a strong voice for ensuring that the Cohesion Policy principle of shared management between national and regional governments also applies to other areas. In our newly established Task Forces on the Future of Cohesion and on Rural Development and Agriculture, the AER Bureau will develop proposals on how subsidiarity can be strengthened and how EU funding programmes can be designed as a meaningful whole. We actively promote the importance of regional voices in the European discourse, safeguarding a cohesive approach to decision-making.

As representatives of more than 130 regions, we bear the responsibility of fortifying European democracy. A few months ago, we published our Manifesto for the European elections 2024. A vision of Europe where decisions are made close to the citizens, where people are at the centre of crisis management, where innovation serves sustainability, where everyone can participate, and where the whole family of European countries and regions grows together.

The Conference on the Future of Europe in 2022, during which we advocated for a stronger role of regions, had highlighted the importance of including citizens in shaping our continent's destiny, a principle that gains even greater significance in an election year. Moving forward, our focus will be on expanding public participation within our network. Amongst other initiatives, the AER presented a publication on successful models of participatory democracy in the European Parliament, advocating for a bottom-up approach that resonates with the diverse voices across our regions.

In our pursuit of inclusive societies, we extend our focus beyond geographical boundaries. The AER strives to create spaces where diverse voices are heard, ensuring that inclusivity is deeply ingrained in our policies and actions. This is reflected in our work on intercultural inclusion, which has grown in dialogue with institutional allies such as the Council of Europe and thanks to successful EU projects, and helps many member regions to shape policy close to the people.

Supporting and empowering youth remains a top priority. As the world rapidly evolves, investing in the younger generation is crucial for a dynamic and resilient future. The AER actively engages with and supports youth initiatives that contribute to the vitality of our communities. That is achieved through our successfully revived Youth Regional Network (YRN), our unique Eurodisney exchange programme for young professionals, and the AER Summer Academy, which in 2023 was awarded the prestigious European Parliament Citizens' Prize for fostering intergenerational debates and youth involvement in decision-making.

In the past year, we have placed a strong emphasis on green innovation. The urgent need to address climate change requires innovative solutions, and the AER is dedicated to fostering initiatives that propel us towards a sustainable future. Our Working Groups on the Bioeconomy and Green Hydrogen, alongside our Task Force on Decarbonisation bring together the pioneers in our network for sustainable technologies. We have presented contributions in this and other policy areas to the Council of Europe and members of the European Commission, to name just two of the institutional partners into whose work we feed the priorities of our members.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all who have contributed to our collective success in the past year. This includes our colleagues, the Secretariat, members, Seconded Officers, and our partners from politics, civil society, academia, and business. Together, let us navigate the challenges of 2024 and the upcoming elections, steering Europe towards a future that embodies the ideals of democracy, freedom, human rights, regional cohesion, green innovation, inclusivity, and pan-European success.





AER Secretary General Christian Spahr

## Secretary General's Foreword

# NEW OFFERINGS AND SKILLS FOR A CHANGING EUROPE

In 2023, our work was shaped by the priority areas of democracy and citizens' engagement, socio-economic recovery and sustainable development, as well as societal cohesion, which we implemented in specific policy fields such as inclusion, youth, skills, the green transformation, and innovation.

2023 was the European Year of Skills, which inspires the title of this report. For the AER, a 'skill' is not only a technical ability, but also the competence of recognising, appraising and sharing expertise. We have implemented several initiatives focused on skills and the capacities of regional stakeholders. These are key to the success of reforms, economic recovery, and social policies. Our Task Force on the Future of Work, the Working Groups on the Bioeconomy and Green Hydrogen, and the Eurodissey programme have together contributed to promoting relevant skills in member regions. In this report, you can find out more about how the AER enables peer learning, forms clusters, and brings together innovators from the public sector and their partners. Our EU projects, with EU-Belong as a flagship on inclusion, continue to develop as a basis for knowledge transfer between AER members. Being driven by innovative thinking and action, they enable our network to distinguish itself as an innovation driver.

Based on the AER's values of democratic engagement and participation, we continued to champion European values. The collaboration between AER and the Council of Europe has been instrumental in advancing our efforts towards stronger regional democracies in wider Europe. At its Summit in Reykjavik in May 2023, we provided input on how regions can be given even more weight in the organisation with the aim of promoting human and civil rights, the rule of law and social progress.

As a pan-European association, the AER has shown active solidarity with our growing Ukrainian membership. We have been working in dedicated alliances, and created our own platform with the AER Focus Group Ukraine to help prepare a sustainable future for the country. This has also given us new impetus to contribute to the development of the EU neighbourhood and enlargement policy.

In this and other areas, the EU has involved us in stakeholder consultations. Several Commissioners have contributed keynotes to our events or exchanged with us bilaterally, which has allowed us to communicate the needs of our members to the EU's political leaders.

In a nutshell, we have formed new thematic and geographical networks, demonstrated our specialist expertise and insights into the future of democracy, established new learning formats, successfully promoted our programmes for young people and practice-orientated EU projects, and brought our members closer together again after the end of the pandemic.

The Secretariat, Executive Board, and members have started work on a new multi-annual strategy which will show how the AER adapts to a changing and challenging political environment. The strategy includes our mission as organization, core aims and values, and our vision for the further development of the AER.

Our good reputation as a political partner, our members leading the AER bodies and activities, strong thematic communities, the member services and the imaginative team are the strengths of the AER. With a strong platform of partners, we can achieve more than we can alone as our community is held together by core political values transcending party boundaries.

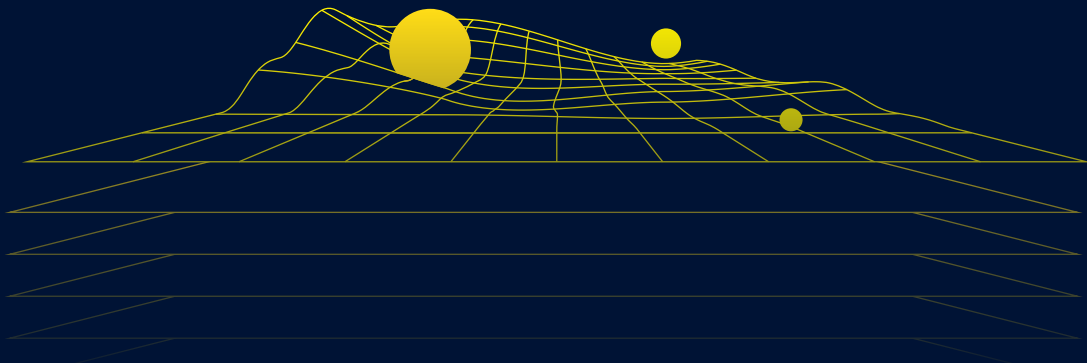
As I write this, the next step in my career is approaching. It has been an honour to serve this network with the cause of making policy close to the citizens. The AER brings very special people together: I have always been impressed by the diversity of cultures, brilliant ideas and mutual enrichment. I would like to thank our President, Board, Bureau, and all who volunteer with us for their trust. Also, AER's partners in the EU and international organisations, associations and NGOs, think tanks and universities. And, especially, the formidable team of our Secretariat. I wish the AER all the best for the next stage and look forward to further exchanges with you in the spirit of shared goals.

# ABOUT THE AER AND ITS MISSION

The Assembly of European Regions (AER) is the largest independent network of regions in wider Europe, gathering regions from 25 countries—from Norway to Turkey and from Georgia to Portugal. The AER is present everywhere on the European continent, inside and outside the European Union. It is the place to be for regional stakeholders across Europe: for politicians, officers, experts and activists.

As a network built on international collaboration, we stand strong to promote a Europe that embraces its diversity to thrive in a global world. Since our creation in 1985, the AER has played a pivotal role in the recognition of regions as key players in the European project.

We believe that a prosperous, multi-ethnic, multicultural and multilingual Europe goes hand in hand with prosperous regions. We help our members improve their policies by exchanging experiences, sharing practices and providing capacity building initiatives. We pride ourselves on our bottom-up approach and on driving initiatives that make a real difference to communities in our member regions all over Europe.



## HOW THE AER WORKS

The AER provides a framework enabling regions to learn from each other and acquire the skills and knowledge needed to engage at European and international levels. The infographic and text below explain how the AER works:



# WHICH SERVICES DOES THE AER OFFER?

## EU Projects

Aligned with the AER's political priorities and the work of the different bodies such as the Bureau, Working Groups and Programmes, EU projects enable members to work on a diverse range of topics such as inclusion, youth engagement and Cohesion Policy. They further help members to connect with experts in the field and with relevant institutions and organisations.

With the goal of delivering value to the entire network and addressing members' needs, the Projects Unit coordinates with other AER workstreams to trial new methods for knowledge sharing and peer learning, advocacy actions and innovative formats. It also provides information on different EU funding opportunities—for EU and non-EU members—and facilitates partner searches for new projects within our network of regions and partner organisations. With the priority of maintaining accountability and transparency, it ensures consistent communication about project activities and outputs.

## Policy and Knowledge transfer

The Policy and Knowledge transfer activities enable members to initiate mutual learning activities on any topic relevant to regional policy making. This can be done through thematic events and Working Groups, bilateral peer-to-peer meetings, and knowledge transfer activities in the context of EU projects.

Peer learning supports innovation in the public sector via the sharing of regional policies and practices. Depending on needs, expectations and resources, the AER engineers learning experiences that can span several years, as in the case of EU-projects or just a few hours, as in the case of knowledge transfer workshops.

As one of the bottom up modalities for peer learning, an AER Working Group provides a space for experience and knowledge exchange between regional policymakers, both civil servants and politicians. Chaired by a politician supported by a civil servant and facilitated by the AER Secretariat, Working Groups are set up for a two-year period and meet both in person and online. Activities may include but are not limited to study visits, regional experience exchanges, seminars, information sessions, workshops.

## Advocacy and Institutional Relations

Working to advance AER's political priorities for 2020-2025, the advocacy and institutions relations actions provide a strong voice for European regions through direct engagement with institutional stakeholders. The AER actively supports and coordinates membership's engagement and joint advocacy with European and international institutions and deepened our strategic alliances with partners. This involves participating in a range of meetings and events and convening joint policy propositions on key policy issues for European regions.

## Programmes

The AER's programmes (Eurodissey, Summer Academy, Youth Regional Network) are an integral part of our identity and services to regions. They generate several opportunities for young people: paid traineeships, participation in international events, advocacy on policy recommendations and capacity-building initiatives.

Through interregional peer learning activities, like the exchange of experiences and practices, they aim to foster cross-border cooperation, partnerships and ultimately a sense of European belonging between young people and European regions. The AER, young people, and member regions work together to ensure the added value of the AER programmes to regions.

## Member Relations

As a member-based network, the AER bases our initiatives on the needs expressed by our regions. Emerging from the pandemic, in 2023, the AER sought to reconnect with members and better understand their priorities. This involved over fifty bilateral and group meetings with the Secretariat, and the creation of a new, comprehensive slide deck 'How to Make the Most of Your AER Membership', which is available to all members and updated on an ongoing basis. More broadly, feedback received from members in 2023 is being consolidated and fed into deliberations on the AER's new long-term strategy.



Skills development is a critical driver of economic growth, competitiveness, and social cohesion. As Europe advances toward a green and digital future, regions must play a central role in formulating and implementing effective skills policies that respond to local needs. In practice, this means regions must be positioned to deliver education, training, and skills programmes that respond to the specific demands of local economies and societies. This will ensure that their workforces are prepared to navigate the challenges and opportunities of the future.

