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Dear Readers,

You have in your hands (or most probably you are looking at it on your screen) the annual report of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions. At the beginning of the working period, we summarise in a handful of pages a year full of impactful actions, significant meetings, published reports and conducted analysis. A lot has happened and been accomplished since the last General Assembly!

2022 meant for CPMR members the return of live reunions and vibrant conversations. During our statutory meetings in Catalunya and Skåne, we confirmed that our networking skills were intact after too many months of online discussions and absent coffee breaks.

Acting in the ever-changing European landscape, the CPMR has kept moving forward, driving debate and conveying the common voice of regions to purposefully defend their citizens interests. The aftermath of the Covid pandemic as well as the ongoing war in Ukraine have influenced the programme of European action, and thus our policy work. During this period, the CPMR has achieved important successes on key issues for its member regions and has influenced the course of the EU policies most relevant to them.

The current global situation, in particular the energy and climate crisis that Europe and the world are facing, makes European policies more interlinked than ever. The multi-disciplinary and cross-policy approach of the CPMR provides an added value to our organisation, and helps us in our endeavor to support social, economic, and territorial cohesion. Turn the page to keep reading about the CPMR’s work on Cohesion, European budget, Transport, Climate, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Energy and Migration.

Through the work undertaken with our Geographical Commissions, our working groups and task-forces, the numerous events we organise and attend throughout the year, our involvement in cooperation projects and our partnerships with like-minded platforms and associations across geographical areas, the CPMR ensures that peripheral and maritime regions are at the heart of the European playing field.

Many are the challenges ahead, but by acting together and fostering cooperation among our territories, we will achieve substantial improvements for our Regions. With war at the gates of the European Union, the rise of nationalism still making the front pages, and other complex political realities in Europe and beyond, it is our duty to stay united, and vouch for the values of democracy and peace.

We wish you a peaceful reading!

Cees Loggen
President of the CPMR
Regional Minister of Noord-Holland Province

Eleni Marianou
Secretary General of the CPMR
Ensuring that territorial cohesion features prominently in the EU agenda and multi-level governance is at the heart of a strong cohesion policy remain the main objectives of the CPMR work. For the past year, the CPMR focused extensively on the implementation of 2021-2027 cohesion policy programmes. However, the aftermath of the COVID19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have put cohesion policy in the spotlight with the presentation of new legislative proposals requiring additional analysis and advocacy efforts on behalf of regional authorities (CARE, FAST-CARE, REPowerEU). Furthermore, the CPMR has launched an early reflection on the future of cohesion policy in the wake of the 8th Cohesion Report.

Reflecting on the 8th Cohesion Report | The presentation of the 8th Cohesion Report by the European Commission has been a major step kicking off the discussions on the future of the policy. The CPMR positioned itself on the report with a relevant analysis that was widely shared among high-level European Commission officials, relevant members of the European Parliament and Member States’ representatives. Political messages in this regard were conveyed by CPMR representatives in the Informal Council meetings on Cohesion organised under the French and Czech Presidencies - where the CPMR was the sole organisation to participate - and the Cohesion Forum organised by the European Commission (both held in March 2022). Additionally, CPMR members were able to have a fruitful discussion on the 8th Cohesion Report with the Commissioner for Regional Policy Elisa Ferreira during the CPMR Political Bureau in Barcelona (March 2022). As part of our advocacy work, the CPMR actively engaged with members of the European Parliament and cohesion policy attachés of the Permanent Representations to the EU in order to exchange views and fruitfully influence the opinions drafted by both institutions on the 8th Cohesion Report.

New legislative initiatives and consequences for the future of cohesion policy | In relation to new legislative files (CARE, FAST-CARE, REPowerEU), the CPMR has provided comprehensive analyses of the regulatory elements and has been in regular contact with key decision makers to table amendments. The CPMR has stood out for opening the debate over the future of cohesion policy and how the latest Commission proposals, including the Recovery and Resilience Facility, will contribute to shaping it. In this sense, a series of reflection papers have been published focusing on critical aspects such as the fragmentation of cohesion policy or the role of cohesion policy as emergency-response instrument. This work has attracted significant attention among decision-makers and analysts positioning CPMR as a prominent actor in the debate. CPMR members were able to discuss and exchange views on the most pressing issues in relation to cohesion policy in a meeting with DG REGIO Director General, Marc Lemaitre (June 2022).
Setting the agenda on Macro-regions

In the past year the CPMR has maintained a leading role in the reflection on sea basin and macro-regional strategies. The task force on Macro-regions has provided an ideal platform for CPMR members to exchange ideas and experiences and define joint actions. Building on this, the CPMR has adopted in March 2022 a new policy position focusing both on horizontal aspects of existing strategies and emerging strategies. In the wake of the document, the CPMR has engaged with both EU commissions official and EP members to give impetus to the political work around the strategies.

