



# **COPENHAGEN & BEYOND: REGIONS SEALED THE DEAL IN 2009**

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*AER White Paper on energy and climate change*



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**Assembly of European Regions  
Committee 1 Economy and Regional Development  
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Please note that the present report has not been drafted by an English native speaker.

# LIST OF ACRONYMS

**AER:** Assembly of European Regions

**B:** Belgium

**BIH:** Bosnia and Herzegovina

**BITS:** International Bureau for Social Tourism

**CEO:** Chief Executive Officer

**COP 15:** United Nations 15<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties

**COR:** Committee Of the Regions

**D:** Germany

**DG REGIO:** Directorate General for Regional Policy (European Commission)

**E:** Spain

**EC:** European Commission

**EP:** European Parliament

**ERDN:** European Rural Development Network

**EU:** European Union

**EUR:** Euro

**F:** France

**FEDARENE:** European Federation of Regional Energy and Environment Agencies

**GE Energy:** General Electric Energy

**GHG:** greenhouse gas

**IPCC:** Intergovernmental panel on climate change

**NEREUS** Network of European Regions Using Space Technologies

**NL:** The Netherlands

**R20:**The G20 of the regions

**RES:** Renewable energy sources

**RO:** Romania

**RUR@CT:** European Regions for Rural Innovation

**S:** Sweden

**TII :** Technology innovation international

**UNDP:** United Nations Development Programme

**UNEP:** United Nations Environment Programme

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Assembly of European regions is the largest independent network of regions in the wider Europe bringing together over 270 regions from 33 countries and 16 interregional organisations. AER is the political voice of its members and a forum for interregional co-operation. The first European Regions Energy Day, convening regional decision makers and energy experts from all over Europe seals a year of close partnership with GE Energy, one of the world's leading suppliers of power generation and energy delivery technologies. The event aims at providing regional responses to key energy questions

2009 has been marked by the run up to the Conference of the Parties in Copenhagen last December, but AER's commitment towards sound energy management, the development of alternate energy sources and more generally sustainable development, dates back to many years and hasn't stopped with the unsatisfactory accord national governments agreed on.

Energy is vital for economic development and territorial cohesion and very closely intertwined with the issue of climate change. AER therefore concentrated its efforts this year to help regions to fully play their role as promoters of energy efficiency both on demand and supply sides and renewables. To this end it developed far-reaching networks and numerous partnerships. It disposes furthermore over a wide series of tools aimed at gathering information on the ground, assessing the situation in the regions, informing about energy related matters and ensuring a proper frame for allowing top-down and bottom up information circulation.

AER believes that to confront climate change properly it is necessary to foster sustainable development in all sectors. It articulates therefore its action over the long term and focuses on two main themes of particular relevance for regions: sustainable tourism and viable water management. Through the variety of its well-coordinated initiatives, AER supports regions in exploiting their touristic potential in order to dynamise their economy perennially while ensuring environmental consideration. Seizing furthermore at the same time the themes of desertification and of floods, AER offered diverse opportunities to its members to share and learn from each other, and develop strategies and tools for mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

As the political voice of the regions AER has issued several political statements throughout the year to advocate for a holistic and matter-of-fact approach to climate strategies. It stressed the urgency of planning, capacity building and public information and highlighted the need of investing in technological development. Above all, AER stated repeatedly that the role of local and regional authorities should be accurately recognised. Indeed in the face of the inherent complexity of energy and climate change issues, their extensive knowledge of local threats and opportunities, as well as their proximity with citizen is an asset and a warrant for efficient action. But regions didn't stop at asking for recognition; they engaged in cross-border interregional cooperation on climate change and committed themselves to reach quantifiable objectives, thus putting words into practice

*“As for the future, your task is not to foresee it,  
but to enable it.”*  
Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

*“Pour ce qui est de l'avenir, il ne s'agit pas de le prévoir,  
mais de le rendre possible.”*  
Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

# INTRODUCTION

Energy use lies at the heart of the climate change debate: carbon dioxide is indeed the most important anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) and its primary source is fossil fuel combustion<sup>1</sup>. Renewable energy sources and energy efficiency are therefore crucial points in the fight against global warming.

As a forum for interregional co-operation and a lobbyist for regional interests on the European stage the Assembly of European Regions (AER) has long been involved in sustainable development. Energy and climate change have naturally become central themes in its activities in order to better help regions cope with the huge challenges these issues raise. Regions are in the front-line when it comes to promoting and harnessing renewable energy sources (RES), ensuring security of supply or encourage energy efficiency. Moreover, it has to be restated that, according to the IPCC report, regions and federal states are *de facto* faced with the tremendous task of implementing between 50 and 70% of the mitigation and adaptation measures. It is in this context that AER and GE Energy inaugurated their partnership on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May 2009 with the launch of the European Regions Energy Day, thus opening a unique gateway between globally renowned energy experts and regional decision-makers. This joint initiative aims to provide regional responses to key energy questions through exchange of knowledge, experience and good practices.

2009 AER activities on energy and climate change are manifold and cover themes as varied as eco-innovation, biomass energy, energy efficiency in public buildings, eco-friendly lifestyle, education, water management and emergency planning. The tools used are also very diversified and reflect AER's pragmatic and holistic approach. Undertaken actions hereunder described broadly fall under three categories: first, promotion of renewable energy and greater energy efficiency at regional and interregional level, second, support in the elaboration of mitigation and adaptation measures to climate change and third, political statements. A chronological list of 2009 activities completes the document and gives a better overview of the scope and scale of AER's action in the field of energy and climate change.

