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REPORTS

This paper consists of the following reports;

- from the thematic groups
- from CPMR General Assembly – will be presented orally at the meeting
- summary Brussels activities for the NSC
- from NSC-BSC cooperation – will be presented orally at the meeting
- from CPMR Energy group
- from Territorial Cohesion group
- from Aquamarina working group

The reports show the relevant activities of NSC since last meeting in June 2008.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. ***For discussion and information***

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CULTURE & TOURISM GROUP

The Culture & Tourism Group has not had any meetings since the last ExCom.

Our main activity 2008 will be the seminar on Culture and Sustainable Tourism, to be hold in Middelburg, Province of Zeeland 22-23 October. A full report will be delivered to the ExCom thereafter.

The next meeting of the Culture & Tourism group will be held during the spring 2009 in Aberdeenshire.

MARINE RESOURCES GROUP

The Marine Resources has not had any meetings since the last ExCom.

The group has prepared a suggestion for a Maritime Policy pilot project for the ExCom, will be discussed under item 6.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GROUP

Had their meeting 25 September and will report at the meeting.

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INNOVATION AND EDUCATION GROUP

1. Introduction
The aim of this report is to summarise the work of the North Sea Commission's thematic group "Innovation and Education Group" (IEG).

2. IEG Chair, Vice-Chairs and Adviser
- Chair: Cllr. Ole B. Sørensen, Region North Denmark
- Vice-Chairs:
  - Cllr. Stella Duneufjardin, Region of Nord-pas de Calais, France
  - Cllr. Kate Dean, Aberdeen City, Scotland
- Adviser: Erik Lindboe, Rogaland County Council, Norway

3. The I & E Strategic Group (the Chair, vice-chairs and advisor, plus some supporting officers) met in Schipol Airport, Amsterdam, 5th September 2008 mainly to revise the Work Plan, and to plan the next Innovation & Education Group meeting, which will be held in Gothenburg 22nd – 24th October 2008. Invitation has been e-mailed to all group members, and the meeting has also been published on the NSC website.

4. Planned Innovation & Education Group meetings
■ 22nd – 24th October 2009 in Gothenburg
■ 24th – 25th March 2009 in Aberdeen

Draft agenda group meeting 22nd – 24th October in Gothenburg

Wednesday 22nd October	Arrivals	Accommodation: First Hotel G at Gothenburg Central Train Station
Thursday 23rd October	From 07.00	Breakfast
	08.30	Departure to the meeting venue, which is less than 10 minutes walk from the hotel. "Läppstiftet Konferens", Address: Lilla Bommen 1-2, 411 04 Gothenburg. (Red Lipstick Building)
	09.00	Welcome, by IEG chair, Councillor Ole B. Sørensen Welcome to Gothenburg and the Västra Götaland Region, by Coucillor Jonas Andersson
	09.30	TN-RIS: Towards a New regional Innovation System - CPMR's report. Presentation by Mr. Dag Boman.
	10.00	State-of-the-art reports on R&D programming etc from Västra Götaland, Nord-pas de Calais and x (tbc)
	10..45	Coffee break
	11.15	R & D as a growth factor for sustainable economic development. Questions and debate. Facilitator: Mr. Lave Thorell, Västra Götaland
	12.15	Lunch
	13.15	Workshops: Idea(s) for a new Interreg project.
	14.00	Coffee break
	14.30	- The Baltic Sea Commission (tba) - Smart Energy
	15.30	"Business meeting" - status on Innovation and Education Group work - work plan - school projects - any new things to be included in the work plan? - aob

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	16.00	End of program
	18.30	Dinner hosted by the Västra Götaland, cllr. Jonas Andersson
Friday 24th October	08.00	Study tour Departure by bus to Alingsås and the Build with CaRe Interreg IVB Project – a triple helix initiative including research, regional support and local authority commitment
	12.00	Lunch
	13.00	The bus takes us back to the hotel/railway station

5. Work Plan / Activities

The Work Plan has been updated. The group aims to limit the number of actions in order to make the work more efficient and realistic to accomplish. The IEG is working with all the items of the Work Plan. We still have to have a closer look at *Food* . The IEG also wants to develop the connections with the Baltic Sea Commission, and the group invites the BSC to group meetings.

