Macro-Regions and Sea Basin Strategies in the CPMR Geographical Commissions

To be presented to the CPMR Task Force Members on 2 November 2016 in the Azores

BACKGROUND:

In 2012, the CPMR set up a “Macro-Regions Task Force” to follow the development on Macro-Regional Strategies and analyse the current and future opportunities for such Strategies.

Two technical papers were published in September 2012 and March 2013 to guide this internal reflection. In June 2013, a policy paper entitled “Macro-Regional and Sea Basin Strategies: Preparing for the future of European integration” was adopted unanimously by the Political Bureau at its meeting in Malmö in Sweden. Finally, a technical note on Governance of Macro Regional and Sea Basin Strategies was presented in September 2014 on the occasion of the Umeå General Assembly.

Seven years after the launch of the first Macro-Regional Strategy in the Baltic Sea Region, this paper presents the current situation in each of the five European Sea Basins (Atlantic, Baltic, Black Sea, Mediterranean and North Sea) covered by a CPMR Geographical Commission and explores courses of action to encourage a better implementation in the territories.
In a nutshell:

- The European Commission will present a report on all existing Macro-Regional Strategies by the end of 2016. However, this report will not take into consideration Sea Basins Strategies, hence our willingness to remind the EU institutions that all transnational Strategies (Macro-regional or Sea Basins) are relevant to the same extent for CPMR members.

- Indeed, as detailed in the 2013 Opinion validated by the CPMR Political Bureau in Malmö, “Macro-Regional strategies (MRS) and Sea Basin Strategies (SBS) both adhere to the same philosophy, pursue the same objectives, fall within the same European policy framework, and have the same spectrum of actions within the territories concerned. Both types of strategy enable multisector and multi-level collaboration across national borders; they must therefore be flexible and allow for intervention that is of benefit to the territories concerned. The aim of such strategies is to develop core projects with a high community added value and which will improve European territorial cohesion and create sustainable growth in the territories.”

- At European level, there are ongoing discussions with Interact to reflect on the objectives of European Territorial Cooperation as part of Cohesion Policy and the future architecture of such policy. These informal thoughts will fuel the debate on the post 2020 budget dedicated to cooperation within Cohesion Policy. Our aim is to mobilise the CPMR Task Force to issue recommendations in this regard.
1. Benchmark of Existing EU Strategies within the CPMR Geographical Commissions

1.1. Atlantic Arc Commission

- Genesis of the Atlantic Maritime Strategy

During the first Semester of 2010, the Spanish Presidency of the EU Council asked the European Commission to prepare an Atlantic Strategy, upon strong recommendation from the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission. As a result, in November 2011, the European Commission issued a Communication entitled “Developing a Maritime Strategy for the Atlantic Ocean Area”. After a two-year consultation process established through an “Atlantic Forum”, the European Commission released a second Communication in May 2013 to set up an “Action Plan for a Maritime Strategy in the Atlantic Area delivering smart, sustainable and inclusive growth”. This Action Plan was later endorsed by the European Council and the European Parliament.

This Strategy is the first EU Maritime Strategy, steered by DG MARE. Five Member States are currently involved: Portugal, Spain, France, the United Kingdom and Ireland.

- How are the CPMR Regions involved?

Since the launch of the Baltic Sea Macro-Regional Strategy in 2009, the Atlantic Arc Commission has been campaigning in favour of a similar EU integrated Strategy for the Atlantic. After lobbying the EU Council Presidency, the Atlantic Arc Commission worked in close cooperation with the European Parliament, especially with MEP Alain Cadec (EPP, FR) who was the Rapporteur\(^1\) on the Atlantic Strategy.

The Lower-Normandy Presidency of the Atlantic Arc Commission was thus invited to participate as a key speaker in the launching event in Lisbon in November 2011.

From 2012 to 2013, the Atlantic Arc Commission participated in all five Atlantic Forums and was involved in the Atlantic Strategy Steering group, a group gathering representatives of the five Member States and European Institutions (European Commission, European Parliament, Committee of the Regions, European Economic and Social Council).

