



MEETING OF THE MACRO-REGIONS TASK FORCE

Held in Ponta Delgada, in parallel to the CPMR General Assembly Meeting

BACKGROUND:

In parallel to the 2016 CPMR General Assembly meeting, the CPMR Macro Regions Task Force gathered in Ponta Delgada on November, 2, 2016.

This Task Force has been created in 2012 to facilitate exchange between the CPMR Geographical Commissions concerned by Macro Regions and/or Sea Basins Strategies.

A background note was prepared by the Secretariat “Macro-Regions and Sea Basins Strategies in the CPMR Geographical Commissions” and presented during that meeting.

<http://cpmr.org/wpdm-package/background-note-macro-regions-and-sea-basin-strategies-in-the-cpmr-geographical-commissions/>

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1. Introduction:

Pauline Caumont, Executive Secretary of the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission, in charge of the Macro Region Task Force presented the context and purpose of the meeting:

- To have a clear view on what is happening in the CPMR's Geographical Commissions (GCs) on Macro-Regions and Sea Basin Strategies topics. The task force meets at least once a year in parallel to the CPMR AGM.
- To present the background note "[Macro-Regions and Sea Basin Strategies in the CPMR Geographical Commissions](#)"; which comprises a first descriptive part on CG activities, a second part concerning policy issues and a third part presenting possible recommendations for the future (post 2020 European policy).

2. Context and presentation of the background document:

- DG Regio is preparing a report on existing Macro regional strategies by the end of 2016 and is not taking into account the Sea Basin Strategies. The CPMR recalls that all transnational Strategies are equally relevant for the regions.
- The background note is useful work to learn from all the Geographical Commission experiences.
- Push the debate on the post 2020 budget dedicated to cooperation within Cohesion Policy.
- It is the right time to position ourselves on these strategies. The CPMR should support transnational cooperation programmes and demand an increase in their budget.
- The European Parliament published a report drawing the potential zones where Macro-Regional Strategies could be set up. A correlation is clearly visible between these zones mapped by the EP and the CPMR's Geographical Commissions.

To sum up the first part of the document, **Pauline Caumont** presented a brief update of actions within the Atlantic Arc Commission and asked the other Executive Secretaries to highlight their main activities in the area.

Regarding the [Atlantic Arc Commission \(AAC\)](#), she noted that:

- The AAC is involved in the governance body of the Maritime Strategy, the so called "Atlantic Strategy Group" (ASG) gathering all EU institutions and the 5 Atlantic Member States.
- At each step of the process, the AAC contributed via position papers, final declarations and technical documents. The AAC has participated in all Atlantic Strategy Forum since it was launched in 2011.
- New recommendations have been issued and a specific budget is requested to finance a flagship project to strengthen the visibility of the Atlantic Strategy

Concerning the **Baltic Sea Commission (BSC)**, **Asa Bjering** presented the following points:

- Regions of Baltic Sea Geographical Commission of CPMR have been involved in the EUSBSR strategy since the beginning. The BSC has a discussion group on governance which published two reports, and the BSC pushed for more cooperation and multilevel governance. The BSC participates in the EUSBSR Annual Forum.
- The BSC will co-organise the Strategy Forum in 2017, it will give a clearer role for the Regions among the Stakeholders and will define the added value of the strategy in the Baltic Sea.
- BSC regions carried out a study on blue growth and is now working on clean tech issues. The BSC is participating in a working group created with all Managing Authorities.

With regard to the **Inter-Mediterranean Commission (IMC)**, **Davide Strangis** insisted on:

- The complex situation in the Mediterranean Sea composed of neighbouring third countries, with two existing Macro-regional strategies: the Alpine and the Adriatic and Ionian Strategy. Within the IMC, particular attention will be given to establishing synergies between these strategies.
- The western Mediterranean initiative is proposed by the Commission and not by the Member States. This initiative is boosted by the regions and pushed by DG Mare.
- One idea would be to extend this initiative to the Mediterranean basin as a whole. All the southern regions and territories concerned were consulted in small specific groups on different topics: blue growth, governance, etc.
- In the current phase, MS and the EC are discussing the implementation. The consultation process is good: meeting with the regions and the different ministries.
- The IMC-CPMR works with the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and on the labelling process for several projects (e.g. the Vasco da Gama initiative in the Mediterranean). Besides, the IMC has entered as an observer for the UfM group on Blue Economy, as well as on axis 4 (on Governance) of Interreg MED through the horizontal projects. As for the EUSAIR, it has got a more complex process for its Axis 4.