COHESION POLICY

In the framework of the #CohesionAlliance, a coalition of the leading European associations of cities and regions and the European Committee of the Regions who defend that EU cohesion policy must continue to be a pillar of the EU’s future, the CPMR took part in the European Summit of Regions and Cities (March 2022). Through the Cohesion Alliance events the CPMR expanded its own messages through the publication of a common statement on the 8th Cohesion Report.
Since its creation in 1973, the CPMR has stressed the key role of transport in ensuring connectivity and territorial accessibility defending its member regions’ interests. These two major challenges for peripheral maritime regions are combined with the need to ensure that transport contributes to fight climate change and that the infrastructure is adapted to its impacts.

Two legislative packages impacting territorial accessibility (the Fit for 55 package and the Winter package) were published in 2021, so the CPMR dedicated most of its attention to analyse their content, including the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T).

Ensuring that the TEN-T is on the right tracks | The TEN-T has proven to be essential for Europe’s sustainable development and territorial accessibility over the last years and will be key to deliver the European Green Deal. The CPMR, therefore, prepared to influence its revision since 2018 by meeting the Directorate General for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE) and key Members of the European Parliament on a regular basis while drafting a series of concrete proposals to enhance the Regulation with its Transport Working group.

In December 2021, the long-awaited revision proposal was presented by the European Commission. The CPMR General Secretariat promptly analysed the key features of the proposed TEN-T.

At these occasions, CPMR member Regions welcomed important improvements included in DG MOVE’s proposal, containing many of CPMR proposals, such as the alignment of core network and rail freight corridors, the inclusion of territorial accessibility as an objective for the whole network, a new approach to maritime transport very similar to the approach defended by the CPMR for years, and a more inclusive definition of urban nodes.

As a result of this intense first semester, the Political Bureau of the CPMR adopted a policy position in June 2022 that allowed the Transport Working group to draft concrete amendments to the proposed Regulation to be passed-on to the European Parliament.

Regions at the forefront to deliver climate neutral territorial accessibility: The Regions MOVE initiative | On 14 October 2021 the Transport Session of the CPMR General Assembly featured the President of the European Parliament Transport Committee, Ms Karima Delli and Mr Pablo Fabregas, Member of cabinet of Commissioner Vălean. The exchange of views and presentations by Member Regions lead the CPMR to launch an initiative aiming to identify Regions’ best practices contributing to decarbonising the transport sector as well as to identify the main obstacles they face in this endeavour.

The first semester of 2022 was the occasion for the CPMR to launch a survey aiming to provide policy recommendations to European Institutions based on concrete examples helping to develop climate neutral territorial accessibility. It gathered contributions from all its Geographical Commissions. The Regions MOVE
initiative feeds into the CPMR ‘Territories Matter’ initiative with two perspectives. With an eye on the long term to influence the future of EU transport policies and the broader EU investment policy framework for the next Multiannual Financial Framework. With a shorter-term perspective to influence the work of the co-legislators on transport-related texts of the Fit for 55 Package, the setting of the CEF 2.0 call for proposals and work programmes and, of course, the reviewed TEN-T.

Advocating for a Fit for 55 Package that takes into consideration territorial diversity | In summer 2021, the European Commission published the legislative Package that was announced as a key element of the European Green Deal. Before that, the CPMR and its Transport Working Group had contributed to the public and targeted consultation on the FuelEU Maritime and the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Directive. The General Secretariat analysed the different elements of the Package, including the ones related to transport and territorial accessibility. It was invited to exchanges views with the rapporteurs on the Fuel EU Maritime, contributed in SEARICA intergroup meetings and kept constant contact with MEPs involved in the work of the ENVI and TRAN Committees of the European Parliament. While fully sharing the overall objective of drastically reducing the emissions of the transport sector, the CPMR remains concerned with regard to the harmful consequences of territorial accessibility some of the measures included in the package would have.

Aviation | In November, the CPMR – represented by Vice-President Miguélez – participated in a round table discussion on sustainable aviation with Commissioner for Transport Adina Vălean and French Minister for Transport Jean-Baptiste Djebbari. The key role of aviation for connectivity and social and economic cohesion were stressed.

The round table discussion fed into the preparation of the Toulouse Aviation Summit organised by the French Presidency of the European Council and to the Toulouse Declaration on sustainable aviation gathering EU Member States, third countries, and key stakeholders, including the CPMR, of the aviation ecosystem.