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<sup>1</sup> IPCC Fourth Assessment Report (AR4), 2007  
<http://www.ipcc.ch/>  
International Energy Outlook 2009  
<http://www.eia.doe.gov/oiaf/ieo/index.html>

# 1. Supporting regions to fully play their cornerstone role in the promotion of RES & Energy Efficiency

Promoting RES and energy efficiency is not only environmentally sound; it is also economically valid and crucial for ensuring security of energy supply. The favourable economics of energy efficiency have actually never been as clear and compelling as now. Therefore, strategies aimed at implementing pervasive improvements in efficiency are obviously an effective way to save energy, improve competitiveness and reduce GHG emissions. Moreover, in an overall European frame of improving energy security, the diversification of energy sources through renewables represents a trump card. Furthermore renewable energies can boost research and consequently innovation and act as a motor for job creation, hence foster economic growth. But renewable energy sources are available locally on a decentralised basis.

Therefore regions are relevant partners and have a key role to play in energy strategies, in spite of varying levels of devolved competences. As a matter of fact participating in ensuring a sustainable development of Europe is above all a question of approach. Nonetheless, in the face of the transverse character of energy issues, regions need assistance in handling the considerable amount of responsibilities they are confronted with. This is where AER's extensive networking and purpose-oriented action is of genuine help.



*Windturbines (Copyright: GE Ecomagination)*

## 1.1. Far-reaching networks & diverse partnerships for efficient action

With its over 270 members, AER is the largest independent network of regional authorities in wider Europe. It has in addition set up a comprehensive array of partnerships with other networks, regional, national and international institutions, organisations and enterprises. This obviously has allowed it to extend its scope of action through a wider range of available tools. Besides, partnerships increase visibility, are a source of expert advice and a tool both for lobbying and for action directed at regions. Plus they allow better circulation and exchange of information (as well vertically as horizontally). In 2009 AER has pursued these partnerships:



With **FEDARENE** (European Federation of Regional Energy and Environment Agencies) AER has set up a *Declaration of European Regions for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Sources* aimed at increasing the visibility of regional energy policies, lobbying at European and national levels and encouraging other regions to set up quantifiable and quantitative objectives regarding the development of RES and improvement of energy efficiency. This initiative started in 2006, 96 regions have now signed the declaration and there are ongoing discussions to determine the next steps.

**UNDP** (United Nations Development Programme) and UNEP have developed, with eight associations of Regions including AER, a global program to promote low carbon neutral and climate change resilient territories entitled *Towards Low Carbon and Climate Change Resilient Territories*. The general objective of this partnership is to train 500 regions from developing countries on climate change in the next 5 years and to assist 50 of these regions in the preparation of integrated climate change strategies and action plans. The program provides assistance on assessing, accessing and sequencing funds for these initiatives. In this context, AER organised in March a conference on regional answers to climate change with the UNDP, to identify best practices in policies and measures for mitigation and adaptation to climate change. The conference resulted in a UNDP-AER joint declaration recognising the threat of climate change, highlighting the determinant role of local and regional authorities and the necessity of co-operation between industrialised and developing regions. Additionally, Christophe Nutall, Director of the Hub for Innovative Partnerships at UNDP participated to AER's General Assembly in November and signed the *Belfort Appeal* on behalf of the UNDP.



AER-UNDP Conference: Cross-border cooperation to confront Climate Change

**GE Energy** is one of the world's leading suppliers of power generation and energy delivery technologies in all areas of the energy industry and was the very first energy company to recognise the importance of European regions in this field. The company is at the forefront of cleaner technologies, especially with its Ecomagination line of more energy efficient products. GE Energy is definitely a European player, not least

because it provides jobs for thousands of citizens. The company employs 25 000 people in Europe, which is 40% of its global workforce. AER joined forces with GE Energy in May 2009, thus bringing together globally renowned energy experts and regional public decision makers. The objective is both to support the European Union's energy strategy and to facilitate the creation of a benchmark centre of expertise and solution provision for all European regions.

The cooperation between was inaugurated on the occasion of the PowerGen Fair in Cologne, when AER and GE Energy launched the European Regions Energy Summit. AER's General Assembly furthermore took place in November on the premises of GE Energy in Belfort. Together with the UNDP, The Climate Group and GE Energy, AER issued an urgent appeal for the recognition of the role of regions and federal states in the fight against climate change: the *Belfort Appeal*. Ricardo Cordoba, President of GE Energy for Western Europe and North Africa, also represented the company at the *Climate Leaders Summit* organised by The Climate Group in Copenhagen last December and signed the R20 declaration.

**More on the partnership:** <http://www.aer.eu/en/news/2009/2009052601.html>

**The Climate Group** is an independent, not-for-profit organisation working internationally with government and business leaders. It acts as a catalyst for leading governments to reduce emissions and supports their transformation to a low carbon economy. The Climate Group is moreover dedicated to accelerating action by sub-national governments to address climate change. It conducts therefore specific actions such as the Climate Week, held in New York on 20-26 September 2009, where AER president Michèle Sabban, who was part of a delegation of regional representatives, handed over a statement on climate change and regions to Ban-Ki Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations. AER likewise invited Steve Howard, CEO of The Climate Group to participate in its General Assembly in Belfort. Finally, in December The Climate Group organised the *Climate Leaders Summit*, a forum for the exchange of practical policy advice between government leader and CEOs of some of the world's leading low carbon technology companies and financial institutions. Michèle Sabban and Ricardo Cordoba participated to this event, which was concluded with the R20 declaration, a pledge to develop the capacities of a limited number of interested sub-national governments from developing and emerging countries.

