



CPMR STRATEGY ON EU PROJECTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The CPMR is a **political organization** mainly devoted to lobbying activities and policy work towards EU institutions. The bulk of its activities, since its creation, remains highly political. **Nevertheless, it has been involved in EU cooperation projects** contributing towards the achievement of its objectives for almost 30 years, **helping its regions** and territorial stakeholders to engage in key actions at EU, transnational and territorial level. Its work on projects aims to address **policy areas relevant** to the CPMR's members and the priorities included in its policy agenda.

The **CPMR and its Geographical Commissions (GCs)** have gained **experience** over the years in **different programmes** and projects, with a variety of **roles** and developing different tasks, providing an outstanding contribution, especially in **dissemination activities** and **capitalisation** of project results, including **advocacy** and lobbying activities.

Considering the **increasing demand from members** to be involved in EU programmes, the **added value for members** as well as growing **opportunities** and successes, and on the other hand the **potential financial risks**, a thorough **strategy** is needed to set a **shared and clear framework** and **improve the CPMR's responsiveness and effectiveness** when it comes to participating in EU projects.

Therefore, the purpose of this document is to describe the overall **CPMR Strategy** towards a strengthened and more informed participation in EU Programmes. It includes a description of its potential role and the added value, together with a series of recent and future actions and recommendations concerning risk assessment that can ensure a smooth and sound management of projects within the CPMR.

One of the **main objectives of this strategy** is to build up a **win-win collaboration with EU programmes and territorial stakeholders**. This will boost the cooperation and exchanges among CPMR regions, help implement and amplify the impact, and **co-fund the CPMR/GCs priority actions**. At the same time the aim is to continue gaining expertise in order to keep **influencing the evolution of the priority cooperation programmes** for the organisation.

1. History, state of play and objectives of CPMR involvement in EU projects

The CPMR is a **political organisation** mainly devoted to lobbying activities and policy work towards EU institutions. As we all know, the bulk of its activities, from its creation in 1973, remains highly political. **Nevertheless, the CPMR has been participating in EU projects** since European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) was introduced as part of Cohesion Policy in 1990, which was - and is today - very high on the CPMR's agenda. Thus, supporting cooperation between regions, also through EU projects, has over the years become a fundamental element of its existence.

In this perspective, and as an **early supporter and pioneer of EU regional policy**, the CPMR has always followed, monitored and contributed to initiatives related to ETC. Its participation in EU programmes and projects has also diversified as a consequence of the emergence of new programmes, opportunities, member needs and arising policy priorities. The CPMR has been engaging in EU projects depending on **demands and initiatives from members of Geographical Commissions (GCs), on priority policy issues**. In recent years, some of its Geographical Commissions have developed specific strategies on projects in relation with specific working groups, topics and/or programmes.

It is based on this **direct experience** and that of the many member regions which are also Managing Authorities of several ETC programmes, members of their Steering Committees and beneficiaries of many other programmes that the CPMR has gathered a high level of expertise allowing it to be influential at EU level in this domain. It is now keen to **develop and consolidate its strategy on EU projects with two main aims**:

- **Building up a win-win collaboration with EU programmes and territorial stakeholders**, to boost the **cooperation and exchanges among CPMR regions**, help implement and **amplify the impact**, and **co-fund the actions that are considered a priority by CPMR members**.
- **Continuing to accumulate expertise in order to help develop ETC and the priority programmes** that are important for the members of all Geographical Commissions.

Beyond the benefit at policy and technical level, so far the CPMR has been involved as a participating partner in **64 projects worth an overall €40 million** for the involved consortia and thus CPMR member regions and territorial stakeholders, including **€11 million** allocated to the CPMR. Over the **past few years, the participation of the CPMR in EU cooperation projects has increased** significantly. To date, the CPMR is simultaneously involved in 18 cooperation projects from different programmes including Interreg (Atlantic Area, MED Europe), DG REGIO grants, H2020, AMIF, Europeaid, Erasmus+ and the EMFF. The main reasons for this increased participation are linked to the demands from members, new opportunities, good visibility and reputation because of the added value the CPMR can give to projects, and the increased expertise gained from the CPMR in project management (in some themes such as maritime affairs or sustainable tourism in particular).

