



CPMR BALTIC SEA COMMISSION POLICY POSITION

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

Baltic Sea Commission (BSC) is one of the six geographical commissions of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR). The BSC is an independent regional owned entity in the Baltic Sea Region representing 27 regions and a population of 14 million in nine countries.

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission is established to work for a sustainable society with the aim of promoting democracy, exchanges, co-operation and solidarity between the coastal zones and islands of the Baltic Sea including the Regions of the non-European Union Countries.

1 CPMR Baltic Sea Commission (BSC) welcome this consultation paper. The regional and local entities should be involved intensely in the further development of the EU-Strategy 2020. The approach will only be successful if it makes use of the potentials, resources and experiences of the regional level. Moreover it should be considered that in many EU member states the regional level took responsibilities for the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy and are prepared to be in charge of pursuing the objectives and indicators of the future strategy. There is a need for a concentrated collective EU strategy for sustainable growth. Such a strategy sends important signals within the EU and to the rest of the world.

2 BSC welcome that EU2020 will more emphatically than the Lisbon Strategy focus on the major, collective European challenges – competitiveness/attractiveness, energy/climate, demography/immigration and inclusiveness. We share the Commission’s recommendation to come to a stronger interrelation between the economic, social and environmental aspects of the strategy.

3 We concur with the three main priorities in the document – knowledge-based growth, social inclusion and green competitiveness. These priorities lie well in-line with our view on development and how we work with development issues in the Baltic Sea Region. The BSC likes to emphasise the importance of innovation policy at all levels as a survival strategy, not only for the EU internally, but also to be put in a global context.

BSC also agrees in having an ‘inclusive society’ and to focus on ‘green competitiveness’ – the discussions at the COP 15 summit in Copenhagen confirm that sustainable and eco-friendly development is needed and will be a competitive factor for all parts of the world, if we want a sustainable future.

The regions in Europe play an important role in all these areas, and it is vital that the regions are actively involved in developing a new strategy for Europe in these three areas.

4 BSC agrees that economic growth shall be in the knowledge-based sector. Much of the growth projects in Europe take place at local and regional levels through financing and decisions by local and regional authorities, which account for two-thirds of all public

financing. Experience shows that the Member States in the EU who to a higher degree integrate local and regional levels in their growth policies are also those who report the best results.

5 EU Cohesion Policy has become an important part of the European integration process and should be continued after 2013. Primary objective of the Cohesion Policy should remain the reduction of economic and social disparities in the EU by enforcing growth, employment and competitiveness. The principles of the Lisbon Strategy should play an important role in this context. The BSC therefore welcomes the European Council (10/11 december, 2009) conclusions which point out that - in context of the EU2020 issues- economic, social and territorial cohesion have to be ensured. For those regions losing the status of a convergence region appropriate transition mechanisms should be foreseen.

Management, monitoring and inspection of the programmes should be simplified and concentrate on those regulations that are necessary to achieve the relevant policy objectives. **Today, a stronger centralisation, a heavy control system and far too much bureaucracy, has made it more and more difficult for the regions to achieve the best results within the European framework, and this has to be taken into consideration when designing the regional policy after 2013.**

6 European Territorial Cooperation has a high European added value. It should remain an essential part of the Cohesion Policy and should be further strengthened in the future. The current global crises emphasise the importance of good governance at all levels and cooperation founded on trust and mutual dependence between different levels of governance. The subsidiarity principle is the basis for the distribution of responsibility between levels in multilateral governance, which is briefly mentioned on pages 9 and 11 in the document. BSC wants to underscore the importance of this.

The regions play an important part in transferring European initiatives into actual policy for people in all parts of Europe and cross-border initiatives between regions have proved to be an efficient way to exchange best practice and conduct knowledge transfer to the benefit of Europe. **Territorial EU programmes, in which regions actively participate in the task of setting priorities, are critical tools. It should remain an essential part of cohesion policy and should be further strengthened in the future.**

7 The regional policy and the structural funds play a very important role in balancing the development policy and territorial partnerships.

Therefore it is vital that the regions and institutional bodies like the Committee of the Regions and regional political players like the CPMR and AER and others are consulted, because they have the knowledge of how regional policy works at the decentralised level and where EU citizens live and work.

8 BSC strongly recommends to take the macroregional strategies into consideration when it comes to define and implement the EU 2020 Strategy. The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, being the first macroregional strategy at EU level, was adopted by the European Council on Oct. 29./30., 2009. It provides a cross-cutting development strategy based on the specific strengths and challenges in the region. It can be considered to be an example as to the involvement of the regional and local level as well as the civil society into the development of the strategy. **It should be safeguarded to keep both strategies compatible to each other and that the regions continue to play an important role in the development and implementation of the strategies.**

Contact: CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Secretariat

Executive Secretary Ms Anne Ståhl Mousa,

Region Gotland, Ledningskontoret, 62181 Visby, Sweden. Phone +46 498 263444, Mobile +46 70 540 88 58, Mail cpmr_bsc@me.com, Web www.balticseacommission.org