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43rd CPMR GENERAL ASSEMBLY
5-6 November 2015, Florence (Tuscany, Italy)

FINAL DECLARATION

The Peripheral Maritime Regions listed below met for the 43rd CPMR Annual General Assembly in Florence (Tuscany, Italy) on 5-6 November 2015

ABERDEEN CITY (UK), ABERDEENSHIRE (UK), ABRUZZO (IT), AÇORES (PT), ANDALUCÍA (ES), AQUITAINE (FR), ARGYLL & BUTE (UK), ASTURIAS (ES), ATTIKI* (GR), AUST AGDER (NO), BALEARES (ES), BASSE-NORMANDIE (FR), BORNHOLM (DK), BRETAGNE (FR), CALABRIA (IT), CALARASI (RO), CAMPANIA* (IT), CANARIAS (ES), CANTABRIA (ES), CATALUNYA (ES), COMUNIDAD VALENCIANA (ES), CORNWALL (UK), CYPRUS (District Authorities) (CY), DYTIKI ELLADA (GR), EMILIA ROMAGNA (IT), GALATI (RO), GALICIA (ES), GÄVLEBORG (SE), GOTLAND (SE), GOZO (MT), HALLAND (SE), HELSINKI-UUSIMAA (FI), HIGHLAND (UK), HIIUMAA & SAAREMAA (EE), IDA-VIRUMAA & PÄRNUMAA (EE), IONIA NISIA (GR), KENTRIKI MAKEDONIA (GR), KIRKLARELI (TR), KOTOR* (MONTENEGRO), KRITI (GR), KYMENLAAKSO (FI), LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON (FR), LAZIO (IT), LIGURIA* (IT), MADEIRA (PT), MAYOTTE (FR), MELILLA (ES), MIDTJYLLAND (DK), MOLISE (IT), MØRE OG ROMSDAL (NO), MURCIA (ES), NAVARRA (ES), NOORD NEDERLAND (NL), NOORD-HOLLAND (NL), NORDJYLLAND (DK), NORDLAND (NO), NORD-PAS DE CALAIS (FR), NORRBOTTEN (SE), NORTHERN & WESTERN REGIONAL ASSEMBLY (IE), NOTIO AIGAIOS (GR), ÖREBRO (SE), ORKNEY (UK), ØSTFOLD (NO), OSTROBOTHNIA (FI), PÄIJÄT-HÄME (FI), PAÍS VASCO (ES), PAYS DE LA LOIRE (FR), PELOPONNISOS (GR), PODLASKIE (PL), POITOU-CHARENTES (FR), POLYNÉSIE FRANÇAISE (FR), PROVENCE-ALPES-CÔTE D'AZUR (FR), RABAT-SALE-KENITRA (MA), ROGALAND (NO), SARDEGNA (IT), SHETLAND (UK), SHKODËR (AL), SKÅNE (SE), SØR-TRØNDELAG (NO), SOUTH-WEST FINLAND (FI), STEREA ELLADA (GR), STOCKHOLM (SE), TELEMAR (NO), TIRANA (AL), TOSCANA (IT), TULCEA (RO), VÄSTERBOTTEN (SE), VÄSTRA GÖTALAND (SE), VENETO (IT), VEST-AGDER (NO), VESTFOLD (NO), VOREIO AIGAIOS (GR), WALES (UK), WESTERN ISLES (UK), ZUID-HOLLAND (NL)

(*) *Observer*

On behalf of the Regions attending the General Assembly, the President of the CPMR wishes to warmly thank the Region of Tuscany its President, Enrico Rossi, for kindly organising and hosting the event.

He also extends his thanks to the regional authorities and EU institutions who took part in the proceedings of the Conference and in particular to the Vice-President of the European Parliament Antonio Tajani, MEPs Jan Olbrycht and Ines Ayala Sender and to the European Commissioners, Christos Stylianides and Karmenu Vella.

