



CPMR Position on EU Strategies with a Macro-regional Dimension

Approved by the CPMR Political Bureau– 10 March 2017 – Gozo (Malta)

BACKGROUND

In 2012, the CPMR set up a “Macro-Regions Task Force” to follow the development on macro-regional and sea-basin strategies. Thanks to their long-standing experience in cooperation in the different EU sea basins, the CPMR Geographical Commissions (GCs) are key actors to issue recommendations on this issue.

A report from the Commission on the [implementation of EU macro-regional strategies](#) was released in December 2016. This document only addresses the four existing macro-regional strategies without taking into consideration sea-basin strategies or other types of emerging strategies.

Now that the post-2020 programming period is under preparation, this Policy Paper summarises the CPMR position on the macro-regional dimension of EU strategies and proposals to move forward towards greater successes.

1. Macro-regional strategies must bring results

- **The three pillars of macro-regional strategies**

In a period marked by the rise of centrifugal forces in Europe, the macro-regional strategies that allow for strengthened cooperation around European living areas are needed more than ever.

The CPMR **expresses its support** for these strategies to strengthen the Europe of today and shape the future of Europe in three ways:

1. By adopting a long-term **strategic approach** in a given area;
2. By strengthening the **feeling of ownership** of European policies by stakeholders;
3. By allowing the establishment of **alliances and partnerships** in Europe that produce tangible results across the territories.

The CPMR, founded in 1973, understood very early on the benefit of being structured around relevant subsets through the creation of Geographical Commissions in 1989.

Ever since, the CPMR has proven that cooperation among Regions is more efficient when based on territories sharing similar maritime challenges. The idea that common challenges need common solutions is now widely accepted.

2. A clear and consistent approach

The CPMR has long been asking for a flexible definition of macro-regional strategies to benefit the territories. The Commission's Report on the [implementation of EU macro-regional strategies](#) from December 2016 highlights the need to jointly tackle macro-regional strategies.

- **Better coordinated strategies at European level**

At present, there are macro-regional strategies for the Baltic, the Danube and the Alps, a maritime strategy for the Atlantic, a hybrid maritime and macro-regional strategy in the Adriatic, a "synergy" for the Black Sea and an "initiative" for the Western Mediterranean.

All these strategies share a common purpose: strengthening cooperation between stakeholders around a given space. However, being decentralised, these strategies can suffer from a lack of coordination at European level.

To avoid the isolation of the actions undertaken within each macro-regional space, **the CPMR calls for the creation of a transversal Task Force, "Strategies with a macro-regional dimension" between the various Directorates General of the European Commission.**

3. Synergies and financial efforts from all sides

- **Adjust Interreg Programmes**

Experience within the CPMR's Geographical Commissions shows that stakeholders interested in Integrated Strategies are turning more frequently to European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) schemes to implement macro-regional projects. For example, 425 proposals were submitted to the first call by the Atlantic Area scheme in 2016.

However, these schemes are not always aligned with European Integrated Strategies. Although the MED Operational Programme (OP) has chosen to include a focus on "the promotion of a polycentric

and integrated development of the MED space”, this is not the case for most areas relevant to the Strategies.

In addition, these transnational schemes are the least well-equipped of the ETC. The overall budget for 15 transnational schemes (out of 103 schemes in total) represents just 2.1% of the total budget dedicated to cooperation within Cohesion Policy.

For these reasons, the CPMR is calling for a genuine adjustment of the Interreg programmes, **in three ways**:

1. **Strengthening the “Cooperation” budget** envelope, within Cohesion Policy, particularly for transnational schemes;
2. Providing **better geographical alignment** between transnational schemes and existing macro-regional or maritime strategies;
3. Providing a **better thematic alignment** between the Operational Programmes and the Action Plans of the corresponding Strategies.

These simple measures will help to meet the needs of project developers, but also to strengthen the synergies between Integrated Strategies and European Cooperation Programmes.

- **Improve synergies within EU centrally managed programmes**

Beyond territorial cooperation schemes, European thematic funds should help to better finance macro-regional projects.

As such, the CPMR welcomes the establishment of Calls for "Blue Growth" proposals within the European Research Programme "Horizon 2020".

