



## Committee of the Regions

COTER-V-006

**86th plenary session  
5 and 6 October 2010**

**OPINION  
of the  
Committee of the Regions  
on  
A STRATEGY FOR THE NORTH SEA-CHANNEL AREA**

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- is convinced that macro-regions can be an innovative form of interregional and transnational European cooperation, providing the right framework for cooperation between regional and local authorities, Member States and EU bodies limited in space, time and scope;
- stresses that macro-regional strategies do not have to cover all policy areas, but should first home in on those challenges that a macro-region shares; also wishes to make it clear that macro-regions are not an additional institutional level of the European Union;
- stresses that the shared priorities for action in the North Sea-Channel lie predominantly in the areas of marine policy, environment, energy, transport, science and industry and their impact on social cohesion;
- asks Member States to support further steps to develop a macro-regional strategy for this area, given the urgent need to address challenges in the areas of transport, the environment, fishing and research;
- calls on the European Commission to make resources for the drafting of macro-regional strategies available even before 2013 and to promote the development of a macro-regional strategy for North Sea-Channel area before 2013;
- calls for cohesion policy after 2013 to include as far as possible macro-regional strategies in its areas of territorial cooperation and considers it urgent to define their role and function more precisely in a Green Paper.

Rapporteur

Hermann Kuhn, Member of the Bremen City Parliament (DE/PES)

## I. GENERAL COMMENTS

### THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

1. welcomes the European Commission's publication – on 10 June 2009 – of an EU strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, which addresses the issue of a macroregion for that area. The Commission made it clear when launching the strategy that it could serve as a model for similar approaches in other European macroregions;
2. points out that the Baltic Sea Strategy rests on an integrated approach, voluntary participation and an active collaboration between regional players who must also be consulted, as well as on fiscal neutrality; its aim is a more coordinated use of available resources. This approach provides useful pointers for work on macroregional strategies, where the starting point must always be the specific characteristics and challenges of the macroregion in question;
3. welcomes the European Council's call on 18-19 June 2009 for the Commission to set out an EU strategy for the Danube area;
4. points out that the Committee of the Regions been very much favoured and helped with work on this matter from the outset, since it helps further the political involvement of local and regional authorities;
5. notes that the concept of a macro-regional strategy is one that many of Europe's regions are working on, as emerged clearly at the Committee of the Regions' conference on "Europe's macro-regions: Integration through territorial co-operation", held on 13 April 2010;
6. is convinced that macro-regions can be an innovative form of interregional and transnational European cooperation to provide the right framework for cooperation between regional and local authorities, Member States and European Union bodies limited in space, time and scope. At the same time, when devising this new strategy, long years of experience with cross-border, trans-national and interregional cooperation should be taken into account;
7. stresses that a European strategy for a macro-region has the potential to improve the cohesion and coordination of political action in various sectors and at various levels and turn specific challenges into joint action. It can help to coordinate the deployment of funding so that it better accommodates local and regional authorities in line with the principles of multilevel governance and is more elastic in bringing in social organisations;
8. takes the view, therefore, that macro-regional strategies are an incremental instrument of European integration and growing economic, social and territorial cohesion;
9. thinks there is a need to ascertain how macroregional strategies and the scopes of these will be tied in with other Union strategic policies, especially Europa 2020, cohesion policy and the Integrated Maritime Policy;

## II. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Macroregions: a new form of interregional and transnational European cooperation*