Throughout the last year, the CPMR engaged with key Members of the European Parliament, officials of the European Commission and industry representatives on the revision of Regulation 1008/2008 (to which the CPMR contributed to) and on the ReFuelEU Aviation proposal and revision of the ETS concerning aviation.

Naturally, the TEN-T will remain a priority for the CPMR. A key step will be the adoption of the report of the European Parliament in early 2023 on which the CPMR will dedicate most of its efforts.

The CPMR will also continue monitoring the Transport related legislation of the Fit for 55 Package (i.e. the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation proposal), and this by adopting a twofold approach: ensuring access to clean energy and a sustainable transport for all, and ensuring that the Package’s measures consider regional specificities and do not jeopardise accessibility.

The CPMR will continue its work on territorial accessibility analysing, for instance, the impact of the new TEN-T maps and will closely monitor the CEF 2.0 calls with an eye on the 2021-2027 mid-term review where it will dedicate its efforts to ensuring that its member Regions needs are addressed adequately. It will also continue its work relating to aviation (especially the revision of Regulation 1008/2008) thanks also to the creation of an informal aviation group.
Restoring, protecting and sustainably exploiting Oceans and seas represent an international and European policy priority. Over the last year, the CPMR has significantly strengthened and enlarged its advocacy activities to contribute to the political debate on the implementation of the most important EU maritime policies. In this respect, the CPMR highlighted the key role regional authorities play by shaping place-based policies and co-funding Research and Innovation strategies to boost the development of sustainable blue economy across Europe.

Common Fisheries Policy | The CPMR General Secretariat contributed to the public consultation on the EC’s report on the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy and called for a stronger and more tangible EU support to allow regional authorities to tackle climate and socio-economic challenges affecting the EU fisheries and aquaculture sector. Additionally, the CPMR co-organised with the regional government of the “Xunta de Galicia” a two-day conference on the state of play of the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and on the regional perspectives for its improvement.

CPMR at the heart of the debate | To disseminate its political and technical messages the CPMR participated and contributed to the main international and EU maritime events:

• A delegation of 12 CPMR members participated in the “One Ocean Summit” held in Brest in February 2022 under the EU French Presidency. In that occasion the CPMR secretariat organised a workshop on 11th February which registered the participation of Commissioner Virginius Sinkevičius and Catherine Chabaud, member of the intergroup SEARICA of the European Parliament;

• Vice-President, George Alexakis, backed up DG MARE Director General, Charlina Vitcheva, to close the 2022 edition of the European Maritime Days (EMD), which have been held in Ravenna (IT). In the same event, the CPMR contributed to the organisation of two workshops on the key role played by regional authorities to boost research and innovation in the fields of the blue economy and to enhance coastal resilience;

“...To ensure that our lifestyles cease to “harm” the oceans and seas we need to set a holistic approach. We need an overall vision not only with regard to oceans and seas as such, but also regarding the strong link with the coastal communities and all the factors connected therewith. The European Green Deal and the Sustainable Blue Economy Strategy represent essential steps in that direction. Nevertheless, to reach greater social, economic and environmental sustainability we need Regional governments to be fully involved in the policy design and implementation phases of more integrated European maritime policies”

GEORGES ALEXAKIS, CPMR Vice-President, Maritime Affairs
Vice-President of Crete Region
In times of great challenges, we need to strengthen our cooperation around matters that we deeply value, as the future of our Seas, Rivers, Islands and Coastal areas and the SEArica Intergroup has demonstrated to be the essential tool to do so.

TONINO PICULA
Member of the European Parliament
Chair of the SEArica intergroup

The CPMR holds the Secretariat of the Seas, Rivers, Islands and Coastal Areas Intergroup, which brings together 107 MEPs from 23 Member States and 6 political groups. In times of great challenges and geopolitical instability, the SEArica Intergroup and its Secretariat have continued to bring forward in the political arena key issues related to maritime and coastal areas and represent the voice of these territories.

At the occasion of the SEArica Board meeting held in February 2022, two new SEArica Vice-Chairs, MEP Erik Bergkvist and MEP Josianne Cutajar, have been appointed to cover emerging priorities identified by the Intergroup, respectively the Arctic and SMEs & Digitalisation.

Since October 2021, the SEArica Secretariat has organised 14 strategic events, gathering representatives from the EU institutions, regional authorities, and relevant stakeholders from the public and private sector. More than 30 CPMR Regions, from all sea-basins, have been involved in debates about key maritime issues such as sustainable tourism in coastal and insular regions, maritime transport, marine litter, blue economy, circular economy, blue skills, energy transition or renewable and marine energies, alongside Members of the European Parliament and European Commission high level representatives.

