

## **COMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN AFFAIRS**

Date: 23 May 2001

Time: 9.30am

Venue: Committee Rooms 3&4,

### **Title: Membership of CPMR, AER and other European organisations**

#### **Purpose**

1. To invite members of the Committee on European Affairs to support membership of the CPMR while retaining a watching brief on AER.

#### **Background**

2. At your last meeting the Committee received a presentation from Mr Gizard and Mr Ostdahl of the Conference on Peripheral and Maritime Regions. At an earlier meeting Mr de Belder of the Assembly of European Regions made a presentation on its work.

3. A decision needs to be taken on membership of these organisations

having regard to value for money, benefits and human resource

implications.

4. The work and structure of the two organisations was described in detail at

their respective presentations. Membership of the CPMR for the Assembly would be 27, 500 Euros, approximately £17, 200 per annum. This does not take into account the associated costs of travel and subsistence. The Assembly of European Regions was unable to provide an exact membership costing but it would again be the in £15,000 region.

#### **For And Against**

5. Both organisations offer a route for the Assembly to network with the wider European community. For membership to be effective the Assembly would need to show commitment at political and official level to gain full value. The financial commitment, although significant, needs to be considered alongside the human resource implications of attending meetings and building up the Assembly's profile.
6. In view of this, it would not be sensible for the Assembly to join both organisations at the same time. A more measured approach would be to join one of them and use the experience to evaluate in practice the benefits of European networking. Joining one of them now does not rule out the possibility of the joining the other at a later stage.
7. On balance, the CPMR seems to offer a better starting place for the

Assembly than the AER for the following reasons:

- It seems better organised and their presentation to the Committee was more effective;
- CPMR has a clearer policy focus. It has fewer members, is more manageable, concentrates more effectively on detail;
- CPMR produces detailed papers on policies; AER is less inclined to do so.
- Through its division into "arcs", the CPMR offers clearer geographical communities of interest while still offering the wider benefits of a larger pan-European group;
- AER has more eclectic membership; may not be the best starting point;

## **Recommendation**

4. That the Assembly applies for membership to the CPMR as soon as possible with a view to being presented as a new member at this year's AGM in Oporto, Portugal on 20/21 September. The decision-making

powers rest with the First Minister but a steer from the Assembly will lend weight and authority to any application.

5. That the Assembly maintains contact with the AER at official level. When – and if – the Assembly has established itself in the CPMR it may be worth looking again at the AER.

**Des Clifford**

**European and External Affairs Directorate**