Once the Action Plan was adopted in May 2013, the Forum was dissolved and replaced by an annual “Atlantic Stakeholder Platform Forum”. The Steering group became the “Atlantic Strategy Group” (ASG) in which the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission still participates. The ASG has an annual rotating presidency. In 2016, under the Irish Presidency of the ASG, the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission was

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\(^1\) Report 2011/2310(INI) on the EU Cohesion Policy Strategy for the Atlantic Area
invited for the first time to take part in the High Level Atlantic Strategy Group meeting which gathers Ministerial Delegates of the five Member States.

Through the Atlantic Arc Commission, Regions are well identified as a key actor both in terms of governance and implementation through their regional Operational Programmes.

- **Funding streams and initiatives to support the implementation of the Strategy**

Upon proposal of MEP Alain Cadec, a budget of € 1.2 Million was allocated twice by the European Parliament as preparatory action to kick-start the initiative. An open call for tender was issued by DG MARE to set up an Assistance Mechanism\(^2\) for the Atlantic Action Plan.

To ensure better synergies between European Structural & Investment Funds (ESIF), Spain decided to set up a blue Integrated Territorial Investment (“blue ITI”) for all Atlantic Regions\(^3\). Four aims have been identified: foster blue growth by applying a cross-cutting approach; increase visibility of the Atlantic Strategy; allow monitoring of progress and results achieved; and contribute to leverage private investment. It is still rather early in the programming period to analyse the results of this tool. Portugal also decided to set up an ITI across all its territory called “ITI Mar”.

In 2013, a Statement on Atlantic Ocean Cooperation\(^4\) was signed in Galway (IE) between the EU, Canada and the United States. In order to implement the Galway Statement, €57 million coming from the Horizon 2020 programme were raised via the “Blue Growth” calls for proposals\(^5\).

The Atlantic Area Transnational Cooperation programme still remains identified as the most obvious source of funding for Atlantic Stakeholders. 425 applications were received to the first call for proposals launched in 2016. With a total ERDF budget of only €140 million, very few projects will eventually be funded (approximately 30 to 40 for the first call). An increase of this programme’s budget would be greatly appreciated by all stakeholders.

- **CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission proposals**

The Atlantic Arc Commission General Assembly held in June 2016 in Pamplona unanimously adopted the **Final Declaration “Pamplona 2016”** with four clear proposals concerning the Atlantic Strategy, two of which concerning funding.

In particular, the Atlantic Arc Commission calls on the Member States and the European Institutions to pursue their efforts to **obtain increased funding** that will enable the Atlantic Strategy to become a reality. In the Atlantic Strategy Group, discussions were conducted to ask for a specific budget for the implementation of the Atlantic Action Plan in the 2017-2018 work programme of the European

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2 See website: [www.atlanticstrategy.eu](http://www.atlanticstrategy.eu)

3 Regions concerned by this ITI are: Galicia, Asturias, Cantabria, Pais Vasco, Canarias, Andalucia.


5 Calls in the framework of the Societal Challenges Pillar’s objective “Food Security, Sustainable Agriculture and Forestry, Marine, Maritime and Inland Water Research and the Bioeconomy”.
Maritime and Fisheries Funds (EMFF- budget from the Integrated Maritime Policy, centrally managed by the European Commission).

Another CPMR AAC proposal was to ask for the introduction of a “bonus”, in the different EU funds, for projects which specifically target the priorities of the Atlantic Action Plan. This bonus could take the form of a co-funding rate 5% higher than for other projects. This bonus would facilitate and speed up the implementation of the Action Plan by offering a financial incentive to projects seeking to convert the priorities of the Atlantic Action Plan into operational projects in the regions.

These messages will be brought to the highest European Level when the President of the Atlantic Arc Commission will meet with the European Commissioner in charge of Maritime Affairs next 7 December 2016 in Brussels.