**EURISY** is a European non-profit organisation that brings together space agencies or governmental offices in charge of space affairs in Europe, and international organisations dealing with space matters. Its main mission is to facilitate the full access of satellite information and services. The AER-EURISY partnership is focused on renewable energies, and economic development. In this frame of reference, AER and EURISY organised a joint workshop entitled "Innovation at the service of regions and cities for implementing sustainable energy strategies" in The Hague. EURISY took also part in the peer review in Republika Srpska and showcased during the Sundsvall MORE4NRG conference *Energy Efficiency - Regional Solutions for the Future* (23-24 September 2009) how satellite imagery can be used for assessing the potential for biomass-based energy production.

**RUR@CT** is an operational network aimed at fostering transfer of experiences between rural regions in Europe. The network's ambition is to offer European regions fields of experimentation for an innovative territorial rural development model including best practice towards RES and energy efficiency. Indeed it should be kept in mind that agriculture significantly contributes to GHG emissions through crop and livestock production, transportation of farm products, use of the farm equipment and food processing. On the other hand it represents a real potential in terms of RES and alternate fuels. During the year AER participated actively in RUR@CT meetings.

**DG REGIO**: the European Commission's Directorate General for Regional Policy aims to strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion by reducing disparities between the levels of development of regions and countries of the European Union. AER is constantly in close cooperation with DG REGIO, be it on the issue of climate change and energy, on cohesion or on the theme of macro regions which importance is increasingly being underlined as crucial in tackling energy and climate change issues.

Other partners with whom AER collaborates on a regular basis include **BITS** (International Bureau of Social Tourism), **COR** (Committee Of the Regions) **ERDN** (European Rural Development Network), **EP** (European Parliament: AER works with several Committees), **EUROCHAMBERS** (Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry), **LOJIQ** (Youth international Offices of Québec), **NEREUS** (Network of European Regions Using Space Technologies), **TII** (Technology innovation international: The Global Gateway to Innovation). These numerous and diverse partnerships complete the diversity that already exists within AER (with its over 270 member regions and 16 member interregional organisations), and enable it to respond more accurately to the specific needs of regions by expanding the scope and means of action.

## 1.2. Versatility as a way to meet energy challenges

In order to assist regions in the promotion and implementation of RES and energy efficiency AER has a series of tools at its disposal. Their purpose is to gather information on the ground, assess the situation in the regions, inform about energy related matters and ensure a proper frame for allowing top-down and bottom up information circulation.

**Energy peer reviews**, based on AER peer review methodology established in 2006, aim at assessing the strengths and weaknesses of a region's energy policies. This tool lays at the core of AER's energy and climate change related activities. It is emblematic in that it reflects AER's matter of fact approach: experts indeed offer advice based not only on proficient theory but also on empirical conclusions coming directly from the regions and on field assessment. In July AER conducted an energy peer review in Republika Srpska. This project was co-financed by the Central European Initiative, it involved 3 regions: the host region Republika Sprska (BiH) and

peers from Maramures and North Hungary. Its goal was to assess the region's potential to produce electrical and thermal power from biomass resources and spotted areas of difficulties.

**Final report:**

[http://www.aer.eu/fileadmin/user\\_upload/MainIssues/Energy/FinalReport071009.pdf](http://www.aer.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/MainIssues/Energy/FinalReport071009.pdf)



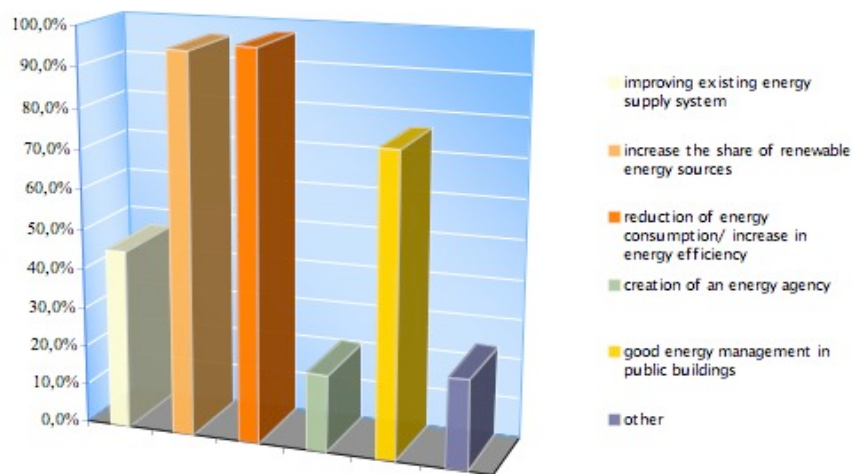
*Field visits during the energy peer review that focused on biomass in Republika Srpska*

AER is part of the **MORE4NRG INTERREG IVC project** directed towards better delivery of regional strategies for RES and energy efficiency by exchanging best practices and jointly developing integrated tools for monitoring the effects of regional sustainable energy policies. The project includes 13 partners. After the public launch of the project during the Sustainable Energy Week in February 2009, three state of the art seminars were organised in Flevoland, Västernorrland and Valencia to identify best practices in the regions. The first peer review was held in Maramures (RO) in September. Technical experts shared their insight on strategic issues through a series of meetings with local energy stakeholders and numerous field inspections. In December the AER team in Prahova (RO) advised county authorities on tackling climate change and meeting sustainable energy needs with the establishment of a reliable, comprehensive and dynamic energy strategy.

