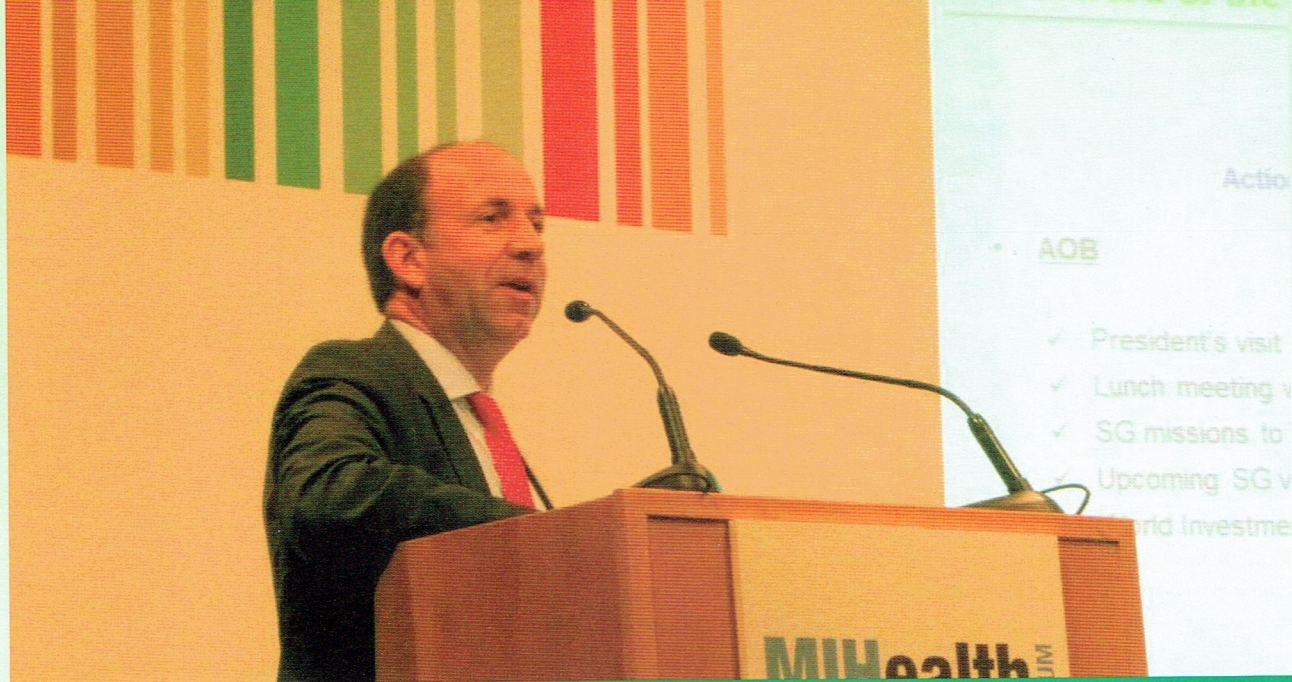


P. Goergen
speaking at the
AER Seminar
on ICT-Based
Integrated Care
in Barcelona,
Catalunya (ES)



Pascal Goergen, AER Secretary General

I believe that 2013 was a transitional year for our Assembly, which will be 30 years old in just a little over a year. We have been fighting for nearly three decades to promote the regional dimension and highlight the regions' role as centers providing citizens - particularly Youth - with assistance for local issues in this ever-changing world.

Building bridges between Europe and its citizens was our governing principle throughout the past year. I am proud of the work that we have carried out together as part of the Eastern Partnership and especially the actions taken in the Ukrainian and other member regions to bring Ukraine closer to Europe. Our Committees' work also benefits from the establishment of relationships with the academic world. Drawing on our academic experts, we provide our member regions with the necessary expertise. The promotion within the AER of concrete actions taken by and for our youth allows us to move forward, exchange and innovate. In our everyday work, this fact is made obvious by the dynamism of our Youth Regional Network and Youth Community members and of course, our annual Summer Academy and Eurodisney programme. We are shaping the future of AER every single day.

The adoption of our new strategy, the election of our new President in Paris and the continuation of a sound financial management, coupled with a transparent and innovating governance, constitute clear answers to our members' need for change,

which I came up with right after taking office. This transitional period was no bed of roses for the General Secretariat's staff or the new political leaders.

President Hande Özsan Bozatli, the Executive Board and myself hold the keys to making AER our member regions' partner for growth. The increased presence of the regions' political leaders and especially the AER President beside the European institutions, the will to strengthen our team in Brussels to increase our lobbying, human networking as well as creating more links with the press, are all signs of the renewed interest in our activities: the press coverage, number of visits on our website and reactions on our social networks confirm that AER is indeed gaining strength. As a matter of fact, the keys that you have given us have already opened numerous doors: those of the European institutions, academic world, institutional and thematic partners, but also those of the corporate world. More doors should open this year: to new member regions, new partner networks and SMEs.

True to my regional creed, my approach has always been and will always be pragmatic and concrete: "the future of AER is now". Instruments that were deployed in 2012 were approved in 2013 and management procedures were adopted by our authorities during the Bureau meeting in Rize, next to the Black Sea. All we have to do now is ensure that we have the human and technical means to use them properly. To reap tomorrow, we must sow today.

Throughout 2013, we have focused on the promotion of common values through quality political reports, the regions' work within our Committees and in the course of 105 events all over Europe. I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of our member regions, the members of my team for their daily involvement, our partner networks and the first companies that co-founded the AER Business Community. Without their energy, our Assembly could not carry out this work.

This is the dawn of a new year, which I hope will witness the strengthening of our regional Assembly. I hereby promise that the AER will implement new and innovating activities throughout 2014.



AER President and Secretary General met with Olli Rehn, EC Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs and the Eurozone.