



Bureau

Ankara (TR), 17 December 2014

Document related to : VI.b Planning Strategy (for adoption)

ANNEXES

1. "AER Planning Strategy"

Original in English

Assembly of European Regions

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Planning Strategy

AER Bureau, Ankara (TR), 17 December 2014



Strategic planning is worthless
- unless there is first a
strategic vision.

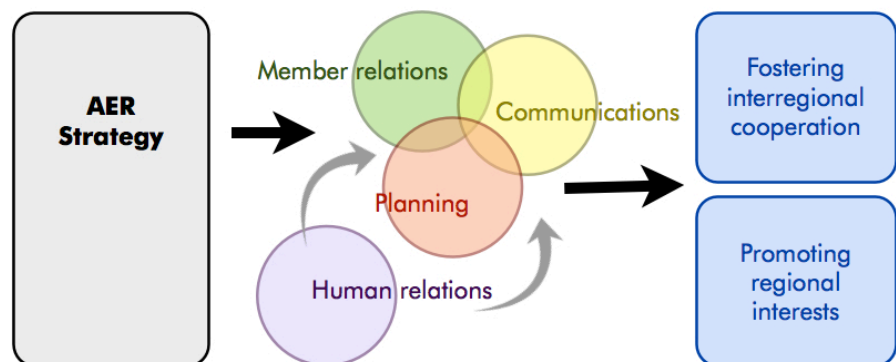
John Naisbitt

Implementing the AER Strategy

The present *Planning strategy* is part of a four fold global strategy of the Assembly of European Regions which aims at setting the stage to ensure that the AER objectives are implemented effectively. These objectives express the core of AER's *raison d'être*:

- (1) Fostering interregional cooperation to promote the exchange of experience and the development of regional policy,
- (2) Promoting interregional interests in Europe and beyond.

The three other components of the strategy comprise *Member relations*, *Communications* and *Human relations*. The documents are interlinked and dependant on one another.



The Planning strategy will be completed by **guidelines** as well as an annual **action plan**. The guidelines will provide further detail on how to effectively implement a planning cycle at AER. The annual work plan will layout the AER calendar of events for the year as well as determine how these activities contributed to the results outlined in the AER strategy.



Plans are nothing; planning is everything

Dwight D. Eisenhower

Table of contents

Implementing the Strategy	2
Chapter 1 Objectives	X
Chapter 2 Key planning documents	X
Chapter 3 The AER decision making process	X
Chapter 4 Planning at AER	X



*Be prepared before you set
off to work on your dreams.
The more prepared you are,
the easier your success.*

Israelmore Ayivor

Chapter 1: Objectives

1. Linking the AER planning documents

The AER Strategy and its two objectives are the long-lasting point of reference. Planning at AER establishes the links between the complementary documents which are necessary to put the two objectives into effect.

2. Establishing the relations between the different governing bodies

This document aims to help better understand the individual role of each decision making level as well as establish how these levels work together as a whole to constitute AER's governing bodies. This is essential in order to determine how and when to draft and implement the AER planning documents.

3. Coordinating these elements into a planning cycle

The Planning strategy harmonises and coordinates the drafting, adoption, implementation and monitoring of the above mentioned documents into a unified and coherent process, also referred to as the AER planning cycle.

Links with other strategic documents

- ▶ Planning helps the **communications strategy** to determine where and how to act throughout a cycle.
- ▶ The **Members relations** helps planning to determine on what field to act depending on the demands of regions at AER

These three objectives allow for the AER Planning strategy to act as a safeguard for the AER strategy. It ensures that the concretisation of its two objectives are done in line with the statutory decision making process, using all resources available at AER at the right moment in time. Finally, it also facilitates the monitoring of the undertaken actions and activities.



Meticulous planning will enable everything a man does to appear spontaneous.

Mark Caine

Chapter 2: Key planning documents

The objectives set within the AER Strategy document are divided into two groups of key documents, essential to a proper planning system. These documents are interdependent and act each within a specific moment in time. These groups are :

Group 1: the AER strategic documents

1. **The AER strategic documents** (Planning, Communications, Member relations and Human relations). These documents are each completed by
 - a. **Individual guidelines**, for members of the AER staff and interested parties, adopted by the AER executive Board and ratified by the Bureau
 - b. **An annual action plan**, implementing each strategy throughout a year. It is adopted by the Bureau and ratified by the GA

Group 1: the AER planning cycle documents

1. **The AER toolkit**
2. **The AER political Priorities**
3. **AER Work programme for the AER committees**
4. **Activity results**

The following grids explain the links between each document as well as their time span and decision making process. They help to better understand the rationale behind each document and how they meet the objectives set within the AER strategy. The first grid describes the links between the strategic documents, each stemming from the AER strategy and working closely together in order to ensure its proper implementation. The second grid contains all the key planning documents produced and used throughout a cycle at AER.