**More information available under:** <http://www.more4nrg.eu/>

On September 15<sup>th</sup> AER launched a **survey on regional energy policies** in order to assess the situation on the field, examine regional disparities and record regional initiatives in the field of energy, especially regarding RES and energy efficiency. Energy matters offer numerous cooperation opportunities and regions are keen to develop partnerships to operate synergies and increase efficiency. This Europe-wide survey aimed to explore how regional authorities deal with energy matters, what kind of political and economic incentives they use to harness new sources of energy, and how they bridge the increasing gap between energy demand and supply.

### What are the most important goals of your energy strategy?



*Graph from the AER survey on regional energy policies*

The underlying question being: "what are the prerequisites for the development of effective regional energy strategies adapted to rapidly changing energy trends?" 66 regions in 24 countries answered the questionnaire, allowing AER to get a representative geographical coverage of the European diversity. The added value of the survey lays in the access it gave to updated information, directly from the regions. The results of this survey are published in a complete report and will serve as basis for upcoming activities. After carefully analysing the answers returned by regional energy experts, the main conclusions, were that local potentials strongly determine regional energy policies and that because RES are available locally, regions are best placed to harness them. Thus, energising Europe responsibly means empowering its regions.

**Complete report:** <http://www.aer.eu/fr/themes-majeurs/energy-policy.html>

**Conferences** are a very effective tool for the promotion of new regional solutions to current energy challenges as they bring together regional experts, local energy agencies consultants, and representatives of European institutions and associations. Therefore the AER Committee for Economy and Regional Development organised a conference on energy efficiency in Västernorrland (S) 22-24 September. Though energy efficiency is largely recognized as a demand-side opportunity it should be kept in mind that there are also significant opportunities that exist on the supply-side of the equation. This event especially sought to feature new funding opportunities and best practices in the area of energy efficiency.

**More information on the conference:** <http://www.aer.eu/en/events/regional-development/2009/more4nrg-conference-energy-efficiency-regional-solutions-for-the-future.html>

**Working groups** are temporary bodies, formed on an ad-hoc basis for issues arising in the context of the activities of the committees. AER's working group on climate change and energy met in February, in April and in September during the conference on energy efficiency to discuss recent EU developments such as the *Climate Action and Renewable Energy Package* endorsed by the European Parliament and the



European Council or the EC White Paper on adaptation to climate change, and examine the modalities of AER participation in present debates. The working group is currently establishing a new road map.

The title of this year's **AER General Assembly** (25-27/11/09) hosted by GE Energy in Belfort was: ***"Energising Europe responsibly: Regional Innovation and Diversity for Growth and Jobs"***. This crucial event was focused on sharing concrete solutions to energy challenges and translating these into opportunities for growth. In the context of the economic downturn it is indeed essential to focus on sustainable solutions for long-term growth. RES, and especially wind energy are a promising and fast growing sector. Regions have The General Assembly is more than a yearly meeting involving all members; it is an opportunity to reflect on current issues from an innovative point of view, trying to harness the wealth of creativity that exists in the regions and give it a new dimension. The General Assembly gives perspective to the activities AER leads throughout the year by giving them not only a larger audience, but also by involving members in a dynamic approach through debates and workshops.



*The "Inspiration Factory" during the General Assembly: sharing, showcasing, learning...*

As there is no one single solution to today's energy questions, AER aims to foster regional inventivity and help regions to access the necessary tools that will allow projects to be more than mere ideas, hence improving Europe's energy security and boosting it's economy. To this end AER actively supports regions in the elaboration of measures for mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

## 2. From mitigation to adaptation: helping regions to tackle climate change

Energy cannot be dissociated from climate change. As scientific evidence of global warming is unequivocal<sup>2</sup>, climate scientists also agree that rising levels of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases trap incoming heat near the surface of the Earth and are the key factors causing the rise in temperatures<sup>3</sup>. Since Energy use is the most important source of manmade GHG emissions, Energy & climate change issues are deeply intertwined and have to be analysed and confronted within an overall perspective. This is why AER has become increasingly involved in climate change related activities. It has concentrated its efforts on sustainable development and uses a diversity of tools to reach distinct public, thus putting into practice the words of the Belfort Appeal that underscored the role of “all citizens regardless of their gender, age or social background”.

### 2.1. Sustainable development as a strategy to confront Climate Change

The most frequently quoted definition of sustainable development dates back to 1987, from the Brundtland Report<sup>4</sup>,

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". It contains both the notions of needs and of limitation and highlights the inter-connection in terms of space as well as in terms of time. The concept of sustainable development is actually rooted in a systems way of thinking where the world is apprehended as a system of interlinked factors and where subsequently local action is of genuine importance. Though climate change issues are extremely complex there are ways to address them on the ground. As a matter of fact many good practices already exist locally, regions are very active and it is obviously in their interest to increase sustainability. AER believes that sustainable development should be considered as an opportunity, and that is definitely compatible with economic growth.

One of the areas where AER has consequently conducted a wide range of activities is **sustainable tourism**. Tourism represents at the same time a fast growing economic sector, a tremendous opportunity for regions and a major threat to the environment if not properly planned. Indeed it involves real challenges in terms of

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<sup>2</sup> <http://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.giss.nasa.gov/research/news/20100121/>

<sup>4</sup> World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). *Our common future*.

water and waste management and considerably contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, especially through transport. But it is also a priceless tool to value local initiatives and to promote eco-development. Climate is literally an essential resource for tourism; it is not a remote event but a phenomenon that already affects the sector, in particular mountain regions and coastal destinations.