1.1. Baltic Sea Commission

- Genesis of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

In 2009, Under the Swedish Presidency of the EU Council, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) was the very first Macro-Regional Strategy to be launched and approved. The eight EU Countries concerned (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden) agreed on a joint Action Plan for the Strategy which was renewed in June 2015.

- How are the CPMR Regions involved?

Since the adoption of the revised action plan 2015, the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission was officially named one of the “Pan-Baltic Organisations” with a role in the implementation as well as in the communication.

The overall coordination of the Strategy lies with the Policy Area Coordinators and Policy Area Focal Points as well as Horizontal Action Coordinators and Horizontal Action Focal Points. The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission (BSC) participates as an observer in some of the National Contact Point meetings. The BSC also works in close cooperation with Priority Action dealing with Innovation and Climate (where the BSC is member of the steering group) as well as Horizontal Action on capacity. (see “Governance system of the EUSBSR” graph below).

The BSC is also an associated partner of the “Let’s Communicate” project, which aims at improving communication regarding the Strategy, especially on how to foster involvement from local and regional authorities.

The BSC participates in the EUSBSR Annual Forum. In 2016, the Forum will take place in Stockholm on 8 and 9 November and the BSC has applied for two different workshops. The BSC is also taking a position regarding the 2030 vision to contribute to the debates during the Forum. In addition, two of
the BSC working groups (Maritime and Transport) will organize back to back meetings with the Forum so as to ensure a good level of representation during the Forum.

In 2017 and for the first time, the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission will co-organise the Strategy Forum, together with the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It will give a clearer role for the Regions among the Stakeholders. In order to make this a success, the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission will set up a special Task Force during 2016/2017.

- **Funding streams and initiatives to support the implementation of the Strategy**

According to one of the principles of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) no new funding has been established to support the macro-regional strategy’s implementation\(^6\). The EUSBSR aims at mobilising the existing funding sources and using them more effectively for joint implementation. The EUSBSR is therefore relying exclusively on these existing funding sources to finance priority actions and Flagship Projects.

The Interreg transnational Baltic Sea Programme is aligned with the priorities of the EUSBSR. Continuous dialogue is now established between the National Contact points and the Programme.

Considering the wide pool of programmes and funds operated in the Baltic Sea Region, the opportunity should be developed to link existing funds (at EU, national and regional level), mobilise available resources and find synergies between these resources.

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\(^6\) Cf. “Three No’s Rule”: no new financial resources, no new legislation and no new formal structure for its implementation.
Cooperation and coordination are needed to align the funding from different sources and to find the synergies between the projects helping to implement macro-regional strategies. This obviously requires transparency and good communication. Each funding decision should not be seen in isolation but rather as part of a bigger picture where a number of funding decisions jointly contribute to realising the priorities of the EUSBSR. A coordinated approach increases the added value of the individual funding decisions and reduces the risk of duplication.

The BSC is in close dialogue regarding a new initiative: A pilot European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Managing Authorities’ (MA) Network focusing on Innovation in the EUSBSR was launched on 19 May 2016 in Warsaw. The general purpose of the Network is to work out ways of more efficient financial support to implement the EUSBSR through the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) programmes as well as increase coordination across relevant macro-regional stakeholders. The CPMR BSC takes part in this network meeting.

In addition, Sweden and Finland have published specific calls for transnational projects proposals within the European Social Fund (ESF) on the themes of Social Economy, Inclusion, Youth Employment and Migrants.

- **CPMR Baltic Sea Commission proposals**

Since its foundation in 1996, the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission has established itself as a forum for policy-oriented cooperation and a platform for cooperation amongst Regional Authorities in the Baltic Sea Region.

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) is a tool for solving common challenges and for the region to reach its full potential. The Baltic Sea Commission (BSC), together with its Member Regions, supports the main goals of the strategy: Save the Sea, Increase Connectivity and Prosperity of the Baltic Sea Region.

