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MINUTES

Opportunities for cooperation in the Channel in a post-Brexit context

Wednesday 15 November 2017 (13.30-18.00) - Cardiff (UK)

City Hall, Ferrier Hall, Gorsedd Gardens Road, Cardiff CF10 3ND

BACKGROUND

Together with the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR), Normandy Region expressed its interest in strengthening cooperation in the Channel area. Normandy is considering the Brexit process as an opportunity to redefine cooperation between French and UK regions. Under the umbrella of the CPMR, it aims to engage in an in-depth dialogue with local and regional authorities of the Channel in order to promote the area's sustainable economic development.

Brittany region, which has carried out detailed analyses of the impacts of Brexit on its territory ([link](#)) also joined the initiative. At a CPMR meeting on 15 November 2017 on "Cooperation opportunities in the Channel area in a post-Brexit context", these two regions were joined by other French and UK regional and local authorities, as well as a range of socio-economic actors from the Channel, all keen to discuss the future of regional cooperation in this area.

The aim was to:

- **Identify areas of common interest for cooperation**
- **Look at cooperation arrangements in a post-Brexit context**

1. Discussion

1.1. Political addresses

François-Xavier Priollaud, Vice-President of Normandy Region with portfolio for European and International Affairs, expressed Normandy's willingness to engage in a renewed cooperation with the UK regions of the Channel area. This cooperation is intended to be ambitious, pragmatic and operational and based on real bottom-up governance where the focus of exchange is based on needs on the ground.

After warmly welcoming the participants to Cardiff, **David Rees, Chair of the External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee, National Assembly for Wales**, reiterated Wales' commitment to renewing cross-border cooperation after Brexit, as expressed in the [CPMR Cardiff Declaration on Brexit](#). As in the case of the Channel actors, cooperation in maritime activities, research, trade and academic exchanges remain important for Wales.

Cliff Jordan, Leader of Norfolk County Council, Managing Authority of the France (Channel) England Programme, expressed Norfolk's willingness to maintain cross-border cooperation under the INTERREG programmes, while acknowledging the UK Government's reluctance in this area. He listed a series of cooperation areas in which Norfolk was interested (trade, port cooperation, cooperation between SMEs/SMIs, academic exchanges, etc.).

1.2. Evolution of flows of people, goods and services – 14.25 – 15.10

Speakers:

- **Jean Marc Roué**, Chairman, Brittany Ferries Supervisory Board
- **Jean-Paul Mulot**, Permanent Representative of the Hauts-de-France Region to the UK
- **Stephen Horscroft**, Economic Planning and Strategy Officer, Cornwall Council
- **Alison Weatherhead**, UK & Ireland Marketing Manager, Normandy Tourist Board, CRT.

Jean Marc Roué stressed the potential impact of the fall in the value of sterling and the end of customs harmonisation on cross-Channel ferries:

- Economic loss on exports;
- Decrease in Brittany Ferries' turnover in sterling;
- Potential decrease in UK-EU trade by sea;
- Restructuring of "just in time" logistics, which constitutes an essential share of traffic with the English ports.

There is also a threat of distortion in competition between ports when European rules on decarbonising maritime transport and state aid no longer apply, as well as a risk of Channel regions becoming isolated due to the United Kingdom's future ineligibility for EU transport funding.

In conclusion, he underlined his sector's interest in cross-Channel cooperation on tourism, projects for investments in decarbonisation facilities and infrastructures, on customs formalities and duties, and the digitisation and security of data exchange.

→ [PowerPoint presentation available online](#)

The panellists all echoed these comments, stressing the importance of cross-Channel trade. **Stephen Horscroft** underlined the importance of the tourism sector as an area of cooperation for Cornwall.

Jean-Paul Mulot pointed out how serious the situation was for the port of Calais and Boulogne. They estimate that 200 million euros will need to be invested in customs control, security, sanitary facilities and reception areas for heavy goods vehicles awaiting inspection.

Alison Weatherhead recalled that a quarter of the foreign tourist clientele in Normandy is British. They represent 850,000 overnight stays per year. The sector is impacted by the fluctuation of the pound, affecting UK residents' purchasing power. To maintain tourist activity, the agency is working with "Atout France" as well as with the British print and digital press. It also takes part in trade fairs across the Channel.

Potential actions under the umbrella of the CPMR:

- Regarding maintaining the flow of people: work on coastal tourism through local stakeholder networking
- Regarding customs controls impacting ports and the logistics chain, investments in maritime transport:
 - A delegation of CPMR politicians to meet with Michel Barnier on 29 January
 - Lobbying institutions to introduce/adapt EU funds to help EU27 regions bear the cost of Brexit's territorial impact (cf. Cardiff Declaration)
 - Lobbying the new European Coordinator to support Motorways of the Sea benefiting medium-sized Channel ports.

1.3. Cooperation on science, education and training: 15.15 – 16.00

Speakers:

- **Forough Salami-Dadkhah**, Vice-President in charge of European and International Affairs, Brittany Region
- **Guy Hembury**, Deputy Director, Research & Innovation Services, University of Portsmouth; Vice-President, Parliamentary & Scientific Committee, Westminster
- **Nathalie Aubourg**, COMUE Normandie Université
- **Paul Witcombe**, Enterprise and Innovation Manager, Hertfordshire LEP

Forough Salami-Dadkhah mentioned the close links between Breton and British universities. Between 2007 and 2013, cooperation with UK actors accounted for 70 projects worth €23 million. The Region advocates maintaining these research exchanges as they are based on trust and mutual knowledge. She advised to undertake the following actions: meeting on cross-Channel cooperation to alert and inform, and lobbying in our respective countries during the negotiations.

