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## CPMR POLICY POSITION

### OPINION OF THE CPMR

*(Approved by the CPMR General Assembly – 30 September & 1 October 2010, Aberdeen, UK)*

# PUTTING THE REGIONS AND THE TERRITORIAL DIMENSION AT THE HEART OF SYNERGIES BETWEEN REGIONAL POLICY AND THE RTD AND CIP FRAMEWORK PROGRAMMES

This paper is a draft CPMR policy position on the synergies between the regions, EU regional policy and the RTD and CIP framework programmes.<sup>1</sup> It has been drawn up on the basis of work done by the Working Group led by Midi-Pyrénées Region (France), which also produced an initial technical paper that was presented to the CPMR Political Bureau in February 2010. Other elements, in particular drawn from the work accomplished in 2008 in the CPMR TN-RIS Group led by Stockholm Region (Sweden), have also been incorporated into this paper.

In recent years, the issue of synergies between EU regional policy and European R&D support policies<sup>2</sup> has been dealt with by various reports and initiatives at European level.<sup>3</sup> It has now been back on the European agenda for several months, for example due to a European Parliament report<sup>4</sup> and the WIRE<sup>5</sup> conference organised during the Spanish Presidency, in which CPMR took part.<sup>6</sup> The issue constitutes one of the areas of development on which the European Commission is focusing as it prepares post-2013 European policies.

Thus the principles highlighted with regard to synergies ought also to be advocated by the CPMR in the debates on the Innovation Union flagship initiative presented within EU 2020 strategy. They also constitute

<sup>1</sup> RTD Framework Programmes (FP7 etc.) or Framework Programmes for Research and Technological Development Programme ; CIP - Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme

<sup>2</sup> This technical paper refers to the RTD Framework Programmes, the CIP and the EIB (European Investment Bank - For the moment, the EIB's instruments in the R&D field are still only of marginal interest for the regions). To a lesser degree, it also occasionally refers to European funding for research in relation to sectoral policies.

<sup>3</sup> See for instance :

- ERAC "Opinion on recommendations and possible options to achieve more synergies between the Knowledge Triangle and Cohesion policies at various governance levels", July 2010

- "Synergies between the EU 7th Research Framework Programme, the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme and the Structural Fund";

- Final report of the European Research Advisory Board on "Energising Europe's Knowledge Triangle of Research, Education and Innovation through the Structural Funds", April 2007 ;

- CREST Guidelines "Coordinating the Research Framework Programme and the Structural Funds to support Research and Development", May 2007

- European Commission, "Practical Guide to EU funding opportunities for Research and Innovation", SEC (2007) 1045, 16/08/2007.

- "Moving towards a Territorialisation of European R&D and Innovation Policies" (2009), Study commissioned by the European Parliament

<sup>4</sup> "Report on the implementation of the synergies of research and innovation earmarked funds in Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 concerning the European Fund of Regional Development and the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Development in cities and regions as well as in the Member States and the Union", Committee on Regional Development, Rapporteur: Lambert van Nistelrooij

<sup>5</sup> Week of Innovative Regions in Europe - 15-17 March 2010 <http://wire.fecyt.es/publico/Inicio/index.aspx?idioma=en>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.crpm.org/pub/docs/149\\_100317\\_cpmr\\_wire\\_conference.pdf](http://www.crpm.org/pub/docs/149_100317_cpmr_wire_conference.pdf)

an initial overall approach on which CPMR can draw when tackling the preparation of the future RDT and CIP framework programmes, in addition to its work on the marine and maritime dimension.

CPMR supports the strategic objectives of EU 2020<sup>7</sup> and thus the decision to develop an economy that is heavily based on knowledge and innovation. It also attaches utmost importance to the following two principles, underpinning the proposals set out in this paper. CPMR also believes that EU regional policy ought to be one of the key instruments from these points of view.

- **Firstly, there should be an inclusive, dynamic territorial approach to innovation, research and competitiveness**

The economic crisis is still having a huge impact on the most fragile territories, so CPMR is urging the European institutions and the member states to reaffirm the principle of support for the growth potential of all European territories, at both economic and political level.

All European regions have innovation potential linked to their specific contexts. Thus peripheral, rural and maritime areas should be considered as offering a great source of potential for European sustainable growth and development. To realise this potential, active policies are necessary and possible in order to produce innovations on the one hand, and to facilitate the use of innovations that are produced elsewhere but correspond to territories' socio-economic needs on the other hand. Through their innovation policies, several regions are taking concerted action to stimulate the development of the parts of their territories located outside the main urban centres. European strategy must foster a spatial dynamic between the centre and the peripheries, rather than encourage the extreme concentration of investment in a limited number of areas, which are already the most competitive ones anyway, at the expense of others.<sup>8</sup>

- **Secondly, the partnership between the regions and European innovation and research support policies should be strengthened**

The regions are acknowledged stakeholders in the field of innovation and research. Their involvement, as full partners in European policies, is essential at political and economic level in order to reduce the wide dispersal of policies in Europe.

