



**CPMR
CRPM**

Political Statement

May 2017

CPMR and the Future of Europe

Future of Europe at stake

While Europe celebrates the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome, it once again finds itself in a period of uncertainty and unrest. That Europe faces a myriad of ongoing and emerging challenges is clear. However, the strong co-operation that has been built between Europe's peoples and nations over the past 60 years, and that has been the foundation of its lasting peace and prosperity, gives us confidence and hope that the European project and the values it represents will overcome these current difficulties, and act as a positive force in people's lives for many more years to come.

Robust defence of European values

We have seen in recent years how the social and economic challenges across Europe have fuelled fear and uncertainty in people over their future, including younger generations. This has led to a deeply concerning growing disillusionment with democratic processes in general, a rise in populism and xenophobia, and Eurosceptic forces. The events of 2016 – the Brexit vote and the election of an anti-EU President Trump in the US – have added further pressure showing the potential vulnerability and fragility of the EU if we do not unite to defend it.

The EU Institutions and Member States have a responsibility to make a more robust and positive case for Europe: why co-operation across national boundaries matters, and the fundamental values that the EU stands for. We as regions have a central role to play in conveying these messages to citizens, acting as the bridge between the EU and ordinary people.

CPMR regions at the heart of the agenda

We represent a population of over 200 million people from more than 160 regions across Europe, and we are the first to feel the impact of many of the social, economic and political changes and challenges facing Europe at its borders. Hence, the voice of our territories needs to be taken into consideration in any discussion on the future of Europe.

European Solidarity

Our member Regions are strong believers in the European project, and would ideally favour a model in which the whole of the EU walked at the same pace. However, differentiated levels of integration in Europe are already a reality, the Eurozone and the Schengen Area being two examples of this. Furthermore, we recognise that Member States do not all share at present the same level of ambition for European integration.

Whichever scenario is finally chosen, it must not set us on the path to a fragmented Europe. Solidarity must remain one of the fundamental principles at the heart of the EU project, underpinned by a strong commitment to territorial and social cohesion and balanced economic development and the appropriate policies to support this.

Cooperation and partnership

Co-operation and partnership are at the core of what the European Union stands for, bringing people together, helping to cross political and cultural boundaries, as well as facilitating economic exchange. Regions play a central role in driving such co-operation through animating links between partners from all sectors and levels. The future European Union must continue to place a high priority on supporting and facilitating co-operation activities between regions, with a much greater focus on actions that address the challenges and concerns of European citizens.

Strengthened Territorial Cohesion

The growing disparities and imbalances across Europe mean that economic, social and territorial cohesion must be a fundamental pillar underpinning the future vision of the European Union. We must demonstrate that Europe can provide relevant and sustainable solutions to the everyday problems facing communities, citizens and enterprises. To deliver this priority we call for:

- A reinforced and reinvigorated Cohesion Policy covering all Regions of the Union and addressing the growing social, economic, environmental and territorial disparities in Europe, and to counter balance the negative impacts from the functioning of the Single Market;
- Prioritisation of key investments in competitiveness, innovation, research, education and training, sustainable energy production, blue growth and the maritime economy, accessibility (including digital infrastructure), and developing sustainable solutions to new and emerging challenges;
- Emphasis on long term investment, in both physical and soft infrastructures, as well as human capital, to foster long term convergence and cohesion and sustainable development;
- A strong focus on territorial co-operation at regional level within the EU and with current and future neighbouring countries;
- Strengthened multi-level governance in order to involve regional and local governments, the private sector, academia and citizens.