Some **Geographical Commissions** have been more involved than others in this regard, for different reasons. The Intermediterranean Commission and the Atlantic Arc projects represent for instance the majority of the projects in which the CPMR is currently involved. This is due to the higher demands of the members of these GCs, as well as to the higher level of opportunities from EU funds, facilitated in some cases by the eligibility rules under some programmes in particular. IMC projects and AAC projects represent respectively 40% and 13% of all CPMR projects in 2019. Both GCs are very much involved in the development of Interreg programmes operating in their respective areas (e.g. the AAC can participate in the coordination committees).

The Islands Commission (IC) and the Balkan and Black Sea Commission (BBSC) are also seeking to increase their participation in projects, representing currently 7% each in the overall share, and looking for new opportunities. These 4 GCs are fully integrated into the CPMR's financial structure, which marks a difference when it comes to joining projects under the CPMR umbrella and for financial risk assessment. The Baltic Sea Commission (BSC) and the North Sea Commission (NSC) had possibly fewer demands from members to be involved in projects within the CPMR. A number of GCs also face reduced eligibility under certain programmes/areas. However, all GCs are showing a growing interest to capitalise on projects and count on regions with high-level expertise (e.g. Managing Authorities and members of programme steering committees). Very often these GCs are also a driving force for setting up Interreg programmes in their areas of reference, and their own strategies serve as framework for cooperation, giving political guidance on priorities/project selection. In this respect, all GCs are in close contact with the Interreg programme secretariats and most of them organise their annual events alongside the High-Level Conferences of these programmes.

33% of the projects where the CPMR is involved relate to **the CPMR's core policy areas** and in particular Maritime Affairs. The main **themes** of the selected projects in the last 2 years relate to: sustainable tourism, maritime spatial planning, blue growth and maritime industries, training in the maritime sector (with a focus on blue biotechnologies) fisheries and aquaculture, marine environment, energy efficiency in public buildings, sustainable mobility, EUSAIR and communicating Cohesion Policy results.

Among all the existing EU sectoral and cooperation programmes, the CPMR is only involved in a few as participating partner¹ to date. Its participation is restricted for instance due to the cooperation area². As the CPMR has only two legally established offices, one in Rennes, and the other in Brussels, it has no access to some relevant programmes³, although its participation would be relevant. It is eligible under some programmes (i.e. Interreg MED) thanks to the 20% "flexibility rule" present in the EU regulation, which (if the programme approves) allows all projects to have 20% of their total budget allocated to partners located outside the programme's geographical area. However, this is an exception that does not apply to all programmes, and which is limited. Given the demand from members to expand the CPMR's eligibility to other geographical areas, the General Secretariat has started a preliminary reflection – that will be developed in dialogue with all GCs - to extend as much as possible the flexibility rule to other programmes of interest while at the same time exploring other possibilities and legal arrangements that could enable the CPMR to participate in other relevant programmes to which it has no access for now.

2. CPMR role and added value towards the participation in EU projects

The main **activities** the CPMR can develop in a project usually fall into one of the following categories: **communication** and **dissemination** of results; **transfer**; or **capitalisation**. These types of activities are consistent with the CPMR's very nature and scope of action. Most of the time, the CPMR's participation in a project relates to increasing the project's impact by giving it more visibility

¹ Main programmes in which the CPMR participates as full partner: Interreg MED; Interreg Atlantic Area; Interreg Europe; H2020; Erasmus+; EMFF; AMIG; Europeaid; DG MARE, DG MOVE and DG REGIO direct grants.

² Most EU sectoral programmes are open to any entity based in the EU, no matter where it is based, except the EU Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) Programmes, which are usually open to a specific geographical area. Interreg programmes are all limited to a specific geographical area, except Interregional programmes.