10. points out that promoting and developing cross-border, interregional and transnational cooperation has always been one of the Committee of the Regions' core concerns, as was demonstrated with the development of Euroregions – which focus on the cooperation of border regions – and when European structures were developed for cross-border, transnational and interregional projects and acquired legal form as European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC);
11. points out that the promotion of interregional and transnational cooperation is also an important goal and component of cohesion policy. Interreg IVB programmes are already geared to larger regional entities such as the North Sea and the Atlantic Arc;
12. welcomes the fact that the inclusion of "territorial cohesion" in the EU treaties makes geographical areas even more important as a focal point for European policies;
13. welcomes the approach now adopted in the EU's Integrated Marine Policy – which seeks to bring sectoral policies together in an integrated approach – that the strategy is an important prerequisite for successful implementation because it enables the priorities and instruments to be more accurately tuned to the specific geographical, economic and political situation of a marine area;
14. is convinced that the concept of macroregions and the political strategies that go with it can be a new and innovative form of EU interregional and transnational policy. It can make a great contribution to consistency and scope for action in a specified area, fusing economic efficiency, social cohesion and a sound environmental balance as appropriate in each case;
15. notes that a macroregion is an "elected" and not an "ordained" territory whose borders need not, therefore, coincide with administrative or political borders. It is a level at which various players decide to work together to solve shared problems which would not be solved – or would be solved less effectively – at other territorial levels. In each case, these are specific challenges and opportunities that a region or Member State is too small to solve, while the Union and its regulations are too big and too general;
16. concludes from this that macroregional strategies do not have to cover all policy areas, but should first home in on those challenges that are a macroregion shares and that a partnership approach can address. Macroregional strategies thus marry the principle of collaboration where it is meaningful and necessary with the principle of subsidiarity;
17. stresses that the macroregion as a "functional area" has no firmly established borders; rather, these can change depending on the problem and the solution. In any event, there must be a minimum degree of consensus on what constitutes the centre of an area (not forgetting the

inland perspective). The essence of each macroregion is determined by the natural foundations on which its economic, political and cultural history has evolved;

18. wishes to make it clear that the macroregion is not an additional institutional or constitutional level of the European Union. It should, instead, be organised as a mode of action, platform or network in which local and regional, national and European partners can work together – with the participation of players in society – in pursuit of jointly agreed goals within a specific area. Use should be made of existing networks and platforms;
19. is convinced that macroregional strategies open up huge opportunities and possibilities for further developing and fleshing out the multilevel governance method, which the Committee of the Regions has made a central plank of its work; this also applies to the open and flexible involvement of organisations in society;
20. points out that local and regional authorities know best about the real situation and problems of regions and that this is one reason why they must be equal partners in designing and implementing macroregional strategies. They are the players closest to the public;
21. in any event, takes the view that collaboration in macroregions cannot be only bi- or multilateral, but that support from the bodies of the European Union must play a substantial role. After all, these bodies represent the shared goals, the shared rules and shared resources of the Union;
22. is convinced that each macroregion needs its own bespoke strategy. Only the development of a series of macroregional strategies different in nature will provide sufficient experience of the possibilities and limits of this instrument;

*A Strategy for the North Sea-Channel area*

23. notes that the North Sea-Channel area comprises the marine area of the North Sea and the passages to the Baltic Sea (Skagerrak and Kattegat), to the Atlantic (English Channel) and to the Norwegian Sea, as well as the coastal regions that surround it to the extent that they are directly or indirectly connected with the sea, influence it or are influenced by it. The marine area corresponds to the "Greater North Sea" as referred to in OSPAR commission documents and the EU's Marine Strategy Framework Directive;
24. points out that EU Member States Sweden, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France and the United Kingdom and their local and regional authorities are politically linked with the North Sea-Channel macroregion. So, too, are Norway and, in a broader sense, Iceland, which already have close links with the EU through their EEA membership. Iceland has already applied to join the Union;
25. notes that the North Sea lies on the continental shelf and is therefore not a deepwater area; With its 230 species of fish and 10 million sea birds, its ecosystem is rich and diverse, but also vulnerable and imperilled. The coasts are diverse: fjords, estuaries, beaches, bays and

mudflats; they have strong tides and sometimes strong currents. The rivers that flow into the North Sea and the English Channel drain a large part of Europe, their deposits putting an additional strain on the seas;