The AER seized upon the EU's European Year of Skills 2023 as an opportunity to mainstream the importance of skills development at a pan-European level. Throughout the year, AER ran events and activities to further engage European regions in critical conversations about the importance of skills and talent development. The objectives were to empower people and businesses as contributors to the green and digital transitions, support innovation, competitiveness, growth and prosperity across all corners of Europe.



As a community of practice, the AER is uniquely positioned to share insights and practices on the topic of skills development. Within our flexible frameworks, members can initiate joint actions either to influence EU policy making through the Task Forces, or to improve regional policies and practices and develop projects through the Working Groups. The AER Working Groups, together with the knowledge transfer communities created within EU projects, establish international communities of peers, who exchange around a policy area, discuss specific aspects of regional policy development and implementation, and support each other and create a sounding board to improve policies and practices. To ensure quality interactions, the AER uses a wide array of tools and methodologies; ranging from support to emerging bottom-up initiatives, the development of peer-assistance frameworks, the engineering of learning experiences, and coaching.

In mutual learning, the quality of the interaction is a major predictor of the success of the learning. For flexibility and tailorability, the AER community provides an ideal framework for capacity building and inspiration for policymakers, who become able to engage with the practice of peer learning. Peer learning is particularly efficient in a complex environment such as regional affairs, where information is available everywhere, but knowledge about what is actually useful for regional policy development and implementation is distributed across systems in uneven ways.

By accelerating the transfer of actionable knowledge and the capacity of regions to innovate, the AER levels the playing field; establishing connections between regions who have converging interests and shared priorities and bridging the ones who experience different realities. Far from limiting the commitment to skills development in the year 2023, the AER will build upon the achievements illustrated in this Activity Report to continue enabling regions for a skilled future.

# SUBSIDIARITY IN ACTION FOR A COHESIVE EUROPE

## WHAT THIS SECTION IS ABOUT:

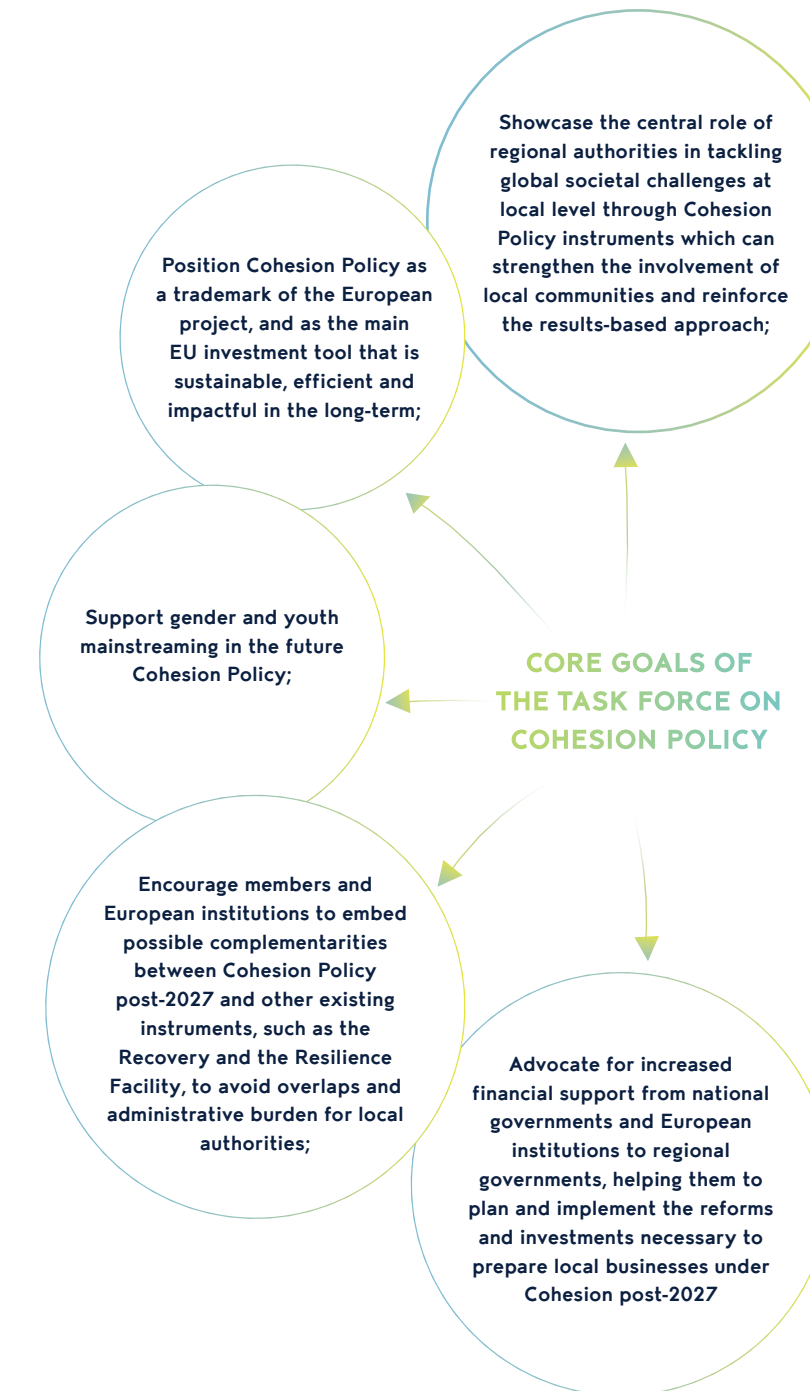
This section explores how the AER supported the creative capacity of the principle of subsidiarity across Europe. This principle does not only enable the development of effective regional governance; it fosters collaborations between public bodies and civil society organisations, freeing space for community-friendly initiatives. Within the European Union, Cohesion Policy is the most comprehensive manifestation of what subsidiarity can achieve. This is illustrated by AER's activities aimed at advocating, communicating and raising awareness on benefits and opportunities funded by Cohesion Policy through several activities, including the EU project YOUTHopia and the new Task Force on Cohesion Policy. In wider Europe, the principle of subsidiarity creates space for regional communities to shape responses to present challenges and priorities, as shown through region-led initiatives emerging from Task Forces on the Future of Work and Agriculture and Rural Development.

## ADVOCACY AND INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

### • Cohesion Alliance and Task Force on Cohesion Policy

The AER is a member of the Cohesion Alliance, which is built upon cooperation between the leading European associations of cities and regions and the European Committee of the Regions. Its main goal is to advocate for a strong EU Cohesion Policy that must continue to be a pillar of the EU's future. On 12 October 2022, the AER signed a joint declaration with the Cohesion Alliance about the common will to keep Cohesion Policy as the EU's most important investment policy, the EU's most visible instrument at local and regional level, a long-term development policy based on principles of shared management, partnership and multilevel governance and a policy that follows a place-based approach and addresses the territorial diversity of the Union.

Moreover, the AER launched a Cohesion Policy Task Force aiming to influence political processes so that the proposal for the future Cohesion Policy post 2027 integrates the perspectives and suggestions of AER members and positions Cohesion Policy as the main EU investment tool to achieve economic, social and territorial cohesion in the long-term. In doing so, the Cohesion Policy Task Force pursues several core objectives:



As part of this process, the AER organised a Bureau debate during the Winter Dialogues in Lower Austria (Austria), in collaboration with the European Commission’s Joint Research Center (JRC) and the European Investment Bank (EIB) to identify synergies in ensuring a strong Cohesion Policy that delivers for the needs and the priorities of regions. According to the JRC, more evidence is needed to improve the discussion on the future Cohesion Policy package in terms of governance, territorial focus, impact of the funds and use for crisis-management and development.

A key message that emerged during the Bureau debate and in its follow-up is that the EIB orientation for 2021-2027 should focus on increased lending for cohesion regions from the current 40%, to 45% by 2025. The EIB also aims to increase the share of climate action and environmental lending across cohesion regions.

Embedding Cohesion Policy into global societal challenges is crucial because of a stark innovation divide in Europe. For instance, cohesion regions invest only a quarter in innovation than more developed regions, on average—the investment gap can be as large as ten-fold. Less developed regions tend to focus on innovation investments with a strong infrastructure element, whereas transition regions focus on innovation in services. On the other hand, data shows that more developed regions focus on industry and manufacturing, in particular on the development and deployment of advanced technologies.

In this context, the Task Force on Cohesion Policy will advocate to continue strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion in the coming years, stressing that Cohesion Policy is a policy for all regions. The Task Force will continue making the case for simplifying and harmonising rules across EU programmes, as well as to evaluate EU policy instruments before introducing new ones to avoid unnecessary overlap. Moreover, it will stress the importance of focusing on the objective of sustainable development of the EU and its regions in the next programming period, as well

as addressing the specificities of regions; including regions in transition, those on the EU’s external borders, outermost regions, and regions facing demographic challenges.

• **Task Force on Jobs, Growth and Investment**

The AER has played an important role as a convener of dialogue with European Institutions on a strong recovery in growth and jobs following the COVID-19 pandemic. The Task Force on Jobs, Growth, and Investment, chaired by AER Vice Presidents Alessandra Zedda, Sardinia (Italy), and Damir Zobenica, Vojvodina (Serbia), has made significant strides in addressing the profound impact of the COVID-19 crisis on economies, jobs, and public services, while also exploring the unique opportunities presented by the recovery as we transition to a digital and sustainable economy.

Throughout the year, the Task Force showcased regional authorities’ contributions to recovery measures and transition plans. It advocated for increased financial and technical support for regional governments, aiming to facilitate sustainable, fair, and inclusive recoveries at the regional level, while accelerating the green and digital transition.

To amplify regions’ voices in reform and investment agendas at national and European levels, the Task Force consistently engaged with EU institutions, including the European Commission and the European Parliament. Emphasising the need for jobs-driven economic growth, the Task Force advocated for investments that promote quality jobs for all, based on an economic model that works for regions across Europe, reflecting the specific needs and potential of our territories, businesses, and people.

In June 2023, former AER President Magnus Berntsson met with European Commissioner Nicolas Schmit to set out AER’s messages for the European Year of Skills, and discuss how regions could collaborate with the European Commission to ensure the success of this initiative.

EU PROJECTS

YOUTHopia at a glance

—Generating Perspectives for Cohesion

Topic	Cohesion Policy
Role of the AER	Lead Partner
Partner regions (AER members)	Donegal County Council (Ireland), Eastern and Western Slovenia, Košice (Slovakia), Union of Cyprus Municipalities
Programme	DG REGIO
Outcome	YOUTHopia is a communication campaign aiming to make young people aware of the tangible benefits and concrete opportunities made available by Cohesion Policy, with the ultimate goal of empowering them to be an active part of their communities and Europe’s life
Budget for the AER	€194,144.17 (80% EU grant)
Website	<a href="https://youthopia.aer.eu/">https://youthopia.aer.eu/</a>
Timeline	October 2022 - October 2023





PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

Built upon the successful project Together4Cohesion (2019), the pan-European communication campaign of YOUTHopia co-funded by DG Regio, aimed to raise awareness of how Cohesion Policy boosts the economic and social well-being of citizens and regions through programmes, projects and services with a focus on youth employment and the transition towards a green and climate-neutral Europe. As a result of the collaboration between the Secretariat, the media partner Babel International, five AER member regions and the Youth Regional Network, the YOUTHopia project engaged young people and other regional stakeholders through training and co-creation activities. This boosted a feeling of ownership and practice of cooperation able to ensure a sustained and long-lasting communication of Cohesion-funded projects and initiatives.

Involvement of member regions

Designed within the AER regional network and driven by the commitment of ensuring local impact, YOUTHopia targeted the young people most affected by the twin transitions. The five AER flagship regions—Donegal County Council, Eastern and Western Slovenia, Košice, Union of Cyprus Municipalities—selected the most appropriate means and channels of communication to spread knowledge and spark discussion on Cohesion Policy, becoming ambassadors of the project’s spirit within and outside the AER network.