The BSC believes that the strategy’s common framework furthers integration in the region, but stresses the importance of tangible results in order to sustain and increase its legitimacy in the coming period.

An ongoing dialogue and process to develop the EUSBSR in line with global themes will help make the strategy more resilient and adapt it to future opportunities and challenges.

- The EUSBSR offers an appropriate framework to achieve progress through traditional cooperation patterns in the Baltic Sea region.
- Regions at sub-national level play a pivotal role in the macro region (EUSBSR) in the further implementation of the strategy, as they are the centre of cooperation patterns.
- It is essential to underline that the EUSBSR as a whole will be better prepared to meet regional, European and global challenges, in contrast to fragmented or exclusive cooperation,

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e.g. among the Nordic Countries. Therefore, the involvement of Norway and Russia is also indispensable.

In 2017, the BSC will focus its work on how to create “a demand” from regional stakeholder to be part of implementing the EUSBSR. It will also seek to identify concrete actions to be taken during the current programming period as well as for post 2020 policies.

1.3 North Sea Commission

- A European Strategy for the North Sea?
The North Sea Commission (NSC) has for several years, and with some support from members of the Committee of the Regions and the European Parliament, called for a macro-regional North Sea strategy at EU level. So far, the member states around the North Sea are not convinced of the need for such a strategy, despite the high pressure on the sea basin and the many conflicting interests in the area.

In 2013, thanks to a proposal coming from the CPMR North Sea Commission, the European Parliament granted € 250 000 for a preparatory action for the North Sea. DG MARE is now developing the contents of this initiative. The aim of this preparatory action is to analyse, in cooperation with stakeholders, the North Sea region’s growth potential and use the findings to investigate the added value of having a future shared macro regional strategy for the North Sea area.

So far, two stakeholder conferences have been held by DG MARE in cooperation with the CPMR North Sea Commission under the preparatory action – the first one in January 2015 in Edinburgh (UK) on energy and maritime spatial planning, and the second one (a smaller workshop) in June 2016 in The Hague (NL) on blue growth. The work will be reported in spring 2017 to the SEARICA® intergroup of the European Parliament, for which the CPMR acts as Secretariat, together with good examples of blue growth projects. The North Sea Commission will closely monitor the outcomes of such conferences.

In June 2016, energy ministers of the North Sea states signed a political declaration and a work plan for closer cooperation in the energy sector. A process with four transnational workgroups under this initiative has just been launched, led by the European Commission (DG Energy and DG MARE).

- How are the CPMR Regions involved?
The North Sea Commission has always been a driving force for cooperation initiatives in the North Sea Region. There was NSC lobbying behind the development of an Interreg Programme for the North Sea Region, and the creation of the Regional Advisory Council for fisheries. The NSC has been advocating an EU North Sea Strategy for a long time, and has been involved with DG MARE in the preparatory action events. DG MARE has asked the NSC to provide good project examples.

More info: www.searica.eu
The NSC has worked actively for a North Sea grid to better connect the electricity networks of the countries, and notes some progress on this issue with the energy ministers’ declaration in 2016.

The NSC is also indirectly, through its member Noord-Holland, involved in the NorthSEE project\(^9\), a cooperation between national authorities and universities around the North Sea to improve coordination in maritime spatial planning. The project started early 2016 and will take 3 years. Funding is provided by the Interreg V North Sea Region Programme.

- **CPMR North Sea Commission proposals**

Due to the limited interest from European and national level to develop a macro-regional strategy, the NSC adopted in 2011 its own North Sea Region 2020 strategy. The strategy, which was revised at the Annual Business Meeting 2016, outlines common challenges and key areas for cooperation and joint action. It defines four strategic priority areas: Managing maritime space, Increasing accessibility and clean transport, Tackling climate change, and Attractive and sustainable communities.

In the “Legoland declaration”, the final declaration from the Annual Business Meeting in South Denmark in June 2016, the regions of the North Sea call for a formalized cooperation platform for the countries and regions around the North Sea as well as for a greater cooperation with Interreg V North Sea Region.