Maritime Policies need for a more ambitious EU financial support and must be provided with a new multilevel governance. The CPMR will continue to advocate for a larger and stronger role for Regional authorities to allow them to fully harvest their strategical and political assets to boost the development of sustainable blue economy across Europe.

Some of the events held by Searica in this period have had a strong geographical focus and have been organised in cooperation with CPMR’s Geographical Commissions. As concrete examples, the event organised on Marine Litter in the Danube and Black Sea Region, the Islands and Cohesion policy event, or the EU Arctic policy event.

These debates provide a platform for CPMR members to discuss priority topics and engage with European stakeholders. Looking forward, the SEArica secretariat aims to continue stimulating debates around major topics as biodiversity protection, digitalisation of blue sectors, climate change adaptation and promote concrete actions in support of a comprehensive approach to maritime-related policies.

The CPMR participated in the launching event of the Charter on the "EU Mission Restoring our Oceans and Seas", which took place on 30th June in Lisbon;

• The CPMR general secretariat co-organised with DG MARE and Skåne Region a brokerage event on how Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) contribute to the development of maritime coastal tourism across Europe.

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The transition to a climate neutral and resilient Europe powered by clean energy is at the heart of the European Union’s policy making. However, for the success, the transition needs to be coupled with a territorial approach, involving regions and recognising their specificities.

In the last year, the Fit for 55 package, aimed at the implementation of the European Green Deal and the 2030 climate and energy targets; the implementation of the EU Adaptation Strategy; and RePowerEU, aimed at the acceleration of the energy transition, have been central for CPMR’s work. In this respect, the CPMR organised and participated in meetings with key stakeholders and produced technical documents.

**Working for a just and place-based transition** | In fall 2021, the CPMR met with the European Green Deal advisor of European Council President Charles Michel, following the publication of the Fit for 55 package legislative proposals. The CPMR shared its expectations and stressed the importance of adequately involving and funding regions, whilst considering their specificities, for a successful implementation of the package.

A CPMR delegation led by Vice-President for Climate and Energy, Richard Sjölund, participated to the 26th session of the Conference of Parties (COP26) of the UNFCCC in Glasgow in November 2021. The delegation met with different stakeholders from CPMR Member Regions to climate and energy organisations.

During COP26, the CPMR co-organised two online side-events at the EU Pavilion: ‘Facta, non verba: How cities & regions can deliver the EU Green Deal for a climate neutral future’ and ‘Water is coming! A place-based and multidisciplinary lens on coastal adaptation’.

In the former, CPMR Vice-President Richard Sjölund stressed the key role of regions in delivering the European Green Deal. In the latter, the need to strengthen cooperation between the scientific community and regions as well as a regional approach to coastal adaptation was discussed. The CPMR was represented by its President Cees Loggen who shared examples and policy solutions.

“In solutions must be tailored to the specificities of the regions and rely on their expertise and strengths. Regions are anchored to their territories, so they are best placed to ensure that actions and policies are in line with the actual needs on the ground”.  

*Cees Loggen, President of the CPMR @ COP26*

In Spring 2022, the CPMR participated to the Climate Chance Summit held in Nantes under the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The results of the Regions Act! report were presented and discussed. At the beginning of May, the CPMR was invited to share the coastal adaptation-related outcomes of Regions Act! to the ‘Mediterranean and Black Sea scoping workshop’ aimed at nourishing the Knowledge Hub on Seal Level Rise initiative by JPI Climate and JPI Oceans.
The CPMR organised two workshops at the 2022 European Maritime Days in Ravenna. In the ‘Maritime regions at the core of EU cooperation to enhance coastal resilience’, the CPMR Vice President Richard Sjölund shared many examples on how CPMR regions are contributing to coastal resilience and their crucial role.

In Summer 2022, the CPMR together with businesses, investor groups, local authorities, trade unions and civil society groups – working together as the Coalition for Higher Ambition – issued a joint letter ahead of the Environment Council’s discussion on 28 June on key files of the Fit for 55 package. The letter called to step up climate ambition, tackle energy security, energy poverty and climate crisis at the same time, by supporting a green, sustainable, territorially balanced and socially fair energy transition, and fully and effectively mobilise existing EU and national funds towards this purpose.

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Throughout the year, the CPMR via its statutory meetings, Climate Task Force meetings and the European Parliament Intergroup SEArica engaged with different stakeholders (e.g. Members of the European Parliament, officials of the European Commission, think tanks) on a wide array of topics, such as the legislative proposals of the Fit for 55 package (e.g. Social Climate Fund and Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Directive), proposals of REPowerEU (e.g. Solar Strategy) and the implementation of the EU Adaptation Strategy.