Overview of activities

Several actions linked to the transnational dimension of the campaign have been combined with AER and partners’ international events. YOUTHopia kicked off during the Eurodysssey Forum 2022 with a co-development session on partners’ expectations and priorities on Cohesion Policy. In June 2023, during the AER General Assembly in Barcelona, YOUTHopia led the workshop ‘Cohesion Policy: Lessons to support youth entrepreneurship and skills development in regions’. Then, during the summer, the project attracted more than 150 participants at the photo exhibition in Paris and Brussels, and mobilised an international audience with the workshop ‘How to Build Trust among (Young) Citizens to Support Urban Change’ with Tilburg Municipality during the European Week of Regions and Cities in October 2023.



YOUTHopia Evening Debate and Photojournalism Exhibition

YOUTHopia culminated with an Evening Debate and Photojournalism Exhibition organised in Brussels (Belgium) on 9 October 2023, which was opened by the remarks of Elio di Rupo, Minister-President of Wallonia (Belgium). It was an opportunity to reflect on the importance of finding innovative strategies to communicate on Cohesion Policy. With the EU getting ready for the elections in June 2024, the work of YOUTHopia regions provided a blueprint for the involvement of regional authorities and communities in spreading awareness of the benefits of Cohesion Policy.

The launch of the AER Task Force on Cohesion Policy marked the end of the final event of the project, showing that the AER’s work on Cohesion Policy will continue and actually upscaled ahead of the European Elections, as will collaboration with the Cohesion Alliance. The YOUTHopia website will stay up and running beyond the project. It will continue to collect and update information for young people regarding Cohesion Policy, operating as the AER’s hub for everything related to Cohesion Policy.

Thanks to the coaching for sustainability within YOUTHopia, the five AER flagship regions identified common areas of interest for future collaboration: brain-drain, sustainable tourism and cultural heritage, gender equality, social inclusion of minorities, and environmental sustainability.

## YOUTHopia activities at the regional and transnational levels

### REGIONAL LEVEL

Training workshops on youth and Cohesion Policy in the flagship regions for young people and aspiring young journalists.

A multimedia campaign boosting visibility and relatability of local stories on Cohesion Policy benefits in each of the five regions.

Five 'Future Fairs' organised in the flagship regions between April and June 2023 with 500+ participants. These Fairs served as platforms for beneficiaries of Cohesion Policy to share their stories, inspire the next generation, and foster personal and professional networks.

The flagship regions identified and implemented extra communication activities, which consisted of one online and onsite visibility actions tailored to local communication traditions.

The 'YOUTHopia Contest—Interrail Tickets Give-Away' was a social media contest to give visibility to EU-funded Cohesion projects which reached 30,000 young people.

### TRANSNATIONAL LEVEL

A series of multimedia articles in English, French and Italian by Babel International to boost visibility of local stories in the European stage.

A podcast series 'Meanings of Cohesion' with episodes on Cohesion Policy released in October 2023.

The AER's '#HotlineCohesion' series provided information on initiatives funded or linked to Cohesion Policy with 14 mini-articles and videos. It focused on the Policy's potential for driving youth-driven initiatives and contributing to a sustainable future.

The three-session workshop series 'Unboxing the EU Cohesion Policy' was organised together with the Youth Regional Network, and it attracted over 100 participants. It trained them to effectively engage with their peers and promote Cohesion Policy in their regions and cities.

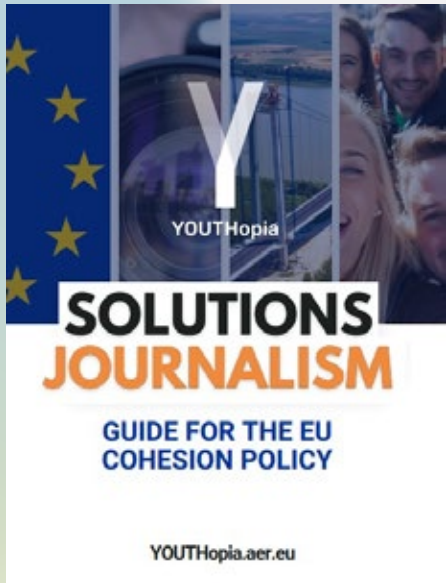
## YOUTHopia publications at a glance

### YOUTH MANIFESTO



Declaration of principle on the importance of Cohesion Policy to strengthen citizen and youth participation and ownership of the European Project.

### SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM

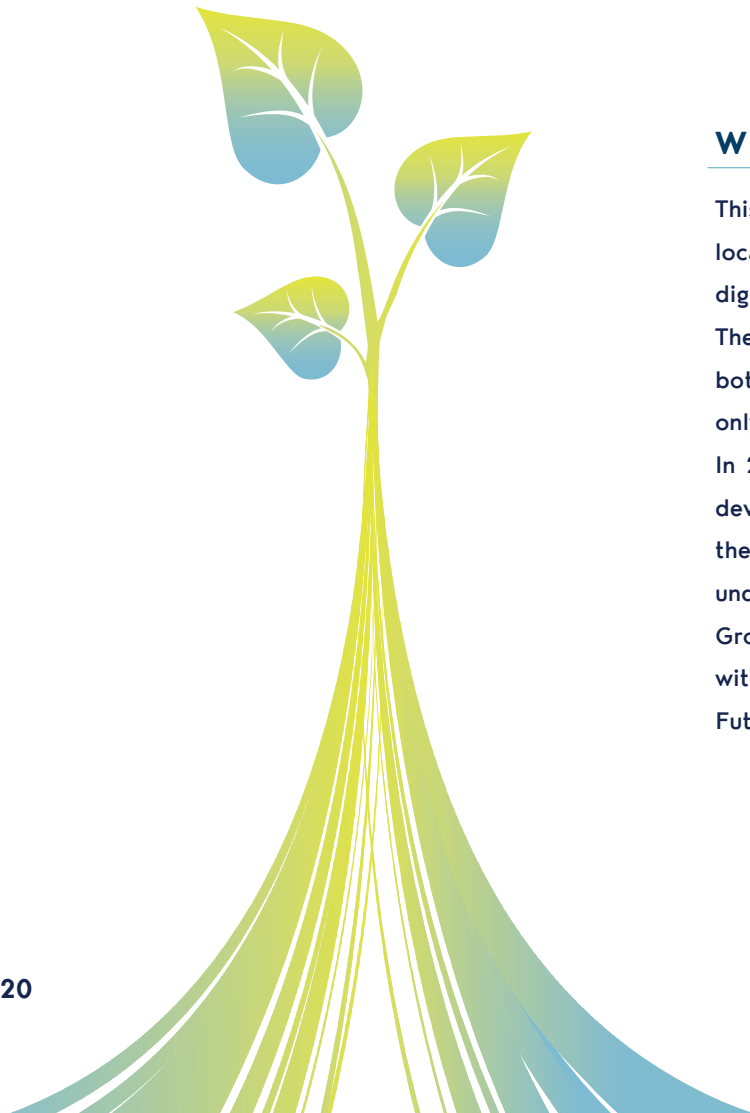


Solutions Journalism Guide 'Effective Communication about the European Cohesion Policy' by media partner .Ereb.

Guidelines on how to use the approach of solutions journalism to explain Cohesion Policy.



# PLANTING SEEDS FOR SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION



## WHAT THIS SECTION IS ABOUT:

This section explores how the AER worked to nest local and regional priorities in the long-term green and digital agendas of European and national institutions. These twin transitions can be an uplifting force for both developed and transitioning communities, but only if territorial needs are understood and addressed. In 2023, AER activities demonstrated that sustainable development and innovation are directly linked to the social and business ecosystems of regions. This understanding laid the groundwork for the Working Groups on Green Hydrogen and Bioeconomy, as well as within the Task Forces on Sustainable Tourism and the Future of Work.

## POLICY AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

### Working Group on Hydrogen at a glance

Chair	Albert Castellanos, Catalonia (Spain)
Seconded Officers	Albert Ballbé, Elena Herrero
Supporting regions	Abruzzo (Italy), Valle d’Aosta (Italy), Grand Est (France), Fribourg (Switzerland), Burgenland (Austria), Denizli (Turkey), Mayo (Ireland), Flevoland (the Netherlands), Košice (Slovakia), Lower Austria (Austria), Maramures (Romania), Värmland (Sweden), Västra-Götaland (Sweden), Gaziantep (Turkey), Adana (Turkey), Donegal (Ireland)
Areas for collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engagement of businesses in the green hydrogen value chain</li><li>• Decarbonisation of fuels-based and polluting industries</li><li>• Self-sufficiency of the agricultural sector</li><li>• Sourcing, infrastructure, import/ export of green hydrogen</li><li>• Production from wind energy, hydraulic power</li><li>• Development of the whole hydrogen value-chain, support, or development of hydrogen valleys</li><li>• Fuel cells and battery technologies studies</li></ul>

• Why a Working Group on hydrogen?

Hydrogen makes up less than 2% of Europe’s energy mix, and is still largely produced from fossil fuels. Producing clean hydrogen from renewable sources like wind and solar is expensive, and while technology has improved and became more affordable, there remain challenges connecting hydrogen production to energy grids and securing enough investment to make it viable.

Regions are essential actors in scaling-up the renewable hydrogen economy across Europe. They have a key role in facilitating, supporting, developing collaborations for the deployment of green hydrogen. By cooperating and sharing experiences and good practices, regions can inspire each other and identify the best possible solutions in several areas at interregional level.



Study Visit of the Port of Barcelona, June 2023

• Overview of the activities of the Working Group on Green Hydrogen

The proposal for a Working Group on Green Hydrogen was submitted to the AER Executive Board following the success of the AER event ‘Green (H)ydrogen: Powering Our Regions’ Future’ organised in May 2022, with activities starting in March 2023.

In June 2023, on the occasion of the AER General Assembly, the Working Group organised a study visit at the Port of Barcelona, which showcased the role of the Port of Barcelona in the green hydrogen economy of Catalonia. Specifically, AER members learned about the Port of Barcelona’s transition plan to decarbonise its activities as maritime port, its present and future energy needs, and the collaborations in the region on alternative fuels and green hydrogen. The AER Working Group also organised a workshop the same day to discuss the potential of Regional Innovation Valleys, and learn about the experience of the Port of Hamburg. The group also communicated about the matchmaking for Regional Innovation Valleys organised by the European Commission in September and is preparing new activities for 2024.

Working Group on the Bioeconomy at a glance

Chair	Aud Hove, Innlandet (Norway) (until end of 2023)
Seconded Officers	Stian Berg
Supporting regions	Värmland (Sweden), Gelderland (the Netherlands), Fribourg (Switzerland), Donegal (Ireland), Údarás na Gaeltachta (Ireland), Adana (Turkey), Eastern Slovenia (Slovenia), Lower Austria (Austria), West Slovenia (Slovenia), Dolj (Romania), Tirana (Albania), Umbria (Italy), Valencia (Spain)
Areas for collaboration	• bio-based construction materials and techniques, new food systems, waste management

• **Why a Working Group on the Bioeconomy?**

The bioeconomy covers all sectors and systems that rely on biological resources. It spans over sectors as diverse as food, construction, energy and waste management. In the context of societal challenges such as climate change, food security, energy independence and environmental sustainability, the bioeconomy is able to generate solutions for a better use of resources, life-cycle management and the development of new materials. The bioeconomy depends heavily on the geographic, climatic, economic and political specificities of regions, which is why peer learning between regions is instrumental to create a common understanding of different opportunities and challenges, and develop the bioeconomy as part of the solution for climate and the environment.