Guy Hembury recalled the impact of Brexit on British universities. It is negatively affecting the attractiveness of UK universities for non-British students and therefore how they rank on an international scale. It stretches relations between partners used to working together on EU programmes. It has a financial impact linked to the potential loss of EU funding estimated at €1 billion for British universities (Erasmus+, H2020, INTERREG, etc.).

Nathalie Aubourg recalled that teacher exchange projects and summer schools with other foreign universities were useful as a means of cooperation. She proposed to focus the organisation of the Cross-Channel Cooperation Summit on a scientific dimension to discuss research programmes and partnerships.

Paul Witcombe spoke about research from a business perspective. He urged to encourage companies to work together by supporting them in risk-taking and in the field of research.

Potential actions under the umbrella of the CPMR:

- Lobbying to maintain UK participation in EU research and academic exchange programmes (cf. Cardiff Declaration)
- Organise jointly with Normandy Region a Summit on Cross-Channel Cooperation and its academic dimension with a view to setting up a community of stakeholders in Cross-channel teaching and research.
- Channel Regions to take part in a CPMR project to set up an exchange network in maritime training courses for trainees and job seekers, available to member Regions. A website will be set up by the end of 2017 as part of this initiative, called Vasco da Gama Youth Mobility.

1.4. Maritime Affairs 16.15 – 16.55

Speakers:

- **Didier Peralta**, Councillor for Normandy Region, member of the European and International Affairs Committee
- **Franck Sottou**, Councillor for the urban community of Dieppe, representing the Normandy-Sussex Cross-Channel Operational Partnership
- **Simon Powell**, Operations Director, Marine South East Ltd.

Didier Peralta introduced the session by recalling Brexit's impact on cross-Channel traffic together with the fishing industry's concerns about the UK's withdrawal from the Common Fisheries Policy and access to UK fishing zones, from which fishermen from Brittany, Normandy and Hauts-de-France derive half the value of their catch. He stressed the need for shared management of fish stocks and also, more generally, for planning of the Channel sea area to avoid conflicts of use between the different activities operating there (marine energy, transport, fisheries).

Franck Sottou presented the private-public initiative TOP DIEPPE SUSSEX. This is based on a joint action plan and coordinates actors on both sides of the Channel to promote the attractiveness of the regions. He gave some examples of action: production of a [map showing tourist and cultural events](#) in the area, a joint tourist guide and cooperation with regard to freight. He suggested drawing up a cross-Channel strategy between ports and on maritime transport and fisheries, and also to develop action to promote fisheries products.

Simon Powell underlined that Marine South East was keen to continue cross-Channel cooperation. He recalled the key challenges Brexit posed for blue economy businesses. This includes maritime planning, changes to logistics chains, exchange of expertise fostering innovation, and access to funding. He proposed cooperation on space technologies for fisheries.

Potential actions under the umbrella of the CPMR

- Follow-up and capitalise on the SEANSE project (Strategic Environment Assessment North Sea Energy) on maritime planning in the Channel in which the CPMR is involved
- Exchange good practice on developing marine renewable energies (e.g. site visits)
- Lobbying activities on the future of the Common Fisheries Policy and its international dimension
- Assess the CPMR's potential involvement in OSPAR: intergovernmental commission that aims to preserve and protect the North-East Atlantic and its resources. It includes third country states like Norway.
- Look at possibilities for regional action to promote sustainable stock management (e.g. temporary cessation of fishing)

1.5. Brexit, reflection on the future of territorial cooperation? 17.00 – 17.45

Speakers:

- **Cllr John Lamb**, Leader of Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and Vice-President of CPMR's North Sea Commission
- **Cliff Jordan**, Leader of Norfolk County Council, Managing Authority of the INTERREG VA France-Channel-England programme
- **Claire Letertre**, Head of the "Interregional Cooperation and European Programmes" Unit, Brittany Region

John Lamb highlighted that it was in the regions' interest to work together towards their development. He stressed the added value of INTERREG in solving common problems related to the cross-border area and the CPMR's work in helping regional players to network with each other. He called for lobbying action to be taken towards governments and urged to continue planning cooperation projects.

Cliff Jordan echoed these words and stressed that the Channel Group was a force of proposals.

Claire Letertre raised doubts about the status of the Managing Authority for UK partners in March 2019. She also highlighted the poor results of the INTERREG France (Channel) England programme for the 2014-2020 programming period. At present, only 23% of the programme budget has been used up. This could be detrimental to lobbying action to advocate UK participation in the programmes. However, the rate of participation in cooperation projects between French and British actors is equivalent, which proves that there is a common interest to cooperate. She believed that the key was to lobby strongly for INTERREG with the UK Government, which fails to recognise its added value.

Potential actions under the umbrella of the CPMR

- Policy position and lobbying on the future of INTERREG programmes. The CPMR regions defend 3 messages: simplification of the programmes, UK involvement, and a greater role for regions within the programmes.
- Exploitation of the [CAMIS project](#) results.

2. Summary of conclusions:

Set up the Channel Task Force, led by Normandy and coordinated by the CPMR, bringing together political and socio-economic players from the Channel area.

Areas of cooperation: mobility of goods and people, all issues under maritime affairs, research and youth

Working principles: bottom-up, pragmatic approach, facilitating projects of common interest.

Timetable first semester 2018:

- CPMR's Meeting with the EU's Chief Negotiator on Brexit, Michel Barnier, on 29 January 2018
- Public Hearing on the impact of Brexit on maritime transport, TRAN Committee of the European Parliament, 20 February 2018
- New Task Force meeting March/April 2018



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The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) brings together some 160 Regions from 25 States from the European Union and beyond.

Representing about 200 million people, the CPMR campaigns in favour of a more balanced development of the European territory.

It operates both as a think tank and as a lobby group for Regions. It focuses mainly on social, economic and territorial cohesion, maritime policies and accessibility.

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