### 1.4 Inter-Mediterranean Commission

- **What Strategies in the Mediterranean?**

In the area covered by the CPMR Inter-Mediterranean Commission, there are currently two EU Macro-Regional Strategies under way addressing the specific Adriatic-Ionian Area (EUSAIR) and the Alpine space (EUSALP). In addition, there is a new maritime initiative (West Med) in preparation, addressing both shores of the Western area of the Mediterranean.

Finally, it is to note that during the last five years, many organizations, local and regional authorities, stakeholders of the area and even EU institutions like the European Parliament (EP) or the Committee of the Regions (CoR) (also through the ARLEM\(^10\)) have launched an extensive debate on the possible setting-up of new macro-regions in the whole basin.

1. **The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)**

The EUSAIR is the third European Macro-Regional Strategy to be adopted (in 2014) after the Baltic (2009) and the Danube (2011) Strategies. The EUSAIR covers eight countries: four EU Member States

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(Croatia, Greece, Italy, Slovenia) and four non-EU countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia).

The EUSAIR constitute the building block for emerging strategies in the Mediterranean. Besides, it is important to note that it has been evolving from a maritime strategy to a Macro-Region, which constitute an encouraging and inspiring experience for future initiatives.

2. The EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP)

The EU Strategy for the Alpine Region involves 7 countries: Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Slovenia and Switzerland. After the invitation by the EU Council in December 2013, the Commission adopted a Communication and an Action Plan on the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region in July 2015.

Even if EUSALP is not at the core of the Mediterranean area, it addresses a space located at the crossroad of the EUSAIR, EUSDR and West Med and involves some IMC regions in particular. Synergies with these strategies are to be especially considered in territorial cooperation and mainstreaming of funds.

3. The maritime initiative for the Western Mediterranean

In 2015, The European Commission launched an assessment process regarding a possible maritime strategy and action plan for the Western Mediterranean Sea basin involving: Italy, Spain, France, Malta, Portugal, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Mauritania. With this aim, EASME in coordination with DG MARE, issued a call for tender to set up the WestMed project.

After the first stakeholder consultations organized in the framework of the project, the first reports by the consultants and discussions between the European Commission (mainly DG MARE and REGIO) the involved States and the Union for the Mediterranean, West Med was given the status of “maritime initiative”. The setting-up process itself was formalized, embedded in the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), and the next phases kicked-off.

The States are currently discussing the organization of a large stakeholder conference at the beginning of 2017 in Barcelona and a possible definition of an Action Plan. The governance will be surely lighter than in MR strategies. Theoretically, the initiative should be launched in 2017 under the Maltese Presidency of the EU. In the long run, the idea is to possibly cover the rest of the sea basin with similar maritime initiatives.

- How are the CPMR Regions involved?

Regarding EUSAIR, many CPMR IMC Regions are deeply involved through:

- Their different national coordination systems or boards, towards implementing the Action Plan (e.g. Italy has set a structured coordination between the Regions and the State),
- The meetings/forum of the Strategy
- The cooperation programmes in the area
- The main networks monitoring the strategy (CPMR and Al Euro-Region)

The CPMR network is always represented by its Secretariat or member Regions, at political or technical level in the most relevant meetings of the strategy opened to these kinds of stakeholders.
Concerning EUSALP, some CPMR IMC regions are directly participating, the network lightly monitors the developments and search for synergies and capitalization, when deemed necessary (e.g. in territorial cooperation projects).

Regarding West Med, many CPMR IMC regions from both shores are directly concerned, and the organization has been involved from the early phases of study and stakeholders’ consultation, participating in all focus groups and capitalizing on its members’ work and projects. The CPMR IMC will be represented in the forthcoming stakeholder conference and be also active as a formal observer as part of the UfM Working Group on Blue Economy. A specific West Med sub-group will be set up in this framework with a rotating co-leadership by southern and northern states.