• **Overview of the activities of the Working Group on the Bioeconomy**

The activities of the Working Group on the Bioeconomy aim to address the challenges related to the development, attraction and retention of skills in a field where connections between stakeholders are very new and mobile.

**TIMELINE OF ACTIVITIES**

1. Kick-off meeting in June 2022 to understand, exchange and discuss priorities of common interest
2. First workshop on ‘Skills for the Bioeconomy’ in August 2022 during the Summer Academy in Donegal, Ireland
3. Second workshop on the sides of the AER Bureau in Brussels in December 2022 on ‘The Bioeconomy & the New European Bauhaus’. The workshop examined regional strategies to promote bio-based innovation to decarbonise the construction sector.
4. Mapping of almost 100 EU-funded opportunities for regions involved in the Bioeconomy to team up or find partners for project development in May 2023. The Summer period was used to facilitate several connections between regions potentially interested in partnering up for EU calls for proposals.
5. A study visit was organised in the context of the AER Winter Dialogues in Lower Austria in December 2023, to learn about processes, multi-stakeholder partnerships, and circular approaches to improve the industry’s carbon footprint.



‘The Bioeconomy & the New European Bauhaus’ Workshop, December 2022



Study visit to the Agrana Plant in Lower Austria, Austria, November 2023



## ADVOCACY AND INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

### Task Force on Future of Work

One of the major advocacy pushes over the last year has been on the future of European jobs and skills. Led by AER Vice President Liljana Madjar from Zahodna Slovenija, the Task Force on the Future of Work played a pivotal role in examining and formulating policy proposals. These proposals aimed to maximise opportunities presented by digital transformation, demographic changes, and the digital and green transition, to boost economic growth, employment, and productivity, and foster economic, social, and territorial cohesion, ultimately enhancing quality of life across Europe.

A significant accomplishment of the Task Force was the organisation of a debate during the Summer Bureau Meeting in June in Barcelona. Titled 'Next Generation Skills: Regions shaping the Future of Work', this event, hosted by the Government of Catalonia, convened representatives from local and regional authorities, institutions, and various stakeholders to discuss the challenges and opportunities faced by regions in adapting to the changing nature of work and strategising for the future.

Informed by insights gained from the debate, the Task Force developed its position, emphasising the importance of adapting education and employment systems to regional needs, promoting inclusivity and diversity, revitalising rural areas, and providing adequate support to local and regional authorities in navigating the evolving labour market landscape.

The draft position, a culmination of the Task Force's collective expertise, was presented, discussed, and approved at the Autumn Bureau Meeting held in Lower Austria in November. This work serves as evidence of AER's commitment to actively shaping Europe's approach to the future of work, ensuring that regions are at the forefront of positive change and progress.

The AER became part of the Territorial Working Group of the Harnessing Talent Platform, initiated by the European Commission. The inaugural meeting of this Working Group took place in November. AER joined the sub-group on "Talent retention/attraction and work-life balance in rural areas" marking our commitment to addressing specific challenges faced by rural communities in talent management.



AER Summer Bureau Debate in Barcelona, Spain, June 2023

### Task Force on Sustainable Tourism

The AER work on building a greener, more accessible, resilient, innovative tourism sector has been critically important this year. Informed by the Bureau debate held in December 2022 as part of the Autumn Bureau Meeting, the Task Force on Tourism, chaired by Vice President Mícheál Ó hÉanaigh from Donegal (Ireland), developed a comprehensive position that underscores the crucial role of regional governments in steering the tourism sector towards recovery and sustainability. The position advocates for recognising and supporting regions in their contribution to the EU Agenda for Tourism 2030, emphasising sustainable practices, digital transition, cultural heritage preservation, workforce development, and enhanced multi-level governance. This strategic approach aligns with the overarching goal of building a fully recovered, resilient, inclusive, competitive, and sustainable tourism sector, echoing the principles of the European Green Deal and the UN 2030 Agenda.

Following the adoption of the Position on Tourism of Tomorrow at the Bureau Meeting in Barcelona in June 2023, AER proactively engaged with the European Commission on enhancing the capacity of regional authorities in formulating and executing comprehensive strategies for the long-term sustainability of the tourism sector at the local and regional levels, and to ensure the collaborative implementation of the EU transition pathway for tourism.

AER actively contributed to the Commission's collaborative initiatives with stakeholders to support the co-implementation of the Transition Pathway, including stakeholder meetings and discussions on the transformation of tourism in the EU.







# CULTIVATING BONDS FOR INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

## WHAT THIS SECTION IS ABOUT:

This section explores how the AER worked to nurture interregional communities of regions and citizens committed to social cohesion. Through the EU projects EU-Belong and Includ-EU, and regions-led initiatives like the Working Group on Mental Health, the AER used the methodology of knowledge transfer to bolster capacities of regional stakeholders and strengthen the resilience of communities as a whole. Enriched by the active involvement of the Intercultural Regions Network and Youth Regional Network, the AER members demonstrated their commitment to a vision of inclusive and solidary Europe.



## EU PROJECTS

### Includ-EU at a glance

Topic	Integration of migrants
Role of the AER	Partner
Member regions involved	Catalonia (Spain); active involvement of regions from the Intercultural Regions Network (IRN) and Council of Europe
Programme	AMIF - Asylum, Migration and Integration Funds
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mapping and thematic grouping of integration practices at local and regional level in six European countries (Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Spain, Romania, the Netherlands)</li><li>• Capacity-building activities for local and regional authorities to facilitate the integration of third-country nationals through training and study visits</li><li>• Implementation and assessment of five pilot integration projects.</li><li>• Regional exchanges on integration policy and practices through seven workshops (including the coaching for sustainability and the final conference) and five webinars aimed at fostering a more coherent approach to integration on an EU-wide scale</li></ul>
Budget for the AER	€ 303,044.35 (90% EU grant)
Website	<a href="https://includeu.eu/">https://includeu.eu/</a>
Timeline	January 2020 - September 2023

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

In the world of regional integration policies, the Includ-EU project led by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) spearheaded a collaboration among local and regional authorities from Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, Slovenia and Spain with the purpose of enhancing transnational knowledge and experience sharing, cooperation and partnerships. Includ-EU also nurtured a virtual community of practice developed through knowledge transfer activities. Thematic webinars and a comprehensive communication strategy via the Includ-EU website also played a pivotal role in sustaining this online community.

• Involvement of partner and member regions

2023 marked the end of the Includ-EU project. Over 45 months, regions and partners adapted, reinvented and created methods and learning opportunities which ensured a successful exchange of practices and experiences on inclusion despite the challenge represented by the pandemic. With the organisation of online and onsite workshops made up of participants with different levels of expertise in integration policies, Includ-EU encouraged exchanges on integration policy and practices between regional and local authorities, and facilitated discussion and cooperation among stakeholders from different fields.



Includ-EU final conference, Brussels, September 2023

• Overview of activities

Includ-EU developed through seven on-site and online workshops, attended by around 500 participants. Open to members of AER and the Intercultural Regions Network (IRN), these knowledge transfer workshops focused on the issue of discrimination and what strategies can be effective to address it.

Two online trainings were organised In January and June. The first one, ‘Anti-discrimination: a Transformative Approach for Organisations’, focused on how to identify and prevent systemic discrimination in different environments. Attended by 260 participants, it was held in English and simultaneously translated into Italian, Slovenian, Romanian, Greek, Spanish, and Dutch. The online training in June aimed at further nurturing the connection with others in the network, recognising the project’s legacy, appreciating its value and enabling its sustainability.

The mobilisation of the Includ-EU community was at the core of the peer learning workshop ‘Whole-of-Society Approach: Cross-sectoral and Multi-stakeholder collaboration for Inclusion’ in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, on 28 March 2023, which gathered representatives from the Netherlands, France, Spain, Belgium, Ireland, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, and



Includ-EU workshop, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, March 2023

Romania. It had the goal of identifying shared challenges and strategies to solve common issues. During this event, AER members Maramures and Timis (Romania), Mayo and Donegal County Councils (Ireland) shared their experiences regarding the role of local and regional authorities as facilitators of cross-sectoral collaborations. Two study visits were organised to better understand practices in context and discover the Cluj-Napoca One-Stop-Shop. Sharing experiences in small groups enabled participants to deepen the connection between participants, understand how to cope in challenging circumstances and further consolidated the informal network of peers of regions and local authorities.

Taking stock of three years of connections and activities, Includ-EU culminated with the final conference, workshop and study visit in Brussels under the theme ‘Including all & Embracing Diversity’ in September 2023. The final event showcased how the project contributed to tangible improvements in integration at the regional and local

levels, and offered valuable insights for future integration policies. It also emphasised the value of structured transnational exchanges and the capacity-building of regional and local authorities. The final Includ-EU event specifically explored intersectionality and participatory approaches in integration policies, recognising that diverse backgrounds and experiences intersect to shape individuals’ lives. AER President Albert Castellanos, Vice President for Interregional and Global Cooperation Jean-Luc Vanraes and Vice President for Democracy, Inclusion and Equality Nina Björby, and experts discussed the value of peer learning in accelerating change, highlighted the role of intercultural approaches and of involving the private sector in integration efforts. The event underscored the vital role of cities and regions in integrating newcomers and creating inclusive communities. It emphasised the challenges posed by anti-migration narratives and the need for multi-stakeholder collaborations for effective policy making.





## EU-Belong at a glance

<b>Topic</b>	Intercultural integration strategies for regions
<b>Role of the AER</b>	Lead partner
<b>Member regions involved</b>	Arad (Romania), Catalonia (Spain), Donegal (Ireland), Salzburg (Austria), Timis (Romania), Västra Götaland (Sweden) (until 2023); and involvement of the Intercultural Regions Network members, and institutional partners (Council of Europe and International Organisation for Migration)
<b>Programme</b>	AMIF - Asylum, Migration and Integration Funds
<b>Timeline</b>	January 2022-January 2025
<b>Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capacity building program for public authorities and local stakeholders</li> <li>Elaboration of a multi-stakeholder model framework for intercultural integration in the regions.</li> <li>Design of a three-year integration strategy in each of the eleven partner regions</li> <li>implementation of eleven pilot integration projects.</li> <li>Knowledge sharing and dissemination activities at national and transnational level</li> </ul>
<b>Budget</b>	Total project budget € 1,499,996.73 (90% EU grant) - Budget for the AER 512,064.55 (90% EU grant)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://aer.eu/eu-belong/">https://aer.eu/eu-belong/</a>

## PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

Started in January 2022, the EU-Belong project is pioneering in the field of inclusion and integration for its intercultural approach developed by the Council of Europe to innovate regional policy making. EU-Belong will showcase how multi-level and multi-stakeholder approaches, tailored capacity-building, co-design and transnational mutual-learning leverage regional efforts and generate innovation.

### • Involvement of regions

The project is implemented in six AER member regions: Arad (Romania), Catalonia (Spain), Donegal (Ireland), Salzburg (Austria), Timis (Romania), Västra Götaland (Sweden, until mid- 2023). The other regions who are partners in the project are: Emilia- Romagna (Italy), Leipzig (Germany), Navarra (Spain), Pomerania (Poland) and Poznan (Poland). Two technical partners, ICEI and ART-ER, support the project implementation. The EU-Belong project is closely linked with the Intercultural Regions Network (IRN), which also means IRN member regions are and can be involved in project activities.

### • Overview of activities

Intersectional to all AER workstreams, from advocacy to project management to knowledge transfer, the format and content of EU-Belong activities were developed consistently with the guidance and feedback of the project's Steering Committee on Intercultural Integration Strategies.