The North Sea Schools Sustainability Network

In addition to the running school project "Sustainability around the North Sea" – which is about climate change and sustainable development, a new project initiated by the NSC's Innovation & Education Group has been approved by the EU's Comenius offices (which delivers funding for school projects). This school project – "Talking about Food around the North Sea", is aimed at children in primary schools.

The Food project had the kick-off meeting in Stavanger 22nd - 24th September 2008. The attending teachers came from these schools:

- Invergowrie Primary School (Scotland)
- Tofthøjskolen (Denmark)
- Ecole Viala (France)
- Kvaleberg skole (Norway).

In June 2009 the two school projects will have a joint conference in Suffolk, England.

Members of the North Sea Commission will be invited to attend this conference.

More information about "Sustainability around the North Sea" in the project's website: http://www.northseaschools.org/main.htm

A website will be made for the Food project, and will be launched later this autumn.

IEG Events calendar

Date	**Event**
5th September 2008	IEG Strategic Group meeting in Kopenhagen
22nd – 24th September 2008	"Talking about Food around the North Sea" – kick-off meeting for the new school project
30th September – 1st October 2008	North Sea Schools Network meeting in Fife, Scotland

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1st – 3rd October 2008	CPMR General Assembly in Aquitaine, France
23rd – 24th October 2008	I&E Group meeting in Gothenburg
6th February 2009	IEG Strategic Group meeting in Aberdeen
24th – 25th March 2009	Innovation & Education Group meeting in Aberdeen
First week of June 2009	North Sea Schools Sustainability Network: The "Sustainability around the North Sea"-project: Final conference in Suffolk, England. This conference will coincide with the new "Talking about Food around the North Sea"-project's meeting in Suffolk.
24th – 26th June 2009	North Sea Commission GA in Haarlem
30th September – 2nd October 2009	CPMR GA in Gothenburg

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TRANSPORT GROUP

Please find below an account of the main activities of the NSC Transport group in the period since the last Executive meeting on 13 June 2007.

- Attendance at meeting of Baltic Sea Commission (BSC) Transport group, Herning, 11 June

Three members of the group, incl. the Adviser, attended the above meeting. The main topics on the agenda were presentation of impact studies for future EU transport policy, TEN-T revision process and response to other EU consultations in the transport sector, as well as update on the Interreg IVB Baltic Sea Programme.

The BSC Transport group has revitalised under the new leadership appointed last winter. The group is characterised by high attendance and activity. The Lead region from Germany is involved at a relatively high political level, and is also providing external experts for the meetings. These features are making the group into a more relevant cooperation partner for the NSC Transport group.

- Attendance at meeting of CPMR Aquamarina group, Brussels, 8 July

The Adviser represented the group at the above meeting. Maritime transport was one of the main topics at the agenda. The meeting heard presentations on key developments within EU maritime transport policy by representatives of DG TREN. These developments include the preparation of a maritime transport strategy 2008 – 2018, follow up of a 2007 Communication on port policy, as well as establishment of a common maritime transport space without borders. Furthermore, the EU Coordinator for Motorways of the Sea gave an update on recent developments. The Adviser took the opportunity to voice NSC concerns for the development of the MoS instrument. The meeting also heard presentations on the shipowners and unions perspectives on maritime transport policy.

- NSC Advisers meeting, Aberdeen, 11 July

The Adviser attended a meeting with the NSC Secretariat and fellow NSC Advisers in Aberdeen. The meeting was mainly devoted to the follow-up of the consultancy exercise on “Promoting the Success of the NSC” (se also below).

- Attendance at Workshop under the Interreg IVB StratMoS project, Hamburg, 3 September

The Adviser and a group member from Aberdeenshire attended a workshop under the StratMoS project on 3 September. The Workshop concerned the development of a systems model on MoS, and is regarded to produce useful input for the activities of the NSC Transport group in this field.

