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"My second term as President has, alas, been cut short halfway through. Nonetheless, I am very proud of what we have managed to achieve as an organisation during that time. Our Regions are facing rapidly changing challenges, and the CPMR has succeeded in tackling them by bringing forward strong proposals on European budget, accessibility, cohesion policy, maritime affairs, energy, climate, migration... and by cooperating with partners throughout sea basins, showcasing once more that the Regions are one element in the response to the challenges facing Europe, and that their effective and significant involvement in European governance key in the renewal of the European political project.

I wish CPMR and its members all the best in continuing the important work on strong regions, mutual solidarity, and interconnectedness."

Cees Loggen
President of the CPMR 2020-2023
Regional Minister of Noord-Holland Province

"For the past 50 years, our association has been calling for a forward-looking vision for the European project, in which peripheral maritime regions play a meaningful role. Many are the challenges ahead, but we believe more than ever that a strong Europe is indispensable to face today’s internal and external challenges. Now more than ever it is essential that the peripheral and maritime Regions of Europe stay united around their common battles.

By acting together and fostering cooperation among our territories, we will achieve substantial improvements for our Regions and for Europe. Through its action, CPMR constitutes a platform for exchanges between its Member Regions on policy-related and technical questions. It has been shown in its over 50 years of existence: the CPMR serves as an excellent platform for effective and fruitful thinking and action."

Gunn Marit Heigesen
Acting President of the CPMR
Councillor of Vestfold og Telemark

"You are currently holding, or viewing on your screen, the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions’ annual report. In this short document we condense a year packed with important meetings and activities, published analysis and significant actions, all in pursuit of a better Europe where our member regions thrive. The CPMR celebrates this year its 50th anniversary. In 1973 in Saint Malo, a group of engaged pioneer regions, had the vision to join forces to ensure a stronger voice for the peripheral and maritime regions of Europe. The enthusiasm and will with which this group of regions founded the CPMR, has proven essential in view of the many successes and accomplishment that our association can be proud of having achieved to date.

The renewal of the European institutions in 2024 constitutes a golden opportunity to consolidate our 50-year-old organisation and succeed in placing regions at the heart of the future of Europe."

Eleni Marianou
Secretary General of the CPMR

"You are currently holding, or viewing on your screen, the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions’ annual report. In this short document we condense a year packed with important meetings and activities, published analysis and significant actions, all in pursuit of a better Europe where our member regions thrive. The CPMR celebrates this year its 50th anniversary. In 1973 in Saint Malo, a group of engaged pioneer regions, had the vision to join forces to ensure a stronger voice for the peripheral and maritime regions of Europe. The enthusiasm and will with which this group of regions founded the CPMR, has proven essential in view of the many successes and accomplishment that our association can be proud of having achieved to date.

The renewal of the European institutions in 2024 constitutes a golden opportunity to consolidate our 50-year-old organisation and succeed in placing regions at the heart of the future of Europe."
Cohesion policy is facing one of the most important rethinking of its structure and governance in its history given the lessons learnt from the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). The key objective during this period has been to ensure that the interests of our members are reflected in any policy debates, with a particular emphasis on the European Semester and simplification, forming the basis of more precise work for the incoming legislative period.

A strong call for the Simplification of Cohesion Policy | European Cohesion Policy is delivered according to the subsidiarity principle through regional and local authorities given their direct contact with existing and potential stakeholders. The current overcomplexity and disproportionate financial controls have put public authorities under a heavy administrative burden which damages the policy's performance and limits its potential. In order to address this, the CPMR has developed a policy position based on trust, equity and creativity, putting forward solutions such as a new structured dialogue among stakeholders, regulatory alignment among funds, reintroduction of trust in regional authorities and setting proportional audit and control.

High-level meeting with Budget Commissioner | The continued existence of an impactful Cohesion Policy depends on sufficient resources in the EU budget, this is why it is important for the CPMR to bring its members and their concerns directly to the top policymakers.

High level political representatives from Regions of the CPMR from Germany, Italy, Sweden and The Netherlands met with Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner for Budget and Administration, to express their position on the European Budget post 2027. Regional leaders called on the European Commission to encourage the involvement of regional and local governments in more effective and cross-cutting multilevel governance for all EU funds and financial instruments supporting investments. During the meeting, special emphasis was put on the role of regions in contributing to EU objectives and implementation of its policies under the Multiannual Financial Framework. The discussions also touched upon cohesion policy as a centrepiece of future EU investment policy, the trend of funding fragmentation and the need for an EU Budget architecture capable of tackling unforeseen crises.