AER has therefore taken it at heart to assist its members in building sustainable tourism practices. AER has developed peer reviews on sustainable tourism in order to measure the sustainability of regions' tourism policies and to offer advice for improving them. In the frame of the PRESERVE Interreg IVC project, "Peer Reviews for Sustainable Eco-Regions via Europe", in which it is the lead partner, AER organised in February a conference under the title "The environment to trigger for more sustainable tourism". In June and October tourism peer reviews were held in Örebro (S), and in Banská Bystrica (SK). In the frame of the partnership with the BITS AER furthermore participated 15-17 October to the 5<sup>th</sup> European forum of social tourism in Malaga and stressed the economic advantages of sustainable tourism. Events like this are an opportunity for both information dissemination to a large audience and networking.

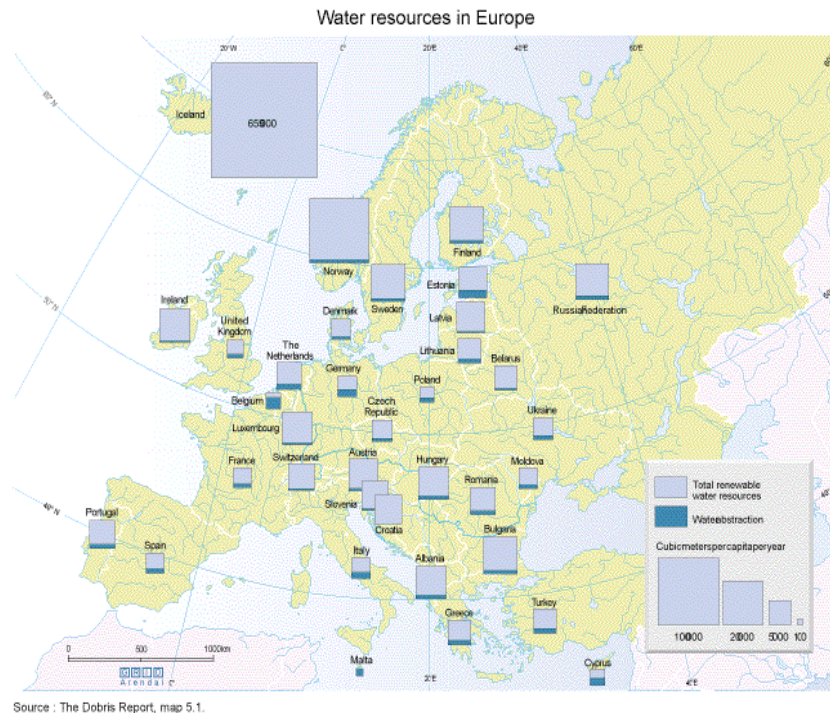


*The Swedish region of Örebro has a huge tourism potential and is part of PRESERVE*

Another issue to which AER has paid considerable attention is **sustainable water management**. Because of climate change, water is becoming one of the most pressing challenges in Europe. Whereas deserts and dry areas will expand causing a 10 to 20% decrease of water resources in the Mediterranean region, areas with abundance of water and high levels of rainfall will most certainly experience even more of the same in the future. This poses an increased risk for water related natural disasters.

Water clearly affects the economy, food production, health care, biodiversity and energy production. For this reason AER's Committee on Culture, Education and Youth organised its 14<sup>th</sup> Summer School and 8<sup>th</sup> Youth Summer School last August on the theme of sustainable water management. By bringing together regional policy makers, officers, experts and young people, the summer schools provided a unique opportunity to show concrete policies, methodologies and technologies that can contribute to establishing a "European water saving culture" but it also gave young citizens across Europe the possibility to express their needs and opinions. Following a week of intensive debate and exchange in workshops and plenary meetings, participants especially underscored the fact that water management constituted one of the most important adaptation measures.





source: [http://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/water\\_resources\\_in\\_europe](http://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/water_resources_in_europe)

Besides, AER's Committee on Social policy and public health set up an **Emergency Planning Network** to help regions to learn from each other in terms of risk management and develop cooperative initiatives. In March on the occasion of the AER-UNDP conference on regional answers to climate change, AER invited members to a thematic seminar on floods. The aim was to help regions develop and improve their plans for preventing and responding to floods hence adapting to climate change. As a result of this meeting, a report was published in order to summarise the ideas and best practices exchanged during the meeting and give guidelines on regional preparedness for floods.

**More on regional preparedness for floods:** <http://www.aer.eu/events/health-social/2009/epnseminar.html>

Climate change requires action in multiple fields. As stated in the Limoges Declaration, **AER advocates for a holistic approach** to this problem. It is therefore involved in diverse but complementary activities within its specialised Committees in order to be close to the needs of *the* regions and help them in the variety of challenges they are faced with. One of the advantages of regions being their proximity to citizens, they can and do play a remarkable role in disseminating and raising awareness on climate change issues. AER has accordingly deployed considerable efforts in these fields.

## 2.2. Dissemination & awareness raising: empowering citizens through information

Because climate change is a crosscutting issue<sup>5</sup> affecting so many different sectors, dissemination of information and awareness raising cannot be uniform and have to be adapted according to the public they aim to reach. It is all the more so true given that citizens have to feel individually concerned to be ready to change behaviour and consumption patterns (for more energy efficiency, better water management, responsible buying, eco-entrepreneurship, green policy making...).