**Regions Act!** | Via the CPMR Climate Task Force and other fora, such as COP26 or the Climate Chance Summit, the CPMR has disseminated the outcomes of the ‘Regions Act! CPMR Regions acting for climate neutrality’ initiative. That is, by showing how its Member Regions are concretely contributing to the European Green Deal through their strategies, sectorial policies, and projects.

Following the dissemination phase, the CPMR has started to spur the creation of a Regions Act! community aimed at the exchange between CPMR Members on best practices, barriers, and policy solutions.

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The CPMR will continue to work for a climate and energy transition that is just and has a place-based approach which involves regions and recognises their specificities. For instance, the CPMR will continue its work on the Fit for 55 package and on RePowerEU by following (and influencing) the political debate. The CPMR will also continue to foster the establishment of the Regions Act! community and promote the work of its Member Regions for a resilient, prosperous and climate neutral Europe.

**Letter of the Coalition for Higher Ambition**

The involvement of regions in the whole policy cycle is a precondition for a successful implementation of the European Green Deal. We have competences on key policy areas for the ecological transition and we know the needs of our territories and their strengths.”

Richard Sjölund, Vice-President of the CPMR, Climate & Energy Vice-Chair of the Board, Regional Council of Ostrobothnia
The CPMR is promoting the Migrant Integration Policy Regional Index (MIPEX-R) developed under the project and which currently analyses the performance of 25 European regions. MIPEX-R has raised significant interest, including among the European Commission and Committee of the Regions. The CPMR believes there is potential to further develop the tool at a wider EU level as a means to improve monitoring and boost the multi-level governance approach.

As coordinator of the REGIN project (Regions for Migrants and Refugees Integration) involving six of its member regions, the CPMR has been using the project results to feed into its advocacy work and foster concrete cooperation opportunities between CPMR members to exchange experiences and knowledge on the topic. In this context it organised a final conference in February 2022 with the participation of high level representatives from CPMR regions, EU institutions and international organisations to debate how to further consolidate and promote the regions’ role in the integration and inclusion of third country nationals and beneficiaries of international protection. In a video address, Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva Johansson acknowledged that regions play a pivotal role between the local level and national and EU levels, and that they are pioneers in this field.

In order to help regional authorities improve their policies on integration and inclusion, the CPMR is promoting the Migrant Integration Policy Regional Index (MIPEX-R) developed under the project and which currently analyses the performance of 25 European regions. MIPEX-R has raised significant interest, including among the European Commission and Committee of the Regions. The CPMR believes there is potential to further develop the tool at a wider EU level as a means to improve monitoring and boost the multi-level governance approach.

A voice in the Conference on the Future of Europe | Between December 2021 and April 2022, CPMR President, Cees Loggen, participated in the Plenary Sessions and Migration Working Group meetings of the Conference on the Future of Europe as part of the delegation of local and regional authority representatives. During the debates, the President put forward key messages from the regional perspective, some of which were included in the final proposals. He expressed particular concern about the urgency of tackling climate change as a factor in root causes of migration by supporting resilience and adaptation in vulnerable third countries.

Consolidating and promoting the regions’ role in integration and inclusion | The CPMR continued to work with its Migration Task Force to consolidate the regions’ role and actions and raise awareness of their needs in relation to EU integration policies, within a multi-governance, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral approach.

Regions stand in solidarity with Ukraine | In Barcelona on 25 March 2022 the CPMR Political Bureau adopted a Statement: The CPMR stands by Ukraine in full solidarity. It condemns Russia’s unprovoked attack on Ukraine, expresses support for Ukrainian local and regional authorities and for the territorial integrity of Ukraine and highlights that local and regional authorities are at the frontline of the first reception of refugees.

Photo: European Union 2022
CPMR members have since been discussing and exchanging experiences on how regional and local authorities are responding to the Ukrainian crisis through their solidarity actions, humanitarian aid and reception and integration of refugees. Sources of EU funding allowing regions to deal with the fall-out from the war have also been an issue for debate further to the introduction of flexibility to Cohesion Policy funding for this purpose.

Beyond the migration issue, regional authorities are also joining forces to assist Ukraine in the task of rebuilding the country and in its EU accession process. The CPMR is actively supporting the “European Alliance of cities and regions for the reconstruction of Ukraine” set up by the Committee of the Regions with the support of the European Commission - DG NEAR, and took part in its official launch on 30 June 2022. This Alliance will work within the framework of the Ukraine Reconstruction Platform co-led by the European Commission and Ukrainian government.

While a few steps have been made on the EU Migration and Asylum Pact, notably with Member States agreeing to implement a temporary voluntary solidarity mechanism, key parts of the package are still waiting to be adopted. The CPMR will continue to monitor negotiations, underlining the importance of taking into account the regional dimension.