- NSC Advisers meeting, Skien, Telemark, 8 – 9 September

The Adviser attended this meeting. The agenda included follow-up of the consultancy exercise, preparations for the Executive Committee meeting in October, update on the CPMR General

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Assembly, discussion on how to follow up the suggestion on "Carbon Footprint" and presentation of an outline for the new NSC Website.

To this meeting, the Adviser had drafted input to a report on the implementation of the Consultancy Exercise (mainly to items 2 – ways of working and 3 – strategic/corporate approach) which will be submitted to the upcoming meetings of the Strategic and Executive Committee.

- Meeting with DG TREN on TEN-T review, Brussels, 18 September

A member of the Transport group from Aberdeenshire attended a meeting with DG TREN together with the CPMR Secretariat and Transport Coordinators of other Geographical Commissions.

The time line for this review would see the publication of new guidelines in 2010, this would require a Green Paper in early 2009. The review will look at mechanisms that will more formally link the aspirations of the policy to the delivery of improvements across the TEN-T network. This aspect will also consider mechanisms to ensure National Governments provide sufficient funds for programmed work to be completed. The review will also take account of additional pressures, such as sustainability concerns and potential further EU enlargement. It was agreed that any revised guidelines for the TEN-T would have to take account of Social Cohesion, particularly for projects in peripheral regions, and could not simply be based on traffic volumes.

The meeting also heard updates on transport-related elements of the maritime policy, incl. the introduction of a common maritime space, developments within MoS and state aid to ports. Considering the latter, the Commission is considering the formation of a Ports Policy Stakeholder Group as a permanent forum. It was indicated that the CPMR may have a role to play in this. It may be the case that the North Sea Commission may well consider it appropriate to be represented at the NSC level, rather than at CPMR level.

The CPMR sees a potential need for a group to lead the organisation's consideration of the TEN-T review, and the Secretariat is very keen to get a Region to volunteer to Chair such a Group. Obviously no one was in a position at the meeting to make any commitments. The matter is obviously one of importance to the North Sea Commission, and may well be something that we should discuss in more detail.

Further information from the meeting on the TEN-T review could be provided in the Executive.

The Executive Committee is invited to consider the issues raised in the two paragraphs above concerning possible representation of the NSC in a Ports Policy Stakeholder Group and role in the CPMR TEN-T review group.

- Group meeting

No ordinary group meeting has been scheduled for the autumn, but work is in progress to settle dates and to identify a host region.

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SUMMARY BRUSSELS ACTIVITIES FOR THE NSC

- Plenary session: Wednesday 18 and Thursday 19 June, 2008
- Results of the 8th Structured dialogue with Commissioner Hübner on the Future of EU regional policy on 18 June, 2008
- Highlight: CoR president Luc Van den Brande in Salzburg 25 and 26 August, 2008

Find below the most important themes discussed at the Committee of the Regions in Brussels in June.

Again three Commissioners were among the main speakers at the Committee of the Regions' plenary session on 18-19 June; Danuta HÜBNER (Regional Policy), Vladimir SPIDLA (Employment) and Gunther VERHEUGEN (Enterprise and Industry).

This time the topics on the agenda were European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC): new impetus for territorial cooperation in Europe, a presentation on the coming French Presidency by Mr Hubert Falco, French minister of state for spatial planning, Communicating Europe in partnership and the European year of creativity and innovation (2009).

Also a structural dialogue with representatives of local and regional authority associations took place on the future of regional policy to discuss the main findings with the Commissioner. See below.

- Results of the 8th Structured dialogue with Commissioner Hübner on the Future of EU regional policy on 18 June, 2008

The structured dialogue on the 5th Progress Report on economic and social cohesion' with Regional Policy Commissioner Danuta Hübner and representatives of local and regional authority associations organised by the Committee of the Regions on 18 June was attended by more than 200 participants including Members of the Committee of the Regions and representatives of associations of regional and local authorities. A publication with all the questions of the associations' representatives and the answers of the Commissioner will be published in the next months.

This 5th Progress Report provides an overview of the many responses to the consultation launched last year with the Fourth Cohesion Report and, for the first time, an analysis of the sectoral composition of regional economies, with a particular attention to those sectors which are driving growth and regional convergence.