GROUP 1: AER Strategic documents

	Question this document answers	Content	Decision making	Type of document	Life Span
1/ AER Strategy	What is AER and what is its main goal as an organisation?	Set the objectives and results, as well as develops the tools and methods available in order to achieve results in line with the two objectives.	Ratified by the GA as a result of the recommendations made by the Turn Around Committee (TAC)	Strategic document, for use of AER secretariat and members.	Long term
2/AER Planning Strategy	How can AER put its two objectives into a concrete plan of priorities and activities which can be implemented throughout a cycle?	Strategy outlining the different key documents, the decision making process as well as the steps to fulfill in order to successfully set up a cycle of priorities and activities at AER.	Document as a proposal from the Executive Board for adoption to the Bureau and ratified by the GA.	Strategic document, for use of AER secretariat and members.	Long term
3/ AER Communications Strategy	How can AER provide the right amount of information to the right people at the right time, using the right tools?	Strategy creating a system of communications for AER as well as defining AER in its communications environment.	Document as a proposal from the Executive Board for adoption to the Bureau and ratified by the GA.	Strategic document, for use of AER secretariat and members.	Long term
4/ AER Member relations Strategy	How should AER develop and strengthen its relations with its member region. How can AER attract new members?	Strategy setting forth the general goal of AER with regards to its members as well as the different options available to them in terms of membership.	Document as a proposal from the Executive Board for adoption to the Bureau and ratified by the GA.	Strategic document, for use of AER secretariat and members.	Long term
5/ AER Human relations Strategy	What Human resources should be made available within AER in order to ensure that the work required is being done?	Strategy determining how AER staff should be recruited, the competences required at AER as well as how to manage issues related to members of the staff	Document as a proposal from the Executive Board for adoption to the Bureau and ratified by the GA.	Strategic document, for use of AER secretariat only.	Long term

GROUP 2: AER planning cycle documents

AER PLANNING CYCLE

	Question this document answers	Content	Decision making	Type of document	Life Span
1/ AER Toolkit	What tools and methodology will AER and its committees carry out in order to achieve the objectives and results of the AER strategy?	This document is a separate document containing all tools and methods used at AER, allowing to determine what activities to set up during a cycle in order to achieve the results and objectives of the AER strategy.	Document as a proposal to the Bureau and GA from the Executive Board	Annex strategic document which can be used to communicate externally about AER's tools and methods.	Long term (to be reviewed regularly depending on the resources available at AER)
2/ AER Political Priorities	What are the main political issues/messages for regions and AER over the next two years?	Document cristalysing the two main objectives into the political orientation of AER over the next two years.	Document as a proposal from the Bureau with the input from the Committees and finally approved by the GA.	Political document which can be used to communicate externally about AER's political priorities. As such, it needs to contain strong messages which are memorable.	Renewed every 2 years
3/ AER Work Programme	Based on the AER strategy, the AER toolkit and the Political priorities what are the concrete AER activities planned for a year?	Within each of the AER's Political Priorities, the list of activities that will be planned throughout a year in order to achieve the results and objectives of the AER strategy.	Document as a proposal to the Bureau and GA from the Committees and transversal issues.	Political document which can be used to communicate externally about AER's activities and initiatives.	Renewed every year
4/ AER Activity Results	Where does AER stand in relation to achieving its objectives for each political priority?	Listing of all the activities and outputs carried out per political priority. Each activity should also include which tool or method was used (as per the AER work programme) and how these activities contribute to the results outlined in the AER Strategy	Document to be elaborated together by the Committees (at the spring plenary) in order to see if the commitments made to contribute to the AER priorities have been achieved. This document is compiled and presented as one document to the Bureau and GA for information.	Document for members use only.	Renewed every year



No matter how good you are at planning, the pressure never goes away. So I don't fight it. I feed off it. I turn pressure into motivation to do my best.

Benjamin Carson

Chapter 3: The AER decision making process

- The **Executive Board** (EB) approves of the initial political orientation of the AER Political Priorities and ensures that a sufficient balance between the two objectives of the AER Strategy is respected. The EB also determines, in accordance with the financial and human resources available during the coming year, which tools and methods¹ of the AER Strategy will be available to the Committees in order to carry out their activities.
- The **AER Committees** will contribute to the AER Priorities through their thematic expertise. They will make proposals on the methods and tools, as well as concrete activities that they wish to work on in order to achieve the objectives and results of the Strategy.
- The **Bureau** leads the discussion on the AER Political Priorities, in order to establish the political orientation of the organisation over a two year period. The Bureau will also ensure that the tools and methods, as well as the activities proposed by the Committees in the AER Work Programme, reflect all the political priorities of the organisation, and will have the power to make cuts or changes if necessary.
- The **General Assembly** (GA) will formally adopt the result of the consultation between the EB, Bureau and Committees, as well as act as a safeguard of activities.

¹ The list of tools and methods available at AER are to be found in the AER toolkit document.



A goal without a plan is just a wish.

Antoine Saint-Exupéry

Chapter 4: Planning at AER

Key planning elements throughout a cycle

The end is the beginning

The AER General Assembly is used as the ultimate chronological reference point. It marks the end of a cycle and triggers automatically the beginning of new one.

Defining limits in time

A planning cycle at AER has a life span of **two years**.

This cycle refers to the AER political priorities. It starts with the official adoption of the priorities by all AER members at the General Assembly in Spring every two years. The cycle ends with the official presentation of the results achieved during these two years, making way for a new cycle to begin.

Working out a annual programme

The AER Work Programme ensues from the political priorities and are also ratified at the General Assembly. AER Committees use their expertise, in consultation with and adoption by the AER governing bodies, to transform the priorities into detailed political and thematic initiatives which are renewed every year in order to best achieve the goals set out within a cycle.

Links with other strategic documents

- ▶ This cycle serves as a basis for the action plans set out by each strategic document : **Planning, Communications, Member relations and Human relations.**



A good plan implemented today is better than a perfect plan implemented tomorrow.

