



► **Commission des Iles CRPM** ►

► **CPMR Islands Commission** ►

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# 35th Annual Conference of the CPMR Islands Commission

25 June 2015, European Parliament (Brussels, BE)

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Comisión de las Islas ▶ Comissão das Ilhas ▶ Commissione delle Isole

Saarte Komisjon ▶ Kummissjoni ta'Gúejjer ▶ Ø Kommission

# 35th Annual Conference of the CPMR Islands Commission

25 June 2015, European Parliament (Brussels, BE)

## FINAL DECLARATION

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The Island Region Authorities gathered in Brussels (Belgium) on 25 June in the framework of the 35th Annual Conference of the CPMR Islands Commission:

Açores (PT), Baleares (ES), Bornholm (DK), Canarias (ES), Cyprus (District Offices), Gotland (SE), Guadeloupe (FR), La Réunion (FR), Madeira (PT), Martinique (FR), Polynésie Française (FR), Saaremaa/Hiiumaa (EE), Orkney (UK), Shetland (UK), Sardegna (IT), Sicilia (IT), Western Isles (UK)

### **Adopt the following Declaration:**

#### **Sustainable energy**

1. The **Island Region Authorities** having in mind that:
  - Island regions have common and specific permanent characteristics and features that clearly distinguish them from mainland regions. Article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union recognises that island regions as a whole face permanent handicaps that require particular attention.
2. In relation to commitments to the EU climate goals:
  - Islands have made so far considerable efforts to contribute to the EU climate goals by signing up to the “Pact of Islands” initiative. However, no properly funded Secretariat for the Pact of Islands is in place and islands feel that they are not well represented in the Secretariat of the Covenant of Mayors.
3. In relation to energy insularity:
  - Islands often lack diversification of energy supply, face supply monopolies, seldom have the possibility to switch to natural gas due to lack of gas networks and as a consequence have significant potential for CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduction;
  - Islands are usually highly dependent on imported fossil fuels, having constraints in accessing mainland energy networks.

4. In relation to energy prices:
  - Islands face higher fuel costs, compared to the mainland, which hinder competitiveness and socio-economic development;
  - Island populations often suffer from high percentages of fuel poverty.
5. In relation to renewable energy, energy efficiency:
  - Renewable energy is often in abundance in European islands and its development can have a significant impact on alleviating islands' permanent structural handicaps and can provide significant socio-economic benefits;
  - Directive 2009/28/EC of 23 April 2009 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources and amending and subsequently repealing Directives 2001/77/EC and 2003/30/EC instructs that electricity producers from renewable sources in island regions (among others), should, whenever feasible, benefit from reasonable connection costs in order to ensure that they are not unfairly disadvantaged in comparison with producers situated in more central, more industrialised and more densely populated areas;
  - Technical restrictions in the grids of autonomous island systems, saturated interconnection cables with the mainland and/or discriminatory transmission tariffs do not allow high renewable energy exploitation and also inhibit renewable energy exports;
  - Energy efficiency potential is high but investments are less attractive due to lack of economies of scale.
6. In relation to human capacity:
  - Islands often lack the necessary technical expertise and organisational capacity to develop local energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.
7. In relation to innovation
  - Islands' potential to develop and demonstrate excellence in a series of economic sectors, such as buildings, tourism, transport, energy production and management, waste and water management, agriculture, fisheries etc. is a great step towards sustainability and also an opportunity to increase competitiveness, create innovation jobs and trigger growth.

**They call on the European institutions to:**

8. Recognise the potential of islands to contribute to the EU climate goals and duly support the "Pact of Islands" as a distinctive initiative, appropriately served by a Secretariat with a clear island dimension.
9. Within the Energy Union framework, recognise the importance of interconnections between islands and the mainland to increase security of supply, treat islands as "energy islands", secure affordable energy for all citizens and address energy poverty
10. Address the market failures that often occur in islands as a result of limited size and isolation and propose appropriate effective exemptions
11. Extend and expand existing technical assistance and capacity building programmes and/or platforms that can assist local and regional authorities to develop sustainable energy investments and/or share experiences with each other
12. Adopt the "smart islands" initiative as complementary to "Smart Cities and Communities", support it and encourage innovative solutions that can promote excellence and growth in islands.

13. The implementation process for EU Cohesion Policy for 2014 – 2020 is now well underway. As operational programmes for ESI funds are on the verge of providing much needed support to economic development within European regions, the state of economic, social and territorial cohesion in Europe is a grave cause for concern.