Some key parts of the Statement on the 5th Progress Report on economic and social cohesion by the Commissioner;

"• Let me start by coming back to your opinion on the Fourth Cohesion Report in which the Committee of the Regions expressed its first views on the future shape of the European cohesion policy. The key message was that – in face of new challenges impacting European territories – cohesion policy must continue to play a key role in narrowing development gaps and enhancing competitiveness at local and regional levels.

• Indeed, this is also the main message emerging from the public consultations I have launched at the Cohesion Forum last year, in which some of you participated in your capacity of local and

regional leaders. Your strong participation demonstrates once again that you are key main actors in the debate about this policy.

• **Strong cohesion policy after 2013 for all European regions** – this is how I would summarize the outcome the consultations. An overwhelming majority of those who have participated in this consultation rejects any attempt of re-nationalisation of the policy.

• Importantly, there is also agreement that in the new global context, supporting competitiveness is the shortest and only way to cohesion. Your Opinion puts it in a nutshell, by **referring to the policy which reduces development gaps and increases competitiveness.** Accordingly, the participants in the consultations support our earmarking approach, resulting in the concentration of investments on innovation, skills and education, sustainable development and Europe-wide infrastructures.

• Finally, many contributions refer to the **importance of territorial cohesion**, which – again in line with your Opinion – should become a **stronger feature within cohesion policy**. This implies that we should give more consideration to questions of territorial balance. As you know, after the summer break I will present a **Green Paper on territorial cohesion** which will initiate a debate on this issue. I count on your contribution and participation in this debate in order to clarify the role this new notion could play in designing and implementing not only cohesion policy, but also other Community policies.

• Clearly, this debate on the future shape of the cohesion policy should be also seen in the context of the **ongoing budgetary review**, the consultation on which were closed just three days ago. As you know, the **results will be published in 2009.**

• **Toward the end of the year, my services will publish a report "Europe 2020"** on the challenges with which regions will be confronted over the next 15 years. This work will set the scene for developing ideas and priorities for cohesion policy for the period post-2013.

• In **January 2009 an independent expert report** will be published. This report will be the outcome of analytical work and debate involving the best European economists and – I can already tell you – will give us quite a new and fascinating narrative for the future shape of the policy.

• **In spring 2009, I will publish the Sixth progress report** which will update on the state of the public debate on the future cohesion policy and provide new insights on other important dimensions of regional development.

• Finally, building on all this material, I intend – by spring next year – to set out my ideas and directions for **the post 2013 shape of the cohesion policy**."

- **Highlight: CoR president Luc Van den Brande in Salzburg 25 and 26/8/2008**

CoR president Van den Brande calls for a bottom-up growth strategy: "Cities and regions are the engines of economic development in Europe"
"Europe's cities and regions must play a bigger role in implementing the Lisbon strategy" said the president of the Committee of the Regions (CoR), Luc Van den Brande, at the fourth conference of European regions and cities, which was held in Salzburg (Austria) from 24 to 26 August 2008. Regions and cities were key factors in the innovation, research and educational

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policy that was essential for achieving the Lisbon goals of innovation, growth and jobs. Their voice must therefore be heard more clearly, concluded the CoR president. In March 2008 the CoR had already submitted a report to the European Council calling for regional and local authorities to be consulted at each stage of the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs. In Salzburg Van den Brande expressly recognised the successes of the European cohesion policy, which was geared to the Lisbon strategy in the current programme period. A key to this success was the partnership approach, where all levels of government, especially the regional and local levels, were involved in developing and implementing programmes as part of the European cohesion and structural policy. "The Committee of the Regions is constantly working to improve this partnership" said Van den Brande.

NSC – BSC COOPERATION

Will be reported orally at the meeting.

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CPMR ENERGY GROUP

Aberdeen Conference

The main activity of the CPMR Energy group at present is the organization of the ***Aberdeen Seminar on Energy "How to reconcile the goals of territorial cohesion with reducing the causes of climate change "***. The will take place on Aberdeen on the 13th and 14th November 2008.