## **I - DEVELOPING SYNERGIES ON THE BASIS OF AN INCLUSIVE, DYNAMIC AND TERRITORIAL APPROACH TO INNOVATION, RESEARCH AND COMPETITIVENESS**

The proposals set out below firstly concern European indicators and concepts, and then deal with European policy instruments.

### **I.1- Developing European indicators and concepts**

#### **Promoting convergence between the cohesion and excellence concepts**

In recent months, European debates on synergies have reflected a desire to overcome the conflict between the concepts of cohesion and excellence by examining how they might incorporate one another. CPMR shares this view. It links this to its wish to see the European vision integrate the potential of territories that are not at present core clusters of competitiveness and to its efforts to ensure that the European level recognises the regions' capacity to promote excellence.

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<sup>7</sup> See the CPMR Draft Policy Position, Opinion of the CPMR General Secretariat (to be approved by the CPMR General Assembly on 30 September to 1 October 2010), "The Regions, responsible partners for an effective regional policy after 2013"

<sup>8</sup> On this point, the Barca Report stated that " *If, in the polarisation process, places not on the technological frontier but with a strong knowledge base were to fall behind, the opportunity would be wasted to apply new general purpose technologies in the activities in which they are specialised. (...) The persistent failure to adapt the new technologies to regions away from the frontier, by progressively eroding the comparative advantages of those regions, would increase the fears of the people living there about the effect of innovation and their opposition to it, (...) Such opposition, too, would have negative effects on overall growth.*"

## **Doing more to ensure that a wider view of innovation is taken within European indicators**

A broad consensus exists at European level concerning the fact that innovation should not only be perceived as a linear technological process that solely takes place in urban areas, but rather as a wider process focused on creativity. However, even though progress has been made, European indicators and mapping systems for innovation focus more readily on products technology innovation issues and less on other aspects. The result is a highly paradoxical and minimalist description of the real European situation in relation to the political purpose expressed.

With regard to the strategy pursued at European level, major efforts must thus be made to identify the potential of several territories, in particular rural areas and regions with permanent handicaps.

### **Analysing the territorial impact of European support for R&D**

For many years, regional authorities have been strongly urged to develop and improve regional innovation strategies taking into account the European context and policies. However, and very paradoxically, the development of precise, accessible and reliable statistics regarding the results of the RTD and CIP framework programmes in the regions is still very difficult, aside from general evaluations. While progress has been made, major issues related to the reliability and accessibility of data still need to be resolved. In parallel, the territorial impact of earmarking has not been analysed until now.

The development of precise territorial assessments would in fact be very useful, for all sectors or in certain key areas for CPMR regions, such as maritime aspects, energy or climate change.

CPMR, which is doing specific work on this subject,<sup>9</sup> urges the European Commission to facilitate the development, by the regions, of mapping exercises and assessments of the RTD and CIP framework programmes on their territories. It should also help them conduct an analysis of the territorial impact of earmarking at European level.

## **I.2 - Building an inclusive, dynamic and territorial approach into European policies**

### **a) Placing the regional and territorial dimension at the heart of European policies**

#### **Determining European policies coordinating “smart specialisation” at the regional level**

The European Commission is now urging the regions to develop “smart specialisation” strategies. This recommendation follows years of considerable efforts made by the regions **to consolidate their innovation strategies with regional policy support. Whatever concepts are used**, CPMR acknowledges the importance of strong European support to encourage these strategies. In this perspective, CPMR furthermore calls for changes in regional policy. There is a need for greater conditionality and additionality. It will then be up to the regions to make use of the powers at their disposal to make, with their partners, the appropriate choices in relation to their territories’ characteristics. These choices include the matter of whether or not to focus investment on a limited number of sectors or parts of the territory.

However, these efforts will only pay dividends if they are accompanied by an effort to take the regional dimension into consideration in policies that ought to work in concert with regional policy. In addition to the RTD and CIP framework programmes referred to below, this concerns:

- State aid regulations; CPMR has already stressed the need to adapt frameworks and, for example, the inadequacy of thresholds in the field of marine energy;
- Employment and training policies, which are essential for supporting creativity in the regions; maintaining the ESF within regional policy is an essential issue here;
- Other programmes contributing to innovation such as the European Strategic Energy Technology Plan (SET-plan) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD);
- The EIB’s financial instruments. The next generation of financial instruments should be more accessible and should bear in mind the poor take-up of the current Jeremy initiative.