In its dialogue with EU institutions, the CPMR will keep highlighting the need for better governance and sustainable and long-term support and funding from the EU to help regions and their local authorities tackle specific challenges they are facing, build capacities and improve the outcomes of regional action. This will be all the more pertinent to ensure effective responses to the needs of Ukrainian refugees as well as other people seeking international protection.

In addition, the CPMR will look at how its regions can develop solidarity with Ukraine on a more long-term level through the recently launched Alliance for the reconstruction of Ukraine.

"We must not forget that our regions are providing care and support not only for Ukrainian refugees, but for all beneficiaries of international protection that arrive in our territories. We cover their basic needs when they arrive, but just as importantly we work, together with other relevant stakeholders, to ensure they feel included in our societies."

Annika Annerby Jansson, President of Region Skåne, Chair of the CPMR Migration Task Force
“Territories Matter”, the CPMR reflection initiative to lay the ground for future proposals on key EU investment policies of regional relevance, kicked-off this year with two seminars.

A MORE TERRITORIAL EU ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK FOR A POST-COVID SCENARIO | The first seminar touched upon potential solutions to strengthen the territorial dimension of the European Semester and EU investment policies, with a specific attention to the Recovery and Resilience Facility. Following the extensive work carried out by the CPMR in assessing the involvement of its members in the recovery and resilience plans, one of the main demands concerned the institutionalisation of regional authorities in the European Semester. Inputs gathered during the seminar allowed the CPMR to provide a contribution to the Public Consultation on the review of the EU’s economic governance framework, striving for a stronger territorial dimension of the framework.

SEEKING RESPONSES TO CHALLENGES AND TERRITORIAL NEEDS ON EU INVESTMENT SUPPORTING THE CLIMATE TRANSITION | The second seminar aimed to discuss about how EU investment instruments should meet the REPowerEU objectives and the broader EU climate and energy ambition, not forgetting territorial cohesion and how regions could be more involved. Each seminar counted on the participation of relevant experts from EU think-thanks who reacted to the contribution of the CPMR members in very active discussions. The main ideas and messages raised during the seminars will contribute to the subsequent discussions under the initiative and the final policy paper in 2023.

The creation of a CPMR Task Force on Gender-Related Issues was voted in 2020 by the CPMR Political Bureau, on the initiative of the Basque Country, with the objective of ensuring the mainstream of gender equality in all EU policy areas, while promoting and strengthening the role of regions in this field.

“Gender Equality is not only a value that the EU defends, but we all have a role across the EU to defend it. I therefore welcome the creation of your Task Force as well as your initiative on the political declaration voicing the essential role of the EU regions in gender equality policies”

Helena Dalli, European Commissioner for Equality

REGIONS, STRATEGIC PARTNERS FOR A UNION OF EQUALITY | In line with the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and the objectives stated in the CPMR Gender Political Declaration approved in June 2021, the Gender Task Force reunited on several occasions to advance together this year. Regions seized the momentum of the EU Recovery to exchange best practices and discuss future EU opportunities to tackle gender-related issues. With the participation of DG REGIO and the European Institute for Gender Equality, they built knowledge about two EU gender indexes and exchanged views on their potential replicability and application to assess regional realities and shape better gender policies. On the occasion of the UN 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the CPMR co-organised an official side event to discuss the role of regions in bridging gender and climate change issues.
Getting closer to the Atlantic Macro-Region | After receiving support of Spanish and Portuguese Secretaries of State in 2021, the Atlantic Arc Commission (AAC) met with the cabinet of French Secretary of State for European Affairs, which led to positive discussions on the added value of the Atlantic Macro-Region. The initiative has been supported by Renew Europe MEPs who addressed a joint letter to the French government. The AAC also promoted an increased role of regions in the Atlantic Strategy governance.

Addressing the Atlantic potential in Offshore Renewable Energies | Considering REPowerEU Communication, the AAC adopted a political declaration addressing key messages to national governments to boost Atlantic Offshore Renewable Energies and sent a letter to three Commissioners calling for more funding for 2023-24 Horizon Europe work-programme.

Joining forces against Ocean Pollution | Through a pledge, the AAC set a series of common ambitions aiming at placing AAC regions at the forefront of prevention and reduction of ocean pollution. These messages were promoted at the UN Ocean Conference 2022.

Looking forward | The AAC will prepare for the Spanish Presidency of the EU Council to concretise the Atlantic Macro-Region while pursuing its working groups’ activities to fulfill the priorities set by the AAC Presidency for 2022-24.

