



## ***CPMR: NOT JUST AN INTEREST GROUP, BUT A THINK TANK FOR EUROPE***

### **WHO WE ARE**

The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions ([www.cpmr.org](http://www.cpmr.org)) brings together some 160 Regions from 24 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** for Regions.

Through its extensive network of contacts within the EU institutions and national governments the CPMR has, since its creation in **1973**, been targeting its action towards ensuring that the needs and interests of its member Regions are taken into account in respect of policies with a high territorial impact.

It focuses mainly on social, economic and territorial cohesion, maritime policies and blue growth, and accessibility. European governance, energy and climate change, neighbourhood and development also represent important areas of activity for the association.

### **HOW DO WE OPERATE?**

The **Political Bureau** is the main decision maker of the CPMR. Meeting twice a year, it proposes policy guidelines for the General Assembly and implements decisions. Only politicians are allowed to sit on the bureau and are granted voting rights. The member Regions from each country nominate a representative and a substitute member to the Political Bureau.

All of the CPMR member Regions meet once a year in a **General Assembly** that adopts policy guidelines and the budget. The assembly is chaired by the CPMR **President**.

The CPMR is a unique organisation, being sub-divided into six **Geographical Commissions**, corresponding to Europe's maritime basins, including the Baltic Sea, the North Sea, the Atlantic Arc, the Mediterranean, the Balkans and Black Sea and the Islands.

### **WHAT MAKES US DISTINCTIVE?**

The CPMR has a long-standing experience on regional development priorities that it has been pursuing since its inception. Its "raison d'être" is focused on promoting the increased role of the Regions in terms of European governance, and it had an important role in the creation of the Committee of the Regions introduced by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992.

Furthermore, for many years the CPMR has been very active in resisting the pressures of certain Member States to reduce the EU budget and its part devoted to Regional Policy.

Being the only association with a territorial work basis, the CPMR largely contributed to creating the European maritime policy and including the Motorways of the Sea in the TEN-T.

Today it is a regular partner of the European institutions, in particular the Commission and Parliament, but also the Council formations such as the Informal EU Council on Cohesion and the Informal Council of Maritime Affairs where it has been involved as an observer for many years already.

## WHAT DO WE WORK ON?

### STRIVING FOR ENHANCED TERRITORIAL COHESION

EU **Cohesion** Policy is at the core of the CPMR's activities. Since the early 2000's, the CPMR has been supporting the idea of "Territorial Cohesion" and has been calling for a Regional Policy for all European Regions. Thanks to its action, territorial cohesion is now part of the Lisbon Treaty, and particular attention is given to territories suffering "*from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps such as the northernmost regions with very low population density and island, cross-border and mountain regions*".

The CPMR successfully contributed to maintaining the architecture of Cohesion Policy over the years with an additional category of **Transition Regions**. The mobilisation of CPMR members and the CPMR General Secretariat helped secure a substantial financial envelope for Cohesion Policy (325 billion euros) thus granting European Regions with the necessary means to stimulate and deliver growth and employment as part of the Europe 2020 strategy and beyond.

In this framework, the CPMR is the first association to launch a broad reflection process on a **methodology for allocating structural funds** after 2020, in order to better address social, economic and territorial development.

In terms of links made between Cohesion Policy and the Stability and Growth Pact, CPMR Regions have clearly stated that Cohesion Policy is a territorial investment policy and not a conditionality instrument at the disposal of the Stability and Growth Pact and EU economic governance. Therefore, the CPMR calls for investments co-financed by the European structural and investment funds to be excluded from the **Stability and Growth Pact**.

The **investment plan** proposed by President Juncker will have consequences for the real economy CPMR Regions are striving to achieve. The Association is in full preparation for this or any other type of initiative at EU level that could help Regions deliver growth and jobs in a sustainable way.

Despite the drastic reduction in the budget line for European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), the CPMR calls on the European Commission to exercise greater flexibility in the use of EU funds, advocates more pre-financing for **macro-regional** strategic projects and asks that the European Commission allocate a part of the technical assistance budget of the Structural Funds to go towards the implementation of the emerging Macro-Regional Strategies and Sea Basin Strategies.

## ENHANCING THE EUROPEAN MARITIME DIMENSION

The CPMR is by definition THE organisation keen and dedicated to protecting the interests of coastal Regions.

The CPMR contributed to the creation of the Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP) established by the European Commission in 2007. Since then, the CPMR has been supporting efforts to strengthen the governance of the IMP and the “**blue growth**” approach. This led the CPMR to support the establishment of specific instruments for the IMP and to defend the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), which for the first time encompasses a specific budget for the IMP. The CPMR is also actively promoting the development of sea-basin strategies, particularly in the North Sea, the Atlantic Arc and the Mediterranean. The CPMR provides support to the European Parliament Intergroup on Seas, Rivers, Islands and Coastal Areas (Searica), renewed in 2014.