Goerge Patton

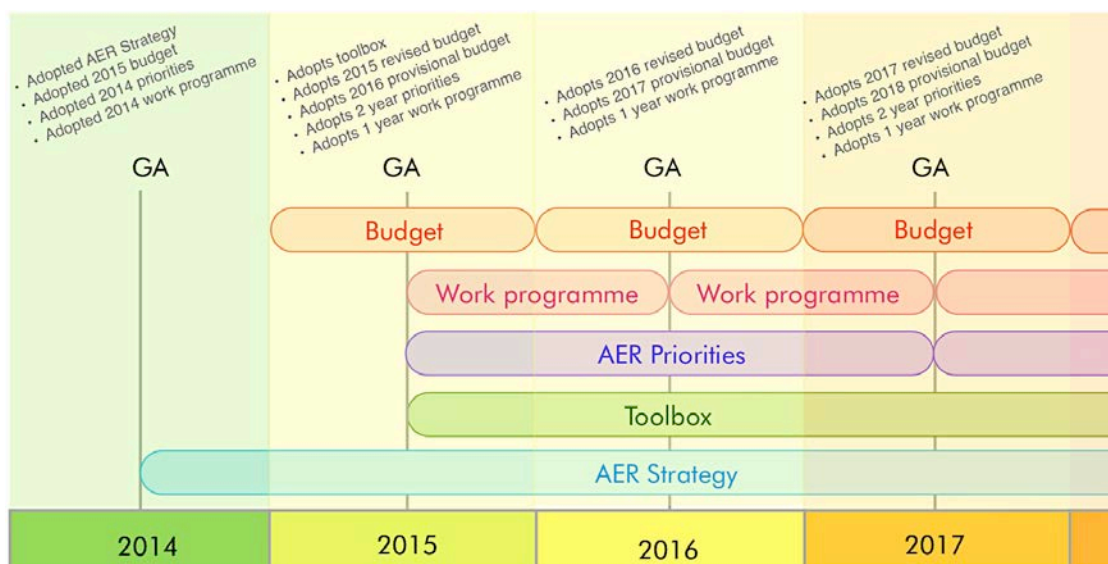
Budgeting a plan

A budgetary year at AER spreads out from January to December. In order to correspond to the AER political priorities as well as the work programme, it is planned on a two year basis. This plan is reviewed every year for the following two years

Monitoring and evaluating results

Planning at AER allows to have a clear overview of when specific activities will take place throughout a cycle².

Careful and regular evaluation of these activities' results will be integrated into the annual planning scheme and will allow to showcase to our members the exact progress and achievements made at the end of a cycle, determining better how to work with the next one.



² This list of activities can be found in the complementary annual action plan



*If you fail to plan, you are
planning to fail!*

Benjamin Franklin



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Bureau

Ankara (TR), 17 December 2014

Document related to : VI.c Member relations strategy (for adoption)

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Member relations strategy

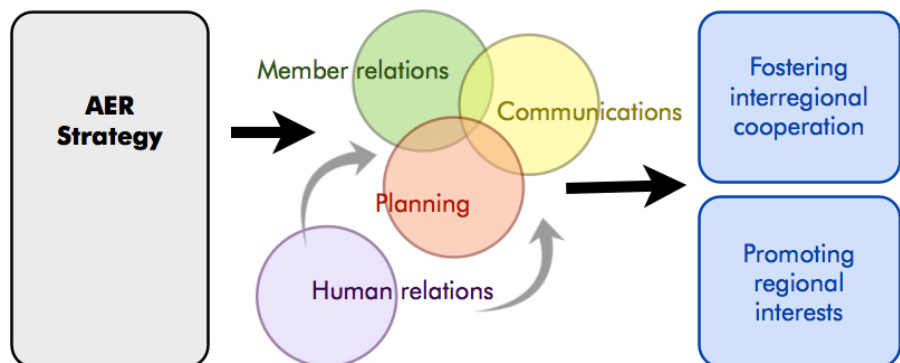
AER Bureau, Ankara (TR), 17 December 2014

Implementing the strategy

The present strategic document is part of a fourfold global strategy of the Assembly of European Regions which aims at setting the stage to ensure that the AER objectives are implemented effectively. These objectives express the core of AER's *raison d'être*:

- (1) Fostering interregional cooperation to promote the exchange of experience and the development of regional policy,
- (2) Promoting interregional interests in Europe and beyond.

The three other components of the strategy comprise Planning, Communications, and Human Relations. The documents are interlinked and dependant on one another.



The Member relations strategy will be completed by **guidelines** and an annual **action plan**. The guidelines will provide further details on how to implement the strategie's objectives. The annual work plan will layout the concrete activities and actions as well as the resources needed to implement them, based on AER's general work programme.

Table of contents

Implementing the strategy	2
Chapter 1 Objectives	4
Chapter 2 Relevance	5
Chapter 3 Membership	6
Chapter 4 Growth and development	7
Chapter 5 Tools	8
Chapter 6 Evaluation and monitoring	10

Chapter 1: Objectives

1. **Putting members first** - understanding members and their needs: AER's member relations strategy is a tool to put members' interest and needs at the heart of AER's activities. Understanding membership processes as well as external policy developments are key in achieving this objective.
2. **Developing strategic approaches to membership development and growth:** Furthermore, the member relations strategy identifies and develops concrete action steps to retain and develop a strong AER membership base, and providing input on further recruitment strategies.

Chapter 2: Relevance

1. **Political rational** - numbers are politics: The Assembly of European Regions is a political network pursuing political goals. The force and strength to achieve these goals lies in the number and diversity of regions in terms of culture, politics and geography, that are members in AER. Thus, the political rationale for membership development is finding allies to pursue a political cause.
2. **Financial rational - numbers are independence:** Developing AER membership has also a financial rationale. To be politically independent AER is using a subscription fee model, meaning that 90% of its resources come from membership fees rather than grants from the European Commission or other sources. This allows AER to express its views freely and to be independent.