Through high-level meetings, connections with member states, collaboration with the European Parliament and other EU Institutions, the Atlantic Arc Commission has produced and used the right tools and mechanisms to get even closer to our objective to see the Council giving mandate to the European Commission to develop an Atlantic Macro-Region”

Iñigo Urkullu, President of the Basque Government, Presidency of the Atlantic Arc Commission

“Solidarity and cooperation with our counterparts from across the CPMR membership is needed more than ever, to enhance our voice, deal with extraordinary challenges in our neighbourhood and continue to work in commitment to our citizens and territories”

Horia Teodorescu, President of Tulcea County Council, Presidency of the Balkan & Black Sea Commission

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Looking forward | For the next period, priority will be given to main policies of interest in the area and the programmes that encourage cooperation between a wide range of stakeholders, allowing us to profit from the expertise of the CPMR from across Europe. The Memoranda of Understanding signed with key organisations and institutions in the Balkan and Black Sea area help drive forward cooperation and development in our region.

Through high-level meetings, connections with member states, collaboration with the European Parliament and other EU Institutions, the Atlantic Arc Commission has produced and used the right tools and mechanisms to get even closer to our objective to see the Council giving mandate to the European Commission to develop an Atlantic Macro-Region”

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"This year has clearly been marked by the Russian aggression of Ukraine, having a particular echo for BSC Regions living close to the Russian borders. BSC Members have expressed support for Ukraine while reiterating their commitment to deepen cooperation for a peaceful, climate neutral and prosperous Baltic Sea Region”

Jari Nahkanen, Board Member, Council of Oulu Region
President of the Baltic Sea Commission

TEN-T | Following the publication of a proposal for a new Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) Regulation by the European Commission, the Baltic Sea Commission (BSC) co-organised, together with the North Sea Commission (NSC), a seminar about how TEN-T can contribute to sustainable and economic growth in Northern Europe. Member Regions presented their views to representatives from the EU institutions on how to improve the proposal in a Position Paper.

EU Arctic Policy | The BSC Arctic Task Force welcomed the new joint EC/EEAS Communication on the Arctic published in October 2021, as a good step forward to reinforce sustainable territorial development in the Arctic. In the framework of the European Parliament’s SEArica Intergroup, the BSC Arctic Task Force discussed in June with regional and EU representatives how to turn the ambition of the new EU Arctic Policy into reality.

Looking forward | The BSC will intensify its actions towards the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2023 to encourage a Baltic Sea perspective in EU policies. In a letter addressed to the Swedish Minister for EU Affairs, the BSC shared policy priorities with Sweden. Looking ahead, the BSC will also continue the activities of its working groups, from promoting sustainable transport to clean energy and a sustainable maritime ecosystem, in line with the objectives of the Action Plan of the EUSBSR.

Blue economy, sustainability, and cohesion in the Mediterranean | Cooperation and mutual understanding between Mediterranean Regions have become imperatives for ensuring sound management of goods and services for development, sustainability and cohesion in Mediterranean territories. For this purpose, the Intermediterranean Commission (IMC) has worked on several projects on blue economy, biodiversity protection, sustainable tourism, water management, developing initiatives and synergies with Mediterranean actors such as the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). The IMC has kept participating in projects, alliances and partnerships with the aim of speeding up the shift towards sustainable economies, and contributing to the advocacy activity of the organisation, having also a positive impact on its membership.

Mobilising the Mediterranean Youth Council (MYC) | The “Intermediterranean Commission Youth Council” was created at the end of 2019, on the initiative of Regione Lazio and has evolved to a higher step and speed over the mandate. Its main aim is to transmit the vision of the youth on current issues such as the environment, employment, and equality (among others) to the highest political level and foster collaboration with policymakers at all levels.

Looking forward | Thematically speaking, the IMC’s activities on sustainable blue economy will keep going on, both through reflections with the members and through the activities of projects. Works with the Mediterranean Youth Council will be strengthened to keep developing Mediterranean dialogues with public administration, advocacy on key themes of interest for the IMC, and reinforce local democracy actions via the MYC on IMC territories. Complementary paths of action on the Mission Ocean on plastics pollution will be developed, as well as activities linked to desertification, among others.
Calling for an Islands Pact | Over the last months, the CPMR Islands Commission (IC) Presidency and Secretariat have held bilateral meetings with its Member Regions to exchange on the IC roadmap and Action Plan, as well as the islands’ socio-economic context and derived challenges. The IC has also relentlessly shown its support to the INI Report on EU Islands and Cohesion Policy calling for an Islands Pact, as reiterated in its Final Declaration adopted in Gotland last May. The European Parliament adopted the Report by an overwhelming majority on 7 June 2022, marking a historic moment for EU Islands. On that occasion, at the invitation of the REGI chair, MEP Omarjee, the CPMR Secretary General and a delegation of high representatives from Island Regions/States had the opportunity to meet with President Metsola and Commissioner Ferreira to further discuss the roadmap of implementation of an Islands Agenda.