Policy Position on Simplification

From left to right: Roberto Ciambetti, President of the Regional Council, Region of Veneto; Bettina Martin, Minister of Science, Culture, Federal and European Affairs, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Cees Loggen, Regional Minister of Noord-Holland Province and President of the CPMR; Anna Jähnke, Chair of the Regional Development Committee, Region Skåne; Eleni Marianou, Secretary General of the CPMR; Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner for Budget and Administration

Erik Bergkvist intervention during the Cohesion Core Group Meeting in March 2023 in Östergötland Region, in the framework of the Swedish Presidency of the EU

Full house at the Cohesion Core Group Meeting in May 2023 at the Brittany Regional Office in Brussels

 PRESS RELEASE
Renewal of the Cohesion Alliance | As a member of the Cohesion Alliance, the CPMR took part in its first high-level event in March 2023, in which Adrian Zittelli Ferrari, Director-General for European Affairs in Murcia, participated as a key speaker. On behalf of the CPMR he advocated for Cohesion Policy as the main investment policy for a balanced territorial development in all regions, highlighting its role in offering equal opportunities and support to all EU citizens, regardless of their location, while also helping them fully participate in European development and the Single Market.

"As time passes, it becomes clearer that the future will require a reformed Cohesion Policy that is better adapted to the challenges the EU faces. There is a serious need to consolidate the EU programmes and to simplify Cohesion policy for it to remain the main investment policy of the EU".

EUGENIO GIANI, President of the Tuscany Region CPMR Vice-President for Cohesion Policy

The next steps for the 2023-2024 period will focus on the future of Cohesion Policy, with particular attention on pushing further on simplification, preserving the role of regions in determining their strategies and ensuring conditionalities on regions are proportional to their responsibilities. Special research efforts will be put on how to address development traps and avoid increases in regional disparities due to lack of capacity in some regions to benefit from the increasing support in the EU for innovation and key value chains.
Connectivity and accessibility are a pre-condition for economic and social development and territorial cohesion, which can only be achieved thanks to a seamless, efficient and sustainable transportation system which leaves no region behind and underserved.

In the last year, the CPMR focused its attention and work on two key files having high impact on the accessibility and connectivity of its Member Regions by influencing and monitoring their legislative process, which are the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) and the Fit for 55 package.

Success of TEN-T amendments | Following the approval of the CPMR Policy Position in June 2022 on the TEN-T Regulation revision proposal by the European Commission, the CPMR and its Geographical Commission, thanks to the input of their Members, submitted a series of amendments both on the Regulation and its annexes (e.g. the TEN-T maps) to the Members of the European Parliament and to the Council in order to feed into their position on the dossier. Currently, the inter-institutional negotiations (trilogues) are still underway and are expected to be concluded by the end of 2023.

Many of the CPMR amendments were included in the European Parliament position in both the Regulation and in the annexes as shown by the CPMR Technical Note “On track for a revised TEN-T”. For instance, the Parliament’s position is very close to the CPMR one when it comes to governance, such as in the case of making it mandatory for the corridor coordinators to consult regional and local authorities or ensuring a broader representation in the corridors’ forum (e.g. maritime ports and inland waterways representatives or relevant regional and local authorities in urban nodes). Similarly, the extension of the definition of urban nodes to the functional urban areas, as adopted in the European Parliament position, is aligned with the position of the CPMR. It would, for instance, allow the inclusion of further key nodes and would better match mobility planning at local scale.

As for the annexes of the TEN-T, which detail the core and comprehensive network of the TEN-T, already many of the CPMR proposal were part of the European Commission proposal. However, in particular, the European Parliament position includes amendments submitted and supported by the CPMR, which are the result of the combined efforts of the extensive work of its Member Regions and of the former CPMR Vice President for Transport, Valle Miguelez, in engaging with the Members of the European Parliament.

An Informal Aviation Group for the CPMR | To better address the specific needs of the CPMR Members, the CPMR Informal Aviation Group was established in 2022. Gathering expert representatives from various CPMR Members having a specific interest in aviation, its primary objective is to facilitate member-to-member information exchange and promote the interests of CPMR members in the field of aviation.

In November 2022, the “Is air connectivity at risk in Europe” event, co-organised by the CPMR, the European Regions Airlines Association (ERA) and SME Connect took place at the European Parliament in Brussels.

The event, sponsored by MEP and Vice-Chair of the TRAN Committee Jan-Cristoph Oetjen, aimed to discuss the key role of aviation for the economic development and social cohesion of regions, their
businesses and their citizens. It also addressed the potential of regional aviation for the decarbonisation of the aviation sector.

The CPMR was represented by Adrián Zittelli Ferrari, Director General for EU Affairs, Region of Murcia and Lauri Romppainen, Chief of Civil Engineering, Council of Oulu Region who took part in the event as panellists and highlighted the importance of air transport for regions and showcased the regions’ efforts to decarbonise the aviation sector.

During the last year, the CPMR has been consistently active in its efforts to influence ReFuelEU Aviation Regulation and the ETS Aviation Directive. It achieved this by engaging in discussions with key Members of the European Parliament and successfully securing temporary exemptions for islands, outermost regions, and regional airports. Furthermore, the CPMR has recently collaborated with Members of the European Parliament on the INI Report titled ‘Electric Aviation – a Solution for Short- and Mid-Range Flights,’ effectively advocating CPMR’s key messages on the role of regional airports as innovation laboratories and importance of air connectivity for regions.