The housing crisis and related challenges were the red thread tying together EU-Belong's events in 2023. The knowledge transfer event in Gdańsk (Pomerania) from 14-15 June 2023 on 'Addressing The Housing Crisis: An Essential Building Block For Intercultural Regions' gathered several stakeholders and civil servants from Poland and various countries in Europe. The aim was to exchange good practices on housing policies and solutions as a key component for intercultural societies, as well as understanding current challenges faced by the region of Pomerania when it comes to the accommodation of refugees. The event featured two study visits, a peer learning workshop and several roundtables aimed at sharing innovative housing practices and represented the first step of a series of online peer exchanges in the context of the EU-Belong Knowledge Transfer Clusters 'Where People live'.



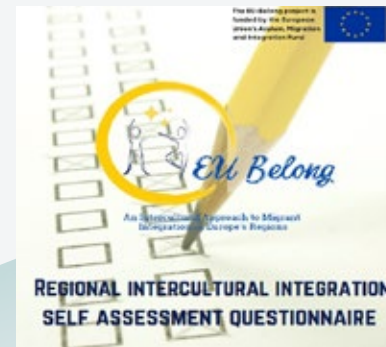
Knowledge Transfer event in Gdańsk, Pomerania, Poland, June 2023

The housing crisis was further explored through two online events. The first one was the first EU-Belong Inclusion Cafe on 16 October, a peer learning opportunity for mutual learning that aims to become a regular appointment, which focused on how to address temporary housing needs in a sustainable and collaborative way. A partner from the Includ-EU project was invited to explain the model developed by ANCI Toscana (Italy) to provide housing to migrants ineligible for reception services. The second online appointment was the first EU-Belong webinar, organised with the member region Catalonia. It took place on 23 November 2023 on the topic of 'Addressing Racial Discrimination in Housing: a multi-stakeholder Approach', and it explored the experience of the Municipality of Olot, a medium-sized city in Catalonia.

## EU-BELONG GENERATES AND DISSEMINATES KNOWLEDGE THROUGH OPEN-ACCESS PUBLICATIONS



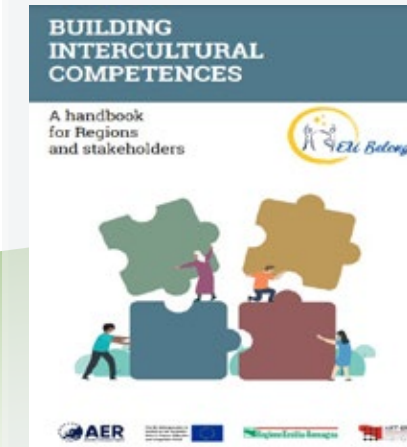
The 'Peer Review of European Replicable Good Practices' gathers ten examples in areas with an intercultural goal or dimension such as education, access to the labour market, sport, and culture.



The 'Questionnaire on Regional Intercultural Integration' is a self-assessment tool for regions interested in knowing more about their intercultural competences.



'Structure and Methodology for Multi-stakeholder Learning Labs' is the programme and methodology for a three-day learning activity to strengthen the competences of key players in planning and implementing effective integration strategies.



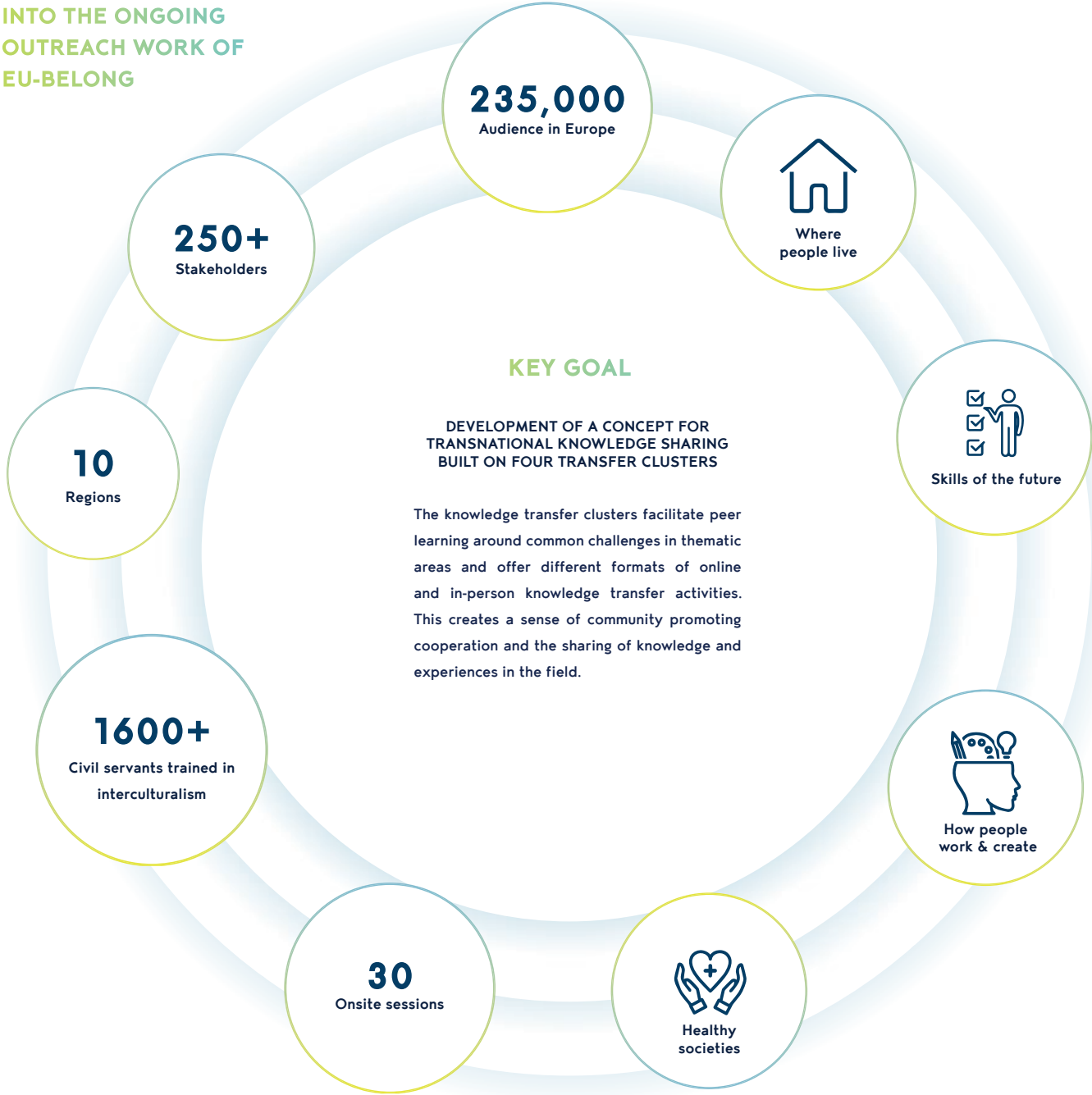
'Building Intercultural Competences' is a toolkit for public authority decision-makers and other stakeholders and practitioners looking to learn more about capacity-building activities.



Multi-stakeholder model framework and Toolkit for Regional Intercultural Integration Strategies - was developed with Catalonia, sets out a common understanding of the multilevel and multi stakeholder intercultural integration process. It is conceived as a blueprint to develop or strengthen existing integration strategies in place.



A SNEAK PEEK  
INTO THE ONGOING  
OUTREACH WORK OF  
EU-BELONG



## INTERCULTURAL REGIONS NETWORK (IRN)

The AER has championed a multi-level governance approach to diversity and migration. In March 2023, the AER co-organised a conference in collaboration with the Cities and Regions for Integration of Migrants network of the European Committee of the Regions, titled 'Empowering Regions and Cities in Migrant Integration Governance.' This conference underscored the importance of multi-level governance in the integration of migrants and refugees across European cities and regions. By bringing together local and regional authorities, representatives from the European Commission, other European institutions, academia, and civil society, the conference served as a crucial platform for discussing and proposing new strategies to effectively manage

migration and diversity through collaborative efforts at all levels of government. Moreover, the conference featured a comprehensive presentation of the key outcomes and tools developed as part of the AMIF funded project 'EU-Belong: Intercultural Integration of Migrants in Europe's Regions', led by AER.

Committed to fostering diversity and inclusion through active engagement in pivotal European forums and initiatives, the AER participated in the Council of Europe Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity, and Inclusion. The AER involvement extended to its Committee of Experts on Intercultural Integration of Migrants.



POLICY AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

The Working Group on Mental Health at a glance

Chair	Daniel Schützer, Värmland (SE)
Seconded Officer	Kaltum Hussein
Supporting regions	Norrbotten (Sweden), Arad (Romania), Kharkiv (Ukraine), Odesa (Ukraine), Vojvodina (Serbia), Donegal (Ireland), Brussels-Capital Region (Belgium), Alba Iulia (Romania), Region Västra Götaland (Sweden), Region Jönköpings län (Sweden), Canton of Zurich (Switzerland), Vienna (Austria), Korca (Albania), East Slovenia (Slovenia), West Slovenia (Slovenia) Special collaboration with the YRN: Tirana (Albania), Salaj (Romania), Nordland (Nordland), Donegal (Ireland), Catalonia (Spain), and the members of the YRN Committee on Mental Health
Areas for collaboration	Traumatic events, drug addiction, strategies to grow resilience and enhance prevention, research cooperation and methods to deal with bullying and hate speech



'Fostering resilience, making health a priority' workshop, AER Winter Dialogues, 29 November 2023

WHY A WORKING GROUP ON MENTAL HEALTH?

Mental health is a rising concern globally, especially since the pandemic. A holistic approach going beyond physical needs is urgently required to address psychological, social, and existential needs that affect people all over Europe. Mental illnesses affect people’s ability to engage in society, education, employment, as well as their overall health and wellbeing. There are various factors that can lead to the development of mental illness, and an intersectional perspective provides insights on how to address mental illness in an effective and sustainable way. People who face unequal opportunities or obstacles, and may be subject to specific discrimination, are also at a risk of developing mental illness as a result of their experiences. Since interregional cooperation helps regional policymakers develop preventive measures and provide better mental health services, regions have a crucial role to play.

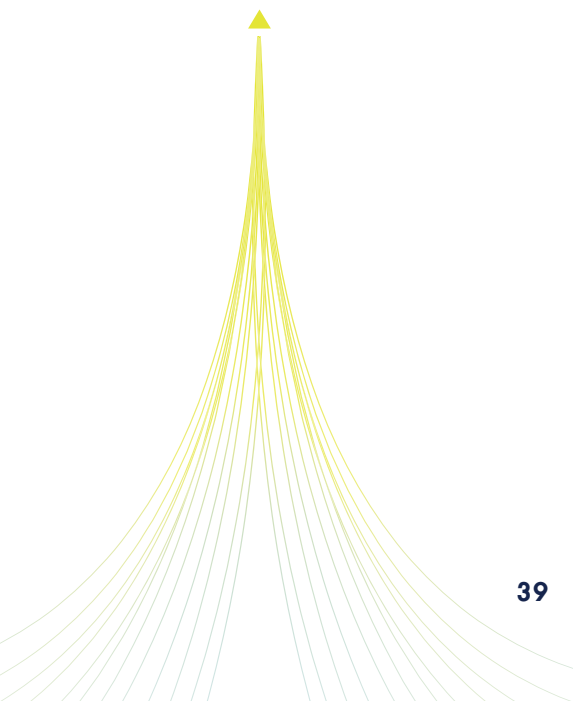
• Overview of activities

Since its inception, the Working Group on Mental Health has worked closely with the Youth Regional Network (YRN). This culminated in a dedicated meeting in October 2023 members of both got to know each other, shared perspectives, and identified priority areas for collaboration.

