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Future of Europe: Regions, cohesion and sustainable development

Any vision for the future must place the Regions at the heart of European integration, since they play a **vital role** in giving democratic legitimacy to the EU. **Territorial, social and economic cohesion as well as the sustainable development goals** must be fundamental pillars.

The CPMR is therefore very concerned that the European Commission's White Paper fails to include any mention of a territorial dimension and Cohesion Policy, at a time of growing territorial disparities.

The **territorial impact of Brexit** requires an EU-level response and the need to maintain strong regional cooperation after Brexit, as was recalled at the Cardiff conference on 16 November 2017. (cf. [Cardiff Declaration](#))

A post-2020 EU budget designed to serve a project

The EU budget must be designed **to serve a project** and be adequately resourced so that EU policies and programmes can be implemented to serve the territories. This implies **reinforcing the own resources component of the budget**.

In the forthcoming negotiations on the post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the CPMR calls for:

- Not risking the future of the **Cohesion Policy budget**
- Giving EU the capacity to finance an **ambitious maritime policy** in line with regional development strategies

Grants and EFSI-funding under the Juncker Plan have very different funding mechanisms and cannot replace each other. Grants remain necessary for regional development. The Commission is invited to propose the types of projects that should continue to benefit from grants because of their nature and the territories in which they are implemented. The EFSI Fund must also be made accessible to **small-scale projects and groups of projects** that may include Regions, such as territorial platforms.

Reviews of **sector policies** such as Horizon 2020, the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) should be led with the primary objective of strengthening

territorial cohesion. The CPMR therefore welcomes the Commission's willingness to improve how they are joined up with Cohesion Policy, while respecting the principles of **regional partnership and shared management**.

The **EMFF** budget must be maintained to finance implementation of the **Common Fisheries Policy** and **Integrated Maritime Policy**.

Ensuring a renewed and updated Cohesion Policy (cf. [CPMR Policy Position](#))

Cohesion Policy is a **long-term investment policy**, indispensable at both European and regional level. The CPMR is opposed to any nationalisation of this policy, which should encompass **all the European regions**. It must be **updated** while respecting its basic principles, and led under **shared management**.

The CPMR will take account of the conclusions of the 7th Cohesion Report and will put forward proposals to feed into the legislative proposals due to be published by the Commission mid-2018.

Cohesion Policy must stimulate innovation in the regions through **smart specialisation**. The interregional dimension of smart specialisation should be supported by EU funding.

In accordance with Articles 174 and 349 of the TFEU, it will need to pay special attention to the **island regions, outermost regions, and northernmost regions with very low population density**.

The CPMR recalls the importance of **territorial cooperation** and the need for the related programmes to be adequately resourced. The **Macro-Regional** and **Sea Basin Strategies** should also be supported and have their own budgets to speed up their implementation. It is fundamental for Regions to participate in their governance.

Placing the Seas and the Oceans at the core of the future of the EU

The CPMR calls on the EU to strengthen its **partnership with the Regions** in defining and implementing its maritime policies, including in the decision-making processes and governance of the **Common Fisheries Policy**.

It invites the EU to strengthen the **Integrated Maritime Policy**, entrusting this task to a Vice-President of the European Commission, a specific European Parliament committee and a specific configuration of the Council. A maritime dimension should also be introduced in the **new EU industrial strategy**.

Brexit will have a particularly strong impact on European maritime policies and communities, especially in the **fisheries** sector. The CPMR therefore calls on the EU to protect its interests and avoid the emergence of any form of **social and fiscal dumping or deregulation** at its borders.

The CPMR welcomes the European Commission's initiatives on international ocean governance and the increasing recognition of maritime challenges at international level. It approves the partnership with the **Union for the Mediterranean** to develop the blue economy. The **outermost regions, including Overseas Countries and Territories**, must be stakeholders in international ocean governance. In this regard the CPMR invites the European Commission to define maritime strategies for the sea basins that concern them.

With regard to **maritime education and training**, the EU is asked to create a European frame of reference, to anticipate and support training and mobility needs, and to finance collaborative initiatives in this area.

Implementation of the **Strategy for the Marine Environment and Maritime Spatial Planning framework directives** should be pursued, paying particular attention to territorial development strategies.

The CPMR calls on the EU to take action to permit direct cover for **environmental damage resulting from accidents at sea**, through changes to international regulations or the Environmental Liability Directive. It should also step up action to **manage and prevent marine litter**.

Climate change and energy transition, key priorities for the EU

Coastal regions are especially impacted by the effects of climate change. The CPMR is committed to the targets for Climate Action for 2030 and reiterates the vital contribution of local and regional authorities in efforts to **reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the effects of climate change**. It supports the review of the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change and the **Clean Energy** Package proposals. (cf. CPMR Policy Positions on [Climate](#) and [Energy](#)).

The regional level is not sufficiently taken into consideration in these EU policies. Regions however can play a pivotal role in mobilising action on the ground. The Commission is therefore called on to introduce the **right institutional framework and tools** for involving regional governments in defining and reviewing national mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Some **sensitive territories** with an exceptional living environment, such as the Arctic and so-called hot-spots recognised by the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) justify special efforts.

Developing the **huge potential for clean and renewable energies** in Europe's maritime regions calls for coordinated EU-level action. The CPMR welcomes the focus on decentralisation and democratisation proposed as part of the energy transition agenda by the European Commission.

Getting EU Transport Policy to improve regional accessibility

By concentrating funding on 9 land corridors since 2014, the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) has confirmed that **improving regional accessibility** is not a priority for EU Transport Policy. The CPMR therefore asks the Commission to take appropriate measures to review the criteria of the CEF calls for projects between now and 2021 in order to achieve a greater balance. Furthermore, Regions should be more involved in implementing the priority corridors.

The EU should also foster the development of short sea shipping to mitigate the impact of intra-EU transport on the climate. The European Commission is therefore called on to speed up preparation of a **support mechanism for maritime transport** which does not generate distortions of competition.

The CPMR demands that better account should be taken of islands, outermost regions, and comprehensive network ports in the **Motorways of the Sea** policy, more specifically in the updated version of the Detailed Implementation Plan due to be published at the end of 2017.

Based on policy positions adopted in 2017, the CPMR will prepare proposed amendments to the **draft Regulation on the CEF post 2020** that the Commission will unveil in mid-2018.

Allowing the EU and its neighbours to tackle the international challenges of development and solidarity

Security, migration, unemployment and development challenges in Europe and in its neighbouring countries call for coordinated and strengthened action by the EU.

Migration issues need to be addressed with long-term view, by taking into account the underlying causes of migratory flows and trends, cooperating with migrants' countries of origin and transition countries, and improving the social and economic development of these countries, as well as through security measures. States and the EU should respect their commitments and **involve local and regional authorities (LRAs)** to a greater extent in European discussions and decision-making and also provide adequate resources.

The CPMR will be drafting proposals on the reform of the European Common Asylum System, the European Agenda on Migration 2015 and the relevant chapters of the proposed MFF post-2020.

The CPMR invites the EU institutions and Member States to recognise **decentralised cooperation** as a "regional public policy on international development cooperation". This will be a critical tool for implementing the global 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and related **Sustainable Development Goals**. The right policy framework needs to be set and reflected in budget terms in the MFF post-2020.

The CPMR reaffirms the need to increase the involvement of LRAs in the **European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)**. The ENP should contribute to emerging macro-regional and sea basin initiatives and strategies and take inspiration from the methods and partnership principles of EU Cohesion Policy.