The choice of these instruments should also be expanded in order to reflect much more effectively the wider vision of innovation and creativity advocated by the European Commission.

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<sup>9</sup> For several months CPMR has been working with regions with specific expertise on this issue. The work now continues under the aegis of the AMCER project, financed by ESPON and developed within the CPMR. AMCER is coordinated by Tuscany Region and involves eight other European maritime regions.

### **Ensuring a consistent impact at interregional and macro-regional level**

Innovation and research are currently covered by several Territorial Cooperation Objective programmes and the European macro-regional strategy for the Baltic Sea. Efforts are underway and should be further pursued to ensure that links between European policies and interregional areas are as consistent as possible. On this issue, CPMR recently drew up proposals on the future of territorial cooperation and macro-regions,<sup>10</sup> which are also relevant from the point of view of innovation and research. It called for:

- Better integration of territorial cooperation into the mainstream, in particular through the development of multi-regional operational programmes for cross-border cooperation;
- The development, when relevant in respect of the characteristics of the areas in question, of macro-regional strategies that should widely involve the regions. CPMR also suggests that a macro-regional operational programme should be developed within the framework of the implementation of macro-regional strategies;
- The continuation of a flexible interregional cooperation instrument with better funding.

### **Improving the socio-economic impact of the RTD Framework Programme and the European Research Area (ERA) at territorial level**

During the current programming period, regional policy has been heavily focused on the competitiveness objective. CPMR suggests that, with a view to promoting convergence of efforts to ensure cohesion, excellence and competitiveness, initiatives should also be taken in order to:

- Introduce a territorial dimension into the evaluation criteria on the socio-economic impact of projects and in the framework of European public/private initiatives in the European Research Area such as Technology Platforms, Joint Technology Initiatives, and the European Technology Institute's Knowledge and Innovation Communities;
- Strengthen the socio-economic impact of projects financed in the territories and the transferability of their results. On this issue, it would be desirable for the RTD and CIP framework programmes to adopt a more similar approach in this area and become as integrated as possible;
- Give a priority, in the evaluation criteria for projects funded, to a dynamic notion of excellence, which would take account of the initial level of development of the stakeholders and projects concerned. Priority should be given to promising stakeholders who represent the excellence of the future rather than those that are already very competitive, for whom European support is not always essential;
- Along the same lines, simplify access to programmes and considerably streamline bureaucracy by avoiding excessive concentration of the administrative controls and audits which take place at the expense of project content;
- Extend the principle applied to the Regions of Knowledge Programme, which finances projects involving stakeholders representing research organisations, companies and regional authorities in each of the regional territories represented in the consortium. In doing so, Regions of Knowledge projects have a territorial impact through the development of links between stakeholders, not just at European level, but also within the regions. This principle could for example be adopted in the framework of future European instruments for clusters.

### **b) Facilitating the combined use of programmes in order to promote territorial approaches**

The development of wider opportunities to combine use of regional policy with the RTD and CIP framework programmes is an important issue in the debate on synergies. Coordination between these policies may be brought about at a general level, due to their complementarity in financing certain aspects of regional innovation systems. Combined use of European instruments may then be developed within general or sectoral regional innovation strategies, or groups of stakeholders involved in regional clusters.

Another level is the creation of pathways between different programme. With this in mind, the European Commission is for example currently exploring the possibility using regional policy funds to finance RTD

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<sup>10</sup> Technical Paper from the CPMR General Secretariat - What Opportunities do Territorial Cooperation and the Macroregional Strategies represent for Cohesion Policy after 2013?

[http://www.cprm.org/pub/docs/282\\_ntp\\_cprm\\_politique\\_rgionale\\_bptroms\\_final\\_en.pdf](http://www.cprm.org/pub/docs/282_ntp_cprm_politique_rgionale_bptroms_final_en.pdf)

Framework Programme projects such as Research Potential projects and priority European research infrastructure supported by European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI). This entails coordination with programming authorities, which the European Commission is currently trying to bring about.

CPMR is naturally in favour of exploring these possibilities, on the condition that regional policy be used to fulfil its ultimate purpose as defined by the Treaty, which is to support cohesion. This means that projects supported should have a strong territorial dimension. It is also essential that the options examined should not be limited to ways of using regional policy to support projects or networks selected via the RTD Framework Programme or the European Research Area. There must also be pathways going in the other direction, for example to give quality projects developed in territorial cooperation programmes or regional cluster initiatives to have easier access to the RTD and CIP framework programmes. Fast-track initiatives could offer a source of inspiration, for example.