A first workshop was organised in collaboration with the YRN on the occasion of the AER’s Winter Dialogues on 29 November 2023 in Lower Austria (Austria) on ‘Fostering Resilience, making Health a Priority’. The workshop explored the reasons behind the increased need for mental health support, the strategies on how to create more resilience, ensure prevention and mainstream health and wellbeing across policies.

Experiences were shared on the response to emergency situations, post-traumatic stress and how to address mental health needs in such situations by participants from Värmland and Västra Götaland (Sweden), the Canary Islands and Catalonia (Spain), Nordland (Norway)/the Youth Regional Network, Odesa and Kryvyi Rih (Ukraine), East and West Slovenia (Slovenia), Vienna (Austria) and Korca (Albania).

The group agreed to organise virtual study visits to discover how mental health is being addressed in different regions. The first online study visit will take place in Odesa in Spring 2024.





# FROM POTENTIAL TO POWER: EMPOWERING EUROPEAN YOUTH

## WHAT THIS SECTION IS ABOUT

Through the programmes of Eurodyssey, the Youth Regional Network (YRN) and the Summer Academy, the AER aims to build a pan-European community of young people; rooted in the local reality, but projected in European fora. By expanding the professional and political horizons of young people with different backgrounds and aspirations, AER’s programmes help to address divides between and within European regions, while training their youth for present and future challenges. This section explores how their work sets the ideal background for advocacy work and EU projects on intergenerational dialogue and youth empowerment, like in the case of the Task Force on Youth and the EU-funded project MEET.

## YOUTH REGIONAL NETWORK (YRN)

The year 2023 was marked by the successful revival of the YRN, the AER’s “youth branch”, which is composed of young people aged between 16 and 30 years-old, and promotes active youth participation at regional level. The YRN provides young people with opportunities to bring forward policy recommendations, encourage debate and capacity-building, share experiences and best practices, engage with decision-makers and influence policies. The YRN is youth-led, and guided by their elected Presidium, the President, Vice-Presidents, and Committee Chairs.

After a revival process initiated at the end of 2022, which culminated with the YRN General Assembly in March 2023, the YRN was officially relaunched and its Presidium elected. Since then, the YRN has led several activities that have embedded valuable youth perspectives in the AER’s overall work.

The highlight of the year was the YRN Capacity-Building weekend in Koppang, in September 2023, hosted by Stor-Elvdal municipality, and co-funded by Innlandet County Council (Norway) and the Eastern Norway County Network. The event brought together YRN members for capacity-building, peer learning and networking activities, joined by young activists from Norwegian youth county councils, and by local and regional politicians. They addressed a number of topics and priority areas: from youth participation and civic space, to gender equality, mental health and sustainability. All of this fed into the publication of the YRN’s Action Plan. The event also included cultural showcases, allowing the participants to discover traditional singing, dancing and regional products from Innlandet County.



YRN Capacity-Building weekend in Koppang (NO), September 2023

The Thematic Committee on Youth Participation & Governance elaborated a Youth Participation Toolkit, and organised online workshops with the Timis County Youth Foundation. The Thematic Committee on Gender Equality & Women’s Empowerment, organised two online workshops, ‘Gender biases in worklife’ and ‘Girls in STEM’, as well as a self-defence training seminar with Albanian and Kosovan members.

The YRN supported the AER EU projects YOUTHopia and MEET, submitting policy recommendations relevant to the future of Cohesion Policy and of European democracy. They joined the AER’s statutory events, namely the Summer Symposium / General Assembly in Barcelona, and the Winter Dialogues in Sankt Pölten. The YRN also joined the AER’s Working Group on Mental Health, providing their perspectives and experiences alongside AER members.

The YRN Presidium was represented at the 45th session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, regaining an observer status among the Congress’ youth delegates (‘Rejuvenating politics’ programme). They also contributed to the AER workshops at the European Week and Regions and Cities, ‘How to Build Trust among (Young) Citizens to Support Urban Change’, and ‘Youth Engagement in Cross-Border Cooperation’.

Finally, they joined international youth events and fora, bringing YRN perspectives into other networks, and benefitting from capacity-building, learning and training activities, most notably at the European Youth Event, the Europa Forum Wachau, and JEF Europe’s project ‘REVIVE: Revitalising Voices of Youth in Europe’.



Youth Delegates at the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

# EURODYSSSEY

Created in 1985, Eurodysssey is the AER’s flagship youth regional mobility programme, managed entirely at regional level, consistently with the AER principles of subsidiarity and regional empowerment. Eurodysssey provides fully-funded traineeships, allowing young people from diverse backgrounds to benefit from a paid traineeship abroad, in one of the participating regions. Over a period of three to seven months, trainees benefit from valuable professional experience in another European region; with language training, professional mentorship, cultural and social activities that boost their job prospects and support personal growth, and a sense of European belonging. Eurodysssey also represents a unique opportunity to boost mutual understanding and intercultural learning, to raise awareness about regional diversity in Europe, and to give a framework for regions to learn from one another and work together.

The annual Eurodysssey Forum provides an excellent framework for this. The 2023 Eurodysssey Forum in the Azores (Portugal) brought together regions for workshops and training sessions, and elected the Eurodysssey Steering Committee for the 2023-2025 mandate, with Esther Estany Campos (Catalonia) re-elected as Eurodysssey President. In addition to the first MEET debate of 2023, the Forum held peer learning and coaching workshops, where members exchanged ideas to enhance the Eurodysssey’s impact on regional ecosystems.



Eurodysssey Forum 2023, Azores, Portugal

12  
Active regions

Catalonia, Murcia, Valencia (Spain)  
Brussels-Capital Region,  
Wallonia (Belgium)  
Ajara (Georgia)  
Sardinia (Italy)  
Azores, Madeira (Portugal)  
Hunedoara, Timis(Romania)

195  
Eurodysssey  
trainees

A SNEAK PEEK IN  
EURODYSSSEY IN  
2022

373  
Offers  
published

273  
Candidates

# SUMMER ACADEMY

Although the Summer Academy is a biennial event, with no edition taking place in 2023, the programme keeps things moving between editions.

Throughout 2023, the Summer Academy Organising Committee (SAOC) worked to bolster youth inclusion in the programme. A statutory revision, adopted at the beginning of the year, included the Summer Academy’s youth delegates in the Statutes, and their involvement not only during the event, but also in its preparations and promotion.

The SAOC welcomed a new member in 2023: the Catalan Youth Agency, hence enlarging the geographical scope of regions involved in the Summer Academy, and valuing the youth work undertaken by the Region of Catalonia.

11  
Members regions  
of the SAOC

Brussels-Capital (Belgium), Catalonia  
(Spain), Donegal (Ireland), Flevoland  
(the Netherlands), Jönköping (Sweden),  
Maramures (Romania), Nordland  
(Norway), Udarás na Gaeltachta (Ireland),  
Østfold (Norway), Vojvodina (Serbia),  
Zürich (Switzerland)



AER Vice President Ó hÉanaigh collects the European Citizens’ Prize from Dita Charansova, Vice President of the European Parliament



Joy Browne (Donegal, IE), YRN representative, John McLaughlin(Donegal, IE) Gerry McMonagle (Donegal, IE), Mícheál Ó hÉanaigh (Donegal, IE) European Citizens Prize 2023

Citizens’ Prize 2023 for Ireland. Awarded every year by the European Parliament, this prize goes to projects “organised by people or organisations that encourage mutual understanding and closer integration between people in the EU, cross-border cooperation that builds a stronger European spirit, and EU values and fundamental rights.” Vice President for Youth, Culture & Tourism Mícheál Ó hÉanaigh, together with representatives from Donegal County Council (Ireland) and Viken County (Norway), collected the prize at the international ceremony hosted at the European Parliament in Brussels. Vice President for Social Policy and Rural Opportunities, Gerry Murray, represented AER at the second prize-giving ceremony, which took place at the European Parliament Liaison Office in Dublin, Ireland.

A highlight for the Summer Academy in 2023 was a prestigious award. The Summer Academy 2022, ‘A Europe for the Next Generation’, hosted by Donegal County Council and Údarás na Gaeltachta, was awarded the European

The 2024 edition of the Summer Academy was also officially announced, with preparations well-underway. Nordland County Council (Norway) will host the Summer Academy 2024 in Bodø, the European Capital of Culture.



# ADVOCACY AND INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

## Task Force on Youth

The AER has continued to advocate for youth empowerment through its dedicated Task Force on Youth, led by Vice President Mícheál Ó hÉanaigh from Donegal County Council. In line with the Position Paper adopted at the Autumn Bureau Meeting in December 2022, AER Secretary General Christian Spahr furthered dialogue with Sabine Verheyen, Chair of the European Parliament Committee on Culture and Education, focusing on the pivotal role of regions in creating opportunities for young people and contributing to the EU’s Youth Strategy, demonstrating AER’s commitment to actively shaping policies that positively impact the youth across all corners of Europe.

## MEET at a glance

Topic	Intergenerational debates to bring the EU to local/regional level
Role of the AER	Partner
Programme	CERV - Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme
Timeline	November 2022-November 2024
Outcome	Intergenerational debates in European regions encouraging interaction between EU politicians and other stakeholders on topics as green transition and digitalisation
Budget for the AER	€84,570.00 (100% EU grant)
Website	<a href="https://aer.eu/meet/">https://aer.eu/meet/</a>

## AIM OF THE PROJECT

The end of the Conference on the Future of Europe and the upcoming European elections represent a double test for European democracy. The MEET project is an opportunity for young and senior EU citizens to get tools for active democratic participation through a shared space for discussing and sharing experiences, expectations and priorities ahead of the European elections. It also represents an opportunity for engaging EU politicians in direct discussions with young people.

### • Involvement of member regions and overview

In 2023, the AER organised three MEET debates in AER member regions. Intergenerational by structure, the debates offered solidarity funds to young people, such as YRN representatives, to enable their participation in international events

## TIMELINE OF MEET DEBATES

### 1st debate

- Date: 8 November 2023
- Region: Azores (Portugal)
- Topic: **youth mobility, skills development in rural and peripheral areas**
- Participants: 100+

### 2nd debate

- Date: 10 November 2023
- Region: Krapina-Zagorska (Croatia)
- Topic: **impact of digitalisation on rural areas**
- Participants: 120+

### 3rd debate

- Date: 30 November 2023
- Regions: Lower Austria (Austria)
- Topic: **EU democracy, inclusive Europe, and implementation of the EU Green Deal**
- Participants: 80+



MEET Debate at the Eurodissey Forum 2023, Azores, Portugal

## Erasmus+ Partnership with the European Forum Wachau (EFW) at a glance

Building on the solid collaboration over the past years, the AER joined the Erasmus+ project led by Lower Austria co-financing the organisation of the Europa-Forum Wachau 2023. This edition took place from 22 to 24 June 2023 in Göttweig Abbey (Lower Austria) under the theme 'Building a Resilient, Green and Competitive Europe'. It was a unique opportunity to foster exchanges and intergenerational dialogue between European citizens and reinforce the sense of European belonging. The AER was represented by former President Magnus Bertsson, who joined a panel discussion on the future of mobility, and a youth delegation composed by members and prospective members of the Youth Regional Network.



Europa - Forum Wachau 2023, Göttweig Abbey, Lower Austria

## BEYOND BORDERS, WITHIN VALUES: A WIDER EUROPE FOR A WORLD IN TURMOIL

### WHAT THIS SECTION IS ABOUT

A democratic, resilient and prosperous European community can only be achieved through meeting common challenges together. Strengthening collaboration between regions across borders; sharing best practices within and beyond the European Union, is how the AER supports and sustains the greater European project in a time of great uncertainty. Translating these bigger ambitions into concrete, collaborative action at regional level is in the mission of AER, and we can point to several successful initiatives in both the political and economic domain over the past twelve months.

