



CPMR'S BREXIT CONFERENCE

16 November 2017, Cardiff (Wales)

1 Context

The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions is an association that brings together around 150 regions from 25 States from the European Union (EU) and beyond, and operated both as a *think tank* and a *lobby* to ensure that the needs and interests of its Member Regions are taken into account in policies with a high territorial impact.

Brexit is one of the biggest developments in the EU's history and during 2017 the CPMR has been undertaking work to look at the potential impacts of Brexit on its member regions. This has included work through two of the CPMRs Geographical Commissions: the Atlantic Arc and the North Sea. It has also included discussions with French regions, at the initiative of Normandy, focusing on the implication of Brexit along the English Channel (and following an initial meeting in Cardiff on 15 November it was agreed a CPMR Channel Taskforce, led by Normandie and supported by the CPMR secretariat, will be established).

The CPMRs work on Brexit has focused on two main themes, which are reflected in the organisation of the Cardiff Brexit Conference: (i) a call for clear recognition to be given to the disproportionate impact Brexit will have on certain regions and territories, and for coordinated action to mitigate this (which is the focus of session 1 of the conference); (ii) a commitment to maintaining strong cooperation with the UK nations and regions post-Brexit, including supporting their continued participation in EU programmes (session 2).

The event on Brexit in Cardiff and the adoption of the Cardiff Declaration at the CPMR's Annual General Assembly in Helsinki is the culmination of this initial work, and represents a strong statement of solidarity from the CPMR towards the UK nations and regions. The signature of the Cardiff Declaration by the First Minister of Wales and by the political representatives of the CPMR's Member Regions is, therefore, an important milestone in the CPMRs work on Brexit, with a clear commitment for follow up actions during 2018 to take forward the key messages it sets out.

2 Summary of the speeches

2.1 Session 1: Keynote speeches

Carwyn Jones, First Minister of Wales, expressed his pride at the signing of the Declaration, named after the Welsh capital, which recognises the value of European regional cooperation beyond Brexit. He said that Wales is committed to European cooperation, as demonstrated by its role within the CPMR and its interregional relationships with special mention given to the long standing cooperation between Wales and Brittany.

Alberto Núñez Feijoo, President of the Xunta de Galicia, echoed this message, referring to the work of the CPMR's Atlantic Arc Commission. He stressed the necessity to take into account the fishing sector in the negotiations, which he said will be particularly weakened by the Brexit decision.

2.2 Session 2: Recognising and responding to the impact of Brexit

Speakers:

- **Desmond Clifford**, Director of the Office of the First Minister of Wales (moderator)
- **Jean-Michel Le Boulanger**, First Vice-President, Brittany Region
- **Roseanna Cunningham MSP**, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform of Scotland
- **Kerstin Brunnström**, President of the CPMR North Sea Commission and Regional Councillor, Region Västra Götaland
- **Antje Grotheer**, Member of the Bremen's Parliament
- **John Seamais O'Fearraigh**, Councillor, Donegal County Council

The speakers detailed the potential economic and social impacts of Brexit on the regions they represent. Key points highlighted were the reconfiguration of trade links and its effect on the local economy, particularly ports, the weakening of the fishing sector if access and environmental standards are changed, undermining research links between universities, the conflicting sectoral interests in the maritime field, and the reduction of the EU budget.

Jean-Michel Le Boulanger, First Vice-President of Brittany Region, presented [the analysis](#) published by the Environmental, Economic and Social Committee of the Brittany region on the impacts of Brexit in the region and highlighted the importance of cooperation between Brittany and Wales, echoing the statement of the First Minister of Wales.

Roseanna Cunningham MSP expressed regret at the UK's decision to leave the UE, stressing the negative impact of Brexit on Scotland, drawing particular attention to the impact on Scotland's coastal communities.

2.3 Session 3: Avoiding a cliff edge – regional cooperation post-Brexit

Speakers:

- **Gregg Jones**, CPMR Director of Finance and EU Programmes (moderator)
- **Cees Loggen**, CPMR Vice-President and Regional Minister of Noord-Holland
- **Adolfo Morais**, Deputy Minister for Universities and Research of the Basque Government

- **Andreas Lervik**, Vice-President of the CPMR North Sea Commission and Councillor, Østfold County
- **Didier Peralta**, Regional Councillor of Normandie Region

All of the speakers expressed their political commitment to regional cooperation. They also stressed the need for the UK to continue to participate in the INTERREG, Horizon2020 and Erasmus+ programmes. **Cees Loggen** called for the creation of a Solidarity and Friendships Declaration. **Didier Peralta** focused on the Channel initiative (mentioned in section 1 above), and [the agreement to launch a Channel Taskforce](#), chaired by Normandy and supported by the CPMR Secretariat focused on giving a new impetus to Franco-British relations across the Channel within strategic fields.

2.4 Session 4: Signing ceremony

Before the signing, **Vanessa Charbonneau**, Vice-President for European Affairs of the Conseil Régional des Pays de la Loire, and President of the CPMR's Atlantic Arc Commission, outlined the commitment of the Atlantic Arc regions to the CPMR's Brexit initiatives, and to the political messages set out in the [Cardiff Declaration](#). The Pays de la Loire Region will present these messages to the EU's chief Brexit negotiator, Michel Barnier, on 29 January 2018. Vanessa Charbonneau also stressed that the CPMR must translate the political message in the Cardiff Declaration into proactive actions, particularly by presenting them to the European Parliament, European Commission and at national level.

Carwyn Jones, First Minister of Wales, reiterated the importance of the Cardiff Conference and the Cardiff Declaration and the strong support of the Welsh Government to the work of the CPMR and cooperation at the European level.

Signing of the Cardiff Declaration: [see the signed declaration](#)

3 Next steps

Mark Drakeford, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government in the Welsh Government, closed the ceremony, echoing the remarks of Vanessa Charbonneau by calling for the points presented in the Cardiff Declaration to be turned into actions at EU level. He also said that the Welsh government is committed to presenting the Cardiff Declaration to the National Assembly for Wales and in its discussions with the UK Government and other UK Devolved Administrations.