Chapter 3: Members

Eligibility to an association is shaping its rationale and character. As a political association representing regions, AER has developed specific criteria defining a region, yet is taking into account rapid institutional and political changes:

1. **Defining who a member is:** AER members are regions that are defined in AER's statutes. They have access to full AER membership, including access to political decision making as well as access to all services AER is providing. These are so-called full members.
2. **Embracing new realities:** Due to the diversity of territorial governance systems and changing institutional set ups, AER is embracing and welcoming territories and public authorities that do not strictly correspond to AER's membership criteria, yet will provide benefits to the network due to their related interests and outlooks. These members are so-called associate members.
3. **Managing members expectations:** The benefits and obligations of membership will be defined in the AER statute.

Chapter 4: Growth and Development

Not losing members (member retention) and attracting new ones (member recruitment) are key to growth and development. Keeping members and gaining new ones is based on three principles:

1. **Defining and communicating AER added value:** Making sure that members understand why they are part of AER, what they gain through membership and why it is useful to promote AER to other regions and stakeholders.
2. **Enhancing network ownership of members:** Increasing member loyalty through AER's democratic decision making processes, clear communication and newly developed planning cycle.
3. **Understanding and identifying needs of members and potential members:** Profiling regions and potential member regions in order to better align AER services to their specific needs and constant monitoring of sub-national governance developments in Europe and beyond.

Chapter 5: Tools

- **Knowing members-gaining member intelligence:** Regular monitoring and analysing membership behaviour as well as profiling non-members and identification of their needs.
- **Accessing member -AER's Database:** Updating and monitoring of right contacts in AER's database and developing further user-friendly ICT tools to contact and stay in contact with AER members and potential new members.
- **Better member service through one contact point:** Providing one membership service point that is dealing with administrative as well as strategic membership issues and a clear reference for members on membership issues.
- **Upgrading the competence of staff:** Training and mentoring AER staff members about membership development principles and some marketing and communication tools.
- **Using AER events for active member relations:** Geographic planning of AER events in line with strategic membership aspects and "anchoring" AER in the territory by involving as many relevant stakeholders as possible.
- **Making AER General Assembly the main annual recruiting event:** Recruiting non-members by invitation to main annual AER event and provision of first insight to AER's network and activities

Chapter 6: Evaluation and monitoring

The monitoring of the member relations strategy will be measured on a regular basis according to pre-defined criteria. These will be established in 3 main areas: (1) member satisfaction, (2) number of members, (3) membership income.



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Ankara (TR), 17 December 2014

Document related to : VI.d Communications strategy (for adoption)

ANNEXES

1. "AER Communications Strategy"
2. "AER Toolkit"

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Communications strategy

AER Bureau, Ankara (TR), 17 December 2014



The art of communication is
the language of leadership.

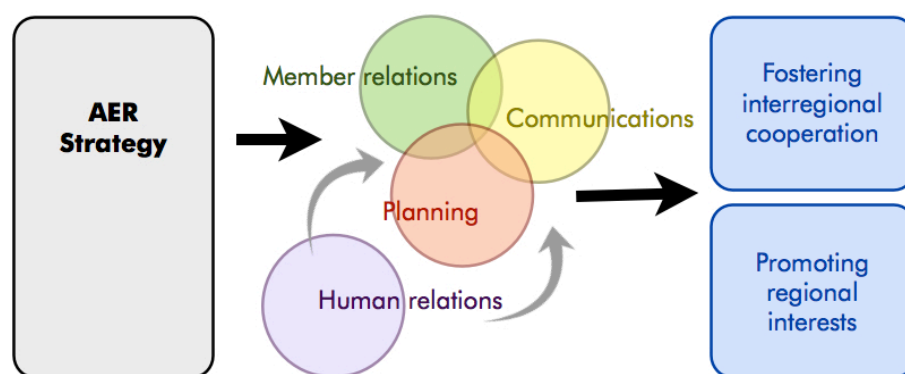
James Humes

Implementing the AER Strategy

The present strategic document is part of a 4-fold global strategy of the Assembly of European Regions which aims at setting the stage to ensure that the AER objectives are implemented effectively. These objectives express the core of AER's *raison d'être*:

- (1) Fostering interregional cooperation to promote the exchange of experience and the development of regional policy,
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The three other components of the strategy are the *Member relations strategy*, the *Planning strategy* and the *Human relations strategy*. The documents are interlinked and dependant on one another.



The Communications strategy will be completed by **guidelines** and an annual **action plan**. The guidelines will provide further detail on how to implement the strategie's objectives. The annual work plan will layout the communication activities and actions as well as the resources needed to implement them, based on AER's general work programme.



The two words 'information' and 'communication' are often used interchangeably, but they signify quite different things. Information is giving out; communication is getting through.

Sydney J. Harris

Table of contents

Foreword		2
Chapter 1	Objectives	4
Chapter 2	Relevance	6
Chapter 3	Audience	7
Chapter 4	Key message	8
Chapter 5	Tools	9
Chapter 6	Evaluation and monitoring	10



Communication is a process of sharing experience till it becomes a common possession. It modifies the disposition of both parties who partakes it.

John Dewey

Chapter 1: Objectives

1. Creating a system of communications

The first and foremost objective of the communications is to implement the AER mission and overall objectives of the organisation. In this regard, communications is understood as going beyond the mere production of outputs for activities. Communications is an integral part of the decision-making process and the operations; it is neither an “add-on” nor only a product, but rather something as fundamental as operational or policy objectives to achieving AER’s overall mission. Effective decision-making cannot be done solely on objective facts and communications should play a role both in that process ensuring that all actors involved (internal and external) grasp the needed information to make the most effective call. At this point, the art of communications is to provide the correct information, in the right amount and at precisely the right time. This is essential for AER to keep up with a changing society and truly apply the principles of transparency and dialogue.

2. Analysing and defining AER in its communications environment

Effective communications requires a good understanding of who we are and how we are perceived in our environment so as to fine-tune the messages and how they should be disseminated. This requires constant and ongoing monitoring of AER’s political eco-system so as to adapt to internal and external factors of the environment.

