



ASSEMBLY OF EUROPEAN
REGIONS
MOST YOUTH FRIENDLY
EUROPEAN REGION AWARD
2011

*SOCIAL INCLUSION OF YOUTH WITH
DISABILITIES*

The Award is open to ALL European Regions





Inclusion of youth issues and young people themselves in regional debates and decision-making process has been a key priority of the Assembly of European Regions since its creation in 1985. For 25 years AER member regions have demonstrated through their youth policies that when encouraged to act, young people are willing to help shape the future of their community.

Crucial to a fair and effective youth policy is the need to be as inclusive and far reaching as possible. The voice and concerns of ALL youth must be heard and dealt with.

Social inclusion of all young people must be at the heart of any youth policy. This is particularly important if Europe is to achieve the ambitious objectives set by the EU 2020 strategy: diminishing school drop-out rate by at least 5% and increasing the overall employment level to 75%. These aims will not be fulfilled if we allow ourselves to neglect some parts of our youth such as young people with disabilities. Like their peers who do not suffer from disabilities, they face tough economic challenges and have, on top of that, to confront prejudices and fears related to their disability, which tend to marginalize them even further from the social and economic life.

This unfair situation is now widely recognized and we are glad that the Youth Regional Network has chosen to focus this year's AER Most Youth friendly European Region Award on policies targeting young persons with disabilities. We are also pleased to see that the Youth Regional Network is taking more and more initiatives to influence and help shape the work of AER and its member regions. By identifying the synergy between their interest in youth inclusion and the work on disability undertaken by AER Committee on Social policy and Public Health they show that the intergenerational cooperation promoted by AER is on the right tracks

Finally, I would like to thank Committee 2 and its network "Equal Europe for People with Disabilities" for the help and expertise they will provide. I am convinced that there is a lot at stake and that the lights that will be shed on the MYFER 2011 winner will not only reward a successful policy but will also help inspire other AER member regions. I therefore encourage you all to take part in this competition. Your initiatives will not go unnoticed.

Hande Özsan Bozatli

President of AER's "Culture, Education, Youth,
International Cooperation" Committee
Vice-President of Istanbul Provincial Council (TR)

The Assembly of European Regions (AER – aer.eu) launched the competition for the Most Youth Friendly European Region (MYFER) 10 years ago. Since then it has given European regions the possibility to make their youth projects known to a wider public and to spread good practices gained in this field. The competition was launched with the objective of reinforcing the integration of young people in society and increasing youth participation in public life. Rewarding the most youth-friendly region is a good way of emphasizing and reminding us that by ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, we committed ourselves to putting children and youth on the central stage when taking decisions that concern them.

Why apply?

With its competition for the most youth-friendly Region in Europe, the Assembly of European Regions seeks to highlight the importance of youth policies. The long-term objective is to improve the integration of young people in society and to increase the number of young people involved in the public life of their regions.

This year's theme has been chosen by members of the AER Youth Regional Network (YRN) in order to recognise the important work undertaken by European regions to facilitate better inclusion of young people with disabilities. Yet, more can and should be done. By rewarding a region and highlighting its best practices, AER hopes that other regions might be inspired and take up the challenge of inclusion of youth with disabilities.

MYFER 2011 also involves a cross sectoral element as committee 3 will collaborate with the YRN Committee on Healthcare and Social Affairs and AER Committee 2 on Social Policy and Public Health – through its "Equal Europe for People with Disabilities" network.

The purpose of the 6th MYFER edition is to highlight a "paradigm shift" in attitudes and approaches to young persons with disabilities as analysed by the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. Young persons with disabilities are not seen anymore as "objects" of charity, medical treatment and social protection but as "subjects" with rights, capable of claiming those rights and making decisions based on their free and informed consent as well as being active members of society.

Who can apply?

The AER Most Youth Friendly European Region Award is open to **ALL European regions**:

AER member regions can apply for the AER Most Youth Friendly European Region Award. Organisations (e.g. regional youth councils, NGOs, student organisations, private companies) which are not part of the regional administration but have a mandate to act on its behalf on inclusion of

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youth with disabilities might also apply; we simply ask that they provide us with a letter of support from the region (if you are unsure about your eligibility status please get in touch with us). Please note that it is the region these organisations work for which will receive the prize, not the organisation itself.