In January AER ***gave its members the opportunity to get an insight into EU legislation and activities*** on climate change and presented funding opportunities in this field. Apart from the conferences AER organised in 2009 on energy and climate change related issues, it conducted a workshop with Eurisy to analyse the impact of energy consumption on environment and climate change and consequently its effects on the size and shape of global and local economies, and citizens' quality of life. This workshop highlighted the advantages of using innovative satellite information and services in support of successful energy strategies. Furthermore together with the governments of Québec and Manitoba, The Climate Group and in association with Catalonia, AER participated to a Breakfast Conference in June on partnerships between regional governments from Europe and North America in the fight against climate change. This conference was also aimed at setting up a strategy to ensure the recognition of the pivotal role of regions in this area.

**More on the AER-Eurisy workshop:** <http://www.aer.eu/events/regional-development/2009/aer-eurisy-workshop.html>

Such events illustrate well how ***AER stimulates interaction between different stakeholders*** and allows information to circulate better and more efficiently. Indeed though events are generally intended for regional policy makers, and the dissemination of information is directed at them, information actually circulates far beyond as results are published in newsletters, press releases, reports, dossiers and the press. In 2009 AER published 4 thematic dossiers and 24 press releases on energy and climate change related issues. On the occasion of the General Assembly alone around 70 articles were inventoried in the international press. AER also organised three "Tales from Europe" events in Paris and in Brussels to provide media with background information on European energy and climate change issues. This special AER format aims at informing about concrete regional examples on the occasion of an evening cocktail. Furthermore, videos of AER events and interviews are available on the Internet via AER's youtube channel. Through these publications and events AER reaches out to a much larger public, and is able to promote the development of a greener economy on one hand and enhance the visibility of local governments in the emerging field of environmental governance on the other hand.

**Thematic dossiers available under:** <http://www.aer.eu/publications/aer-are-vre-dossier.html>

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.undp.org/climatechange/ccross.htm>

**AER values the implication of young people in political life** and considers it a pillar of democracy. A unique platform for young people from European Regions, AER takes it at heart to involve young citizens in current debates regarding climate change and sustainable development. It has therefore set up a Youth Committee on Sustainable Development in order to raise awareness on sustainable development, especially on eco-friendly lifestyle and to improve intra-regional activities of young people on sustainable development. Key areas are environment, society and technology. This Youth Committee met during the Youth Summer School in Valencia and has a huge potential in terms of awareness raising and education among youth. The Youth Summer School on water was another 2009 achievement of genuine impact as it drew approximately 200 persons together during a week around this critical issue. A debate moderated by a member of the European Parliament and covered by EuroparlTV, gave young people the opportunity to express their concerns about this subject.



Furthermore AER organised a pan-European photo contest, "Snapshot Europe" including a category on environment and sustainable development. The competition was open to young people aged 18 to 30 years, active in their region or involved in AER youth activities. AER received 160 photos, from 44 European regions in 21 countries. As the award winning photo shows, youth feel very concerned by climate

change. The best photos were on display at Espace Wallonie in Brussels for three weeks, and at GE's headquarters in Belfort during AER's General Assembly. This increased the awareness raising impact the competition already had, by giving it a new and broader audience.

**More on AER Youth activities:** <http://www.aer.eu/main-issues/youth.html>

*Award winning picture from the Snapshot Europe! photo competition:*

*"After the big storm", Miroslav Argalas, Zilinsky region (SK)*

All in all, AER is able to reach an ever-growing audience through various thematic events and targeted communication channels. But far from being mere dissemination of a corporate image, the information that is thus displayed is aimed at giving citizens the opportunity to influence their own environment hence enable their future. Because AER is committed to represent the regions at international level it has additionally a considerable political role.

### **3. Raising the political voice of European regions for concrete results**

The largest independent network of regional authorities in wider Europe, AER is above all the political voice of its members. It acts for full recognition of the principle of subsidiarity and of the role of regions in the fight against climate change. From January to December 2009 AER has released different political statements acknowledging the threat of climate change as well as the critical nature of energy issues and their link with economic development and global warming, while highlighting the need for a decentralised approach. Declarations are more than words, they are the culmination of long-running cooperative work and field experience, and as such they are a tangible proof of the vitality of European regions.

#### **Advocating for true recognition of the principle of subsidiarity & giving it practical expression**

##### **-AER contribution to the green paper on territorial cohesion (25/02/09):**

Energy is closely linked with economic development; it is therefore mentioned several times in the AER contribution to the green paper on territorial cohesion released in February. The paper underscores the direct interference of energy policies and territorial functions and affirms the importance of the promotion of alternate and renewable energy sources to ensure a fully integrated market approach. Among other propositions members suggested that regions with specific features receive ad hoc support to handle difficulties regarding access to energy networks, that energy efficiency in businesses be encouraged to strengthen the coherence of territorial policies and that energy production, consumption, distribution and sale be included in the list of qualitative and quantitative indicators aimed at monitoring characteristics and trends in territorial cohesion

**More on cohesion policy:** <http://www.aer.eu/main-issues/cohesion-regional-policy.html>

##### **- Limoges Declaration (31/03/09):**

Global warming being a trans-border issue, cooperation is essential both for regions from industrialised countries and regions from developing and emerging countries. It is in the interest of both parties to closely cooperate and share knowledge on tackling climate variations. The Limoges Declaration was adopted at the end of the AER-UNDP conference and stressed the need for a holistic approach to climate change. Parties noted that regions were in a position to play a key role in mitigation and adaptation policies. They called member regions to continue to strengthen cooperation with other local and regional authorities especially in the field of energy efficiency, diversification of energy sources and the use of clean technologies.