Energy and Climate Change Package

The European Energy and Climate Change package is proceeding through the European Parliament.

A number of the amendments which the Energy Group proposed earlier this summer have been adopted.
In the Turmes Report, which deals with renewables the proposal for an amendment on

"5e. In assessing the impact of renewable energy developments taking place in areas designated under EU environmental legislation, and especially the Habitat Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC), the Member States will take into account the positive impact of these developments for Renewable Energy Production in the European Union, and their contribution to meeting the objectives set by this Directive"

has eventually resulted in the adoption of a compromise amendment with a similar thrust

"coherence is achieved with the assessment, planning and licensing procedures under existing different pieces of EU environmental legislation while taking into account the contribution of renewable sources of energy towards their contribution to meeting the climate change objectives and those set by this Directive"

Also in the Turmes Report, not only has article 147 prohibiting discrimination on transmission charging been maintained as we asked, but it has been strengthened by an amendment initiated by Alyn Smith, MEP:

"National regulatory authorities shall make mandatory that the charging of transmission and distribution feeds does not discriminate against electricity from renewable energy sources, and does not discriminate against electricity from renewable energy sources produced in peripheral regions, such as island regions, and in regions of low population density; the Commission shall investigate abuses of this provision and take the necessary corrective action if it is violated."

In the Ek Report which deals with the Emissions trading Scheme an extremely important amendment which we submitted has been approved. It concerns the way the huge financial proceeds arising from the auctioning of Emission certificates will be used in the future.
Our proposal in Amendment 189 Article 10 – paragraph 3 suggested that these moneys should be also employed

(fa) to mitigate the impact of the allowance trading system on territories beset by permanent and severe geographic and demographic handicaps, by giving them supplementary means to develop a sustainable energy policy;"

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The adopted Compromise Amendment 4 reads:

***(fa) to mitigate the impact of the Community scheme on regions affected by special geographic and demographic challenges, by assisting them in developing a sustainable energy policy;* .“**

This has the potential for significant financial implications for these areas in the long term.

Kevan Lim

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TERRITORIAL COHESION

Since the Treaty of Rome, reducing regional disparities through better economic and social cohesion has been a key objective of the EU.

The general objective of territorial cohesion is to achieve a more balanced development by reducing regional disparities, avoiding territorial imbalances, and by making sectoral policies with a spatial impact and regional policy more coherent.

Article 158 of the Lisbon Treaty specifically acknowledges territorial cohesion as an EU objective which represents a third dimension of cohesion policy alongside its economic and social aspects. This means that cohesion policy must strive to achieve a more balanced, sustainable and integrated form of regional development.

Article 158 states that particular attention shall be paid to:

- Rural areas
- Areas affected by industrial transition
- Regions which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps such as the northernmost regions with very low population density and island, cross-border and mountain regions

Accordingly, there is a need to take greater account of geography, regional inequalities and regional cooperation and to ensure a degree of consistency between regional and sector-specific policies with a regional impact.

In Autumn 2007, the European Commission launched a public consultation on the future of Cohesion Policy. From the responses received, it was concluded that there was an overwhelming desire for Cohesion Policy to continue beyond 2013; that there needed to be stronger co-ordination with other community policies; and for the territorial cohesion objective to be strengthened.

The concept of territorial cohesion is subject to a variety of different definitions and systems of implementation which vary across Member States. An EU Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion will be published in the beginning of October 2008. This will be the basis of a broad public consultation on the issue, aimed at reaching a common definition of the concept and to propose possible tools for a better integration of this territorial dimension in the Structural funds and in some sectoral policies having a territorial impact.. Conclusions from this consultation will be taken onboard in the consideration of the future of Cohesion Policy post 2013. It will therefore be important for the NSC to make a contribution to this consultation.

Recommendation:
It is recommended that Members of the Executive Committee note the contents of this report.

To add:
European Commissions' DG Regio on Territorial Cohesion
DG Regio organises two expert meetings about this concept summing up the outcomes in a third bigger seminar in April 2009. The first one has taken place in September; the second one is planned for the beginning of 2009. The expert meetings are only open for some experts and stakeholders invited by DG Regio. The seminar in 2009 will be open for a broader public.