AER non-member regions that would be eligible to become AER members can also take part in the competition. AER membership is open to any regional authority with an elected representation immediately below the level of a Council of Europe member state. Membership is also open to regions outside the Council of Europe at the condition that they respect its basic fundamental principles.¹

Main priorities 2011

Globally, there are **over 650 million** persons with disabilities, and around **a third of these are youth**. Yet, youth with disabilities is a severely under-researched field, with limited data on their specific needs, which hampers many efforts to develop policy responses. Youth with disabilities constitute a group particularly prone to social exclusion and poverty. The problems experienced by youth with disabilities often result in decreased access to necessary and fundamental services, lack of decent housing, financial exclusion, reduced participation in the community and exclusion from the labour market. Accordingly, in order to facilitate their integration within society, youth with disabilities should be offered better access to education and training, increased opportunities for entering the labour market (including measures to facilitate the leap from school to work), provision of quality healthcare and greater encouragement to participate in the life of their communities. The jury of the 2011 edition of MYFER will look carefully at initiatives in **3 thematic fields** (education, employment and civic engagement). Please see the details below. These fields are given as a guideline of what we would like to see in your applications but are not exclusive of any other interesting initiatives you would like to present. You can also apply even if you are not active in all three categories.

EDUCATION. Education is as critical for realizing the full potential of youth with disabilities as it is for their peers without disabilities. Educational institutions are often inaccessible: they lack appropriate facilities, whereas teachers frequently have preconceived ideas about what is appropriate for their students with disabilities, which often results in the exclusion of youth with disabilities from certain activities.

Under this category we are looking for **actions that contribute to bringing youth with disabilities in the education and training systems (both formal and non-formal) as well as actions preventing the school drop-out among youth with disabilities, etc.**

EMPLOYMENT. Not receiving the right skills and qualifications limits the employment opportunities for youth with disabilities. Unemployment rates for persons with disabilities are higher

¹ As stated in the Charter 2, Article 2 of the AER Statutes adopted on 26 November 2009 in Belfort (F). The AER Statutes are available on aer.eu under "About AER" – "Vocation"

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than among people without disabilities and discrimination as well as negative perceptions of youth with disabilities pose significant barriers to employment.

Under this category we are looking for **actions that help youth with disabilities to get into and remain on the labour market, i.e. regional strategies accompanying the leap from school to work, setting up successful apprenticeship policies and bringing young people with disabilities onto the labour market, etc.**

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT. It is particularly difficult to involve youth with disabilities in their communities when their basic needs are not met. However, these societal misapprehensions can be addressed successfully. Technological innovations such as the Internet and software adaptations have created opportunities for youth with disabilities, helping to break down barriers and increase their sense of belonging and interaction with others. AER and its youth-related activities reveal a positive trend: regions play a key role in ensuring that through, for example, their youth councils, regions reach out to all youth – including youth with disabilities.

Under this category we are looking for **actions that improve the involvement of youth with disabilities in the regional decision-making processes, e.g. through involving them in youth participatory structures (such as regional youth councils, parliaments, NGOs, student councils, youth information points), facilitating their participation in elections, etc.**

Youth committee

The AER youth committee will be in charge of making the first assessment of the applications' eligibility and will make recommendations to the jury members, based on the criteria detailed in the application form. It will be composed of young members of the AER Youth Regional Network, a member of the AER Working Group on Disabilities and a representative of the AER secretariat.

Jury

The international jury will be composed of young people (nominated among the members of the AER Youth Regional Network), European experts dealing with the rights of people with disabilities, a representative of the AER Working Group on Disabilities, representatives of European institutions and a representative of the AER secretariat. Jury members cannot come from regions that are candidate to the 2011 of the MYFER Award.