## **II - DEVELOPING SYNERGIES BASED ON A STRONGER PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE REGIONS AND EUROPEAN INNOVATION AND RESEARCH SUPPORT POLICIES**

The success of EU 2020 strategy and synergies between regional policy and the RTD and CIP framework programme also requires multilevel governance involving the regions very directly. The following proposals can thus be made.

### **II.1 - From the Territorial Pact to regional innovation strategies**

#### **The European Territorial Pact and a strong regional policy**

Since 2008, CPMR has been calling for the formal conclusion of a European Territorial Pact via the signature of a political agreement on EU 2020 strategy between the European Commission and all European regional authorities. Such an initiative would help avoid the error of the Lisbon strategy, which did not sufficiently involve the regions.

Also, regional policy ought to remain a key instrument for coordinating between the regions and European policy guidelines. Total “sectorialisation” of the European budget at the expense of regional policy would thus be a major error. On the other hand, CPMR is in favour of greater conditionality and additionality.

#### **Support the development of strategic expertise by the regions**

RTD Framework Programme initiatives that help the regions to develop strategic expertise must thus be directly useful in the development and follow-up of regional policy operational programmes. To achieve this, CPMR suggests that programmes such as the Regions of Knowledge, Research Potential and OMC-NET, or their successors should:

- Receive significant support from the RTD Framework Programme;
- Avoid focusing on a limited number of regions. Current evaluation of the Regions of Knowledge and Research Potential programmes will be instructive in this respect;
- Place the issue of the impact of operational programmes at the heart of their evaluation criteria and seek maximum consistency with recent initiatives undertaken under the Territorial Cooperation Objective, such as Regions for Economic Change;
- Systematically involve regional authorities. On this point, CPMR is concerned that a large number of Regions of Knowledge projects no longer directly involve regional authorities.

### **II.2 - Encouraging participation of the regions in the coordination of research programmes**

Coordination of research programmes is an important aspect of the European Research Area, to which the regions should have full access. The regions’ participation is essential in itself, if only to reduce the wide dispersal of research programmes in Europe. The regions’ involvement in ERA-NET schemes is better under FP7 than under FP6. However, co-funding opportunities under the mobility programmes (COFUND) have had little effect on the regions. Lastly, doubts exist about whether the regions can be involved in projects implemented under Joint Programming (Article 169).

In this context, CPMR suggests:

- Maintaining ERA-NET schemes and making them more ERA accessible. A simplification of ERA-NET+ will be essential, as several regions have found it too restrictive;

- Enabling the regions to develop similar initiatives to those offered to central governments in the framework of Joint Programming.

### **II.3 – Strengthening the participation of the regions in the governance of European innovation and research support policies**

#### ***a) – Better involvement in public/private initiatives aimed at structuring the European Research Area***

The regions are not very involved in the governance of public/private initiatives launched in the framework of the European Research Area, even though they have been asked to take account of them, and even partly finance them. Very few regions have for example succeeded in becoming directly involved in the governance of Joint Technological Initiatives and European Technology Platforms. Neither have the regions been directly involved in identifying ESFRI research infrastructure. There is currently an interest in forging links with the regions on the issue of ESFRI infrastructure. However, this must not be limited to efforts to secure better access to regional policy funds, but entail the effective involvement of the regions in projects, and real work on the territorial dimension of the impact of these projects.

On the other hand, and the Knowledge and Innovation Community launched by the European Technology Institute on the theme of climate change mitigation and adaptation directly involves six regions.<sup>11</sup> This example shows that the involvement of the regions as full partners is possible.

A major effort must thus be made in order to facilitate the involvement of the regions and other regional stakeholders in these initiatives. This also applies to the future European Innovation Partnerships which will be proposed under the EU 2020 Innovation Union initiative.

#### ***b) – A bigger presence in the governance of research support programmes***

In several regions, the targeting of a major part of regional policy on innovation and research has brought about a change in governance. Certain regions have for example transferred the management of the innovation part of the ERDF to their innovation and research departments, while others have introduced coordination mechanisms between these departments and those responsible for managing the ERDF.

In parallel to these significant changes observed on the ground, it would also be necessary to involve the regions in the governance of ERA bodies. With this in mind, CPMR suggests:

- Encouraging the regions' participation in the Competitiveness Council, within the limits of the each member state's specific institutional set-up, particularly those regions that have legislative powers;
- Strengthen the regions' participation in RTD Framework Programme, European Council research bodies, the Research Executive Agency and advisory bodies such as the European Research Area Board (ERAB).

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<sup>11</sup> These regions are: Central Hungary, Lower Silesia (Poland), Midlands (UK), Hessen (Germany), Emilia Romagna (Italy) and Valencia (Spain)