Kerstin Brunnström presented a brief state of play concerning the **North Sea Commission (NSC)**:

- There is no “real strategy” in the area because the member states are not quite convinced about its utility. There is only a sea-basin strategy (2011) of which member states are awaiting the evaluation conclusions.
- Work is focused on advocacy for an integrated North Sea energy grid. This has been supported by member states, which could constitute an impetus for the promotion of an eventual macro-regional strategy in the area (as it should be supported and asked by the MS in the first place). Explanation for such delay might be that no emergency is perceived by the member states as they already have a long tradition of working together.
- Repercussions of the Brexit, if ever, are still to be assessed for the area, as well as what this would imply for the potentialities of a macro-regional strategy.

Stavros Kalignomos provided information from the perspective of the [Balkans and Black Sea Commission \(BBSC\)](#)

- Expectation of more concrete moves during Romania's presidency of the EU during 1st semester 2019.
- Black Sea synergy is for now on hold and hopefully will get more results for the next few years.
- The BBSC is part of projects through its member regions (as the CPMR is not eligible to the programme area) and will work on the reflections for a strategy accordingly.

3. Further reflections

What budget for ESI funds?

Some regions/MAs are used to tagging projects corresponding to the implementation of the strategies within their Structural Funds Operational Programme, which is a good retro feedback for strategy implementers.

Integrated Territorial Instruments (ITI)

- A “blue” ITI has been created in Spain and in Portugal to better manage structural funds in Atlantic Regions. This structure seems quite useful to know the type of projects funded. Would this be interesting for other Geographical Commissions?
 - For the Mediterranean, it would be interesting indeed. However, the order of implementation and creation of the strategy and the use of ITIs is different, with inclusion (or not) in regional operational programmes.
 - For the Baltic Sea, initiatives should be linked to North Sea priorities. Blueprint initiatives (not one system fits all) should be supported in order to have a more concrete position for the next programming period.
- How about the role of transnational operational programmes to implement the strategies? Are they a better fit for the Geographical Commissions? Would this be an argument to ask for more funds to allow to transnational programmes?
- What process to undertake/follow: what from transnational programmes is in line with our geographical commissions' strategies?

What's next? And how useful is it?

- For the Atlantic, ITI are a useful tool for monitoring but not for implementing projects. The “Atlantic Area” Interreg perfectly covers the zone of the Atlantic Strategy. More funding seems necessary to finance new emerging projects.
- For the Mediterranean, the question remains to know if this could be applicable to the West Med initiative.
- For the Baltic, linked to energy policy, the question is how to create jobs? Smart Specialization Strategies (S3)? The policy area coordinator collaborates with 3 actors that have written a

policy paper for the innovation agenda for the area to be implemented. How to link it to the EUSBSR remains unclear to the regions working on the Baltic Sea strategy.

4. How to prepare the CPMR position and for when?

- Proposal to organize a meeting for all Executive Secretaries in January in order to prepare the CPMR position for March 2017.
- The question is to try to prepare political messages as soon as possible to prepare the post 2020 period, both in terms of policy and budget. Geographical Commission representatives agree to work on a policy paper to be presented at the next CPMR Political Bureau meeting on 9 March 2017 in Malta.

Pilot projects and preparatory actions

- Regarding investment tools, in the end and especially in the Atlantic, investment projects are the main final aim. The Juncker Plan does not really help in this sense, as it focuses on mainly 3 countries, i.e. France, the UK and Germany.

4 policy recommendations to include in the CPMR March policy position (CPMR PB 2017)?

- Clear demand to support transnational programmes with a reinforced budget (shift from cross-border cooperation to transnational programmes), including the possibility to finance infrastructures (*/!\ this can be much more complex, unless they are small scale infrastructures linked to the strategies*). It will be necessary to be careful about how to argue about this and be very specific (e.g. North Sea grid).
- To produce further analyses concerning the link between macro-regional strategies and the Juncker Plan. The aim is to push for more maritime and regional dimensions within the Juncker Plan.
- To push for emerging strategies covered by CPMR geographical commissions (political and governance message).
- Influence the debate on the architecture of the future Cohesion Policy and its cooperation component (i.e. take part in the discussions with INTERACT, etc.).

5. Upcoming meetings

Agreement on meeting with the **Executive Secretaries in January 2017**, in parallel to the Extended CODIR in Brussels, and presentation of the policy position during the Political Bureau in Malta (with the support of the background note).