Looking forward | The Islands Commission will seek further support for an Islands Pact during the upcoming Swedish and Spanish Presidencies of the Council of the EU. To move forward on this matter, the IC is already working on its next General Assembly in Palma. In parallel, it will continue to foster islands’ role and potential as pioneers of sustainable development via ad-hoc initiatives, actions, projects.

Encouraging youth participation | A structure for youth participation in the work of the NSC has been set. Regions are encouraged to involve representatives from their youth councils or other youth structures in the NSC work. At the Annual Business Meeting, it was agreed to allocate money for youth participation so that young people can be more involved in NSC activities.

TEN-T | The North Sea Commission has played an active role in the TEN-T revision. At our Executive Committee meeting in April, the NSC position paper on the TEN-T revision was adopted. In June 2022, the North Sea Commission transport working group, was present in Lyon during the CEF Days to promote a functional TEN-T in northern Europe.

Looking forward | The NSC transport working group will continue their lobbying efforts on the TEN-T revision in the fall, when the trilogues are taking place. Moreover, the Fit for 55 Task Force will come together in September to outline possible North Sea Commission action on the RePowerEU initiatives of the European Commission.

"EU Islands demand to play an active part in the construction of the future of Europe. A future that recognises the geographical and territorial diversity and thus the unique opportunities and challenges of the islands”
Francina Armengol i Socias, President of the Balearic Islands Government, Presidency of the Islands Commission

"With this position, I see an opportunity to strengthen the (Northern) Netherlands within the CPMR. My goal in the coming time is to ensure that the political ambitions and discussions in the NSC are backed by concrete actions. We need to work on facilitating the connection between ourselves and tangible projects, such as Interreg”
Tjisse Stelpstra, Councillor of Northern Netherlands, Presidency of the North Sea Commission

The North Sea Commission (NSC) has a new president: Councillor Tjisse Stelpstra from the Northern Netherlands was elected President at the Annual Business Meeting 2022.

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**RECENTLY STARTED**

**BLACK SEA AREA**

- **PREP4BLUE**: Preparing the ground for a successful first phase of the Mission Ocean (2022-2025)
- **TWINSOLAR**: a brand-new Horizon Europe project on the integration of solar energy production in insular territories
- **REBOOT MED**: for the recovery, experimentation and stimulation of eco-tourism in the WestMed area (EMFAF)
- **REGINA-MSP**: Fostering the role of maritime regions in Maritime Spatial Planning (EMFAF)

**INTERREG ATLANTIC AREA**

- **BRIDGE-BS**: Advancing Black Sea Research and Innovation to co-Develop Blue Growth within Resilient Ecosystems (Horizon 2020)
- **CulTourE4Youth**: Developing a regional paradigm as capacity building initiator for empowered youth employment
- **iSOL-MET**: Bridging the gap between the shipping world, maritime universities’ students and maritime professionals (Erasmus+)
- **MINE-EMI**: Maritime Innovative Network of Education for Emerging Maritime Issues (Erasmus+)
- **Clean Atlantic**: Signature of a pledge to place Atlantic Arc Regions at the forefront of prevention and reduction of ocean pollution
- **SAFER**: Providing innovative solutions for a sustainable and competitive seafood value-chain
- **FANBEST**: Consolidating cooperation on Blue Regional Smart Specialisation Strategies in the Atlantic
ONGOING PROJECTS

Next2Met: Addressing regional challenges with soft digitalisation measures that improve people’s lives and services on the ground

 ASPBAN: Acceleration services gearing up to boost the role of Ports as Hubs of the Blue Economy

AI-NURECC Plus: Fostering entrepreneurship, transnational clusters, and digital innovation hubs activities for the EUSAIR

SolaQua: Accessible, reliable, and affordable solar irrigation for Europe and beyond (Horizon 2020)

MAESHA: working towards solutions for a decarbonised energy future in Mayotte and other European islands (Horizon 2020)

RECENTLY CLOSED

REGIN: Strengthening regional capacities, policies and actions for enhanced integration outcomes

HERIT DATA, WINTER MED & DestiMED PLUS: tools and methodologies for sustainable tourism planning and management for Mediterranean regions

The Mediterranean Innovation Alliance for Sustainable Blue Bioeconomy: leading the way towards Mediterranean innovation

Closing 6 years of cooperation across the Mediterranean through Blue Growth projects

The Mediterranean leading the way towards a cooperative framework to effectively protect biodiversity

BEST MED and SMARTMED: Developing Solutions for Enhanced Mediterranean Tourism Governance