26. is aware that the North Sea and the Channel AREA is the busiest maritime space in the world and is put to extremely intensive use: by shipping (with concentration highest in the Channel), fishing, raw material extraction (oil, gas, sand and gravel) from the sea bed, offshore energy and tourism. These uses conflict with one another and with protection of nature;
27. is conscious of the fact that the coasts of the North Sea and English Channel are among the well developed regions of the EU. They include two of the world's largest ports for intercontinental sea traffic and other large urban centres with traditional and modern industries; tourism and farming are also well developed in the main. At the same time, traditional sectors such as fishing and shipbuilding are in the throes of difficult structural change which the current financial and economic crisis will make all the worse;
28. takes the view that the North Sea-Channel area is a growth region. It can, and should, make a contribution to the Europa 2020 strategy and to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in Europe. This can be promoted by a macroregional approach;
29. is troubled by the fact that the North Sea-Channel area is environmentally strained and endangered – strained by various kinds of pollution and deposits in the sea and endangered by the risks coming from shipping and energy extraction. Climate change is a source of new risks for immediate coastal regions as sea levels rise and extreme weather conditions become more frequent;
30. points out that the coastal regions around the North Sea and the English Channel have been intimately connected politically and culturally for two thousand years – through migration flows, close trade relations (in the days of the Hanseatic League, for example), and through shared maritime traditions. For many centuries, it was the point of embarkation for voyages around the world which helped forge the sense of identity of the people in the region;
31. stresses that the countries bordering the North Sea and the English Channel are facing shared difficulties and challenges of a serious nature that cannot be solved and surmounted by individual regions or Member States. These arise in the main from the natural and territorial characteristics of the North Sea, the English Channel and the coastal areas, which have remained to this day the foundation for similar historical, economic, social and cultural developments. Prime among them are:
  - a distinct and uniform ecosystem and the threats that beset it;
  - climate and geology (use for renewable energies such as wind and tidal energy; new challenges for coastal protection);
  - intensive use of natural resources (fishing; oil and gas extraction, etc.);

- intensive and mutually antagonistic uses of the area (wind energy, shipping, nature conservation);
  - and the economic traditions on the coasts (shipping, shipbuilding, tourism);
32. stresses that the measures that are urgently needed – measures to preserve the ecosystem of the North Sea and its links with neighbouring waters, to safeguard its resources, to reduce and eliminate further pollution, to foster safety at sea and on land, and to adapt to climate change – are by their very nature crossborder and therefore cannot be tackled by regions or individual Member States on their own. The same is true for the creation of crossborder infrastructure and spatial planning: shipping corridors, transport networks, cable- and pipe-laying routes, and networking of marine protected areas;

*Key areas for action*

33. stresses that the shared priorities for action in the North Sea-Channel lie predominantly in the areas of marine policy, environment, energy, transport, science and industry and the impact of these on social cohesion. The added-value of successful collaboration will be clearly visible in these policy areas. It will also, however, have beneficial effects on policy areas that are not directly dependent upon territorial characteristics and traditional development;

*Shipping and ports*

34. stresses that shipping is a key part of the European economy, an important factor in employment and, notwithstanding the strain on the environment, the most environmentally friendly mode of transport. The aim is therefore to shift transport – primarily freight – onto water and to better connect waterways and rail routes to the hinterland. There should be coordinated development of short sea transport and motorways of the sea and connections with inland waterways in the North Sea-Channel macroregion;
35. takes the view that improving and monitoring maritime safety, especially in high-risk areas of the sea such as the English Channel, merits particular attention. Additional risk scenarios prompted by the growth in offshore wind parks require new joint civil defence strategies;
36. is concerned that heightened competition in shipping and port industries spawned by the financial and economic crisis could sideline the need to combat sea and coastal pollution. Particular support, measures and incentives are needed to take forward strategies such as Clean Shipping, the Zero Emissions Ship and Green Harbour. The Rotterdam Climate Initiative and the Clean Shipping Index are good examples here;
37. is convinced that although safety at sea issues and measures to counter environmental pollution must be matters for international accords, these accords can only be successfully prepared and launched by the actions and example of well organised macroregions;