³ i.e. ENI CBC MED, some cross-border programmes in the Med, the Baltic and the North Sea, the Balkans, among others

at EU, national or territorial level and promoting the replication of its methodology and tools by other members and/or partners to a wider extent. It is also a good way to gain knowledge/expertise in specific topics and inputs for policy, for all the involved partners and stakeholders.

Such activities include organising workshops or big dissemination events, managing web sites, newsletters, promotional materials, monitoring legislation, lobbying actions, and liaising with other projects, bodies, initiatives. They include also trainings, policy papers with specific recommendations, consolidating or creating new networks/platforms to follow up on the results of the projects, signing Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with entities to undertake to apply the results of the projects, and even the possibility of exploring new collaboration opportunities to continue the work for ensuring long-term sustainability of the action.

Thus, projects offer many types of **added value** for the CPMR, its Geographical Commissions and the members, first and foremost the **possibility to implement already planned actions to a higher transnational extent**, by securing support from the EU.

EU projects can also give **increased visibility** to the results and knowledge generated, the participating partners, the CPMR and its concerned GCs, at different levels. Projects can even be a means of further elaborating or **amplifying the organisation's political messages** and being part of new ones, **shaping policy through projects**. For instance, a policy paper co-funded by the EU in the framework a project and supported by a large group of territorial stakeholders, including specific CPMR/GCs views, can be widely disseminated in high-level events and to EU institutions that will consider those messages because they are supported by a critical mass of key players, and also because they come from an EU-funded project.

Another added value is deeply connected with the nature of the CPMR, helping members to **share expertise and capitalise** to a larger extent. In this regard, CPMR members and all GCs will soon also be able to use for this very purpose the **newly established intranet** created as part of the CPMR web site. The Secretariat is also working on new ways and tools to improve communication related to projects (such as a projects catalogue, stands, social media, etc.) and capitalisation (e.g. specific workshops, tailored webinars, online presentations for members, signature of MoUs).

Projects can also help the organisation **strengthen project management capacities** of its staff and in the member regions. A first internal **training session** on EU projects was organised in 2019 for CPMR staff, involving also experts from a CPMR member. It aimed to increase knowledge, share experiences and views through role plays and interactive sessions, improve the way of doing things, performance and effectiveness when dealing with projects, as well as the connection with policy work. New trainings can be foreseen in the coming years and some of them can also be opened to the staff of member regions (in the role of experts and participants), capitalising on other courses developed by members or by the CPMR, like the one on Territorial Integrated Development for civil servants that was implemented in 2018.

Finally, there is also a **budgetary added value** from projects both for the organisation and its member regions involved in the consortia. If the activities to be developed are part of the priorities of the CPMR or one or more of its GCs, using projects to implement them is surely beneficial and a win-win operation, not only at policy/technical level but also from a financial point of view. If the programme presents good co-funding rates and/or other positive financial characteristics, such as prefunding or preparation costs and administrative costs, this can become even more beneficial for the finances of the organisation/GC and the involved members. Besides, projects normally include budget lines for travels and interpretation, hence CPMR/GC staff and members can co-fund their travels for many project meetings that are organised usually alongside statutory CPMR and GC events or working groups and benefit from an additional support to facilitate mutual understanding.

In conclusion, there are **five main types of role** that an entity like the CPMR can play within an EU cooperation project. Some of them have more advantages than others in relation to the CPMR's strategy, or could serve different purposes. The CPMR, when eligible, can be **lead or participating partner**, with financial and legal responsibilities. It can also be an **associated partner** that allows it to follow and monitor the project's activities as an active "inside" observer without funding or legal responsibilities (but usually with the coverage of travel expenses for meetings). A third role for the CPMR is to be contracted **as an external expert/service provider** for very specific activities. A fourth and lighter role, is the one of (external, formalised) **observer**, that can allow the CPMR to follow the activities and support the project, based on flexible needs and without any form of binding commitment. The fifth role is the one where the CPMR can provide a project with a certain **assistance or support** without a formal involvement, helping for instance members build up partnerships, sharing partner searches, and sometimes giving inputs to the project idea.