Overall, the CPMR, has set up a Task Force concerning the Adriatic Ionian area. The IMC has a broader working group on “Territorial Cooperation and Macro-Regional Strategies” addressing the discussion on the whole basin and making synergies with CPMR TFs, and another WG on “Integrated Maritime Policy and Transport” contributing specifically to maritime priorities of West Med, EUSAIR and future emerging Strategies.

- **Funding streams and initiatives to support the implementation of the Strategy**

EUSAIR is supported mainly by territorial cooperation programmes in the area: ADRION and MED Interreg V B programmes at transnational level, several Cross Border and IPA\(^\text{11}\) programmes as well as a preparatory action of the European Parliament.

The EC is studying in particular the establishment of a sustained dialogue between the EUSAIR and the ESIF programmes labelling and funding EUSAIR projects.

The future approval of the territorial cooperation projects connected to the strategy and the labelling of the first EUSAIR projects are entering into the operational phase.

The transnational programme ADRION is also setting up a specific “facility point” project linked to its axis 4 to help the governance of EUSAIR at practical level. In addition, the programme is also trying to adapt its priority to migration issues which is a specific challenge for the area.

The MED Interreg transnational programme, on a more general level, will help both EUSAIR strategies, emerging West Med as well as in general the reflection on governance in the Mediterranean through its “platform project” linked to its axis 4.

This action will gather reflections capitalizing on Med projects in strategic themes such as sustainable tourism, maritime surveillance and innovation. It will also develop specific tasks on “mainstreaming”, “liaising” (e.g. with other programmes) and “migration”. The IMC CPMR and its regions will be involved in these processes as formal observers and partners of key Med horizontal and modular projects already approved (Specific Objectives concerning blue growth & innovation, protected areas, sustainable tourism, efficiency energy in public buildings).

In general, territorial cooperation programmes in the Mediterranean have a real added value to implement the existing strategies at operational level. They also help shape reflections on the

emerging ones. This type of support shall be boosted in the future programming period also in relation with INTERACT work aimed at amplifying capitalization and synergies.

- **CPMR Inter-Mediterranean Commission proposals**

As stated in the ARLEM 2013 report led by the IMC Presidency and several other policy positions, the IMC advocates for the setting up of macro-regional and sea basin strategies or initiatives in the whole Mediterranean.

This process shall be based on principles such as variable geometry, gradual inclusion of southern territories, multilevel governance and mainstreaming (among others), towards the consolidation in the long term of an integrated Mediterranean Strategy. The CPMR IMC will keep pushing in this direction through its projects and lobbying activities.

Regarding the EUSAIR and the WestMed Initiative, the IMC reiterates its commitment to contribute to the reflections of the States, the EC, the EP and the EU cooperation programmes concerning the following themes: blue growth, Maritime Spatial Planning & Integrated Coastal Zone Management, transport, migration, governance and synergies between strategies, mainstreaming of funds.

Concerning West Med in particular a huge effort will be put into the consultation process towards the forthcoming action plan.

Furthermore, the CPMR IMC will work hard in order to keep proposing and implementing concrete cooperation actions with real impact on the ground.

The most recent recommendations in this regard are included in the last IMC GA Venice Declaration (July 2016) which focuses on maritime priorities for the emerging strategies in addition to the links with neighbourhood policy, migration and the need to seek the territorial integrated model of development for a real cohesion in the area.

1.5 Balkan and Black Sea Commission

- **What Strategies in Black Sea?**

A Communication on the Black Sea Synergy Strategy was adopted in 2007 and officially launched in 2008.

The Synergy was intended as a flexible framework to ensure greater coherence and provide policy guidance. It is based on a bottom-up project development approach aimed at building on concrete deliverables in the environment, maritime affairs, fisheries, maritime transport, energy, education, civil society, cross border cooperation and research fields. It includes three EU member States: Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, one candidate State: Turkey, as well as non EU member States: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Russia
This strategy is steered by the European External Action Services (EEAS) with a strong involvement of DG MARE.