Award

The 2011 MYFER award will be granted to a region which is (1) able to describe specific project(s) in the field of inclusion of young people with disabilities and (2) showcase how this(these) project(s) fit(s) in a comprehensive and integrated policy targeting those young people. The jury will look more specifically for initiatives in the three thematic fields identified above (education, employment and civic engagement). These fields are a guideline but should not prevent you from applying if you do not have initiatives in all three areas. Moreover, this should not preclude you from presenting initiatives in other relevant fields of inclusion of youth with disabilities if they are related to your overall youth with disability policy.

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However, we recognise that not all regions might have implemented such a wide-ranging and integrated policy yet but are working towards that aim and have in the meantime set up one or several interesting project(s). If this is the case in your region you might still apply but you will be required to explain how this (these) project(s) will lead to a wider policy in the near future. The jury will award a "special prize" to the region with the best existing project(s) and most promising policy to come.

The Award ceremony will take place during the AER General Assembly (24-25 November 2011, Ponta Degada, Açores, P). Each participating region will receive a certificate of participation.

What if you win?

AER will organise a series of dissemination events dedicated to the policy of the winning region(s). These events may include **AER Breakfast Briefing**, **AER Tales from Europe**, **AER European Citizens' Forum**, **AER Committee 2 events** related to the theme of people with disabilities as well as **YRN events** related to the competition's theme. These events will offer the opportunity for the awarded region(s) to promote their work in the European context. AER will also help the winner(s) to promote its (their) policy(ies) in European media and will display its (their) description(s) on the AER website. Finally, the winning region(s) will be invited as an expert to attend the above-mentioned AER events.

Applications

DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING THE APPLICATIONS IS 15 JULY 2011!

- Participation in the AER Most Youth Friendly European Region Award is free of charge.
- Application forms can be downloaded on the AER webpage <http://www.aer.eu> (Path: Youth - Most Youth Friendly European Region Award - Competition 2011).

Documents to be submitted:

- completed application form (signed .PDF + electronic version in .DOC)
- letter of support from the relevant regional authority (if they are not the applicant)
- promotional material: 2 pictures + logos (organisation and/or region)

The documents should be sent to:

Electronically:

Justyna Hejman
Youth & Citizenship Officer
j.hejman@aer.eu
Fax / Tel: +33(0)388 227 446

By mail:

Assembly of European Regions
Justyna Hejman
6, rue Oberlin
67000 Strasbourg
FRANCE





ASSEMBLY OF EUROPEAN REGIONS

MOST YOUTH FRIENDLY EUROPEAN
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ANNEXES

[Annex 1: Rules and regulations](#)

[Annex 2: Frequently Asked Questions](#)



RULES AND REGULATIONS

- Article 1** **Assembly of European Regions** (6 rue Oberlin, F-67000 Strasbourg) organises the 6th edition of the **AER Most Youth Friendly European Region Award**.
- Article 2** The objective of the 6th edition of the award is to identify best practices as well as to highlight the importance of youth policies facilitating the social inclusion of youth with disabilities.
- Article 3** The award is open to AER Member regions as well as other European regions that would be eligible to join AER (regions of the member states of the Council of Europe and other European regions under the condition that they respect the basic fundamental principles of the Council of Europe). The term *region* follows the AER understanding as stipulated in its **statutes** Chapter II, article 2.2 "*local authorities immediately below the level of central government, with a political power of representation as embodied by an elected regional Assembly.*"
- Article 4** Participation in the award is **free of charge**. The application form can be downloaded on the AER website www.aer.eu in the youth section (path: Youth – Most Youth Friendly European Region Award – Competition 2011).
- Article 5** All applicants will receive an email confirmation upon receipt of the application form.
- Article 6** Complete applications must include **all** pages of the application package. Support documents can be added as annexes to the application forms. The application package includes the document in Word format (not signed) AND the signed form as a scanned .PDF. These should be returned by email to j.hejman@er.eu or fax +33 (0)388 227 446. File size is limited to 5GB by email. If the number of annexes exceeds this weight, the application should be sent by post. The deadline for applicants is communicated in the application form.
- Article 7** The application form must be filled-in in English. Annexes can be provided in any other language, but shall be briefly commented in English in case this language is not French, English or German (AER official languages)
- Article 8** Annexes are not mandatory, except (1) the letter of support for applicants which are not regional authorities (see Who can apply? and FAQs) and (2) the promotional material (2 pictures of the project + relevant logos).
- Article 9** The Award and "Special Prize" will be granted to regions respecting the terms set out in the "award" section of the brochure. If more than one region demonstrate exceptional practices for the Award of the "Special prize" the jury might decide to reward the two best applications in each category.
- Article 10** Applications will be reviewed by the AER **youth committee** for eligibility and first recommendations. Incomplete or unclear applications may be rejected by the youth committee. The applicants will be informed if their project is considered ineligible. The applications will then be referred to the jury for the final selection.
- Article 11** The awards will be given during the AER General Assembly. All participating regions will be informed of the outcome of the competition in advance of the General Assembly.
- Article 12** Participants accept the rules and regulations. The jury decision cannot be appealed.
- Article 13** All the collected information will be kept strictly confidential and will be used exclusively for the purpose of the present Award.
- Article 14** The Assembly of European Regions reserves the right to interrupt, postpone, prolong or cancel the award in case of any event or circumstance beyond AER's control.
- Article 15** The same shall apply to the dissemination events related to the winning project.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