On behalf of its members, the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions, gathered for its 43rd Annual General Assembly in Florence (IT), adopted the following Final Declaration

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2015 was a particularly testing year for the European project on a variety of levels:

1. The lack of solidarity among EU Member States and the resulting absence of a long-term European solution for tackling the refugee crisis has challenged the principle of free movement within the EU.
2. Growth is starting to pick up in Europe, but many peripheral regions are still trailing behind, as evidenced by recent statistical data showing **the ever-widening development gap between European regions**. Nevertheless, positive initiatives undertaken at EU level with maritime regions such as the blue growth approach are delivering results.
3. As we are nearing the mid-term review of the EU Budget, traditional European policies to deliver growth through a decentralised approach, reinforce territorial cohesion and reduce regional disparities are being challenged to favour somewhat **spatially-blind approaches fostering investment** in Europe and its territories.

We strongly urge the Commission to rehabilitate the spirit of close cooperation with regions and organisations like CPMR.

On behalf of Peripheral and Maritime Regions, the CPMR invites the European institutions to consider the following messages.

A role for Regions within neighbourhood and migration policies

In the Euro-Mediterranean region, economic inequalities combined with conflicts and political instability in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa have led to high levels of human mobility between the two shores of the Mediterranean. Massive human tragedies have become a daily occurrence in Mediterranean regions.

4. The proliferation of emergency EU summits in 2015 to deal with the refugee and migrant crisis has only revealed the extent of the lack of solidarity from certain EU Member States, which have refused to acknowledge the European nature of the issues at stake. Member States ought to take inspiration from the solidarity displayed among peripheral and maritime regions and particularly within the Intermediterranean Commission Members, which are **bearing the huge human and financial responsibility of saving lives and supporting migrants in their integration**.
5. Solidarity at European level would require a suitable European strategy foreseeing sufficient resources to strengthen the reception capacities, the asylum system, and the management of the external borders in full respect of human rights and dignity, and recognising the positive contribution of migration on development from a demographic point of view. It would also put significant focus on the socio-economic integration of migrants in the European society, including measures or programmes for fostering their self-employment, and in the development cooperation with their countries of origin, including support to decentralisation and democratic governance.
6. The “We are all Mediterranean” solidarity campaign¹ enacted by the CPMR and its Intermediterranean Commission, and further actions to mobilise European leaders about the **need for a genuine Mediterranean policy**² taking into account the management of migration flows are sadly only just starting to bear fruit.
7. The recent additional 1bn Euro pledge of humanitarian aid from Member States³ to help stem the daily waves of migrants landing on the beaches of Greece and Italy, as well as the few ambitious voluntary plans announced by Member States vis-a-vis the number of asylum-seekers that they

¹ <http://tousmediterraneens.com/en/>

² See for instance [Open Letter to the European Council and Parliament](#) sent in April 2015 and [meeting of Regional Presidents with Martin Schulz](#), European Parliament President in May 2015

³ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-5700_en.htm

would accept, are welcome as they are broadly in line with CPMR proposals. **They do, however, not meet the long-term strategic response the CPMR expects from the EU institutions**, such as a global integrated approach at EU level, solidarity and support to Regions and examination of EU Migration Policy and improvement of legal migration channels. The situation is no longer just a Mediterranean one, with other parts of the Union (such as Northern European regions) bearing the stress of integrating the high number of asylum-seekers.

8. In light of this, the CPMR welcomes the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy and invites the Commission **to improve the coordination of the European Neighbourhood Policy with other EU Policies**, in particular the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Migration Policy, but also EU funding programmes, and with the Union for the Mediterranean. The European Neighbourhood Policy can only work if the co-ownership of the Policy with Local and Regional Authorities is increased – as already demonstrated through cross-border cooperation within the ENI-CBC programmes – and in line with Macro-Regional Strategies and Sea Basin strategies.
9. The CPMR General Assembly applauds the generous and spontaneous response to the refugee crisis by communities and local and regional authorities throughout Europe; supports measures for the Regions to use EU funds in responding to the urgent needs of refugees; and expresses regret that some state governments have so far been reluctant to admit more refugees, despite the willingness of the general public to welcome them.

Towards spatially-blind European investment instruments?