### Beyond borders, within values: pan-European membership in action

In February 2023, the AER upscaled efforts to support our fifteen members in Ukraine through the creation of a dedicated Ukraine Focus Group. This unique community is committed to empowering our Ukrainian member regions, helping them find partnership opportunities and supporting them on their path to membership of the European Union.

Since its creation, the Focus Group has held networking, enterprise and training seminars in Cluj-Napoca, Barcelona, and most recently in Vienna. Members also welcomed delegations from the Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada. Working closely with Vice Presidents Lukas Mandl and Jean-Luc Vanraes, the Ukraine Focus Group stepped up advocacy efforts at European level to ensure that regional and civil society perspectives, needs and priorities are embedded and reflected in important instruments like the Ukraine Recovery Facility.

As the level of government closest to the citizens, regions are uniquely well-placed to support the EU's Neighbourhood and Enlargement policies. They translate its support into political and economic reforms and effective change on the ground; contributing to greater prosperity, stability, and security. AER's ongoing political work on EU enlargement continued with institutional partners in 2023, notably through the submission of detailed recommendations to the European Commission in consultations on the EU enlargement package. Chief among AER's recommendations was the call for continued, meaningful engagement with regional and local authorities regarding reform processes in the Western Balkans.

Fostering economic partnerships between regions was another key priority, especially considering that such opportunities were cut-off for nearly two years due to the pandemic. Most notable in this regard has been the welcome, enduring success of the Regional Business Forum (RBF) in Novi Sad (Serbia), in its sixth year in 2023. With a focus on the application of artificial intelligence in the agrifood, metal processing and ICT industries, the RBF brought together businesses, regions and institutions to bolster economic cooperation and seize opportunities afforded by disruptive technologies—the building blocks of future economic growth all over Europe.

The fundamental importance of cross-border, cross-community cooperation to peacebuilding was the basis for the high-level conference, ‘PEACE TWENTY-FIVE: Everyday Peacemakers’, which took place on 9 June at the Irish College Leuven, led by Vice President Mícheál Ó hÉanaigh in partnership with the International Fund for Ireland (IFI). PEACE25 celebrated the achievements of community activists who laid the groundwork for the Northern Ireland peace process. These efforts culminated in the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, and a peace that has endured in the quarter-century since.

The conference gathered peacemakers and leading experts from all over Europe to share insights and practical blueprints for bringing communities together; covering support initiatives for peacebuilding, women’s leadership in peace-building and cultural and community-based initiatives for reconciliation.

The important contribution of everyday peacemakers working in exceptionally difficult circumstances was underlined by European Commissioner Mairead McGuinness in her keynote address on the second day of the Conference, “I think the politics of all this are hugely important, but we all know that change really happens at the local level.”

Whether it is working for peace, prosperity or better policy, the AER continues to lead by example to connect regions across borders, and inspire ideas that support communities all over Europe. The AER will continue crossing and bridging borders within and between regions, in an effort to foster a pan-European community that thrives thanks to a common sense of belonging.

CONCLUSION BY AER SECRETARY  
GENERAL : AN EMPOWERED  
NETWORK

In 2023, with a firework of ideas fuelled by the work of our members and Secretariat, the AER has once again proven that it is a network capable of responding to both

the European political agenda and the changing needs of its members. The Secretariat has regularly engaged its members to understand and foresee their needs. The new Executive Board, elected in June 2023, and many other active members have provided strong impetus for this with the experience from their regions.

The AER has shown that it can further develop its expertise in traditional key topics and at the same time combine areas of work under a common banner. For example, with a new Task Force on Cohesion Policy and a parallel EU project for young people on the same topic, the AER has fostered synergies between stakeholders which were used to operate in different, separate fields.

Under the guiding principle of the European Year of Skills, all internal work areas—Member Relations, Policy and Knowledge Transfer, Institutional Relations and Advocacy, Programmes, Projects, and Communications and Events—were able to bring together their contributions to solving regional challenges. This is further proof that we do not think in terms of ‘departments’, but promote complementarity and impetus between the work areas.

The next legislature of the European Parliament, as well as our network of regional governments are facing challenges in offering perspectives. The excellent contributions from politicians, experts, civil society partners and citizens in our forums show the potential of multi-level governance, the value of politics close to the people, and the importance of peer learning between stakeholders. These are some of the guiding principles of our Manifesto for the 2024 EU elections.

Thank you once again to everyone who was part of our journey in 2023—we are counting on your good ideas and your involvement in our dynamic, pan-European network in 2024 and future years.

EVENT LIST 2022-2023

2022	22 June	Kick-off meeting of Working Group on Bioeconomy Online
	01 Sept	Workshop on the Bioeconomy & Skills chaired by Innlandet Letterkenny, Donegal, Ireland
	08 Nov.	YOUTHopia kick-off during Eurodissey Forum Letterkenny, Donegal, Ireland
2023	31 Jan.	Includ-EU Online Training Session - “Anti-discrimination: a Transformative Approach for Organisations” Online
	9 Mar.	Joint Launch of publication ‘Elevating Citizens’ Voices - Avenues for Participatory Democracy at National, Regional and Local Levels’ with European Network of Political foundations (ENoP) Brussels
	13 Mar.	Kick-off meeting of Working Group on Green Hydrogen online
	10 Mar.	Youth Regional Network General Assembly & Revival Brussels
	3-4 June	Open meeting of the Youth Regional Network Presidium online
	8-9 June	PEACE25 Everday Peacemakers Conference Leuven, Flanders, Belgium
	14-15 June	EU-Belong Knowledge Sharing Event - Addressing the Housing Crisis : An Essential Building Bloc for Intercultural Societies Gdańsk, Pomerania, Poland
	21-24 June	AER Youth delegation at the Europa Forum Wachau Wachau, Lower Austria, Austria
	28 June	Ukraine Focus Group meeting - part of the Summer Symposium Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain
	28 June	Study visit on Green Hydrogen and Workshop on Green Hydrogen chaired by Catalonia- part of the Summer Symposium Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain
	29 June	YOUTHopia Transnational event - Workshop on Skills, Cohesion Policy and Project Development - part of Summer Symposium Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain
	29 June	Spring Bureau Meeting and Debate on the Futre of Work - part of the Summer Symposium Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain
	30 June	High-Level Debate on Sustainable Tourism Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain
	30 June	General Assembly - part of the Summer Symposium Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain

27 July	YOUTHopia Get Together Workshop #1 Online
03 Aug.	YOUTHopia Get Together Workshop Session #2 Online
10 Aug.	YOUTHopia Get Together Workshop Session #3 Online
6-7 Sept.	Includ-EU Final Conference Brussels
22-24 Sept.	Youth Regional Network Capacity-Building Weekend Koppang, Innlandet, Norway
9 Oct.	YOUTHopia Evening Debate and Photojournalism Exhibition with launch of Task Force on Cohesion Policy (during the European Week of Regions and Cities) Brussels
11 Oct.	Youth Engagement in Cross-Border Cooperation in partnership with the European Youth Forum (durign the European Week of Regions and Cities) Brussels
12 Oct.	YOUTHopia workshop in partnership with Tilburg Municipality (during the European Week of Regions and Cities) Brussels
16 Oct.	EU-Belong Inclusion Café: Co-Design for Temporary Housing Solutions Online
27 Oct.	Kick-off of Working Group on Mental Health Online
6-9 Nov.	Eurodissey Forum with MEET Debate Ponta Delgada, Açores, Portugal
10 Nov.	MEET Debate Krapina-Zagorska, Croatia
22 Nov.	Regional Business Forum Novi Sad, Vojvodina, Serbia
23 Nov.	EU-Belong Webinar ‘Addressing Racial Discrimination in Housing’ Online
29 Nov.	Workshop on Mental Health chaired by Värmland - part of Winter Dialogues Sankt Pölten, Lower Austria, Austria
30 Nov.	AER Bureau meeting & debate, part of the MEET debate series - part of Winter Dialogues Sankt Pölten, Lower Austria, Austria
30 Nov.	Youth Regional Network workshop - part of the Winter Dialogues Sankt Pölten, Lower Austria, Austria
01 Dec.	Ukraine Focus Group meeting ‘The role of regions and enterprise in Ukraine’s economic renewal’ - part of the Winter Dialogues Vienna, Austria



# OUR EXECUTIVE BOARD



**Albert Castellanos Maduell**

**PRESIDENT (since June 2023)**  
Catalonia (ES)  
Seconded Officer:  
**Elena Herrero Pérez**



**Magnus Berntsson**

**PRESIDENT (2017-2023)**  
Västra Götaland (SE)



**Christian Debève**

**Vice President - Treasurer**  
Grand Est (FR)  
Seconded Officer:  
**Jean-Baptiste Cuzin**



**David Batsikadze**

**Vice President for Science**  
Ajara (GE)  
Seconded Officers:  
**Indira Khozrevanidze,**  
**Lolita Dolidze**



**Nina Björby**

**Vice President for Democracy,**  
**Inclusion and Equality**  
Västerbotten (SE)  
Seconded Officer:  
**Kurt-Åke Hammarstedt**



**Nicola Campitelli**

**Vice President for Innovation,**  
**Urban and Territorial Planning**  
Abruzzo (IT)  
Seconded Officer:  
**Leo Grassi**



**Simon Johnsen**

**Vice President for Employment,**  
**Education and Skills**  
Nordland (NO)  
Seconded Officer:  
**to be appointed**



**Lilijana Madjar**

**Vice President for Cohesion,**  
**Public Services and**  
**Digitalisation**  
Zahodna Slovenija (SI)  
Seconded Officer:  
**Nataša Rojšek**



**Lukas Mandl**

**Vice President for European**  
**Integration and Wider Europe**  
Lower Austria (AT)  
Seconded Officer:  
**Caroline Parsché**



**Sergii Miliutin**

**Vice President for the Local**  
**Dimension and Ukraine Recovery**  
Kryvyi Rih (UA)  
Seconded Officer:  
**Anton Krasovskiy**



**Gerry Murray**

**Vice President for**  
**Social Policy and Rural**  
**Opportunities**  
Mayo (IE)  
Seconded Officer:  
**to be appointed**



**Mícheál Ó hÉanaigh**

**Vice President for Youth,**  
**Culture & Tourism**  
Donegal (IE)  
Seconded Officer:  
**Anne Marie Conlon**



**Johannes Sundelin**

**Vice President for Sustainability,**  
**Green Transition and Health**  
Norrbotten (SE)  
Seconded Officer:  
**Per Erik Andersson**



**Jean-Luc Vanraes**

**Vice President for**  
**Interregional and Global**  
**Cooperation**  
Brussels-Capital (BE)  
Seconded Officer:  
**Karima Zahi**



**Damir Zobenica**

**Vice President for**  
**Economic Development and**  
**Investment**  
Vojvodina (RS)  
Seconded Officer:  
**Sanja Šifliš**



**Esther Estany**

**AER Eurodyssey President**  
Catalonia (ES)  
Seconded Officer:  
**Adriana Andrés Comas**



**Kari Anne Bøkestad**  
**Andreassen**

**AER Summer Academy President**  
**(since February 2023)**  
Nordland (NO)  
Seconded Officer:  
**Åshild Opøyen**



**Jenny Evjen**

**Summer Academy President**  
**(until January 2023)**  
Nordland (NO)  
Seconded Officer:  
**Åshild Opøyen**



**Jim Simonsen Jenssen**

**AER Youth Regional Network**  
**(YRN) President**  
Nordland (NO)



**Dr Hande Özsan Bozatli**

**AER Honorary President**  
Istanbul (TR)  
AER President 2013-2017



**Magnus Berntsson**

**AER Honorary President**  
Västra Götaland (SE)

## EB MEMBERS UNTIL THE AER GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN JUNE 2023:

- **Kenneth Backgård**, Norrbotten (SE) | VP for Innovation and Economic Transition
- **Alessandra Zedda**, Sardegna (IT) | VP for Employment, Education and Skills
- **Marina Medarić**, Primorje-Gorski Kotar (HR) | VP for Inclusion, Diversity and Equality



OTHER AER BODIES

The AER General Assembly convenes representatives from whole membership once per year and charges the Executive Board to implement its organisational and statutory decisions.