The CPMR conducted an analysis of the inter-institutional agreements of some of the Package’s proposal, which included an analysis of the agreements’ content and a ‘CPMR fitness check’ providing the CPMR perspective.

Albeit the need for compromise between the European Parliament and the European Council, the CPMR succeeded in conveying some of its messages in the final texts on the need of an approach tailored to the specificities of the different territories, thanks to a close cooperation with the Members of the European Parliament. For instance, it successfully managed to increase and ensure temporary derogations for the territories more dependent on transport, such as islands and outermost regions, in the FuelEU Maritime and ReFuelEU Aviation Regulations, as well as ETS Maritime and ETS Aviation Directives.

The CPMR will continue to work and fight for a sustainable, efficient, seamless and resilient transport. It will, among other activities, influencing the TEN-T trilogues and closely analyse the final TEN-T Regulation and its annexes, continue its work on territorial accessibility, contribute to the Air Services Regulation. Moreover, thanks to the contributions of its Member Regions it will convey its messages on transport to the new European institutions after the EU elections of June 2024 and will continue its analysis and lobby work on key legislative proposals impacting accessibility and connectivity as well as transport decarbonisation and the energy transition.
At the heart of their shared identity, Maritime Affairs are a key cooperation priority for CPMR regions. As a regular partner of the EU Institutions, the CPMR has actively advocated for an improved consideration of the specific challenges of peripheral maritime regions in anticipation and reaction to EU maritime initiatives.

**Shaping the future of the Common Fisheries Policy in close collaboration with EU Institutions** | Building on its contribution to the European Commission’s Consultation on the 2022 report on the functioning of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), the CPMR has maintained its commitment to voice the regional perspectives on the current and future implementation of the CFP to EU Institutions. Framed in a Policy Position approved during the CPMR 2022 General Assembly in Crete, regions have addressed proposals for improved multi-level governance, a simplification of procedures, and to drive better integration of EU environmental, social, and economic objectives. These messages have been discussed with Charlina Vitcheva, Director General for DG MARE, who described the CPMR as DG MARE’s most logical partner. In January 2023, at the initiative of the CPMR and hosted by Pierre Karleskind MEP, Chair of the Fisheries Committee, and in the presence of Gabriel Mato MEP, Rapporteur of the own-initiative on the CFP, regional representatives and PECH MEPs gathered and agreed on the necessity for a CFP revision that reflects regional realities.

In reaction to the EC Fisheries and Ocean Package, the CPMR has created fruitful opportunities for regions to contribute to the European debate with the production of a technical analysis, informal exchanges of views with Jesus Gamallo, CoR Rapporteur, reaction to the final vote in NAT Committee, and the organisation of a meeting between experts of the CPMR Fisheries Working Group and Gabriel Mato MEP’s cabinet.

“**It is now time to rebalance the magnitude of EU action among the environmental, social and economic specific objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy. To address the energy crisis that is severely affecting the fisheries and aquaculture sectors the European Union must equip itself with a more innovative and effective Common Fisheries Policy**”

CLAIRE HUGUES, Vice-President of Pays de la Loire Region, Chair of the CPMR Fisheries Working Group

**At the forefront of Sustainable Blue Economy in Europe** | To the initiative of DG MARE and DG REGIO, the CPMR co-organised a seminar on Smart Specialisation for Sustainable Blue Economy on 25 October 2022, in Crete. CPMR regions not only learnt about the S3 thematic platform on a Sustainable Blue Economy, but also supported the European Commission to identify innovative value chains, progress on the creation of sea basin and macro-regional synergies and discussed the support they need to tap into the full potential of their Blue S3s. In parallel, the CPMR performs Blue S3 analyses as part of the EU Mission Ocean project PREP4BLUE.

At the 2023 EU Maritime Day, the CPMR advocated for a strengthened role of regions in the design and implementation of EU maritime policies and called for the full alignment of the development of a sustainable blue economy with Green Deal’s objectives. The CPMR organised a workshop on the future skills for the Sustainable Blue Economy with ENSTA Bretagne, Formare and Prosea on competences and innovative approaches to improve knowledge and expertise of Blue Economy professionals.
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

Since 2010, the CPMR holds the Secretariat of the Seas, Rivers, Islands and Coastal Areas Intergroup of the European Parliament (SEArica), supporting more than 100 Members of the European Parliament to address together maritime and coastal challenges beyond parliamentary committees.

With the organisation of ten events since September 2022, the CPMR has provided a high-visibility platform to fourteen CPMR regions for them to voice their territorial realities to key EU policy-makers. Bringing together representatives from the EU institutions, regions, and stakeholders from private and public sectors, the SEArica Intergroup has facilitated constructive exchanges on the maritime dimension of major EU legislation such as TEN-T, RePowerEU, Nature Restoration Law, and has pushed the reflection further on EU maritime initiatives such as the Offshore Renewable Energy Strategy.