Communications is an important tool in making AER a political intelligence agency; it will provide input for decision-making and enhance the added value of AER activities and actions, making them more relevant, attractive and comprehensive to the audiences.



Storytellers, by the very act of telling, communicate a radical learning that changes the lives and the world: telling stories is a universally accessible means through which people make meaning.

Chris Cavanaugh

Chapter 2: Relevance

It is important to identify the relevance of the communications strategy but also to acknowledge that the process is based on a broad set of existing actions and practices. This strategy is a natural evolution of what has been done in the past and the result of a need to constantly adapt and improve so as to keep up with the political reality, competitors and environment in which the organisation is working.

Competitive advantage: communications will help to stand out in light of AER competitors and other actors on the European landscape as a being the unavoidable player for promoting regional interests.

Identity: communications will be the starting point for a longer process of *branding* the structure, ie. identifying what makes the organisation unique and defining a common identity for a structure that prides in its diversity.

Links with other strategic documents

- ▶ The success of creating an efficient communications system will depend on the effectiveness of the **planning cycle** which defines the distribution of responsibilities and timing of the decision-making process.
- ▶ Communications will encompass the relations with all relevant stakeholders and actors, including AER's primary audience (see chapter 3) its members and the **member relations strategy**.



The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.

George Bernard Shaw

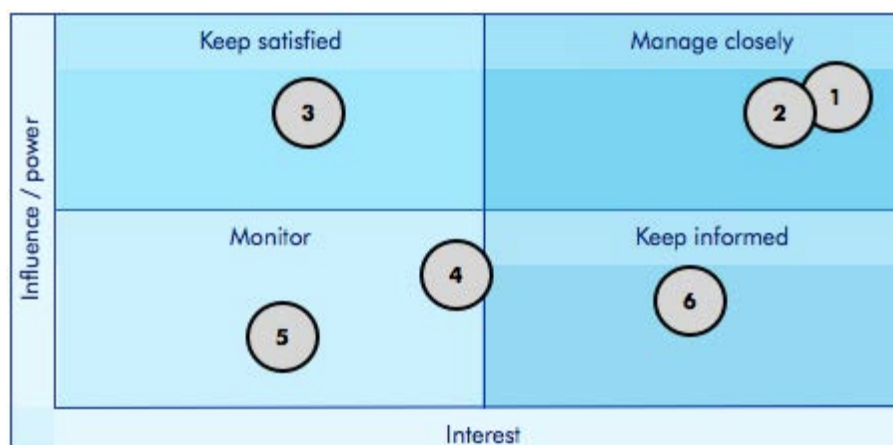
Chapter 3: Audiences

Definition: primary groups of people, with common interests and needs, identified as the intended recipient of the communications outputs. Getting the audience right ensure proper implementation of the strategy.

The list of audiences below are prioritised with the members at the top, being the most important. They represent where most of the efforts, time and resources will be spent for preparing, sharing and disseminating information. Those on top will receive more frequent information in larger amounts and greater detail.

1. Members	Member regions and their representations, Observers & Member organisations
2. Staff	General Secretariat and Brussels office
3. Partners	Organisations & companies with whom AER has a cooperation agreement
4. Media	European and regional media
5. Stakeholders	Institutions, Networks, Organisations
4. Potential members	Non member regions

Stakeholder mapping





It's not all about content. It's all about stories. It's not all about stories. It's all about great stories.

Mitch Joel

Chapter 4: Key message

AER communications should convey the core of the following message, no matter the audience addressed, and no matter the channel being used. These messages should always transpire at some point in the dissemination.

- **AER added value:** the sum is greater than the parts. The diversity of members from wider Europe and the diversity of AER's action result in a bottom-up organisation tailored to meet the needs of regions.
- **AER competitive advantage:** with the regions, for the regions. The unique history of the network moulded by numerous key regions and individuals combined with active ownership of members make AER a strong, non-institutional (political) and hands-on organisation.
- **AER achievements:** the impact and influence of the organisation through its ambassadors (members) is both qualitative and quantitative and more often than not difficult to measure. AER's independence is a key success factor for the network's achievements.

Links with other strategic documents

- Identifying and defining the added (member) value is a key component for the success of the **member relations strategy**.



Effective communication is 20%
what you know and 80% how
you feel about what you know.

Jim Rohn

Chapter 5: Tools

1. **Informing and exchanging:** information cycles on EU funding, breakfast briefings, Tales from Europe, Citizens Forum, Academic and Training Centre, etc.
2. **Dissemination and media:** newsletter, website, press releases and conferences, media partnerships, multimedia work, social networks, press monitoring, political reports, etc.
3. **Projects and programmes:** Eurodyssey, Rur@ct, Youth Regional Network, Summer Academy, EU co-funded projects, etc.
4. **Training and advising:** training academies, peer reviews, etc.
5. **Advocacy and networking:** networking events, lobbying, AER added value, recommendations, letter, declarations, position paper, etc.
6. **Events and awards:** key events, regional innovation award, Most Youth Friendly European Region, etc.
7. **Networks, groups and communities:** thematic groups, thematic networks, EU and international networks, e-health network, AER Communities, Equal opportunities group, etc.
8. **Political tools:** strategies, political priorities, strategic documents, etc.
9. **Planning and monitoring:** annual activity report, plenary meetings, calendar of events, monitoring and evaluation group, etc.

Links with other strategic documents

- ▶ The tools will take their full form in the **AER Toolkit** as an independant publication.
- ▶ **Member relations strategy:** the Toolkit will serve as a means of explaining AER to potential members.



Communication is a means of persuasions to influence others so that desired effect is achieved.