- **How are the CPMR Regions involved?**

The Balkan & Black Sea Commission has participated in the three High-Level Black Sea Stakeholder Conferences (DG MARE) held in 2014, 2015, 2016.

The CPMR participated in the ENI CBC Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Programme 2014-2020 launching conference and 1st Partners Forum in July 2016. The CPMR was suggested by the TESIM (Technical support to the implementation and management of ENI CBC programmes) to those looking for partners as an organisation with members as possible partners.

Since 2014, an annual event called “High-Level Black Sea Stakeholder Conference” is organised, in which the CPMR is present and active. This event is prepared in coordination with the hosting State and the European Commission (DG MARE).

The CPMR Balkan & Black Sea Commission collaborates with the Black Sea NGO Forum. The Forum aims at increasing the level of dialogue and cooperation among NGOs in the wider Black Sea Region, strengthening the NGOs’ capacity to influence regional and national policies and to increase the number and quality of regional partnerships and projects.

- **Funding streams and initiatives to support the implementation of the Strategy**

The ENI CBC Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Programme is still identified as the main programme covering most of the basin.

The Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), Horizon 2020 SME Instrument, and European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) provide financial support for actions in this region.

- **CPMR Balkan & Black Sea Commission proposals**

It its Final Declaration “Brussels 2015” The CPMR BBSC reiterated its support to the development of macro-regional strategies to respond to the demands of the territories concerned.

It also fully supported the Eastern Partnership and the Black Sea Synergy, which respectively promote the partner countries’ rapprochement to the EU and the regional cooperation in the Black Sea area. Only by fostering cooperation between the countries and the regions of the Balkans and the Black Sea will common problems be tackled and political and economic reform be encouraged.

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The Regions of the Balkan and Black Sea Commission also announced their willingness to collaborate with their central state authorities in order to enhance the sectoral dialogue partnership with the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) to the benefit of the national and regional level.

Finally, the CPMR BBSC calls for the development of a macro-regional strategy in the Black Sea Basin.
2. Further steps to be taken by the CPMR Task Force

2.1. Analyse the alignment between Regional Operational Programmes and EU Strategies’ Action Plans

In January 2016, the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission prepared a table (see extract below) identifying the extent to which the Atlantic Strategy was taken into account in each Regional Operational Programme of its Member Regions.

During the meeting of the Task Force next 2 November 2016 in Ponta Delgada, it would be interesting to jointly discuss the interest of preparing similar documents for each CPMR Geographical Commission covered by a European Strategy.

2.2. Analyse the alignment between Transnational Operation Programmes and EU Strategies

Similar work could be conducted to better identify the alignment between Interreg V B (Transnational) Operational Programmes and the EU Strategies and make proposals for the future.

It is interesting to note that the MED programme in particular allows “platform projects” to be implemented, in relation to its Priority Axis 4 “A shared Mediterranean Sea”. Indeed, the Priority Axis 4 objectives are “to contribute to a dialogue on macro regional and sea basin strategies in the Mediterranean and to generate cooperation and consensus raising among Mediterranean regions and participating countries on issues currently lacking common agreements and strategies.”
this priority axis, the MED Programme clearly identifies the need to support implementation of Strategies in its area.

It could be interesting to have a benchmark of Transnational Operational Programmes priorities in order to prepare the ground for the post 2020 programming period.

Below: maps of the regions covered by the current 15 Transnational Cooperation Programmes:

2.3. Usefulness of instruments such as Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI)

ITI is a tool to implement territorial strategies in an integrated way. It is not an operation, nor a subpriority of an Operational Programme. Instead, ITI allows Managing Authorities to implement Operational Programmes in a cross-cutting way and to draw on funding from several priority axes of one or more Operational Programmes to ensure the implementation of an integrated strategy for a specific territory.

Spain and Portugal chose to set up a “Blue ITI” to implement the Atlantic Strategies through their Operational Programme. It should be noted that in both countries, the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) are centrally managed by the States.