SEArica has also covered cross-cutting issues that are essential to shape a sustainable future for maritime regions, such as Blue SMEs.

Important collaboration between the Intergroup and CPMR Geographical Commissions has enabled fruitful discussions on sea basin challenges. This year, the Atlantic has especially addressed the potential of ports to become innovative hubs of the Blue Economy. The Balkans and Black Sea have discussed innovation strategies in the Black Sea area. In reaction to the war in Ukraine, Baltic regions came together to discuss energy resilience challenges. The Mediterranean has reflected on biodiversity protection, as well as climate adaptation and coastal resilience.

In light of these achievements, the SEArica Intergroup has welcomed two new MEPs this year, counting now on the support of Mr Marian Marinescu and Mr Christophe Clergeau. Ms Deirdre Clune has been appointed as new SEArica Atlantic Vice-Chair.

 Ahead of the 2024 EU Elections, the CPMR will seize this pivotal year to focus its efforts on a successful renewal of the SEArica Intergroup for the 2024-2029 mandate.
The clean energy transition is one of the most significant challenges we face, but it also represents a sea of opportunities. The CPMR Member Regions are well aware of this and are committed to turn the transition into reality. This commitment has led to the establishment of the CPMR Energy Working Group in 2023, which aims to facilitate the contribution and involvement of the CPMR Members in the energy transition.

At the 50th CPMR General Assembly, held in Agios Nikolaos in Kriti, the CPMR Members expressed their interest in creating an ad-hoc Working Group dedicated to energy policy. The Group aims to build upon and leverage the previous work undertaken by the CPMR General Secretariat and its Geographical Commissions. As its guiding light, the Group aims to ensure and promote a territorially balanced energy transition, promoting a clean, secure, and affordable energy in all Regions.

The coordination of the Energy Working Group will be held over the next three years (spring 2023 – spring 2026) in the following sequence: first by the Basque Country, then by Västra Götaland as of spring 2024, and finally by Päijät-Häme as of spring 2025.

Interconnecting a CPMR energy community – from Brussels to Bilbao | At the end of May 2023, the CPMR Energy Working Group held its first meeting in Brussels. This meeting served a dual purpose. On the one hand, through round-table group discussions between the participants, it provided an opportunity to establish the Group’s working priorities and methodology, as well as to discuss its future activities. On the other hand, the meeting also explored ways to foster cooperation and enhance the promotion of the CPMR Members’ efforts in the energy transition.

This meeting also featured a panel discussion with various key stakeholders, shedding light on the implications of the Fit for 55 package and its potential impacts across different sectors and areas. It also addressed the latest developments in EU-level energy policy, such as the Net-Zero Industry Act (NZIA) and the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plans. During the meeting, key findings of the CPMR analysis on the Fit for 55 package, including the Renewable Energy Directive (RED) and the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation (AFIR), were presented.

In October 2023, the CPMR Energy Working Group met in Bilbao for a two-day meeting hosted by the Basque Energy Agency. Gathering EU and regional political and technical representatives, the meeting revolved around the industrial and energy transition within the framework of the NZIA.

The meeting, under the auspices and welcome of Iñigo Ansola, Director General of the Basque Energy Agency, was formally kicked off by an opening address of Member of the European Parliament Izaskun Bilbao Barandica. Both praised meetings like the one organised by the Basque Energy Agency and the CPMR as crucial steps towards achieving EU’s energy transition, in which regions have a key role to play.

Panel debates were conducted to highlight the actions, work, and efforts of the CPMR Members and their industrial stakeholders in support of the energy and industrial transition, covering a wide array of topics from renewable energy production (e.g., offshore renewable energy) to hydrogen infrastructure. During the meeting, group discussions were organised to discuss the latest developments in EU energy legislation (e.g., RED, REPowerEU) as well as to start a reflection on the Group’s messages towards the new European institutions, following the coming EU elections of June 2024.

The meeting concluded with a field visit to the port of Bilbao, where the participants had the opportunity to also visit the Haizea Wind industrial facilities and gain insights on the port’s projects for the energy transition including dock electrification. This was an important momentum for participants to learn and exchange on best practices in this area.
In October 2023, during the European Week of Regions and Cities, the “Maritime Ports – Energy Hubs to EmPower Regions” workshop was organised in Brussels. With contributions in the workshop’s debate from the European Commission Directorate General for Energy (DG ENER) the European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO) and the Port of Port-La Nouvelle, the workshop addressed not only the central role of ports in the energy transition but also their crucial contribution to the economic and social development of regions.

Unleashing the potential of maritime ports | Maritime ports have an increasingly important role to play in the energy transition and in Europe’s pursuit of energy independence. Moreover, they serve a pivotal role in enhancing connectivity, as well as fostering social and economic development within their respective regions. Two seminars on these subjects were organised by the Murcia Region and the CPMR.