*Limoges final Declaration* and information about the conference: <http://www.aer.eu/en/events/regional-development/2009/limousin.html>

### **Appeal to Copenhagen Climate Conference (02/11/09)**

Only national governments were entitled to negotiate at the UN Climate Conference in Copenhagen. Regions therefore sought support of other sub-national leaders to make their voices heard so as to guarantee proper recognition of their consequential role in the fight against global warming. In the frame of its partnership with the Climate Group and together with several other associations of regions, AER launched an impelling appeal to member regions to press national governments in order to ensure explicit references to multi-level policy making in the drafting of the new climate change protocol.

More on the appeal: <http://www.aer.eu/en/news/2009/2009110302.html>

### **The impacts of Climate Change on Health: a Warming up debate (26/11/09)**

Though the tremendous consequences of climate change are now well known, their impact on health is generally either ignored or undervalued. With the exacerbation of climate variability and the concomitant increased frequency of extreme events, weather-related deaths and population displacements will inevitably intensify. Simultaneously the spread of a significant number of diseases will be accelerated. In the face of these dire predictions, early action is necessary. The position that was adopted by AER's General Assembly in Belfort is a reaction to the European Commission's April White Paper "Adapting to climate change". While acknowledging the significance of data collection, it advocates for immediate planning, capacity building and public information on the ground of available data. It furthermore emphasises the geo-specificity of risk and the relevancy of regions in the delivery of a holistic political response. Additionally it stresses the need of investing in technological development to boost region's preparedness for the changing health landscape.

### **Belfort Appeal (27/11/09)**

During the last major international event before the Copenhagen summit AER, the UNDP, The Climate Group and GE Energy launched an urgent appeal for the recognition of the role of regions and federal states in the fight against climate change. The Belfort Appeal is not so much a dramatic attempt to show regions feel concerned by climate change, as a genuine commitment to harness all available tools to effectively confront global warming. Cross-border interregional cooperation, innovation for a greener economy and energy efficiency constitute the backbones of action, but this in turn can only get under way quickly if regions are truly empowered. Therefore all parties called upon national and international governments and institutions to fully endorse the principle of subsidiarity and give it practical expression.

The Belfort Appeal: <http://www.aer.eu/en/news/2009/2009112702.html>



## **R20 Declaration (15/12/09)**

*The Climate Leaders Summit 2009* organised by The Climate Group in December in Copenhagen culminated with the announcement of the R20 initiative. Together, business leaders and subnational and local government leaders demonstrated how they are working together to build the low-carbon economy of the future. The R20 initiative that will be officially launched in September 2010, shares the spirit of the Belfort Appeal. It is a commitment for decentralised cooperation in the field of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures between regions of industrialised countries and regions of developing countries. The main idea behind this declaration is that sub national governments are a very powerful force for change and that north-south partnerships accrue mutual benefits to all parties involved. Regions are indeed key players in executing sustainable national policies and technologies and play an important role in evaluating energy supply and demand issues. They have moreover a wide range of legislative tools to stimulate the development of clean energies in their territories and a major role to play in increasing ownership of RES. The R20 commitment created thus a critical momentum for the United Nations Climate Change Conference taking place less than three kilometres away

Altogether AER stated publicly throughout the year what regions experience on a daily basis, that is, that climate change indeed challenges all sectors of society and has to be dealt with urgently. Regional authorities' thorough knowledge of local threats and opportunities, as well as their proximity with citizens are an asset for any climate change strategy. Therefore, and in the face of the significant differences between regions, especially regarding the scope of competences they enjoy, AER repeatedly insisted on the need for accurate acknowledgement of the regions' role in confronting global warming. But regions didn't stop at asking for recognition; they engaged in cross-border interregional cooperation on climate change and committed themselves to reach quantifiable objectives, showing thus that their political statements are much more than just words.

# CONCLUSION

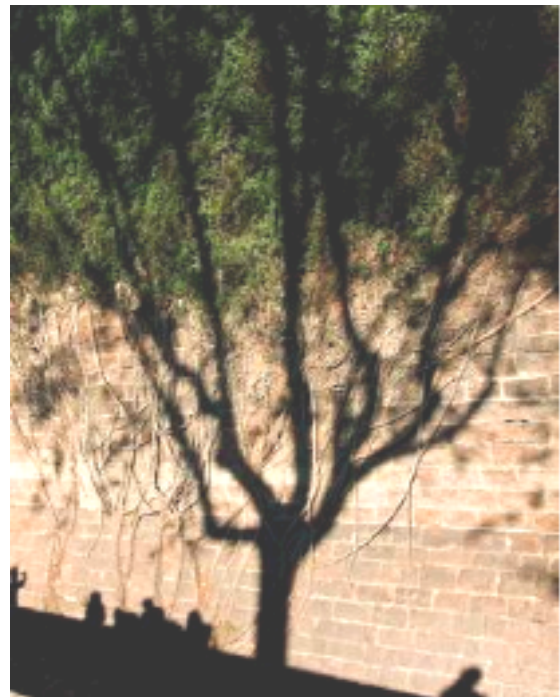
Given the social, economic and environmental threat that climate change represents, AER set up a broad strategy encompassing a huge variety of activities.

Whereas energy is *a sine qua non* condition for economic development, AER believes that it is generally possible to lower energy consumption substantially without curbing performances. The combination of all viable renewable energy resources, coupled with energy efficiency, conservation and smart grid development have the potential to lead to security of energy supply, cleaner, and more sustainable energy infrastructure and to what could soon prove to be the greatest growth opportunity of the 21st century.