*Skills*

38. believes that as maritime transport and offshore operations again become more important, the demand for workers – and the demands placed on them – will increase; there will be tougher international competition for highly skilled labour. The maritime centres in the North Sea-Channel area face the common challenge of ensuring the training and certification of workers specialising in a very broad range of maritime roles;
39. thinks that the idea of a "sea academy" – which would be a shared virtual training centre for traditional and new maritime trades in which common curricula and standards would be developed and then recognised by all sides – should be tried out;

*Industry and the economy*

40. stresses that the coastal regions in the North Sea-Channel area are being badly hit by the turmoil in the distribution of labour in the industry internationally, especially in shipbuilding. High-tech specialist shipbuilding and low- or zero-emission ships have to be promoted in order to help shipyards compete and at the same time make maritime transport safer and more sustainable;
41. points out that the sea and also the coastal area can become a site or raw material for new technologies and industries: i.e., offshore technologies, "blue" biotechnologies, water- and delta technology, maricultures and the potential extraction of further raw materials from the sea bed. Regional clusters for these technologies and industries should be set up in the North Sea-Channel area in the future, since the scientific and industrial capacity is in place;
42. welcomes the Commission's announcement in its 2010 work programme of a communication on "Blue growth" – a new vision for sustainable growth in coastal regions and maritime sectors;

*Integrated Maritime Policy*

43. stresses that the EU's integrated maritime policy highlights the need for solutions that are tailor-made for the (geographic, economic and political) characteristics of regional seas and that the North Sea-Channel area is just such a regional sea. The development, implementation and monitoring of an integrated maritime policy for this area is an important component of a European strategy for the North Sea-Channel area;
44. trusts that the communication announced by the Commission on the Integrated Maritime Policy in the Greater North Sea area will set out the need for greater cooperation of the countries bordering it and propose the goals and instruments for such cooperation;
45. points out that regional and local authorities and stakeholders are important partners in this discussion, since they can best determine which measures are suited;

*Fisheries*

46. regrets that the European Union's fisheries policy has so far fallen short of its targets and is up against considerable challenges: over-fishing of many kinds and in many regions, the parlous state of many stocks – in some cases below the biological limit –, the still unduly high fishing capacities, and illegal and unregulated fishing which has so far not been effectively curbed;
47. recommends that each fishing area be studied and assessed to ascertain which form of management best suits the sea region, the kinds of fish caught and the type of fleet. To this end, the role of the Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) should also be bolstered and the involvement of regional and local authorities promoted;

*Environment*

48. notes that economic development and the increasing incursions of man have placed a great burden on the North Sea-Channel ecosystem and led to major environmental problems: the contamination of sea and beaches (including with plastic waste), increased pollution of waters with chemicals and heavy metals and from shipping and the extraction of natural gas and oil in the sea;
49. is in no doubt that the only way of achieving a sustainable improvement of the marine environment (e.g. water quality, preservation of biodiversity) – including in the estuaries – is if all the countries bordering the North Sea and the English Channel pledge themselves to common goals and their coordinated implementation and monitoring;
50. is deeply concerned to note that the bed of the North Sea and the English Channel is still littered with large amounts of munitions (estimated at 1 million tons) from the time of the Second World War which present a significant danger to shipping, the environment and people. Pooling of information, cooperation based on trust, and a joint action programme are needed to lessen and eradicate this danger;
51. is adamant that very thorough studies are required to assess risks and environmental impacts before carbon capture and storage facilities are planned under the seabed;

*Climate change – Adaptation and Mitigation*

52. points out that the rise in the sea level and the increased danger to coastal areas from flooding at times of extreme weather conditions caused by climate change have a specific and similar effect on the countries bordering the North Sea and English Channel. The coastal regions of the North Sea and the English Channel must tackle these challenges with joint research projects, the exchange of salient information and the coordination of tangible coastal protection measures;
53. notes that the countries neighbouring the North Sea have unique experience in dealing with the kind of changes in sea-level that climate change may provoke. A synergy between

research and knowledge update in this sphere could therefore contribute to greater competitiveness and protection of the environment for those living there;