In March 2023, “The role of maritime ports at the crossroad of energy transition” seminar took place in Cartagena. This event brought together port authorities, regional politicians and technicians, energy producers, industry representatives, and trade associations. The seminar’s objective was to shed light on the significant role that maritime ports play in the energy transition, while also identifying challenges and opportunities. Following the seminar, recommendations were issued, as part of the key outcomes of the seminar, to unleash the full potential of maritime ports in the energy transition.

“We must be prepared to convey our messages on energy to the new European institutions. We must ensure a territorially balanced energy transition providing clean, secure, and affordable energy to all Regions and to all citizens. I am confident we will be able to do it by showing that Regions are already delivering the energy transition on the ground and that, therefore, they should be fully empowered!”

GEORGE ALEXAKIS, Vice-President of the CPMR, Climate & Energy, Vice-Governor, Crete Region

The CPMR will continue, thanks also to the creation of the new Energy Working Group, to work for an energy transition that is territorially balanced and that has a place-based approach involving regions and recognising their specificities. It will, thus, shape and present its key messages on energy to the new EU institutions and will monitor the implementation of the Fit for 55 package and REPowerEU in its Member Regions.
Climate change hits all aspects of our lives. Not one day goes by without extreme weather events showing the limits of the resilience of maritime peripheral territories and harming their fellow citizens and their families. To tackle climate change, huge efforts must be deployed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (climate change mitigation) and to take action to prepare for and adjust to both the current effects of climate change and the predicted impacts in the future (climate change adaptation).

Climate change adaptation and coastal resilience | In February, under the umbrella of the SEArica intergroup, the CPMR organised a workshop on how to “Enhance Climate Change Adaptation and Coastal Resilience” across Europe. Peripheral maritime regions are at the forefront of the fight against climate change. Their long experience on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and climate action allows them to design and implement effective place-based strategies. The SEArica event allowed CPMR members to showcase concrete examples of good practices of adaptation strategies and initiatives implemented by regional authorities, to representatives of the European Parliament and European Commission. The event also allowed the CPMR to stress the issue of access to EU funds to boost the implementation of adaptation measures at territorial level.

Focus on civil protection and reconstruction | In March a very fruitful exchange of views took place among representatives of regional authorities and civil protection in Cartagena, at the meeting of the CPMR Political Bureau. Since the intensity and frequency of extreme weather events are bound to increase, it becomes crucial to shift towards a new generation of first aid and reconstruction policies. In Cartagena, the debate highlighted the urgent need that, following natural disasters, reconstruction plans and initiatives cannot escape from integrating factors that go far beyond the simple priority of restore to the original state of both infrastructures and services. In this regard, the CPMR Political Bureau fully converged towards the conclusion that resilience and adaptability to climate change must be central in reconstruction efforts.

A CPMR Climate Working Group | After an internal consultation process, the new CPMR Climate Working Group organised its first meeting on 29th September. The Working Group identified adaptation as its main thematic scope. It was also foreseen to be bound to a narrowed reflection on mitigation issues (e.g., oceans and seas as carbon sinks, EU Forestry Strategy). The first meeting of the CPMR Working Group allowed member regions to brainstorm on the CPMR technical and advocacy priorities when it comes to adaptation. It also was an opportunity to gather feedback from regional experts on the state of play in the implementation of National Adaptation Plans and to debate on their contribution to the daily action of regional authorities in delivering innovative policy tools and infrastructures to reinforce territorial resilience.

“Understanding obstacles and taking a logical approach to the best existing Climate Adaptation policies are key in the regional efforts to financing and achieving climate neutrality in Europe. This is Andalusia’s commitment.”

SERGIO ARJONA JIMENEZ, Vice-Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Blue Economy, Junta de Andalucía, Chair of the CPMR Climate Working Group
Climate action in tourism | As a signatory of the Future of Tourism Coalition in 2020 and the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism in 2021, this year the CPMR finalised its Action Plan with the objective to continue and strengthen its daily actions for climate adaptation and mitigation. Indeed, encouraging steps have been already carried out to reduce the carbon print of some of the CPMR’s standard activities. In this respect, the CPMR General Secretariat worked in close cooperation with all CPMR Geographical Commissions, notably through the deployment of a specific approach to be used when designing and implementing sustainable tourism projects.

“We are bound to be confronted with natural disasters and extreme weather events with more intensity and frequency in the future, so it is crucial to strengthen Region’s resilience and reflect in our ability to respond, including improving the efficiency of multi-level governance when it comes to coordination and management of first aid measures”

GEORGE ALEXAKIS, Vice-President of the CPMR, Climate & Energy, Vice-Governor, Crete Region

In the months to come the CPMR will continue to work on adaptation to identify good practices, enhance their scaling up and produce a comprehensive Policy Position to target the new European Commission and the elected members of the European Parliament.
Migration is of key concern to the CPMR and continues to dominate the EU agenda as Europe is confronted with multiple and new challenges, highlighting the urgent need for more sustainable long-term solutions.