The new Juncker Commission brought both a change of style and substance to the previous European Commission⁴. One of the biggest changes concerns the chosen approach for dealing with the falling levels of investment since the beginning of the crisis in 2008. The solution preferred by the European Commission is to rely on a new European financing mechanism (the European Fund for Strategic Investments – EFSI) to mobilise private financing for strategic investment projects, coupled with an increase of financial instruments to be used in the framework of Cohesion Policy.

10. The CPMR calls for the implementation of the EFSI to be based on the pro-active involvement of the regions in the determination of strategic projects that will contribute to the future growth of the European Union.
11. Whilst the proactive approach taken by the European Commission is certainly welcome, peripheral and maritime regions have different experiences with financial instruments. **Many of them lack the necessary structures and expertise just yet to successfully tap into these new instruments.** The fact that all of the events organised by the European Commission to boost capacity in the field of financial instruments are held in capital cities does nothing to alleviate these concerns⁵.
12. Besides, financial instruments could favour projects that already have access to sources of investment to the detriment of those considered “at risk” by private investors but which are of much greater strategic importance for Europe. This is already the case in sectors such as blue biotechnologies, marine renewable energies and maritime industries. There is a balance to be struck – with regions that are best placed for this – between financial instruments and classic public investment instruments (such as grants) in order to be effective where the market is not. **Regions are best placed to assess this.**
13. Generalising such an approach for stimulating growth and jobs in Europe would raise **long-term questions about the nature and roles of Cohesion Policy** (the EU’s investment policy until now), **the pursuit of the territorial cohesion objective, and the legitimacy of Local and Regional Authorities, as stressed by the CPMR at its Political Bureau in Nantes in February 2015**⁶. The EFSI also needs to be better connected with existing and possible future Macro-Regional and Sea Basin strategies and their action plans.

⁴ http://www.crpm.org/pub/docs/442_technical_paper_cpmr_cohesion_crete.pdf

⁵ <https://www.fi-compass.eu/events/list>

⁶ http://www.crpm.org/pub/docs/435_cpmr_declaration_juncker_plan.pdf

14. Such developments – along with plans to set up a separate Budget for Eurozone members – require careful consideration by peripheral and maritime regions. Further research would be needed to understand **which sectors and levels of the economy can be supported by financial instruments and their impact on economic, social and territorial cohesion. These issues need to be at the heart of the review of the MFF to be carried out in 2016.**

Regions as genuine and effective investment actors

The CPMR wishes to recall the effective role played by Regions in terms of fostering investment for growth and jobs.

With regard to maritime issues

15. The Regions stress that one of the pillars of EU Investment Policy is based on the Operational Programmes, and that EU Innovation Policy is put in practice through the Regions' Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3 strategies). With the launch of a "platform" on investments⁷, the CPMR is collaborating with regions, the European Commission and stakeholders in order to stimulate the use of available funding. **The 2016 MFF review should see maritime investments and blue growth remain at the top of priorities at European level.**
16. Beyond that, Operational Programmes and Smart Specialisation were largely drafted by the Regions to match the needs of the actual maritime economy on the ground. Regional strategies reflect the reality of economic interactions between maritime sectors and stakeholders, thereby ensuring that EU funds are used in an effective way.
17. The contribution that Regions can bring to the effective use of EU funds in the maritime area also requires further developments in EU policies. In line with this, the CPMR stresses:
 - a. The need to support both the development of the marine renewable energies, shipbuilding and other maritime industries in transition (e.g. the oil & gas sectors) as well as **the development of a unified European maritime industrial strategy involving current European initiatives in these areas;**
 - b. **That the promotion of education and training, mobility, and boosting the attractiveness of the maritime sector are vital.** The CPMR will continue to play its part through its Vasco Da Gama project, which is pursued to deliver blue growth and replicated at the level of sea basins;
 - c. The need for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and Maritime Spatial Planning Directives to pay close attention to land-sea interaction and synergies with regional development strategies, sea-basin or macro-regional strategies;
 - d. The need for EU institutions to collaborate with regions to monitor the socio-economic impacts of the Common Fisheries Policy, in connection with issues such as the obligation to land all catches, including by-catches, above all in the outermost regions and islands, the link between fisheries and environmental regulations (e.g. MSFD) and setting-up multi-annual management plans in the different sea basins.
18. The CPMR calls for fisheries dependent communities to be represented on the High Level Groups, set up under the Common Fisheries Policy to help implement the "discard ban", to ensure that effective practical arrangements for sustainable fisheries also support sustainable fisheries communities.