Nonetheless it has to be highlighted that regions are the best placed to promote both RES and energy efficiency, therefore AER has conducted several initiatives aimed at helping them to increase the efficiency of their policies.

Besides, AER has been very actively supporting regions in the conception and implementation of mitigation and adaptation measures to tackle climate change through sustainable development.

On the whole, AER's activities clearly show that it is not only a true European talking tree where regions share, learn and build bridges of cooperation. It has as well a forceful political mission, which it fulfils with verve. This has been especially obvious in Copenhagen when regions were able to make real and consistent commitments in contrast to what happened at international level, but is true also for all other activities that are just as important, for life doesn't stop at COP 15!



*Picture from the Snapshot Europe! photo competition: "Under one tree", Lora Vasileva, Sofia (BG)*

# ANNEX

## 2009 REVIEW

### *Chronological List of Activities*

**14 January 2009**, Brussels, *Bruxelles-Capitale* (B) Training Academy on Climate change : Training session for AER members to get an insight into EU legislation and activities on climate change and present funding opportunities in this field. (organiser/ partner : AER, South West UK and Poitou-Charentes (F)

**19 January 2009**, Brussels, *Bruxelles-Capitale* (B) Project development meeting on ECREIN (eco-innovation platform) INTERREG IVC

**04-05 February 2009**, Brussels, *Bruxelles-Capitale* (B) PRESERVE conference : « the environment to trigger for more sustainable tourism » (AER/Rhône-Alpes) Dissemination of the PRESERVE project to other regions – better knowledge between PRESERVE partner –preparation of future peer reviews – external dissemination (press work)

**09 February 2009**, Brussels, *Bruxelles-Capitale* (B) Meeting of AER working group “energy and climate change” to discuss the *Climate Action and Renewable Energy Package* endorsed by the European Parliament and the European Council.

**11 February 2009** Brussels, *Bruxelles-Capitale* (B): Sustainable Energy Week, Public launch of the MORE4NRG project, presentation of the objectives and partners. Dissemination of the MORE4NRG project to other regions – better knowledge between MORE4NRG partner

**17 March 2009** *Flevoland* (NL): 1st MORE4NRG state-of-the-art seminar

**31 March 2009** Limoges, *Limousin* (F)- AER-UNDP conference “Regional answers to Climate Change”

**01 April 2009** Limoges, *Limousin* (F) Meeting of AER working group “energy and climate change” to discuss the EC White Paper on adaptation to climate change as well as water issues.

**01-03 April 2009**, *Styria* (A) PRESERVE kick-off seminar

**06-07 April 2009**, *Västernorrland* (S) 2<sup>nd</sup> MORE4NRG state-of-the-art seminar

**06-07 May 2009** *Valencia* (E) 3rd MORE4NRG state-of-the-art seminar



**8 April 2009** Brussels, *Bruxelles-Capitale* (B) Tales from Europe “Climate Change: Global Challenge, Regional Responses”

**26 May 2009** Cologne, *Nordrhein Westphalen* (D) First European Regions Energy Summit : joint initiative to examine the energy challenges facing European regions today and to promote their possible solutions

**22-23 June 2009**, The Hague, *Zuid-Holland* (NL) AER-Eurisy workshop on energy policy

**22-26 June 2009**, Örebro (S) PRESERVE tourism peer review

**26 June 2009**, Brussels, *Bruxelles-Capitale* (B) AER Breakfast Conference: The Road to Copenhagen Partnership on Climate Change between regional governments from Europe and North America

**21-24 July 2009**, *Republika Sprska* (BIH) Peer review on biomass-based energy (CEI programme)

**24-28 August 2009**, *Valencia* (E) 14<sup>th</sup> AER Summer School 2009 & 8<sup>th</sup> AER Youth Summer School “Water, Engagement For Our Future”

**01-04 September 2009** *Maramures* (RO) first MORE4NRG peer review

**15 September 2009** Strasbourg, *Alsace* (F) Launch of AER’s survey on regional energy policies

**20-26 September 2009**, *New York* (USA): Climate Week, AER president Michèle Sabban was part of the delegation of local governments that met UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon.

**22 September 2009** Sundsvall *Västernorrland* (S): Meeting of AER working group “energy and climate change” and election of its new president.

**22-15 September 2009** « Snapshot : Europe ! » AER’s photo competition

**23 September 2009** Sundsvall, *Västernorrland* (S) MORE4NRG Steering Committee and Monitoring Board meetings combined with a seminar on “Energy efficiency – regional solutions for the future” and Committee 1 plenary meeting

**07 October 2009** Brussels, *Bruxelles-Capitale* (B) debriefing of peer review in Republika Srpska & publishing of the final report

**19-23 October 2009** *Banská Bystrica* (SK), PRESERVE tourism peer review

**04 November 2009** Brussels, *Bruxelles-Capitale* (B) Tales from Europe on energy in the regions

**24 November 2009** Paris, *Île de France* (F), Tales from Europe on energy in the regions. On this occasion the preliminary findings of the energy were unveiled

**25-27 November 2009** Belfort, *Franche Comté* (F), AER General Assembly  
“Energising Europe Responsibly: regional innovation for growth and jobs” at GE’s  
headquarters

**01-04 December 2009** Prahova (RO), MORE4NRG peer review

**15 December 2009** - AER partners with “R20” group to fight the climate change