### **The Island Region authorities:**

14. Are concerned about the rise of regional disparities between European regions, a trend which has been exacerbated by the effects of the 2008 financial crisis. The latest publication of EUROSTAT regional GDP figures for 2012 and 2013 are testimony to the increasing development gap between the centre and the periphery of Europe. Other indicators which go beyond measuring economic production and that take into account islands specificities, such as the regional competitiveness index (which comprises a suite of 73 difference indicators) confirm such a trend. The additional costs in islands also need to be taken into account.
15. Stress that if the latest regional GDP statistics were used to calculate regional eligibility for Structural Funds (2011, 2012 and 2013 average, as opposed to the 2007, 2008 and 2009 baseline), thirty one regions would move down a category, i.e. from “more developed” to “transition” regions or from “transition” to “less developed”, whilst only one would move up. Five Island regional authorities (South Aegean, North Aegean, Crete, Ionian Islands and Sardinia) would be concerned.
16. Are particularly concerned about the complete lack of attention provided by the new European Commission to territorial cohesion or cohesion policy as an EU policy, these two terms are woefully lacking in Commission President Juncker’s Ten Point priorities or any of his communication since the start of his mandate.
17. Disagree with the European Commission assessment provided in the 6<sup>th</sup> Cohesion Report, which brushes aside the idea that islands should get additional funding (‘permanent funds’) or special treatment by way of compensation for their geographic characteristics. The same report even goes as far as saying that some of these areas 'have succeeded in achieving a relatively high rate of growth and becoming 'high income' regions' whilst adding that 'in a 21st century economy, the inherent characteristics in question can be as much a stimulus to growth as an obstacle'. Such statements completely contradict the EU Treaty and in particular Article 174.

### **In light of this, they:**

18. Call on the European institutions to fully consider the challenges of island regional authorities – accessibility and the resulting territorial overcosts being one of them – within the emerging debate on the post-2020 Cohesion Policy. Issues include the role of island regional authorities within Cohesion Policy programmes management and delivery, identifying and developing suitable methodologies comparing the challenges faced by islands at both NUTS 2 and NUTS 3 levels, and ensuring that the post-2020 Structural Funds allocation methodology includes an islands dimension.
19. Commit to working within the Islands Commission of the CPMR on developing evidence-based arguments over the coming three years to ensure that the specific situation of islands is taken into account, in line with corresponding articles of the EU Treaty, in time for the review of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) which is due at the end of 2016.

## Investment Plan ("Juncker" Plan)

### The Island Region authorities:

20. Are concerned that islands, often representing small economic markets and higher investment risks, might fail to attract investors' interest and the anticipated private funding and therefore might eventually not benefit from the Juncker Plan.
21. Are concerned that islands might not have the appropriate facilities, capacity, or expertise to set-up financial instruments to benefit from such initiatives and Funds.

### In light of this, they:

22. Endorse the CPMR Policy Message on the Juncker Plan.
23. Call on the European Commission to adopt a targeted approach to islands and other regions that risk being left on the side-lines of such EU initiatives, to stimulate capacity building in those areas and ensure equal opportunities.

## Accessibility

### 24. The Island Region Authorities having in mind:

- Article 170 on Trans-European Networks of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union stresses that: "Within the framework of a system of open and competitive markets, action by the Community shall aim at promoting the interconnection and interoperability of national networks as well as access to such networks. It shall take account in particular of the need to link island, landlocked and peripheral regions with the central regions of the Community."

### In light of this, they:

25. Endorse the CPMR Accessibility campaign aiming to bring the subject of the accessibility of maritime regions back to the top of the EU's Transport Agenda.
26. Welcome the organisation of a seminar on adapting Motorways of the Sea to local situations in an island, specifically Palma de Mallorca, in September 2015.

## Migration

### The Island Region authorities:

27. Express their solidarity with the islands of the Mediterranean that bear a significant responsibility with regard to the humanitarian emergencies faced during recent years.
28. Consider that migration flows to Europe is a European issue and should be dealt with as such.
29. Endorse the awareness campaign of the CPMR Secretariat "We Are All Mediterranean".
30. Welcome the creation of a CPMR Task Force to develop a proposal on Migration.
31. Urge the European Commission to give Regional Authorities direct access to the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) to provide them with the means to deal faster and more accurately with the problems immigrants are facing.

**Unanimously adopted (1 abstention)**

# ADMINISTRATIVE DECISIONS

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## **Election of the President and the Bureau of the Islands Commission**

The Convener of the Orkney Islands, Mr Steven HEDDLE is unanimously re-elected as President of the CPMR Islands Commission for one year.

The following list of members of the Islands Commission Political Bureau is adopted. This list will be completed during the meeting of the Islands Commission to be held in parallel with the CPMR General Assembly in Florence (4-6 November 2015).

## **Next General Assembly**

Date and place to be defined in Florence. Regions interested in hosting our next GA are invited to contact the secretariat.

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## **List of the CPMR Islands Commission Bureau**

(Elected in Brussels, June 2015)

- **President**

Steven HEDDLE, Convener, Orkney Islands Council (UK)

- ***Alternate representative of President of the Islands Commission***

Georgios HATZIMARKOS, Governor, South Aegean (GR)

- **Vice Presidents**

### CYPRUS

Ermis KLOKKARIS, Chief Town Planning Officer, Department of Town Planning and Housing (CY)

### DENMARK

Winni GROSBØLL, Mayor, Bornholms Regionskommune (DK)

### ESTONIA

Kaido KAASIK, Mayor, County Governor, County Government of Saaremaa (EE)

### FRANCE - To be nominated

### GREECE

Georgios HATZIMARKOS, Governor, South Aegean (GR)

### ITALY - To be nominated

### MALTA

Anton REFALO, Minister of State, Ministry for Gozo (MT)

### PORTUGAL

Rodrigo OLIVEIRA, Subsecretário Regional da Presidência para as Relações Externas, Governo Regional dos Açores (PT)

### SPAIN - To be nominated

### SWEDEN

Meit FOHLIN, Vice-Mayor, Gotlands Kommun (SE)

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