With regard to Cohesion Policy

19. The CPMR strongly welcomes the strengthened provisions on partnership and multi-level governance within Cohesion Policy for 2014-2020, which are somewhat inspired by the CPMR proposal on Territorial Pacts⁸. The CPMR study conducted with 40 Member Regions shows some progress in terms of the involvement of regions within Cohesion Policy programmes, though **the quality of the involvement remains extremely patchy from one Member State to another**, with the

⁷ http://www.crpm.org/pub/docs/441_cpmr_maritime_agenda_2015.pdf

⁸ http://www.crpm.org/pub/docs/5_pour_reussir_une_strategie_de_lisbonne-en.pdf

islands dimension being largely ignored within Cohesion Policy despite specific EU Treaty provisions. **The multi-level governance dimension of Cohesion Policy must be preserved and stressed in the context of the mid-term review of the MFF to be carried out in 2016 via the proactive involvement of the regions as identified partners as set out in Article 5 of the CPR.**

The CPMR urges the European Commission and member states to explore the benefits of launching further macro-regional and sea-basin strategies

With regard to Transport

20. The TEN-T multimodal corridors are progressing, and the Regions are pleased to participate in their Forums; nevertheless, their demands need to be taken into account in the delivery of the TEN-T corridors.
21. Coordination between the nine CEF/TEN-T corridors as well as between the rail freight corridors should be improved to respond to the real needs of traffic. The involvement of Regions to implement this coordination is essential, due to their proximity to the demand for services.
22. Cross-border projects are the cornerstone of a truly European network, and Regions and the CPMR are their key facilitators. These projects may find difficulties in being placed among national priorities, therefore putting the prominent role they have in the Connecting Europe Facility at risk.

With regard to Climate Change issues

23. The significant legislative responsibilities regions have in this field and the breadth of actions they carry out at local and regional level require, in order to be more effective, **an integrated territorial dimension in climate adaptation and mitigation policy**. Regions ask for their role in tackling climate change, as well as in climate change adaptation, to be recognised and legitimised by the United Nations and national governments. The responsibility of the Regions in the planning and execution of climate adaptation and mitigation measures should be accompanied by an increased role both in monitoring and evaluating climate programmes and the 2030 Agenda, in the context of international negotiations. Regions are also calling for a series of responsibilities in terms of bottom-up approaches to the development of climate-related plans (such as national mitigation and adaptation plans) and for better links with the climate and the post-2015 development agendas⁹. **Enhanced access to funds by Regions, such as the EU Solidarity Fund which can only be activated upon request of Member States, is vital**. Regions are also calling for Islands, Seas and Oceans to be addressed in the conclusions of the COP21.

With regard to External Cooperation issues:

24. The CPMR warmly welcomes the adoption of the global 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Concerning the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, **a new model of North-South and South-North solidarity based on coherence, coordination and cooperation between all levels of government is crucial. Decentralised cooperation will be a critical tool for the implementation of the 2030 agenda**. Capacity building and peer-to-peer learning schemes for regional and local governments, including through technical assistance and the provision of adequate financial resources, should also be developed.

Rising disparities in Europe: what happened to the territorial cohesion objective?

The “positive economic tailwinds” identified in the European Commission’s latest spring economic forecast¹⁰ are masking distressing signs that regional disparities are not only very much still a reality; they are indeed increasing steadily¹¹. **Growth has been very uneven in a majority of European countries, with many regions – often peripheral, outermost or insular – falling further behind the European average**, as evidenced in a recent analysis conducted by the CPMR. Such statistics are particularly relevant for the design of future EU policies with a high territorial impact.