In parallel the CPMR facilitates investments in the maritime field. A specific platform on EU investments in support of the maritime economy at regional level has been launched in cooperation with the European Commission in order to develop analysis and networking activities with Regions and stakeholders.

The CPMR is asking for coastal and maritime spaces to remain environmentally healthy and open to human activities, managed on the basis of reliable data on the state of marine waters. Such orientation is guiding its work concerning the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and EU positions in relevant negotiations at international level. The CPMR is now a member of the EU coordination group on the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

**Integrated Coastal Management (ICM)** is a key issue for the CPMR, which considers that the implementation of the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive should involve Regions. The CPMR is a member of the EC expert group on Integrated Coastal Management and is involved in work in the area of prevention of coastal erosion and risks.

In the area of education and training, the CPMR launched a Maritime Erasmus type scheme called **Vasco da Gama**, consisting of a pilot project for maritime professions. The objective of Vasco da Gama is to develop high-level professional skills within the EU. In particular, it aims to improve the skills of persons employed in the European shipping industry with a view to addressing specific challenges, such as maritime safety and reducing environmental damage, and to lay the foundations for mobility within Europe, involving education and training institutions. Vasco de Gama geographical projects are under development within the CPMR sea basins.

The CPMR also calls for a unified **European maritime industrial strategy**. The strategy should bring together EU initiatives concerning climate change and energy transition, wind and ocean marine energies, and the differentiation and diversification of shipyards.

Concerning **Maritime Safety**, the CPMR contributed to the launch of the ERIKA III package and since then, it has been urging for an ERIKA IV package that could include initiatives on issues such as container ships and compensation for ecological damage. In parallel to its work at European level, the CPMR raises these issues at international level, through its observer status on the International Oil Pollution Compensation (IOPC) Funds.

As regards **Fisheries**, the CPMR is giving special consideration to the social and economic impact of the new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). The human dimension must be at the core of the CFP when implemented, which must continue to provide support for fishermen throughout their career. The CPMR has also been calling for a balance between the economic and environmental dimensions of the CFP when applying the new measures, such as the obligation to land all catches.

#### ENSURING ACCESSIBILITY AND CONNECTIVITY IN PERIPHERIES

The CPMR is the only regional organisation in Europe that aims to reduce the distance between the economic and political centre of our continent and its peripheries, thus enhancing accessibility for those Regions that have geographical handicaps hindering their potential. In 2015 an **accessibility campaign** has been launched in order to underline the unquestionable relationship between accessibility and the economic development of Regions and the fact that accessibility is insufficiently taken into account in the TEN-T and CEF maps.

During the negotiations for the 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework, the lobbying work of the CPMR focused on the **Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T)** and the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). Thanks to the CPMR's efforts, more peripheral ports have been integrated into the TEN-T core network, several Regions have been involved in the governance of the TEN-T priority corridors, and a seat has been granted to the Regions – through the CPMR – in the newly established European Sustainable Shipping Forum.

In addition, the CPMR has contributed to the inclusion of the **Motorways of the Sea** in the TEN-T framework and today, in contact with their coordinator, is ensuring their balanced implementation and their extension to outermost and island Regions.

Maritime transport in Europe is affected by a series of legislative texts aiming to reduce its impact on the environment, such as the **Directive on the reduction of sulphur content of marine fuel** which consists in transposing IMO requirements into European law. Although Member States negotiated this IMO decision, they were for the most part not ready to anticipate its practical and financial consequences; neither had they prepared the stakeholders concerned, essentially ship-owners and port authorities. The CPMR plays a key role in developing awareness on the Sulphur challenge among regional authorities. In addition, it is lobbying – through the European Sustainable Shipping Forum – for the European Commission to publish a comprehensive vademecum of the various forms of support which can be made available to ship-owners and public authorities to cope with the necessary investments required by the new provisions, such as LNG refuelling stations and the adaptation of ships.

Furthermore, the CPMR is undertaking a policy watch on EU instruments dealing with maritime transport. In particular, in the absence of the Marco Polo programme which ended in 2013, the CPMR is advising DG Move on how the new TEN-T regulation (Article 32) can be shaped in order to support maritime transport even in remote areas with relatively low traffic flows.