Similarly, the launch of three “Blue Careers”, “Blue Labs” and “Blue Technology” Calls by DG MARE within the scope of the Fund's 2016 work programme for the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) is a positive sign.

These Calls may enable the financing of projects with a macro-regional dimension in European maritime basins. However, **better structuring** is necessary to strengthen the synergies between European Action Plans and the various funds and schemes managed directly by the Commission, particularly:

- Horizon 2020 Research Programme;
- European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF);
- Europe's Programme for SMEs (COSME);
- Connecting Europe Facility (CEF);
- LIFE programme.

The CPMR has **two proposals** to strengthen the link between these schemes and the macro-regions:

1. Include a **specific reference** with a macro-regional dimension in Calls to existing projects;
2. Prepare **Calls for Projects** specifically oriented towards Integrated Strategies.

Furthermore, additional resources may be proposed by the **European Investment Bank** (EIB) or other financial institutions to create a leverage effect and attract funding, including private.

- **Set-up incentives for mainstream European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)**

Co-managed at national or regional level, the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) are a crucial tool for the implementation of macro-regional strategies.

However, a study conducted in 2016 across all regional Operational Programmes of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) of the CPMR's Atlantic Arc Commission Regions has shown that if management authorities mention the existence of a maritime strategy, no OP provides specific axes for the implementation of its Action Plan.

This is explained by the fact that no incentives are offered to management authorities to encourage project leaders to develop projects with a macro-regional dimension.

To remedy this situation, **the CPMR proposes introducing incentivizing tools for all ESIF funds, including:**

1. **A co-financing bonus of around 5%** for all cooperation projects meeting the priorities of the relevant strategy;
2. **Facilitating the mobilisation, by the project leaders, of Article 70 of the [General Regulations](#)** of Cohesion Policy, enabling actions outside the area covered by the scheme, whether this Article was activated by the managing authority or not;
3. **Assessing the value of the Integrated Territorial Investment Tool (ITI)** to focus the ESI funds on the objectives of a strategy with a macro-regional dimension.

As such, the CPMR will prepare proposals in its Policy Paper of June 2017 on the future of EU Regional Policy.

4. Synergies and smart engagement

Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) are a tool for Regions to steer ESI funds in a way that builds competitiveness in Europe. As an ex-ante conditionality for EU Cohesion Policy, S3 allow Regions to know their strengths and combat their disadvantages. It can also help them identify potential partners with whom they can build transnational bottom-up projects on shared issues.

This approach can therefore be applied at macro-regional level, as has already happened in the Baltic. Indeed, in 2016, a network of ERDF managing authorities was created among the Member States in the Baltic Sea Region. Through this network, the managing authorities have the ambition to initiate transnational collaboration, as a complement to Interreg programmes, so as to establish alternative funding opportunities to implement the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR).

This good practice leads us to identify **two recommendations to support growth and employment in the macro-regional areas:**

1. Considering the establishment of **Smart Specialisation Strategies** at macro-regional level;
2. Strengthening the **commitment, particularly financial, of the States** affected by these Strategies.

This pooling of S3 and national funds will maximise the impact of Strategies with a macro-regional dimension across the territories.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of this, the CPMR General Secretariat recommends:

- the establishment of a “Strategies with a macro-regional dimension” Task Force among the relevant Directorates General within the European Commission;
- strengthening and adjusting the Interreg Programmes for Territorial Cooperation, particularly the Transnational Programmes (Part B);
- improving synergies between the sectoral funds directly managed by the Commission and the Integrated Strategies;
- providing clear and simple systems to implement for ESIF management authorities so that the OPs include bonuses for projects with a macro-regional dimension;
- strengthening the commitment, particularly financial, of States in transnational cooperation;
- continuing to look at Smart Specialisation Strategies at a macro-regional level.



Contact person: Pauline CAUMONT, Executive Secretary of the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission, in charge of the CPMR Macro Region Task Force

Email: pauline.caumont@crpm.org

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.

www.cpmr.org

CONTACT:

6, rue Saint-Martin, 35700 Rennes
Tel: + 33 (0)2 99 35 40 50

Rond-Point Schuman 14, 1040 Brussels
Tel: +32 (0)2 612 17 00

Email: Secretariat@crpm.org; Website: www.cpmr.org

Ref.: CRPMPPP170002