Regional authorities lack formal legal competence in managing migration flows, which remains the responsibility of the Member States. However, they have relevant on-the-ground experience and play a crucial role in addressing migration issues, responding to emergencies, facilitating integration and inclusion of migrants, and promoting socio-economic development. They must therefore be considered as key players in EU migration policies.

Adapting to the evolving context | Europe faces numerous challenges, including irregular arrivals at external borders, the instrumentalization of migration for political purposes, rising racism and xenophobia, and persistent inequalities and discrimination. Additionally, the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 led to an unprecedented influx of refugees in European countries.

Under its new chairmanship of Valencia Region, the CPMR Migration Task Force took the opportunity at its meeting in April 2023 to update its Terms of Reference and Action Plan to reflect these latest developments in the EU agenda, while maintaining its same core objectives of advocacy on the regions’ role and needs and exchanges of experience and cooperation between regions and their relevant stakeholders.

The Task Force’s scope of action was also extended to include the coordination of activities on Solidarity with Ukraine. This covers specific issues related to the reception and integration of Ukrainian refugees but also the regions’ role in providing humanitarian and emergency support to Ukraine and reconstruction in the framework of Ukraine’s EU accession process.

Monitoring the EU Migration and Asylum Pact | The CPMR has been urging for the European co-legislators to finalise and adopt the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum based on a sustainable, organised, multilevel and humane policy at the European level.

In particular it has been calling to include provisions in the legislation within the Pact that give concerned regions a say in national migration strategies, acknowledge their situation and role in crisis management, solidarity, relocation and integration, and provide them with relevant funding and support. The European Parliament has made positive amendments in this sense in the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation and Crisis Regulation.

Updates on the negotiations on the Pact and related legislation and implications for regional authorities were discussed at the General Assembly in October 2022, the Political Bureau in March 2023 and the Task Force meeting in April.

Regions in solidarity with Ukraine | In November 2022, the CPMR published an Issue Paper on CPMR Regions’ Actions and Needs in Support of Ukraine. It provides concrete examples, challenges and recommendations concerning the integration and long-term inclusion of Ukrainian refugees, the Regions’ contributions towards humanitarian aid and civil protection and sustainable cooperation with Ukrainian regions and cities in the longer-term perspective of Ukraine’s reconstruction and future EU accession.
Throughout the past year, the CPMR General Secretariat has actively participated in the working meetings of the “European Alliance of cities and regions for the reconstruction of Ukraine”. The CPMR was represented by Valencia Region at the Alliance’s first political meeting on 29 November 2022. It also contributed to the Committee of the Regions’ Report on the new Ukraine Facility.

Through its Migration Task Force, the CPMR has been encouraging members to support European solidarity campaigns promoted by the Alliance, such as the Generators of Hope, school buses for Ukraine and summer camps for Ukrainian children. It also made links with peer-to-peer networks such as Cities4Cities and United4Ukraine which match EU cities and regions with counterparts in Ukraine to respond to both humanitarian and reconstruction needs while establishing more long-term partnerships for mutual cooperation. And through its Balkan & Black Sea Commission, the CPMR is also fostering partnerships that can provide opportunities for working with Ukraine.

As the EU co-legislators progress towards finalising the adoption of the Migration and Asylum Pact before the end of the current legislature, the CPMR will continue to push for a recognition of regions’ roles and needs within the legislation. The Migration Task Force will continue to foster cooperation and exchange between voluntary regions while also exploring concrete synergies with other related CPMR work areas such as climate and gender.

On Ukraine, the CPMR will look at the role of regions in the successful longer-term inclusion of Ukrainian refugees while also preparing for their eventual return to Ukraine in the context of reconstruction. It will continue to explore how to develop solidarity through cooperation between CPMR members and Ukrainian regional authorities in the context of reconstruction, especially in the maritime field.

Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund Opportunities

The CPMR took advantage of the 2023 AMIF call, focusing on integration at the regional and local level, to submit a project proposal in May 2023 as leader of a consortium including several of its member regions (Azores, Campania, Catalonia, Gozo). If selected, the project named “PATHS to inclusion” will aim to build regional and local authorities’ capacities to improve migrants’ and refugees’ access to the labour market, education, and health care.
Since 2020, the CPMR coordinates a Task Force on gender-related issues that brings together regional authorities with a common ambition to ensure the mainstreaming of gender equality in all EU policy areas, while promoting and strengthening the regions’ capacity in this field.

Considering the European Commission’s proposal for new legislation on combating violence against women and domestic violence, this year CPMR regions have particularly focused their cooperation on the identification of the role of regional authorities and to understand how regions should be better involved in the implementation of the future Directive.