This Task Force could closely monitor the interest and usefulness of such instruments and better identify which Regions or which Managing authorities have decided to implement an ITI.
2.4. Pilot Projects and Preparatory actions

As detailed in the section “Funding streams and initiatives to support the implementation of Strategies” of this background note, several Preparatory Actions have been granted to support the kick off phase of EU Strategies: in the North Sea, in the Atlantic Arc as well as for the EUSAIR.

A pilot project is an initiative ‘of an experimental nature designed to test the feasibility of an action and its usefulness’ and permits appropriations for it to be entered in the EU budget for not more than two consecutive financial years.

A Preparatory action - normally the successor of a successful pilot project on the same matter - is designed to prepare proposals with a view to the adoption of actions like EU policies, legislation, programmes etc. with funding for not more than three (further) years during which time a legal base needs to be established in secondary legislation, if the action is to continue beyond the three years.

PP-PAs are important tools for the formulation of political priorities and the introduction of new initiatives that might turn into standing EU activities and programmes (having their own budget lines).

Funding for Pilot projects (PP) and Preparatory Actions (PA) directly comes from the European Parliament’s own budget. The Financial regulation (Article 54 (2) a) and b) stipulates that the institutions agree to limit the total amount of appropriations for pilot schemes to € 40 million in any budget year.

PP-PAs are not the exclusive prerogative of Parliament only. The Council and the Commission also have the right to propose PP-PAs. During the 2016 budgetary procedure, the Commission proposed to transform a pilot project into a preparatory action.

We suggest that the CPMR Macro-Region Task Force could closely monitor the process of asking for a Pilot Project or a Preparatory Action to support the emergence and appropriate implementation of EU Strategies in the European Sea Basins.

For information, below is the first tentative calendar setting up the main milestones for the adoption of PP-PAs in the 2017 budgetary procedure 13:

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2.5. Investment tools used

Another important avenue of investigation could be to better identify which investment tools are used to implement Macro Regional and Sea Basin Strategies.

For instance, is the Juncker Plan useful to finance investment at a transnational level? Do Geographical Commissions (GC) have a clear view on this?

The CPMR will be involved in the ETIP Ocean project, a technology platform deriving from the Ocean Energy Forum, with a specific focus on investment and finance. The ETIP Ocean project will be launched in Brussels on 1 December 2016. Executive Secretaries of the CPMR GCs could be invited to join this event to know more about the Project and its potential benefits to the GCs, particularly in terms of investments. In addition, the experience led in the North Sea in connection with the Energy Grid could be of interest for other CPMR Geographical Commissions.

With the help of the CPMR GCs, this Task force could help identify new ways of guiding investment towards Macro-regional projects. Knowing more about work conducted in each of the CPMR Geographical Commissions would facilitate exchanges of good practices and ideas to be duplicated in other Sea Basins.

3. Possible policy recommendations to go further

In light of this document and building on the exchanges with the Task Force members next 2 November 2016 in Ponta Delgada, the CPMR General Secretariat recommends that the CPMR develops thoughts and activities on the following points:
● Clearly support the existence of the Transnational Cooperation Programmes and reinforce their envelope in the Next Programming Period (post 2020), with the possibility to finance infrastructure projects, as it is currently the case for Cross Border Programmes;

● Produce further analysis links between Macro Regional or Sea Basin Strategies and the Juncker Plan: currently more that 60% of the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI) go to three (rich) Member States, with no territorial dimension / no territorial cohesion criteria;

● Push for emerging strategies in the area covered by the CPMR Geographical Commissions and secure the participation of Regions’ and/or Geographical Commissions’ representatives in the governance bodies established to steer such strategies. This would allow a better ownership of the Strategies on the ground;

● Participate in the discussions between Interact and the European Commission on the architecture of the future Cohesion Policy and its Cooperation component.

These messages could lead to the preparation of a CPMR Draft Policy Paper to be presented to the CPMR Political Bureau taking place in Malta next 10 March 2017.
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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