I represent a regional or local youth council/parliament/NGO/private company/student council/other entity mandated by the regional authority to implement its policy/project(s) on inclusion of youth with disabilities, can I apply for the award?

You can apply at the condition that your action stems from a clear mandate given to you by the regional authority to implement its policy or project(s) on inclusion of youth with disabilities. Please note that it is the region which will be awarded the prize. In order for your application to be evaluated by the AER youth committee you will need to provide us with a letter of support signed by a representative of your regional council in order to show that your initiative is supported by the regional authorities. If you are not sure of your eligibility status please get in touch with us.

Where can I find out if my region is a member of AER?

The list of AER member regions is available on our website: aer.eu under "AER Members".

My region is not a member of AER, can I apply?

Yes! The MYFER Award is the only AER Award that is open to all European regions of the member states of the Council of Europe as well as other European regions under the condition that they respect the basic fundamental principles of the Council of Europe.

What kind of initiatives are eligible?

The words "initiative", "action" and "project" are used interchangeably in the application form and brochure. The form of the initiative does not matter; it can be a programme, a project, a strategy, etc. What is important in the award is how these fit in wider policy approach aiming at social inclusion of youth with disabilities.

How recent does the initiative have to be?

Given that the best project will be evaluated on the basis of its outcomes, some important aspect of the initiative must have occurred within the past 2 years (i.e. no earlier than on 1 January 2009). It also means that when filling in the application form you will be able to comment on the first results. Please read the information required in the application form carefully as a significant amount of quantitative data is required as justification of the objectives and results.

My initiative has not ended yet, can I still apply?

Yes, the project does not have to be 100% completed to be eligible. However, you will see that quantitative information is needed on (expected) results, so these must be explained in quite some detail.

Do I have to use the application form provided?

Yes, the application form must be used and fully completed. The word version of the document is available on the website and should be completed electronically. For the final signature, you can use an electronic signature, or print the finished application form and send it to us as a PDF with the handwritten signature.

How long can the answers be?

We encourage you to be as concise as possible. The jury will have many pages to read so it is important to keep the description of your project short, simple and to the point. Do not hesitate to use bullet points and lists to make your ideas clearer.

What sort of supporting documents should I send?

That is up to you. The only supporting document required are the letter of support (if applicable – See FAQ number 1) and the promotional material (2 pictures of the project + logos), but please feel free to send annexes if you think they will help support your project, such as: press articles, outcomes of dissemination activities, leaflet or other communication material. Please keep in mind that the jury will primarily refer to the application form and only turn to the annexes if they require further information. Please note that the working language of the technical committee is **English**. If you wish to send supporting documents in any other language they must be briefly commented in English in case your chosen language is not French, English or German (AER official languages).

How will the winners be chosen?

The AER youth committee will review the documents for eligibility and check to see whether they are complete and whether projects presented fit with the prize description. The jury will then decide upon the recommendations of the youth committee and after a discussion on the content of each application.