Aristotle

Chapter 6: Evaluation and monitoring

The monitoring of the communications output will be measured on a regular basis according to pre-defined criteria. These will be established in 4 main areas in what concerns communications: (1) member relations, (2) partner relations, (3) press relations and (4) stakeholder relations. Monitoring will also be necessary for the policy side of AER's work.

Evaluating the success of the actions will be a much more subtle exercise, as it will aim to evaluate the effect of the communication actions, so everything that cannot be measured with a mere number. To be effective, the evaluation should be constant and repeated systematically. This process is time consuming and challenging and highly dependant on qualitative analyses but absolutely key as it will provide insight on the impact of the communications system.



*Don't trust everything you read
on the internet.*

Abraham Lincoln



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AER Toolkit

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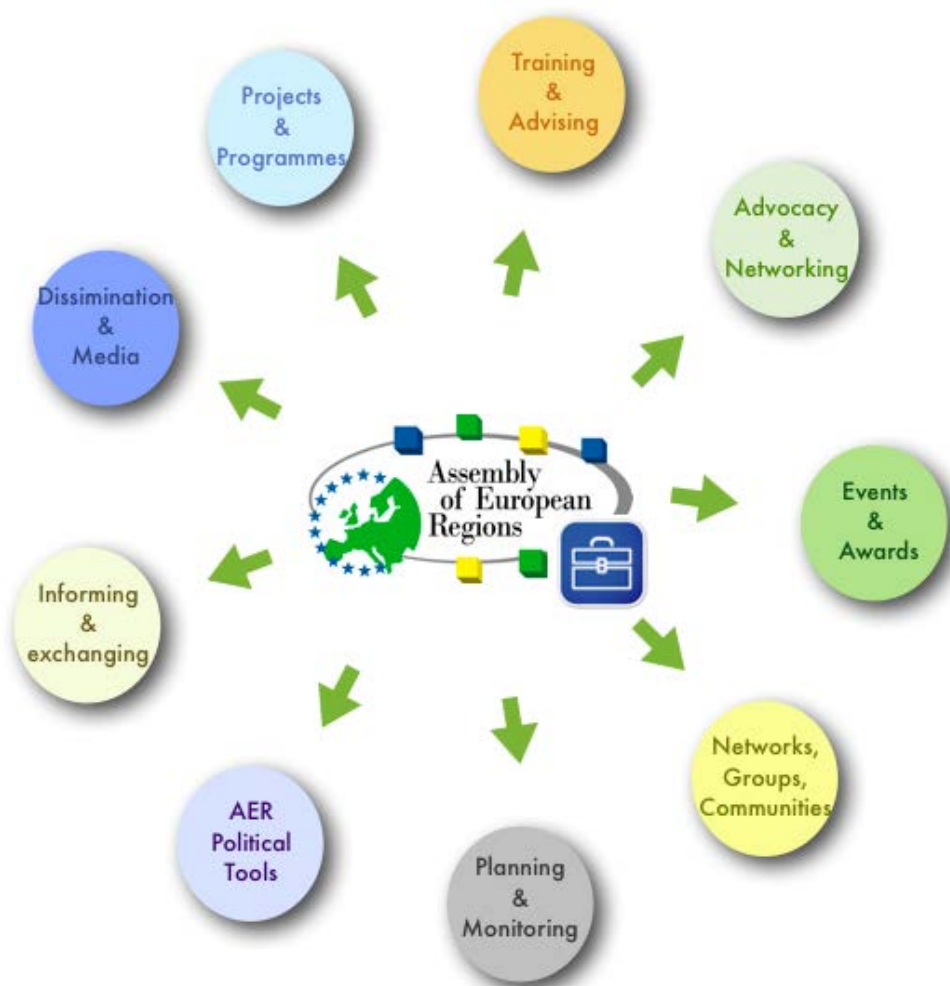
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Implementing the Strategy

As a complement to the AER Communications Strategy, the present Toolkit is indirectly part of the four fold global strategy¹ of the Assembly of European Regions, aiming at setting the stage to ensure that the AER objectives are implemented effectively. These objectives express the core of AER's *raison d'être*: (1) Fostering interregional cooperation to promote the exchange of experience and the development of regional policy, (2) Promoting interregional interests in Europe and beyond.

This present document contains all tools available and used at AER, allowing for the AER Executive Board to determine how to put in action and promote the Political priorities of a given cycle through concrete activities, projects and methods.



¹ Implementing the AER Strategy requires the complementary action of four sub-strategies, all closely linked to each other: the Communications Strategy, the Planning Strategy, the Members Relations Strategy and the Human Resources Strategy. A

Table of contents

Implementing the Strategy	2
Chapter 1 Informing & exchanging	4
Chapter 2 Dissemination & media	4
Chapter 3 Projects & Programmes	6
Chapter 4 Training & Activities	7
Chapter 5 Advocacy & networking	7
Chapter 6 Events & Awards	8
Chapter 7 Networks, Groups & Communities	9
Chapter 8 AER political tools (internal use)	10
Chapter 9 Planning & Monitoring (internal use)	11

Informing & Exchanging

AER aims at helping its Members implement policy actions in various fields by first and foremost informing them on the options and methods available to them. AER also encourages its members to exchange regional stories, best practices and lessons learnt in this field between stakeholders and key actors. The tools available to our members are :

Information sessions on EU funding

Information sessions with a view to offering AER members extensive and detailed information on the funding opportunities available to them for 2014-2020

Breakfast Briefings

The AER Brussels office organises breakfast briefings on a given topic in order to help regional officers in Brussels keep track of policies of their interest. This also enables AER to brief them about what AER is doing on these topics and how members can get involved.

