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**Baltic Sea Commission
General Assembly
Naantali – 27th May 2005
Presentation of current CPMR activities**

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Financial Perspectives – Cohesion

On 19th May, the Luxemburg Presidency has issued a new version of the negotiation document, which is very disappointing:

- Commitment appropriations : 1,06 to 1,09 % of the GNI; the Commission's proposal – supported by CPMR – was 1,24 %
- Cohesion policy : 0,37 to 0,38 %; the Commission proposed 0,41%
- Repartition of the cohesion budget : 82% Objective 1, 15% Objective 2, 3% Objective 3; the Commission proposed : 78/17/4

If approved, such proposals would severely reduce the budgets allocated to Objectives 2 (competitiveness and employment) and 3 (territorial cooperation), to which the Baltic Regions are attached.

Furthermore, the proposed budget reductions are still more drastic under the heading financing Research and Trans European Networks: + 8-11 %, instead of +194% proposed by the Commission.

These proposals are really challenging the credibility of the “Lisbon message”.

There is a clear need to mobilize the Regions' efforts on this issue, before the Heads of Governments summit, end of June. So far, 26 Regions have signed the memorandum defending Objective 2: additional commitments are welcomed.

Regional State Aids

Following the successful CoR/CPMR seminar 18th April in Asturias, a fruitful informal discussion is going on between CPMR and DG Competition. This DG seems to be more open to an extension of eligibility to “Objective 2” territories.

A new political statement will be proposed to the vote of the CPMR Political Bureau, 24th June in Tulcea. It will include a demand for more territorial differentiation of horizontal aids, especially for innovation.

DG Competition should issue a revised version of the proposed guidelines end of June, with a view of having them adopted by the Commission in September.

Territorial Cooperation

The draft Cohesion Community Strategic Guidelines 2007-2013 have just been published by the Commission. After a first quick look at them, they seem to be very satisfying from the CPMR point of view.

This document includes first thoughts on the implementation areas of transnational cooperation for the next period: the Baltic area is noted as one of the 4 spaces “with a strong maritime vocation”, to be retained in the implementation of forthcoming Objective 3.

New Neighbourhood Policy

The Commission aims at an approval of the European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument regulation by 3rd quarter 2005.

With its Cross Border Cooperation working group, the Baltic Sea Commission is aware of the discussions at the European Commission’s level (DG Relex and Regio): eligible crossborder areas, “Sea basin” cooperation...

The ambition of this renewed policy will also depend on the final discussions on EU budget perspectives. 2 different budget headlines are concerned: ERDF budget dedicated to territorial cooperation, and external relations budget. This financial uncertainty should not prevent from thinking of what a Baltic Sea Neighbourhood Programme could be, with major inputs from the Regions, and complementary to the Baltic Sea Objective 3 transnational programme.

Europe of the Sea

The interregional cooperation project is progressing following the adopted time-schedule.

Fruitful contacts have been established with the Head of the Maritime Task-Force in the European Commission.

2 “maritime” meetings of the CPMR Scientific Council have been held on the following issues: transport, research (11th of October Lisbon), governance, sustainable development, energy (4th of April Coimbra).

This “mix” of scientific approach, gathering of expertises, and bottom up from the Regions, should enable CPMR to hold a key role in feeding the EU Green Paper, expected 1st half 2006.

Following the conclusions of the last CPMR Political Bureau meeting, there still is the need to involve the European Parliament in the process: next step to start.

Transports

The Midi-Pyrenees Region wishes to launch a new period of CPMR mobilization on transports issues. A working group composed from members of the different maritime basins and geographical Commissions will meet in Brussels in September (probably 20th), and discuss within two priorities: maritime transport, and air transport.

Rural Development

On 6th of April in Brussels, a meeting of information and discussion with UE institutions has been organised, in order to debate on the future of EU rural development policy. Apart from useful information on the current negotiations, it has been an opportunity for the Regions to deliver again the messages from the Florence seminar (30/4/2004): role of the Regions in the decision making process, and in the implementation, coherence at regional scale between the second pillar and the CAP and the implementation of ERDF programmes.

This meeting has enabled the CPMR to keep a good level of partnership with DG Agriculture, always wishing to keep a close contact with Regions on issues where the voice of States is (too?) pre-eminent.

Energy

The CPMR working group on energy, chaired by Navarra, met for the first time on 5th of April in Brussels.

Its action will be organised on the basis of two main themes :

- Exchanges of experience and best practice between members on following aspects: how can a Region get the most economic and financial benefit from the development of renewables in its

territory? How to develop market-oriented innovations? How can the development of renewables be taken on board alongside other requirements (economic, social, and environmental)? How can we influence the demand for energy?

- Political lobbying: Are EU legislation and policies adapted to help develop the potential of the peripheral maritime regions with regard to renewables? How can/should these regions contribute towards the EU's energy objectives?

A preliminary survey on the issue of governance will be undertaken during 2005, and a general conference held in Navarra at the end of 2006.

Research and Development

The Valencia seminar (11th of March 2005) on the Regional Dimension of the European Research Area has met the expectations. A fruitful dialogue is firmly established with Commissioner Mitsos and DG Research. The regional dimension is quite well taken into account in the 6th of April Commission's proposal drafting the 7th Framework Programme for 2007-2013.

CPMR General Secretariat will produce a new technical note in order to propose improvements of this text in two directions: governance and accessibility to Regions of the community tools, and maritime dimension. On this second aspect, the Europe of the Sea project will provide useful elements of argumentation.