In this respect, Tuscany region hosted the seminar “Regions at the forefront of a Union of Equality: How can regions contribute to the fight against gender-based violence in Europe and its Neighbourhood?” in Florence, as a side-event of the CPMR Political Bureau in June 2023. Throughout the discussions, regions presented an important and diverse range of tools and initiatives already implemented on the ground, giving food for thought for exchange of best practice. The main outcome was clear: regions should be actively involved in EU efforts to combat gender-based violence, as key drivers for data collection and comprehensive approaches based on local realities.

This initiative was also an opportunity for CPMR regions to further develop its collaboration with youth. As a preparation for the seminar, the CPMR held a meeting that allowed direct and constructive exchanges between Youth Councils and regional representatives on the challenges, expectations, and perspectives of the future generation on gender-based violence.

In addition, the CPMR General Secretariat has maintained its commitment to support regional initiatives on gender-related issues. Created at the initiative of Sicily Region, the CPMR has been a partner of the awareness campaign “#ThinkOnIt Without Equal Parts We Cannot Be Whole”, that was officially launched in December 2022 in Palermo.

The Gender Task Force will pursue its efforts to encourage gender equality in all CPMR regions, while monitoring the future European Commission’s objectives and consideration of regional authorities on that matter.
“As Europe looks towards the East, it is a crucial moment for the promotion of the Atlantic axis. Conscious of the risk of being relegated in strategic matters, together this year, we confirmed the bold, forward-thinking, and proactive vision on the creation of an Atlantic Macro-Region to respond to common challenges in a long-term perspective.”

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

**Evolve towards an Atlantic Macro-Region |** Aiming at getting the European Council mandate for the creation of the Atlantic Macro-region by December 2023, the Atlantic Arc Commission held five political meetings held to conceptualise its vision of the Atlantic Macro-Region in 2022-2023. It resulted in the adoption of the Declaration of Cardiff adopted in May 2023 which was shared with the Spanish Presidency of the Council as well as with the ministers.

**Boosting support to the Blue Economy “Made in Atlantic” |** With the support of key Research and Innovation stakeholders, the AAC developed policy recommendations on how to boost the Atlantic ecosystem of innovation. Besides, following the AAC’s call to the European Commission to dedicate more funding under Horizon Europe on ocean energies, the European Commission adopted its work-programme in December 2022 where it dedicates EUR 74 million for offshore renewable energies.

**Developing transatlantic cooperation |** Considering the need to rethink cooperation between EU and non-EU regions in the Atlantic after Brexit, the AAC further developed the pilot project on transatlantic cooperation of the European Parliament. The AAC also welcomed Québec as an Associated Member during the General Assembly in Cardiff on May 2023.

**Looking forward |** The AAC will maintain its collaboration with the Atlantic Member States to obtain a mandate for the creation of the Atlantic Macro-Region and continue make the most of EU instruments for the benefit of its members activities to fulfill the priorities set by the AAC Presidency for 2022-24.

**A developing cooperation |** The BBSC keeps being open to new members from the Adriatic-Ionian, Balkan, Danube, and Black Sea regions, working on common priorities and challenges for the benefit of its territories and the well-being of its citizens. During the 2022-2023 period, as BBSC we had the pleasure to see the implementation of two key cooperation projects for the Adriatic-Ionian and Black Sea regions, AI-NURECC PLUS and BRIDGE-BS, taking place. Two key projects that will help us, the BBSC members, to promote our political objectives and vision for our region. We were also glad to see the successful closure of the Innovative SOft SkilLs to Maritime Education and Training (iSOL-MET) Project, a project that coincided with the European Year of Skills 2023 and was also identified as a Black Sea Success Story by the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea.

**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. Our long-standing collaboration with key organisations and institutions in the Balkan and Black Sea region helps us to drive forward cooperation and development in our region.
“While the Baltic Sea Region faces challenges related to the consequences of the illegal aggression of Russia against Ukraine, I am satisfied the CPMR BSC seized the opportunity of the Swedish Presidency of the Council to advocate for a just green transition, a well-connected and a sustainable development of the Baltic Sea Region”

Roberto Occhiuto, President of the Regione Calabria, Presidency of the Intermediterranean Commission

**Cohesion for sustainable development in the Mediterranean** | Cooperation and mutual understanding between Mediterranean Regions is key to ensure the sound management of goods and services for development, sustainability and cohesion in Mediterranean territories. For this purpose, the Intermediterranean Commission (IMC) has kept on pushing forward the idea of a macroregional strategy for the Mediterranean to ensure coherence between initiatives and strategies, advocating for a sounder use of financial resources. The IMC has kept participating in projects, alliances and partnerships on blue economy, biodiversity protection, sustainable tourism, water management, developing initiatives and synergies with Mediterranean actors such as the MedCoopAlliance and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). These activities have allowed a stronger advocacy of the organization, positively impacting on its membership.