54. points out, at the same time, that the regions in the North Sea-Channel area attach great importance to climate protection and environmental research and together will make the most of their regional capacity to cut greenhouse gas emissions. This is being done under the regional climate protection programme, through increased energy efficiency, the promotion of renewable energies – both offshore and onshore –which are to replace fossil energy sources;
55. highlights the fact that the coastal area, and especially the large estuaries, must be made more "climate-proof" in a way that improves as much as possible both quality of life and quality of the natural environment in coastal regions and their hinterland;
56. points out that climate change can also put a further burden on the marine ecosystem through warming, water acidification and the influx of new species. It will also bring change in the potential for tourism in the area. Jointly drafted, scientifically informed scenarios are essential for realistic policy responses;

#### *Spatial planning*

57. stresses that combating cross-border impacts, above all in a space so heavily used as the North Sea-Channel area, calls for increased coordination on spatial planning issues at the coasts and in the water. The still increasing uses to which a specific vulnerable area is being put must be assessed and weighed against the backdrop of sustainable development and the preservation of the natural environment;
58. raises the question of whether a joint "mining code" should not be constituted for the North Sea-Channel area to establish a common law – with norms for permits and safety issues – on exploitation of the seabed. Also required on this front are rules for the laying and use of cables and pipelines on the seabed;
59. draws attention to the important function of the coastal area in protecting the hinterland from the sea. At the same time, it is an outstanding natural and recreational area and as such contributes greatly to the quality of life of those living by the North Sea and the English Channel. Given the various uses (natural environment, recreation, economy, safety, residential) to which the coastal area is put, its appropriate and efficient use and an integrated planning and development are vital;

#### *Energy*

60. presumes that the extraction of oil and natural gas will continue to be promoted in the North Sea. Stringent common safety standards and systems to counter and limit threats are required to reduce the risks as much as possible and to enable a swift and effective response when needed;

61. stresses that, because of their geographical conditions, the North Sea and English Channel have huge potential for renewable energy, the expansion of which is crucial to a successful climate policy. There is great potential for energy from wind, waves, tide and currents and it is in the interests of all in the region to conduct further research into this and to promote it. Given the rapid expansion of offshore wind farms, standards for their construction, safety, noise and pollution must be agreed;
62. welcomes the fact that planning for a North Sea grid – a comprehensive energy transport network – has been set in motion to realise the full potential of renewable forms of energy. This brings with it a pressing need for collaboration between Member States, regions and private partners. If the necessary progress towards smart grids takes place, the strengths of renewable energy generation could make the area a pilot region for e-Mobility;

#### *Research*

63. calls for marine and maritime research to be promoted more vigorously in the Eighth Research Framework Programme and support to be given so it can be networked. The reason is that the basis for all the areas of action mentioned is scientific knowledge about the ecosystem of the North Sea and the state it is in, about the consequences of climate change, about the reciprocal impact of competing uses, and so on;
64. proposes that a differential cross-thematic research initiative for the regions be launched geared to amalgamating knowledge about the North Sea-Channel area from all disciplines. Lessons learnt in the BONUS 169 programme for the Baltic Sea area should be taken on board;

#### *Culture*

65. points out that life and work on and by the sea have given rise to a long cultural tradition, to recollections and tales. Land reclamation, shipping and seafaring have done much to shape the self-awareness and identity of the people that live around the North Sea and the English Channel. Bringing these traditions to life and developing them as a shared identity is one of the assets in making this area stand out from the competition;
66. calls for promotion of cooperation between museums and cultural institutions (for example, the North Sea Maritime Museum Network) dealing with these traditions. A joint history book would be a good way of improving understanding of the shared (and separate) history of the area;
67. highlights the importance of the creative and cultural economy in many regions of the North Sea-Channel area and is convinced that this economic sector will assume increasing importance for growth and employment in this area, notably by cultural and academic exchange programmes and the link between culture and sustainable tourism across the area;