## **SIX GEOGRAPHICAL COMMISSIONS TO PROMOTE COOPERATION AND DEFEND THE REGIONS' INTERESTS**

The Atlantic Arc, the Baltic Sea, the North Sea, the Inter-Mediterranean, the Balkan and Black Sea and the Islands are the six Geographical Commissions of the CPMR. With the exception of the Islands, they all correspond to Europe's main sea basins. Therefore, the CPMR's internal structure is a precursor of the EU macro-regional strategies.

Each Geographical Commission has its own organisational structure, so that it can promote its specific identity and cooperate on subjects of common interest, while contributing to the cohesion and unity of the Conference.

The Geographical Commissions – like the macro-regional strategies – are population catchment areas focusing on major common challenges and characteristics requiring collective trans-regional action. These cooperation areas extend across national borders and have the aim of joining forces, creating synergies and reducing overlaps within the same area. They all actively contribute to the reflections of the CPMR and to the preparation of its core policy positions.

The **Islands Commission** was set up in 1979 to defend the notion that being an island should not be synonymous with isolation. Representing Island Regional Authorities, it urges the European Institutions to acknowledge those permanent handicaps that result from insularity, and to unfailingly consider the islands' conditions in policy development.

The **Atlantic Arc Commission** was set up in 1989, when the geopolitical interests of the EU were looking more towards the East than the West. Its priorities are linked to Accessibility, Transport, Marine Renewable Energies, Fisheries, Tourism, Culture and Innovation. More recently, the Atlantic Arc Commission campaigned in favour of its own strategy at the EU level. Since the adoption of this Strategy in 2011, this Commission has been participating in the monitoring of the strategy, as well as in the drafting of its Action Plan. In order to help stakeholders implement the Action Plan, the Atlantic Arc Commission called for a Preparatory Action that was voted and granted by the European Parliament.

The **North Sea Commission** was set up in 1989 and since then it has been active facilitating regional cooperation on topics such as management of the maritime space, accessibility and clean transport, energy and climate change issues as well as fostering attractive and sustainable communities. Cross-cutting issues are addressed by promoting innovation, excellence and sustainability. Lobbying work for a North Sea grid is one of its flagship projects, and work is otherwise guided by the North Sea 2020 strategy and action plan. An ongoing preparatory Action, called for by the North Sea Commission and granted by the European Parliament in 2013, has created the possibility to examine the added value of increased regional cooperation in more depth.

The **Inter-Mediterranean Commission** was also set up in 1989 and focuses on the development of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue and Territorial Cooperation, concentrating its efforts on Transport and Integrated Maritime Policy, Economic and Social Cohesion, Water and Energy. Today, it is calling for a macro-regional strategy for the Mediterranean and

fostering the emergence of Mediterranean citizenship - also on migration policies - mobilising partners from the south of the basin too.

The **Baltic Sea Commission** was created in 1996, more than ten years before the creation of the Baltic Sea Macro-regional Strategy in 2008. Today, it is an important forum for constructive debate and the sharing of best practice on common issues and concerns across this area. Maritime, Energy, Transport and Multilevel Governance are the main topics of discussion among its members.

The **Black Sea and Balkans Commissions** were created in 2002 and 2003 respectively. They merged in 2004 in order to develop joint projects. Today, the objective of the **Balkan and Black Sea Commission** is to encourage dialogue and cooperation with a view to stepping up the relations between EU and non EU Regions in the wider Black Sea region. The BBSC acts as a bridge between programmes and strategies implemented by the EU and activities developed by other networks and institutions in the region, like the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). The BBSC is project-oriented, encouraging and helping the member regions to implement transnational cooperation projects, with the support of dedicated and focused working groups, and – when relevant – of EU funding. The BBSC is a significant arena for actions conducive of exchanges of good practices. The exchange of views and good practices provide members with fruitful outcomes thanks to the various political and technical meetings, set up within the organisation, which can largely enrich member's regional strategies.

An **Adriatic-Ionian** Task Force was launched in 2012 following the request of Member States to design a macro-regional strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Area (EUSAIR). This task force is composed of members from the Inter-Mediterranean and Balkan-Black Sea Commissions. It aims at helping the European Commission and the eight concerned Member States to take into account the priorities of regional authorities in its four pillars: maritime issues, transport, environment and tourism. The task force allows regional authorities from non-EU Members to prepare their future accession.

#### **TO SUM UP, THE CPMR HAS TO OFFER:**

- Experience: Long-standing (more than 40 years) and consistent presence with highly professional and articulated positions on key policy concerns of its members
- Lobbying: Think tank and lobbying organisation standing by the principles of multilevel governance and regional democracy; the CPMR is the Interlocutor of the EU Institutions through EP Intergroups, and EC expert groups on the fundamental policy issues for its membership
- Networking: High-level events and bilateral meetings with Commissioners, Ministers and other regional Presidents