

## ~ Case Study ~

# Somerset becomes The Most Youth Friendly Region in Europe

Somerset has been selected as the 'Most Youth Friendly European Region' for 2009 by the AER (Assembly of European Regions). The award has been given to Somerset as a result of the contributions from a variety of teams within Somerset County Council to developing projects and initiatives focused on youth issues and raising their profile to the wider public.

This year's theme was creativity, innovation and youth entrepreneurship and the AER judging panel commended Somerset for its involvement in such projects as the UK Youth Parliament, Somerset Children's Parliament, Youth Opportunity Fund (YOF), Youth Capital Funding (YCF) and numerous other youth projects.

Cllr John Osman, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, said: "Somerset County Council aims to help give young people a chance to actively communicate the issues that matter to them. We're proud that the variety of work carried out, by us and our partners across the county, has been recognised on such a big stage with a prestigious award for our hard work."



Somerset – a paradise for young people- SW UK Office Brussels

When it comes to the actions taken by local authorities to encourage young people to become entrepreneurs, the Somerset region in the United Kingdom is simply the best of the best. And it's not an advertisement for students sponsored by politicians. The title of 'Most Youth Friendly European Region' of 2009 was given to Somerset by the Assembly of European Regions.

The main topic of this year's competition was innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship", says Mikheil Ananidze, jury member and a representative of the Adjarian Autonomous Republic in Georgia.



“Why Somerset? The region provided the widest range of activities supporting young businesspeople and that was this year’s most crucial criterion”, Mikheil explains. The AER judging panel emphasized projects such as the Youth Parliament, Somerset Children’s Parliament, the Youth Opportunity Fund (YOF), Youth Capital Funding (YCF) and many others.

There were twelve applications for the award, so the jury had its work cut out choosing the most youth-friendly region. If we get into details, the points were for example given for the amount of money allocated from the regional budget to youth programs, the number of regulations supporting youth implemented in the local law and mentions about youth entrepreneurship in the regional education curriculum.

### **AER Cup**

The jury consisted of the secretary generals of the AER founding organisations, a personal representative of the president, the AER secretary general, a representative of the president of the committee responsible for youth and the president of the sub-committee on youth. Mikheil was one of three people representing the AER Youth Regional Network.

The award has been handed out each two years since 2001. The prize is rather symbolic and prestigious - each region applying for the award receives a certificate and the winner is awarded with the AER Cup as well as a flag with inscription: “Most youth-friendly European Region”.

One can think that if there’s no financial prize, such a competition is simply pointless. If so, he should listen to Mikheil’s opinion. “After our last meeting in Krzyżowa, I told about the award to my regional council and officials decided to apply for the competition”, he says. “But soon they realized there are not enough activities and programs for youth to fulfil the minimum requirements. We agreed that our application would be really poor”, Mikheil admits. But the council didn’t give up and concluded that the Adjarian region has two years to improve the situation of youth policy and they are planning to apply for the next title in 2011.

