

Ladies and gentlemen!

My name is Magnus Berntsson, and I'm Vice President Treasurer of the Assembly of European Regions. I come from the Swedish region of Västra Götaland where I'm vice president of the regional parliament.

The Assembly of European Regions is the largest independent network of regional authorities in wider Europe, bringing together regions from 35 countries along with 15 interregional organisations. This year, AER has been celebrating our 30th anniversary and on the same time gone through a well needed reform process to be more effective and focus even more on our two main areas:

Exchange of experience and match-making of potential interregional cooperation
Providing a regional perspective on European politics – already at a pre-draft state.

AER uses a bottom-up approach and most of our work is done in thematic committees, open for all members and I would like to mention two of our initiatives for young people:

Eurodyssey is AER's youth mobility programme operating between AER's member regions for over 30 years. Aiming to improve the chances of young Europeans to integrate into working life by offering them the opportunity of a work experience abroad. Since its creation, over 10 000 young people have benefited from Eurodyssey work placements.

Youth Regional Network, YRN, created by the Assembly of European Regions the Youth Regional Network (YRN) is a platform of regional-level youth parliaments, councils and organisations from the wider Europe.

Dear Friends, I hope you can accept that made a change in my written speech today! I feel obliged to tell you what I mentioned during the CALRE meeting this morning!

Yesterday morning, I was sharing a meeting in my home region. At the same time, just 2 km away, in an area with a lot of immigrants, a man in his early twenties walked into a school with a mask over his face, swordlike objects in his hands and hatred in his heart. This ended in a catastrophe. Three people are dead so far, including the offender, and two persons are still hovering between life and death. One of the victims arrived from Syria just 9 months ago, from where he and his family fled the war.

We as regions, that live and act closer to the citizens than the national states and we as political leaders on the regional level, has a surtain responsibility to fight for and promote democracy and to safeguarding human dignity. This is not at least important today, in a world with great flows of refugees.

We need to do our best, when it comes to education, psychiatry and getting people in work, etcetra. But also in creating a discussions in our sociatys about ethics and how we should treat eachother. Let us all work against extremism in anyway it shows it's face!

Thank you very much!