**Actively listening to the Youth** | Created at the end of 2019 on the initiative of Regione Lazio with the support of Region Sud, the Mediterranean Youth Council (MYC) has evolved to a higher step and speed over the mandate, contributing to our various institutional and thematic events at CPMR and IMC levels. These contributions have been very useful for our political representatives to understand needs from the younger generations and make sure to include answers in their forthcoming actions to better anticipate potential impacts on the Youth in the years to come.

**Looking forward** | In view of the European elections, the BSC Executive Committee members will meet with MEPs during a plenary session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg to highlight challenges in the Baltic Sea Region and call for EU support for Baltic Sea issues now and in the future. The CPMR BSC Working Groups will continue to implement their Action Plans serving the three goals of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The highlight of the year will be the General Assembly hosted in Kymenlaakso in May 2024.
Moving forward with an Agenda for EU Islands | During its last General Assembly in Palma this year, the Islands Commission adopted its Final Declaration “Europa Archipelago: an Agenda for EU Islands” – as a follow-up to its 2022 Gotland Declaration – intended to further reflect on the operational implementation of such an agenda. This document includes some additional suggestions to further advance towards a real recognition of insularity at EU scale, with a special focus on strengthening the cooperation among all relevant stakeholders at different levels of governance.

Nature Restauration Law (NRL) on the spotlight | Throughout 2023, the Islands Commission in cooperation with the Intermediterranean Commission, has been intensively following and contributing to the discussions on the future NRL. It organised a dedicated joint seminar, as side event of its General Assembly in Palma, and later this year it developed a joint Policy Position on this piece of legislation, capturing the most relevant insights from members.

Looking forward | In view of the upcoming European elections, the Islands Commission will continue to advocate for a visionary and inclusive Strategy for EU Islands, building up on the valuable lobby work carried out in the last two years. In parallel, it will support its members via ad-hoc initiatives, actions, projects linked to priority areas - such as transport and energy, maritime affairs, climate and environment - while contributing to and benefitting from the fruitful actions implemented by the different CPMR working groups and task forces. As to statutory updates, the IC will hold new elections for its Presidency during the next General Assembly 2024, following the end of Ms Armengol’s mandate.

In June 2023, Tjisse Stelpstra left office after the regional elections in the Netherlands and had to step down as NSC President. On 29 November, the North Sea Commission members will elect a new President at an extraordinary Annual Business Meeting in Rotterdam.

Fisheries and wind energy | NSC members have adopted a statement on fisheries and wind energy in which they recognise the need for in integrated planning initiative for the whole North Sea. Moreover they recognise the need for an initiative that respects and protects the need for more offshore energy infrastructure, socioeconomic complexity of fisheries and coastal communities. The North Sea Commission members call for a maritime forum to build communication channels and planning process where fisheries both offshore and onshore, energy interests and Local and National Authorities work.

Encouraging youth participation | Regions are encouraged to involve representatives from their youth councils or other youth structures in the NSC work. Together with the CPMR IMC, a youth event was organised at the General Assembly in Crete. Furthermore, there will be a smaller youth event organised in Rotterdam alongside the upcoming Extraordinary Annual Business Meeting in late November.

Looking forward | At the ExCom meeting in February 2023, the new action plans for the period 2023-24 have been discussed. These new action plans outline our activities for the next two years. On 29 November the next NSC ExCom meeting will take place in Rotterdam, the Netherlands and will be part of the North Sea Conference, organised together with the INTERREG North Sea Region Programme Joint Secretariat, the city of Rotterdam and the Province of Zuid-Holland.
COOPERATION PROJECTS
**RECENTLY STARTED PROJECTS**

- **FLORES**: Offshore Renewable energies partnership in the Pact for Skills
- **BlueMissionMed & BlueMissionAA**: supporting the EU Ocean Mission implementation in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic
- **Dialogue4Innovation & Community4Tourism**: promoting innovation institutional dialogue and sustainable tourism solutions transfer in the Mediterranean

**ONGOING PROJECTS**

- **AI-NURECC Plus**: Fostering entrepreneurship, transnational clusters, and digital innovation hubs activities for the EUSAIR
- **BRIDGE-BS**: Advancing Black Sea Research and Innovation to co-Develop Blue Growth within Resilient Ecosystems
- **MAESHA**: working towards solutions for a decarbonised energy future in Mayotte and other European islands
- **REGINA-MSP**: Fostering the role of maritime regions in Maritime Spatial Planning
- **REBOOT MED**: for the recovery, experimentation and stimulation of eco-tourism in the WestMed 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
**PROJECTS**

**RECENTLY CLOSED PROJECTS**

**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.

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

**Next2Met**
Addressing regional challenges with soft digitalisation measures that improve people's lives and services on the ground.

**SolaQua**
Accessible, reliable, and affordable solar irrigation for Europe and beyond.

**iSOL-MET**
Brigding the gap between the shipping world, maritime universities’ students and maritime professionals.

**CulTourE4Youth**
Developing a regional paradigm as capacity building initiator for empowered youth employment.
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