*Links with other EU policies*

68. points out the high degree of convergence between these key planks and issues in the North Sea-Channel area strategy and the goals and guidelines of the Europa 2020 strategy. It sees this as an excellent premise for cross-pollination between the strategic ambitions at EU level and intensive crossborder and transnational cooperation in a specific macroregion comprising countries bordering the North Sea and English Channel;
69. envisages that a macroregional strategy of the countries bordering the North Sea-Channel could make tangible and sustainable contributions in particular to the future tasks for the EU embodied in the flagship initiatives "Innovation Union", "Resource-efficient Europe", "An industrial policy for the globalisation era" and "New skills and jobs";
70. argues that cooperation between national, regional and local partners on a clearly defined range of issues within a macroregion delivers considerable added-value in implementing overriding EU strategy, since this process will identify the right players and mobilise and target resources at the macro-regional level;
71. stresses the particular importance of collaboration between players in a macroregion for the efficient and successful implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy "on the ground" and the way it is lived by the public in their experience at regional and local level;
72. points out that between the North and Baltic Seas, there are many economic and political links. Both sea areas are facing similar challenges, particularly with the marine economy, marine environment, climate change and energy policy. Efforts are therefore being made to develop close cooperation between the Baltic and North Sea areas. Moreover, steps should be taken to examine how tried and tested procedures from the Baltic Sea strategy can be applied to the North Sea strategy;
73. proposes examining whether and how the goals and strands of cohesion policy should in future be linked with agreed priorities in macroregional strategies, for example with some structural fund financing being allocated to these strategies;
74. notes that the North Sea-Channel area already has EU cross-border, trans-national and interregional cooperation programmes – above all the Interreg Programme IV B for the North Sea and the Atlantic Arc – which promote cooperation and assist the closer cohesion of regions. These programmes – more closely and more flexibly interlinked or of longer duration – could be carried forward and turned into an important instrument for the development and implementation of a strategy for the North Sea-Channel area;
75. calls on the local and regional authorities in the North Sea-Channel area to make greater use of these interregional cooperation support instruments even now in formulating and developing a macro-regional strategy;

76. appeals once again for greater interregional cooperation in the formulation of cohesion policy from 2014 and for increased funding for this without detriment to cohesion policy objectives 1 and 2;

*Governance*

77. takes note of the European Commission's "three no's" – no new regulation, no new institutions and no additional funding – when it comes to taking macroregional strategies forward;
78. thinks, however, that there should also be "three yeses":
- jointly agreed application and monitoring of existing rules in the macro-region;
  - creation – for which EU bodies should be responsible – of a platform, network or territorial cluster of regional and local authorities and Member States which also brings in stakeholders;
  - agreed use of existing Union funding for developing and implementing macroregional strategies;
79. thinks that new forms of governance (such as networks and platforms) that are geared to joint action and specific goals must be developed and put in place for implementing macroregional strategies. These can set in train and take forward political processes without undermining existing powers and prerogatives. It would make sense to have a multilevel structure that brings together various tiers of governance, powers, resources and capabilities;
80. recalls that the International Conferences on the Protection of the North Sea (1984 to 2006) achieved pioneering work towards agreement on better protection for the North Sea. The 1998 Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic, including the North Sea, created a binding framework for international accords in this area;
81. stresses that the North Sea Commission (NSC), one of the geographical commissions of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR), is an important partner that works for better cooperation in the North Sea area and has already come up with ideas for a strategy for the North Sea-Channel area. The North Sea-English Channel Intergroup in the Committee of the Regions and the NSC have been in close contact on this issue for some time now. Other networks of local and regional organisations in this area should have the opportunity to contribute to this work;
82. stresses that the Arc Manche Regions Assembly plays an important role for the English Channel area, working expressly for the English Channel to be included in a common macroregional strategy with the North Sea;