3. Risk assessment and recommendations

Over the last few years, EU projects have accounted for around 25% of the CPMR's total budget. They also represent around 30% of the total staff working time, assigned mainly to the staff in charge of projects, administration and Geographical Commissions, and a much lower percentage to staff in charge of policy work (when this is fundamental to give a "thematic" added value to both the project and CPMR/GC policy work).

From an exclusively financial point of view, it should be noted that the **projects contribute to the overall balance of the CPMR's budget**. This is the second source of income after membership fees. They affect income and expenditure. In 2018, the CPMR received €834,712 in funding from the European Union, representing 22% of the CPMR's total revenue. Membership fees, in turn, accounted for 73.5% of total revenue. In 2018, the gross contribution⁴ of the projects to the CPMR budget was €585 635. Projects therefore represent quite a large share of the CPMR's activities and budget. The good performance and reputation of the CPMR as regards its participation in EU projects should not be taken for granted however. Several **recommendations** and rules must be observed in order to **limit risks related to EU projects and keep performing well**.

First, CPMR actions and decisions concerning EU projects to join must be **consistent and aligned with the CPMR's strategic priorities**. The proposal to join a project comes mainly from a Geographical Commission or a member, in a bottom-up process. It may also come directly from the European Commission approaching the CPMR to become a candidate for a more political and important thematic programme for the whole membership.

All **proposals** deemed of **potential interest** need in any case to go through either an **internal check at GC level** (each GC needs to set its own process) and a **complete quality (impact/added values) and financial assessment** at the level of the CPMR General Secretariat (needed only for the projects that have an impact on CPMR finances). This quality and financial assessment will involve the newly created **CPMR directorate for EU programmes, partnerships and GC coordination** that counts on experienced staff that will help to **assess**, in collaboration with the promoters (e.g. member regions) and Geographical Commission(s) concerned (and the directorate for policy and think tank, when needed), the **feasibility and potential role** for the organisation in a given project (see section 2). It will afterwards propose the specific case for **the final decision of the Secretary General**, who formally gives the **authorisation to proceed** on behalf of the CPMR and its Bureau, ensuring that

⁴ The "CPMR gross project contribution" to the budget is a calculation of the costs covered by the project revenues (staff costs + indirect operating costs + project preparation costs) from which the CPMR co-financing of the project is deducted.

the organisation matches up to the proposed responsibilities and can manage the risks associated with the proposal.

This new directorate is already consolidating and drafting **new internal tools** (e.g. Time Resource Management), **guidelines and procedures** (for project presentation and implementation, communication, etc.) to better manage member expectations, **forecast** (e.g. methodology of scenarios for projects under evaluation) and **increase performance**, while ensuring a **solid risk assessment**, including adequate staff involvement, when **submitting and implementing projects under the CPMR banner**. In this sense, within a **complete risk assessment**, it is paramount to evaluate the **overall feasibility** of involving the organisation in a project, by carefully considering, **after the relevance of the content and alignment with priorities**, also all **financial requirements** (e.g. co-funding rates, pre-funding, eligible costs).

Several coordination meetings are being set up to improve the internal organisation, governance and monitoring for ongoing projects as well as training and brainstorming for new projects opportunities. A monthly **financial monitoring** has been put in place with the accounting department as well as specific reports and discussions with the Financial Committee and regular updates by the Treasurer twice a year, during the CPMR Political Bureau meetings. In the long run it will be **important for the CPMR and its GCs to be able to anticipate and coordinate 2-3 years ahead** their needs and potential participation in EU programmes, foreseeing global cycles linked to EU programming periods. At the same time, the organisation could explore **ways of improving its eligibility** for programmes through advocacy actions or arrangements that can benefit more GCs. The CPMR should also **further exploit the role of its GCs and members in the EU programmes so as to contribute and influence their evolution** by maximising the synergies and opportunities for exchange on priorities in events and workshops or ad hoc meetings.

Finally, the CPMR should keep **strengthening its participation in projects** based on the trends of the last 2 years, but also try to go towards a **more balanced involvement of GCs** in EU projects and **focus**, where possible, on **activities that can contribute to policy relevant actions** and create new expertise.



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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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