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AQUAMARINA WORKING GROUP

The second meeting of the CPMR's Aquamarina working group took place in Brussels on 8 July 2008. The theme of this meeting was Maritime Transport. Secretary General, Xavier Gizard, addressed the meeting to advise that the group may become a more permanent part of the CPMR structure and that it remains open to any CPMR member. The Group is tasked with developing proposals for the Political Bureau and General Assembly.

Dimitrios Theologitis, Head of Unit at the Commission's DG TREN spoke on forthcoming proposals in the fields of ports policy, maritime space, a maritime transport strategy and Trans-European Networks (TENs). The EU's ports policy will put forward an action plan, including revisions to the State Aid guidelines; guidance on environmental legislation and proposals on 'eMaritime' (using technology to speed up administrative procedures); and a 'single maritime space without barriers' policy. The single maritime space concept will aim to simplify ports procedures through a number of smaller measures. Work in the Commission is also ongoing to update the EU's Maritime Transport strategy, aiming to foster a sector which is competitive, qualified, high-quality, integrated and has a global dimension. A 2009 Green Paper on TENs for the transport sector will focus on hinterland connections.

Alfons Guinier from the European Community Shipowners' Association called for a flexible approach to State Aid and highlighted the need to attract new entrants to the sector, including land-based activities (e.g. through defining clear career paths and developing maritime clusters). The relatively low emissions from the shipping sector were highlighted, as were proposals to reduce these further. Finally, the point that Short Sea Shipping should not be in competition with subsidised Motorways of the Sea was made.

Phillipe Alfonso from the European Transport Workers' Federation called for EU social legislation to be applied to the sea, with more and more non-EU mariners being employed with salaries up to 60% less that EU citizens.

Luis Valente de Oliveira, Co-ordinator for Motorways of the Sea, gave an extensive presentation on Motorways of the Sea, focusing on the need to develop indicators for benchmarking; improving connections between Short Sea Shipping and Motorways of the Sea; improving the capacity of ports and logistical chains; and improving vessel tracking and tracing.

Ann Bell and Martin Brebner gave a presentation on the situation in the North Sea Region with regards to the implementation of the Maritime Policy. The presentation briefly covered the North Sea Commission's work on the Green Paper before setting out plans for a Maritime Policy Pilot project to implement the policy in the North Sea region and develop a North Sea Maritime Strategy.

A summary of progress of the Aquamarina group was given. A technical committee and three thematic commissions have been established. Schleswig-Holstein is set to co-ordinate a group on Maritime Research & Clusters. The other groups will focus on Data & Indicators and Maritime Surveillance. It was noted that the majority of Aquamarina participants have not responded to the survey on priority areas for the group's work. However, based on the responses so far, ten priorities have been identified (see Table 1). The next meeting of the Group is set to take place on 12 November 2008 and will focus on research and clusters.

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Conclusions

While the meeting may have been useful for transport specialists, it remains unclear how the cross-sectoral co-ordination of different sectors will be supported by the Aquamarina group (a 'thematic meeting' on governance?). It is also unclear how the work of the group relates to established CPMR working groups (significant overlaps in yellow):

Table 1: Aquamarina Priorities and CPMR Working Groups

Theme/Group	Aquamarina	Energy Group	Fisheries Group	Research Group	Tourism Group	Transport Group
Maritime Policy Governance	✓					
Clusters	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fisheries	✓		✓			
Spatial Planning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ports	✓		✓			✓
Energy	✓	✓				
Environment	✓	✓	✓			✓
Coastal Tourism	✓				✓	
Maritime Policy funding	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Partnership (industry, policy-makers and research)	✓		✓	✓		✓

Recommendations regarding the Aquamarina group:

1) The Executive Committee notes the contents of this report.

2) Clarification is sought from the CPMR Secretariat as to how the Aquamarina Group will relate to other CPMR working groups.

3) Where Aquamarina meetings have a thematic nature, specialists from the NSC Thematic Groups are given the opportunity to represent the NSC at the meetings.