AER Response to the Commission Working Paper

‘Ongoing and Systematic Policy Dialogue with Local-Government Associations’

1. The AER welcomes the initiative of the European Commission to systematise a policy dialogue with European and national associations representing regional and local government. We particularly welcome the intention that this dialogue is of a POLITICAL nature, with high ranking politicians representing the aforementioned associations.

2. The participants to this dialogue should be associations representing regional and local government at the national and European level. Where no association exists at the national level, provisions should be made for the participation of regions from the Member State in question. Associations of a sectoral nature, namely focusing on specific policy areas, should be included, as they hold expertise which would be of great value to the European Commission when formulating policies.

3. The consultation with the associations representing regional and local government should occur at the early stages of the policy-formulation process. The AER suggests that the structured dialogue, as proposed by the Commission, be supplemented with more regular communication and cooperation between the associations and the Commission’s services at the preliminary phase of policy formulating, e.g. the fact-finding stage. Thus, the territorial aspect of proposed policies would be taken into consideration at an early stage and potential impediments at the adoption or implementation phases would be averted.

4. The AER welcomes the participation of the Committee of the Regions within the proposed structured dialogue. The role of the Committee of the Regions should be that of an intermediary and not of a principal. The associations should remain independent actors within this process.

5. The criteria for identifying the associations to participate in the systematic dialogue should be developed jointly by the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions and the associations representing regional and local government. Their application should be an open and transparent process.

6. The systematic dialogue should include a follow-up stage, with the Commission providing feedback on the outcomes of the consultation. Where the Commission chooses not to follow the recommendations voiced during the consultation process, it should provide its reasoning for this decision.

7. Besides approximately 250 regions in Europe, the AER also represents 12 interregional associations, a list of which is annexed hereto. We would request that these associations are included in the systematic dialogue.
8. The AER is willing to cooperate with the Commission in further developing the details of this systematic dialogue and especially the particulars relating to the process of identifying the participants in the proposed consultation process.

**NOTE RELATING TO TERMINOLOGY**

We would suggest that the titles of the English and Greek version of the working paper be altered in order to reflect the full range of levels of government the Commission wishes to include in the systematic dialogue. To this end, we suggest that the English version title be amended to ‘*regional* and local government’ and that the Greek version include the terms ‘*περιφερειακά και τοπικά καθεστώτα’*. The amendment of the title in this manner would be consistent with the French version of the working paper, which states ‘collectivités territoriales’ and the Swedish version, which states ‘*regionala och lokala myndigheter*’.
Annex

List of AER Member Interregional Associations

• Assembly of European Wine-Producing Regions (AREV)
• Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)
• Alps-Adriatic Working Community (ALPEN ADRIA)
• Working Community of the Alpine Countries (ARGE ALP)
• Working Community of the Western Alps (COTRAO)
• Working Community of the Low and Middle Adriatic
• Working Community of the Danube Counties (ARGE DONAULÄNDER)
• Working Community Galicia - Nord Portugal
• Jura Working Community (CTJ)
• Working Community of the Pyrenees (CTP)
• European Industrial Regions Association (EIRA)
• Assembly of European Fruit and Vegetable Growing and Horticultural Regions (AREFLH)