⁹ http://www.crpm.org/pub/docs/444_cpmr_climate-policy_position.pdf

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/eu/forecasts/2015_spring_forecast_en.htm

¹¹ <http://news.crpm.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Analysis-from-the-CPMR-Secretariat-Regional-GDP-statistics-July-2015.pdf>

With regard to Cohesion Policy

25. Statistics, unfortunately, do not dictate policy and it cannot be assumed that increasing levels of disparities will further legitimise Cohesion Policy in the post-2020 period. In light of this, **it is rather alarming that the European Commission itself is questioning whether Cohesion Policy should be supporting all European regions after 2020**, as mentioned in a speech delivered by Commissioner Cretu recently¹².
26. The CPMR calls on the Commission to defend the added value of Cohesion Policy and its contribution to both goals of increasing competitiveness and reducing regional disparities. **The review of the MFF to be carried out by the end of 2016 is an opportunity to recall the contribution of Cohesion Policy as an investment policy for all European regions.**
27. Further, the CPMR calls for Cohesion Policy post 2020 to examine the issue of statistics, for example the cost of transport to remoter regions and islands, along with GDP per head statistics, to better reflect territorial specificities when allocating funding. A Cohesion Policy based on more balanced statistics would support growth, jobs and innovation outside heavily populated areas as Commissioner Cretu raised in her speech on 28 August 2015 in Lisbon. The CPMR will continue to work on this subject and will be mobilised to react to Commission proposals on the new architecture of the policy.

With regard to EU Transport Policies

28. **The CPMR regrets that the pursuit of territorial cohesion and accessibility seem secondary in the eyes of the European Commission.** The nine priority corridors of the Connecting Europe Facility do not serve the least accessible areas of the European territory, especially the island and outermost regions. As pointed out in the CPMR response to the mid-term review of the White Paper on Transport, **the resulting connectivity gap between European territories could then widen further** and ultimately result in a more pronounced loss of attractiveness for those Regions which remain the most peripheral and difficult to access. The European Commission is therefore requested to increase the financial allocation and adopt more favourable co-financing rates for projects on the comprehensive network in the upcoming revision of the CEF regulation.
29. **The 2016 MFF review should enshrine the principle of accessibility**, and the priorities of the nine terrestrial corridors of the Trans-European Networks should evolve on that occasion to facilitate access to and from peripheral regions. EU instruments for maritime transport, such as the Connecting Europe Facility should be strengthened by re-introducing support for the start-up of maritime services. The next CEF call for Motorway of the Seas (MoS) should be made more favourable for projects in peripheral and insular and outermost areas in terms of co-financing rates and eligibility rules.

With regard to Energy policies

30. Whilst the Energy Union framework is certainly a welcome step to address energy supply risks for the most vulnerable countries, **the CPMR regrets that the concept of 'energy insularity' is one that applies to Member States only, and not to island regions too.** Market failures, poor connectivity with the mainland, security of supply and high energy production costs are all specific challenges for island regions in the energy sector¹³, a situation that is worse in the outermost regions given their very remote location from the European continent. These challenges require additional support and changes in the State Aids regime to reduce disparities. In addition, directing funds for the development of cross-border energy projects and pilots – e.g. in the North Sea to help achieve a meshed North Sea Grid - in support of the Energy Union should also be encouraged in the framework of the MFF review and in the island and outermost regions to develop projects designed to foster the use of renewable energies in order to make these regions less dependent on fossil fuels.

¹² https://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/cretu/announcements/55th-congress-european-regional-science-association-lisbon-portugal_en

¹³ http://www.crpm.org/pub/docs/443_cpmr_energy_union-technical_paper.pdf

31. Regarding the Energy Renovation of Buildings, the role of the public sector and of Regions in particular, in support of the Energy Union, should be exemplary. In that perspective, multi-level governance models for the Energy Renovation of Buildings should be set up. Elements such as the inclusion of public-private partnerships, the establishment of financial support to boost the market and address market failures, the creation of information system modelling, awareness raising and capacity building should be considered as success factors.

Adopted unanimously

With the exception of:

Point 7. Adopted by a majority vote (1 against, 1 abstention)

Point 27. Adopted by a majority vote (7 against, 2 abstentions)