Tales from Europe and citizens forums

Debate events allowing for a close exchange of information as well as home stories and best practices between citizens and various stakeholders across Europe.

Academic Center

Database of experts on regionalism to strengthen the position of AER as a main resource centre on decentralization.

Dissimination & Media

Communication and dissemination is one of AER's strong points. Indeed, AER makes the most of its vast European network to spread the news on what its member regions have accomplished, using all channels available on the media market. The press and media tools used at AER are :

AER monthly Newsletter

With over 16000 subscribers across wider Europe, AER offers a monthly overview of all its actions, novelties, interesting facts and calls for proposals in its electronic Newsletter. Open to all willing to subscribe to it, the newsletter allows for our members to follow closely our activities and spread the news to potential stakeholders, partners and new members.

AER Website

The AER website gathers all information on AER, explaining what it is, our activities, our members and partners, our transversal thematic and regional expertise, publications and a press and media center. It also works as a platform allowing for our members to upload working documents for our events as well as find all relevant information on our upcoming activities.

AER Press releases

AER regularly sends out press releases to all EU and international media, stakeholders, and member regions delivering key messages on topics of current concern, new activities at AER and political stances our members wish to take.

AER Press conferences

In order to give a voice to our members and political representatives, press conferences are organized whenever possible with local as well as EU media to answer directly to questions asked by journalists and press. This allows for AER to gain more visibility and promote our activities further to a wider public.

Partnerships with EU media and press institutions

Specific media and EU news branches agree to partner with AER for targeted press and media activities. These partnerships, such as that held with New Europe, allow for AER members to receive official interviews, broadcasted directly and publicly online as well publicity through articles and highlights printed in their digital and paper press. Furthermore, partnerships with institutions such as the Brussels Press Club allow for AER members to have access to their rooms for conferences and meetings in a strategic location based in the heart of the EU institutions sector in Brussels.

Lobbying with Brussels journalists

AER makes the most of its tight contacts with EU journalists based in Brussels in order to lobby with them in favor of services rendered to AER and its members. These actions allow for AER to benefit from specific and punctual offers and initiatives which are then used to highlight our regions, activities and partners.

AER videos and interviews

Our members and partners are put forward through videos and interviews AER conducts and broadcasts during our meetings, on our social networks and shares with our members through mailings and communications.

AER campaigns

Some projects at AER are promoted through specific “campaigns”, limited in time and using bigger wider means of communication, thanks to the assistance of private, public partners as well as member regions in these new initiatives.

Active social networks

Facebook, Twitter, Youtube...you name it, AER uses it! Regular daily updates are posted on these networks allowing for our followers and friends to keep live track of what is going on at AER. It also allows for member regions to further highlight and promote their achievements.

Press Clippings monitoring

AER monitors closely what is being said about its members, its activities and its representatives in a wide range of regional, national and European press. It collects all press clippings and evaluates the different interests and tendencies EU media from different countries have for different topics.

Projects & Programmes

Member regions from AER can call upon our services when it comes to assisting them with EU or regional projects and programmes. AER also offers to its members-only to take part to a range of AER-specific programmes. These tools are :

EU projects

AER is continuously partner of various European Projects in different topics that are in line with the work done by the three committees and are of interest to our members. AER also allows for better partner search for members wishing to undertake a new project, assisting them in the building of project proposals and helping to disseminate information between member regions on past, ongoing or future initiatives.

Eurodissey Programme

The AER professional mobility programme offers 3 to 7 months internships abroad to young people aged 18 to 32 who are looking for a first job experience. Every year, 600 young people benefit from this programme.

Youth Regional Network (YRN)

YRN brings together nearly 100 young people between 18 to 30 who participate in the regional decision-making process and bring their point of view on the policies discussed within AER or the policies they deem relevant. Since May 2013, the YRN President is a full member of the AER Executive Board.

RUR@CT Programme

Supports the transfer of best practices from one region to another through the technical assistance provided by AER to its

AER Summer Academy

Annual forum to exchange knowledge and experience. Every year, politicians, civil servants, experts and representatives of the YRN meet in an informal setting to strengthen co-operation on a given topic.

Training & Advising

A key service offered to AER members consists in tailor made training and advising regarding regional policy issues, specific thematics requiring detailed explaining as well as learning. The tools available are :

Training Academies

Free on day / half day seminars on European affairs (seminars on thematic issues, lobbying, programmes or EU decision-making).

Regional Peer Reviews

Detailed peer-learning methodology allowing regions to assess their policies in a structured and in-depth Europe.

Advocacy & Networking

As a platform of exchanges and cooperation between regions of wider Europe, AER takes networking seriously and encourages its members to find synergies together and stimulate new partnerships. AER also uses its wide network to advocate in favor of regional causes, making sure that regions and their voice are heard at the right time, at the right place and by the right people.

Networking events

These events gather all actors, part of AER : member regions, partner organizations and businesses, institutional stakeholders and actors of civil society...to meet and exchange on diverse topics, helping them find new ideas of partnership and fostering the exchange of best practices.

AER added value

This document lists all of AER's added value for its members: the services we grant them, the help they receive in diverse activities as well as what it truly brings them to be part of AER. This document can be used to highlight AER's actions and results in front of important European and

International stakeholders , but also to encourage new regions to be part of our regional adventure.

AER recommendations/ declarations/statements and positions

The regional dimension needs to be fully taken into account in all aspects and steps of the decision making procedure on a national, European as well as international level. AER helps its members express their needs and positions on specific topics through the drafting and publication of official recommendations, declarations and statements, which are then communicated to all relevant stakeholders involved in these fields. AER also uses its expertise to complete these documents and involve external experts to reinforce the messages sent.