The AER Bureau is the primary political voice of the network. Composed of Executive Boards members and two representatives per country, it has the purpose to define the network’s political positioning.

The AER Monitoring and Evaluation Group (MEG) monitors the performance of the AER operations according to statutes and provisions. In 2023, the members were:

- **Andrew Joy**, Chair (Hampshire, UK)
- **Ana Verushi** (Korça, AL)
- **Kenneth Backgård** (Norrbotten, SE) - Since June 2023

The AER Election Committee takes care of the necessary procedures for smooth elections within the General Assembly. Its members are:

- **Thomas Hartman** (Västerbotten, SE)
- **Marina Medarić** (Primorje-Gorski Kotar, HR) - joined in June 2023
- **Ana Verushi** (Korça, AL) - joined in June 2023

AER SECRETARIAT

STAFF MEMBERS

SECRETARY GENERAL:

- **Christian Spahr**

MEMBER RELATIONS:

- **Justin Sammon**

INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS AND ADVOCACY:

- **Vania Freitas** (current)
- **Larisa Stanciu** (current)
- **Gisela Guari Cañada** (until April 2023)
- **Niccolò Giusti** (until January 2023)

POLICY AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER:

- **Johanna Pacevicius**

EU PROJECTS

- **Agnese Pantaloni**
- **Mirjam de Jong**
- **Giulia Moretto**
- **Emanuela Pisanò**
- **Anna Comacchio** (until October 2023)
- **Beniamino Brunati** (until April 2023)
- **Birgit Sandu** ( until August 2023)
- **Luca Magri** (until October 2023)
- **Mathilde Perrier** (until October 2023)

FINANCES

- **Nataliia Karasevych** (until July 2023)
- **Jatupon Thongying** (current)

PROGRAMMES

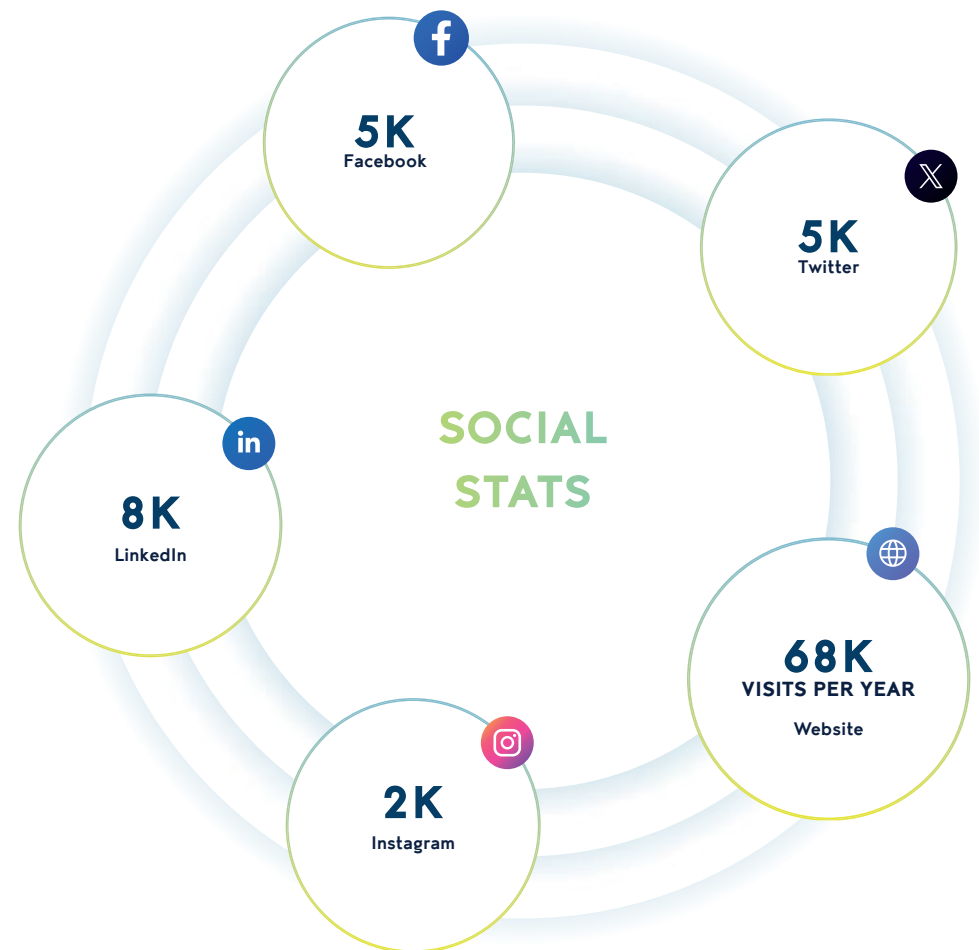
- **Lorène Weber**
- **Erik Hayes** (until December 2023)
- **Teodora Nicolaescu** (Eurodissey trainee)

COMMUNICATIONS AND EVENTS

- **Barbara Polin**
- **Laura Bassan** (intern) - until July 2023

OUR MEMBERS

Berat - <b>AL</b>	Zagreb County - <b>HR</b>	Cluj - <b>RO</b>	Örebro - <b>SE</b>
Dibër - <b>AL</b>	Union of Cyprus Municipalities - <b>CY</b>	Covasna - <b>RO</b>	Värmland - <b>SE</b>
Durrës - <b>AL</b>	Corsica - <b>FR</b>	Dâmbovița - <b>RO</b>	Västerbotten - <b>SE</b>
Elbasan - <b>AL</b>	Grand Est - <b>FR</b>	Dolj - <b>RO</b>	Västra Götaland - <b>SE</b>
Fier - <b>AL</b>	Guadeloupe - <b>FR</b>	Galați - <b>RO</b>	Basel-Stadt - <b>CH</b>
Gjirokaster - <b>AL</b>	Martinique - <b>FR</b>	Gorj - <b>RO</b>	Fribourg - <b>CH</b>
Korça - <b>AL</b>	Ajara - <b>GE</b>	Harghita - <b>RO</b>	Zürich - <b>CH</b>
Kukes - <b>AL</b>	Imereti - <b>GE</b>	Hunedoara - <b>RO</b>	Adana - <b>TR</b>
Lezhë - <b>AL</b>	Údarás na Gaeltachta - <b>IE</b>	Iași - <b>RO</b>	Antalya - <b>TR</b>
Shkodër - <b>AL</b>	IE Mayo County - <b>IE</b>	Ilfov - <b>RO</b>	Denizli - <b>TR</b>
Vlorë - <b>AL</b>	Mayo County Council - <b>IE</b>	Maramureș - <b>RO</b>	Edirne - <b>TR</b>
Tirana - <b>AL</b>	Abruzzo - <b>IT</b>	Mehedinți - <b>RO</b>	Erzurum - <b>TR</b>
Lori - <b>AM</b>	Sardinia - <b>IT</b>	Mureș - <b>RO</b>	Gaziantep - <b>TR</b>
Tavush - <b>AM</b>	Molise - <b>IT</b>	Neamț - <b>RO</b>	Izmir - <b>TR</b>
Burgenland - <b>AT</b>	Trentino-Alto Adige - <b>IT</b>	Olt - <b>RO</b>	Kirsehir - <b>TR</b>
Lower Austria - <b>AT</b>	Umbria - <b>IT</b>	Prahova - <b>RO</b>	Mus - <b>TR</b>
Upper Austria - <b>AT</b>	Valle d’Aosta - <b>IT</b>	Sălaj - <b>RO</b>	Sakarya - <b>TR</b>
Tyrol - <b>AT</b>	Municipality of Budva - <b>ME</b>	Satu Mare - <b>RO</b>	Kryvyi Rih - <b>UA</b>
Vienna - <b>AT</b>	Flevoland - <b>NL</b>	Sibiu - <b>RO</b>	Odesa Oblast - <b>UA</b>
Brussels-Capital Region - <b>BE</b>	Gelderland - <b>NL</b>	Timiș - <b>RO</b>	Odesa Rayon - <b>UA</b>
German Speaking Community - <b>BE</b>	Viken - <b>NO</b>	Tulcea - <b>RO</b>	Kharkiv - <b>UA</b>
Wallonia - <b>BE</b>	Nordland - <b>NO</b>	Vaslui - <b>RO</b>	Kirovohrad - <b>UA</b>
Bosna-Podrinje - <b>BA</b>	Innlandet - <b>NO</b>	Vrancea - <b>RO</b>	Pavlohrad - <b>UA</b>
Brčko District - <b>BA</b>	Azores - <b>PT</b>	Šumadija and Pomoravlje - <b>RS</b>	Chernivtsi - <b>UA</b>
Sarajevo - <b>BA</b>	Madeira - <b>PT</b>	Vojvodina - <b>RS</b>	Lviv - <b>UA</b>
Zenica-Doboj - <b>BA</b>	Alba - <b>RO</b>	Košice Self-Governing Region - <b>SK</b>	Zaporizhzhia - <b>UA</b>
Brod-Posavina - <b>HR</b>	Arad - <b>RO</b>	East Slovenia - <b>SI</b>	Poltava - <b>UA</b>
Istria - <b>HR</b>	Argeș - <b>RO</b>	West Slovenia - <b>SI</b>	Association of Self-Governments
Krapina-Zagorje - <b>HR</b>	Bihor - <b>RO</b>	Catalonia - <b>ES</b>	Euroregion Carpathians-Ukraine - <b>UA</b>
Osijek-Baranja - <b>HR</b>	Bistrița-Năsăud - <b>RO</b>	Valencia - <b>ES</b>	Dnipropetrovsk - <b>UA</b>
Primorje-Gorski Kotar - <b>HR</b>	Brașov - <b>RO</b>	Murcia - <b>ES</b>	Rivne - <b>UA</b>
Šibenik-Knin - <b>HR</b>	Buzău - <b>RO</b>	Gävleborg - <b>SE</b>	Ternopil - <b>UA</b>
Split-Dalmatia - <b>HR</b>	Călărași - <b>RO</b>	Jönköping - <b>SE</b>	Transcarpathia - <b>UA</b>
Varaždin - <b>HR</b>	Caraș-Severin - <b>RO</b>	Norrbotten - <b>SE</b>	Hampshire - <b>UK</b>



## AER OFFICES

### Brussels

Rue d'Arlon 6, 1000 Brussels, Belgium

### Strasbourg

6 Rue Jean-Frédéric Oberlin, 67000 Strasbourg, France

### Alba Iulia

Piata Ion I.C. Bratianu, 1, 510118 Alba Iulia, Romania



[www.aer.eu](http://www.aer.eu)

[info@aer.eu](mailto:info@aer.eu)

ISBN 978-2-9579590-7-5

EAN 9782957959075

## 2023 ASSEMBLY OF EUROPEAN REGIONS

### Design Credits:

Habile Studio - Silvina Scotto, Graphic Designer

### Compilation & Editing:

Barbara Polin, Communications Coordinator

Teodora Nicolaescu, Programme and Communications Assistant



[www.aer.eu](http://www.aer.eu)

[info@er.eu](mailto:info@er.eu)

ISBN 978-2-9579590-7-5