83. is convinced that collaboration with these and other active bodies (such as the Wadden Sea Forum) and NGOs is a crucial pillar for the development and success of macroregional strategies;
84. expects a better synergy between the funds available at Community level can be engineered until funds are specifically available for macroregional strategies. Given the diversity of the subjects dealt with, this requires that various existing Community resources could be enlisted for macroregional strategies. This means not just structural funds, but also, for example, the CIP, the TEN-T and Marco Polo programmes in the transport sphere, and the Framework Programme for R & D;
85. sees the aim of the policy for macroregions aims as being to achieve joint action that is limited in space, time and scope; This policy should therefore be embodied in a North Sea-English Channel 2020 action plan;

### **III. CONCLUSIONS**

86. asks the EU Member States to support at European level further steps to develop a macroregional strategy for the North Sea-Channel area;
87. that takes the view that, given the pressing problems and challenges, work on drafting a European strategy for the North Sea-Channel area must be started now. Calls on the European Council to task the Commission with this drafting and asks the European Parliament to work closely on it;
88. calls for cohesion policy after 2013 as far as possible to include macroregional strategies in its areas of territorial cooperation (in crossborder, translational and interregional cooperation) and advocates the adoption of a macroregional strategy before 2013 so that the regional operational programmes of the next programming period can, as far as they are able, contribute to the tangible implementation of this strategy;
89. stresses that a strategy for the North Sea-Channel geographical area rests on the application of the subsidiarity principle. It will address a range of issues and problems that cannot be solved at local, regional and national level alone;
90. stresses that a broad public consultation must accompany the drafting of this strategy. This should be conducted in close collaboration with the Committee of the Regions as the representative of regional and local authorities, and especially with the CPMR's North Sea Commission, the Arc Manche Assembly and other important players. Norway and Iceland, which are members of the EEA, should also be involved;
91. calls on the European Commission to make the technical assistance resources for the drafting of macroregional strategies available even before 2013 so that these can be included in the European Union's future financial perspectives;

92. proposes that the European Commission promote the development of a macroregional strategy for North Sea-Channel area before 2013, including within the programmes promoting territorial cooperation , especially Interreg IV B and other programmes such as ESPON; in this way the European directives and conventions that already apply to the area become clear;
93. welcomes the fact that the European Commission's work programme envisages the publication of a communication on the implementation of an integrated maritime policy for the Greater North Sea;
94. considers it urgent that the role and function of macroregions be examined and established more precisely in a green paper. The Committee of the Regions has already called on the European Commission to do this in its Resolution on the Commission's work programme for 2010;
95. instructs its president to forward this own-initiative opinion to the European Commission, the European Parliament, the current Council presidency and its partners in the presidency trio 2010-2011.

Brussels, 5 October 2010.

The President  
of the Committee of the Regions

Mercedes Bresso

The Secretary-General  
of the Committee of the Regions

Gerhard Stahl

#### IV. PROCEDURE

<b>Title</b>	Own-initiative Opinion of the CoR on "A Strategy for the North Sea-Channel area"
<b>Reference(s)</b>	
<b>Legal basis</b>	Initiative art.307, 4è al.
<b>Procedural basis</b>	
<b>Council referral/European Commission letter</b>	
<b>Date of Bureau/President's decision</b>	12.3.2010
<b>Commission responsible</b>	Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy (COTER)
<b>Rapporteur</b>	Hermann Kuhn (DE/PES), Member of the Bremen City Parliament
<b>Analysis</b>	5 May 2010
<b>Date adopted by commission</b>	24 June 2010
<b>Result of the vote in commission</b>	Majority
<b>Date adopted in plenary</b>	5 October 2010
<b>Previous Committee opinions</b>	Opinion on the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea region – CoR 255/2009 – Rapporteur: Ms Pauliina Haijanen (FI/EPP)  Opinion on the role of local and regional authorities within the new Baltic Sea Strategy – CoR 381/2008 – Rapporteur: Mr Uno Aldegren (SE/PES)