AER letters

Official letters, drafted by AER and its members and signed by regional and national elected officials as well as EU and international representatives can sent to the decision makers in order to help a regional cause get the attention and consideration it needs. These letters can be sent privately or made public, depending on the importance of the cause.

Political reports

AER members are encouraged, with the support of the AER secretariat, to draft political reports on topics representative of the interests of AER members. These political report are useful lobbying tools, facilitating the exchange and compiling of good practices and allowing all interested AER members to promote their views and experiences on a given topic.

Events & Awards

AER doesn't only participate to a variety of conferences and events across Europe but also takes pride in organising an important number itself with its member regions and partners. It strives at highlighting the diversity, capacities and hidden treasures of its member regions , and awards those who work hard to constantly help their territories progress and stand out in different policy areas.

AER events

Highlighting and promoting AER's work through the European Investment and Business Summit, the Black Sea Summit, the Eastern partnership forum and various other conferences and workshops all throughout the year and all over wider Europe.

Regional Innovation Award (RIA)

Illustrating the strategic role that regions play in making innovation happen in Europe, this prize rewards the most innovative region for a project launched each year throughout its member states.

Most Youth Friendly European Regions Awards (MYFER)

Award seeking to promote initiatives related to various youth issues, offering European regions the chance to make their projects known to the wider public, share their invaluable experience, and provide examples of good practice to other European Regions.

Networks, Groups & Communities

AER has entered into a series of strategic and thematic partnerships in order to strengthen its expertise in some specific domains and to raise awareness and visibility of the regional dimension on a European as well as an International level.

Thematic working groups

These ad-hoc groups are organized within the Committees, they give AER expert input to support the drafting of political statements, they provide for concrete actions at regional level, allowing for sharing best practices on identified topics and give also input for AER's daily lobbying work.

Thematic networks

Association of Cities and Regions for Recycling and Sustainable Resource Management (ACR+)

Airports Council International (ACI)

European Business and Innovation Centre Network (EBN)

European Regions Research and Innovation Network (ERRIN)

Acting Collectively to bridge Space and Society (EURISY)

Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA)

Network of European Regions Using Space Technologies (NEREUS)

World Health Organisation's Regions for Health Network (WHO-RHN)

Community of Regions for Assisted Living (CORAL)

European Patients Forum (EPF)

MIHealth Management & Clinical Innovation Forum

European Countryside Movement (MER)

Foundation of European Regions for Education and Training (FREREF)

European Network of Cultural Administration Training Centres (ENCATC)

European Association of Regional Televisions (CIRCOM)

EU and international networks and partnerships

Association of North East Asia Regional Governments (NEAR)

United National Development Programme (UNDP)

Region of Climate Action (R20)

World Investment Conference (WIC)

AER E-Health networks

A platform where regions engage to develop e-health tools and where they contribute to European Union policies on e-health

AER Business Community

The AER Business Community aims at raising awareness of the regional dimension among business leaders through “win-win” partnerships with private businesses and members from different economic sectors.

AER Youth & Students Community

The Youth and Students Community gathers young people from 16 to 30 who are willing to discover Europe’s regions, to know more about the main European regional issues and to meet Youth and Political leader from all across the continent. The Youth and Students Community is a platform of exchange and networking between its members and AER.

AER Equal Opportunities Group

Equal Opportunities needs to be mainstreamed throughout all of AER’s activities. In order to allow for that to happen effectively, a group of nominated elected representatives from each Committee gathers regularly to discuss on what strategic and thematic steps AER should take towards promoting Equal opportunities in its policy actions.

AER Political tools (internal use)

These documents allow for AER to define its raison d’être, i.e., its objectives as an association. This starting point defines the political orientation and political priorities, the way they should be implemented as well as the tools available to AER to decide how and with what means to do so. These tools are :

AER Strategy

The AER strategy defines the strategic vision and meaning of AER. Its two objectives express the core of the association’s raison d’être.

AER Political Priorities

Document crystallizing the two main objectives into the political orientation of AER over a 2 year period, also referred to as a cycle.

AER Strategic Documents (*Planning, Communications, Member relations & Human Resources*)

Documents of a four fold global strategy of AER aiming at setting the stage to ensure that the AER objectives are implemented effectively. These strategic documents should be used as a reference when deciding how to proceed with a new AER cycle of activities.

Each strategic document is completed with a set of guidelines, explaining further how to implement the principles announced in the strategies as well as with an annual action plan, adapting AER's needs with the strategies throughout a cycle into concrete actions.

Evaluation & Monitoring (internal use)

In order to evaluate and monitor AER's presence and activities across wider Europe, a number of documents are produced beforehand, during and after a cycle in order to keep track of how things are being implemented. These tools are :

Annual Activity report

Listing of all the activities and outputs carried out per political priority throughout a year. Each activity includes the tools and methods used (as per AER work programme) allowing to showcase how these activities contribute to the results outlined in the AER strategy.

Plenary meetings and committee reports

In order for AER committees to receive the political implication it needs in order to proceed with its actions and initiatives, two plenary meetings are held per committee per year, some of which may be joined between committees. These meetings reunite the elected officials within the committees to discuss on the outcomes of past initiatives and agree together on the next steps to take.

AER work programme and calendar of events

Within each of the AER's political priorities, the work programme lists the activities that will be planned throughout a year in order to achieve the results and objectives of the AER strategy. These activities are then displayed within a yearly calendar of events, allowing for an effective overview of AER's actions and presence throughout its member regions.

Monitoring and Evaluation Group

As per mandated by the General Assembly in 2013 in Paris, the Monitoring and Evaluation Group is composed of elected representatives who observe and advise AER on how to properly implement the strategy. They make sure that AER stays in line with its statutory requirements and help direct AER in the direction its members agreed for it to go.