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## CPMR POLICY POSITION

### OPINION OF THE CPMR GENERAL SECRETARIAT

*(Approved by the CPMR Political Bureau – 15/16 February 2010, Gijón-Asturias, ES)*

## CONTRIBUTION TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE “EU 2020” STRATEGY

1. As Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe, we welcome favourably this consultation paper. It is indeed the first forward-looking, long-term oriented paper from the European Commission fully taking account of both the economic and social impacts of the crisis on the EU and the urgent need to shift our development model towards a more shared, sustainable, and greener one, which proposes common ways to succeed. To this extent it is a good start, but for EU 2020 to be fit for its stated purpose of equipping the EU with the right framework for a robust development model in the context of globalisation, far more thought needs to be given to a number of key issues which are highlighted in our comments to follow. Whilst we appreciate the constraints weighing on the institutional and political agenda of the EU, we nevertheless think that a consultation paper with such far-reaching consequences and of such strategic importance for the future development of the EU and which addresses all European stakeholders deserves to have a longer consultation period.

2. We do believe that the definition of credible exit strategies from the current economic and social crisis can only be based on a clear analysis of the model which has led us to the current crisis and, more importantly, a clear vision of where Europe wants to be once this crisis is over. In this respect,

- We fully support the EU 2020 vision of a more inclusive, more sustainable, greener, and strong knowledge-based society – rather than economy only – able to ensure social and territorial cohesion. This is in fact what we, sub-national authorities, have been pursuing over the past few years, integrating the main objectives of the Lisbon and Gothenburg agendas in our regional development strategies. We welcome the potential of EU 2020 to bring new momentum to this process;
- We are in favour that EU2020 be the single, overarching strategy embodying EU core priorities and integrating the set of existing thematic strategies.

3. We do agree with the three key priorities proposed by the paper: i) creating value by basing growth on knowledge; ii) empowering people in inclusive societies and iii) creating a competitive, connected and greener economy. With regards to the climate change and environmental challenges, we nevertheless believe that:

- They deserve a very clear and explicit reference, including to mitigation and adaptation strands, which is actually lacking in the consultation document;
- The pragmatic focus put on their economic dimension must not make one forget their basic non-economic, heritage dimension. This should also be clearly mentioned.

4. With respect to these key priorities, we also wish to draw your attention to the following facts:

- All of them are already being implemented on the ground by regional and local governments;
- The effort that sub-national authorities have mobilised and will continue to ensure is largely due to the alignment of the main investment policy at EU level with the Lisbon and Gothenburg agendas from 2007 onwards. EU regional policy has indeed been instrumental in shifting the attention of sub-

national levels towards key EU priorities in the area of sustainable development, inclusion, and innovation. Already a significant proportion of cohesion policy is allocated to those priorities. The leverage effect cannot be underestimated since the sub-national level authorities are responsible for around 70% of public investment in Europe.

5. While there is broad agreement on the priorities to be pursued, the same cannot be said for their delivery. The consultation paper remains rather vague and sometimes sends unclear signals on the subject:

- The way key priorities are detailed points to a possible sectoralisation of EU intervention, which we believe would be particularly unwise since, from an economic point of view, it is increasingly recognised that public action is more effective when it integrates rather than separates investment decisions. While the paper rightly states that horizontal coordination will be more important than ever in finding successful exits from the crisis, sectoralisation would, on the contrary, make coordination of policies more difficult, increase risks of conflicting results and could hamper the exploitation of synergies between policies;
- We therefore call for a delivery method based on the territorial approach. As a matter of fact, territories are places where people and businesses, which are at the heart of the strategy, live, organise, and eventually create genuine, complex and rather homogeneous systems with their own specificities. Addressing the key priorities jointly through these territories is the only efficient method if we are to give a tailored and integrated policy response to the challenges the EU faces. *"Europe needs a thriving agriculture, rural economy and maritime sector"* says the document. We fully agree with this, but are convinced that this can only be achieved if these activities are closely connected to the corresponding territories. In this context, EU cohesion policy has proved to be an advanced and efficient policy instrument. A regionalised agricultural policy would also contribute to this objective;
- Although the consultation document makes reference to the principle of territorial cohesion introduced by the new Lisbon Treaty, we do not feel that the text gives any guarantee on its actual implementation. We therefore draw attention to the fact that any action from the EU aimed at implementing the EU2020 strategy will have to take account of this principle and of territorial specificities as defined by Art.174 of the Treaty.

6. The territorial approach of EU 2020 must go hand in hand with a compatible governance system automatically associating sub-national authorities in the design and implementation process of the strategy. In this respect, we take note of the fact that the consultation document explicitly considers sub-national authorities as partners in implementing it, and that the European Council of 10 and 11 December calls for further reflection to enhance ownership of the EU 2020 strategy through more active involvement of regional and local authorities. We remain nonetheless very cautious and expect the Commission to give substance to this principle so that it does not remain wishful thinking. It must not be forgotten that, from a political point of view, the Lisbon and Gothenburg agendas have been heavily criticized for the little involvement of sub-national actors in their design and implementation. In fact, it can be reasonably argued that part of the limited effect of those agendas is due to the absence of ownership on the ground. Vertical coordination embodied in a real and effective multi-level governance system is thus absolutely indispensable to ensure the success of the new EU 2020 strategy. It is only through such coordination that sub-national authorities will "buy-in" to the strategy, adapt it to their own contexts, and support it throughout its implementation.

7. We therefore urge the Commission to back-up the EU 2020 strategy with a delivery method based on territories and a credible, inclusive governance system, which allows everybody in the EU to benefit from and contribute to it. To this end, we encourage the Commission to build on the genuine "European Territorial Pact" that the CPMR has developed<sup>1</sup>, and which proposes:

- The signature of a political agreement on EU 2020 vision, objectives and priorities between the European Commission and all EU regional authorities, committing the latter to implement them in their field of competences;
- Contractualisation involving regional authorities in the framework of cohesion policy (either bilateral or trilateral with Member States according to the national institutional arrangements);
- The introduction of a territorial dimension in the Open Method of Coordination.

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<sup>1</sup> Initially called for in the manifesto "Emerging stronger from the crisis: a European Territorial Pact", the "European Territorial Pact" has been developed in the document "[Territories at the heart of EU medium-term policies](#)" in October 2009.