**Regions Act!**

**CPMR Regions acting for climate-neutrality**

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**Introduction**

The European Green Deal is the long-term framework for guiding investments and policy developments in the EU. The Green Deal’s ultimate goal is to make Europe climate neutral by 2050, while at the same time boosting the economy via green technological advancements, cutting pollution, and making industry more sustainable. The Green Deal’s climate neutrality target will be enshrined in law following the vote on the European Climate Law expected by end of June 2021.

*Regions Act! CPMR Regions acting for climate neutrality* was an initiative launched by the CPMR General Secretariat in its Policy Position *CPMR Regions at heart of the European Green Deal*.

The *Regions Act!* Initiative, a survey of CPMR member regions, aimed at gathering data from regions on their ambition and engagement on climate action, and thus the contribution of CPMR members to meeting the targets of the European Green Deal and the Paris Agreement.

This report, which is the outcome of the survey, intends to draw conclusions about the implication of local and regional authorities in addressing climate change and to gather recommendations in support of the implementation of the Green Deal and relevant global policies.

In total, 37 CPMR member regions from 12 countries completed the survey (see Annex 1). Respondents and results can be viewed via the interactive map. Regions were asked to provide input in four areas: ambition and inclusiveness, adaptation, EU funds, and Just Transition. Regions vary in their level of economic development and their capacity to harness their endogenous potential. Despite this, trends emerge in the survey that show that regions are acting to tackle climate change and are setting themselves ambitious targets.
Conclusions and recommendations

As shown by Regions Act!, CPMR Member Regions are acting via their mitigation and adaptation measures encompassing different policy areas with an integrated and place-based approach to deliver a climate neutral and resilient future. Therefore:

➡️ Regions must be seen as key partners in the fight against climate change and be fully involved in the design and implementation of policies for the ecological transition. (CPMR) Regions mean business when it comes to delivering a climate neutral and prosperous future: 37% of the respondent regions have an ambition that is even higher than the 2050 climate neutrality target.

➡️ A robust multi-level and multi-stakeholders’ approach is sine qua non to deliver the ecological transition. The CPMR Regions Act! survey shows that an overwhelming majority of respondents are proactively involving stakeholders in the fight against climate change. Regions are a key level of governance providing coordination at the local level between the actors in the territory and for cooperation between the national and local levels. This should be better recognised and exploited.

➡️ Delivering a just transition to a climate neutral future will rely on a place-based approach and region-specific solutions. This survey shows that sectors needing support to reach a fair transition to a climate neutral economy differ from one region to another, and that regions are taking an integrated approach within their regional strategies to deliver a climate-neutral future.

➡️ European funds delivered in partnership with local and regional authorities are of vital importance to support EU and regional ambitions on climate action. Cohesion Policy provided a significant contribution to deliver on climate in the 2014 – 2020 period. The CPMR Regions Act! survey indicates that this may increase for the 2021 – 2027 period. The key principles of partnership and multilevel governance must be preserved, so that regions are provided enough leeway to spend money as they see fit to address the sectors where there is most need to affect change.

➡️ Financial and technical support should be provided to those areas that are most likely to be left behind in the ecological transition, while at the same time a front runners should be guaranteed a conducive environment to develop and implement innovative solutions to the benefit of Europe as a whole.
1. CPMR Members are acting for climate neutrality!

The transition to a climate neutral society will be crucial to achieving the Paris Agreement objective of limiting global warming to well below 2, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels. Several countries – including the EU and its Member States, Norway and the UK – have pledged to become climate neutral by 2050 at the latest.

The contribution and commitment of CPMR Members to the climate neutrality objective was measured by analysing their mitigation objectives, strategies, and measures. The ambitious climate neutrality by 2050 target was used as a baseline.

**37% of the respondent regions have a higher ambition than the 2050 target:** 8% of regions aim to achieve climate neutrality by 2030, 8% of regions by 2035, 5% of regions by 2040, and 16% by 2045.

![Figure 1: Percentage of respondents with a climate neutrality target to be achieved between 2030 and 2050](image)

As shown by Figure 1, in order to better display the different levels of ambition, the data was disaggregated to show the respondents climate neutrality targets between 2030 and 2050.

Achieving these targets would make those regions European and global leaders in the fight against climate change and spur innovative solutions.

This study is testimony to the fact that regions are acting and are ambitious. The EU and national governments should recognise the potential that lies in the regions to achieve the European Green Deal ambitions and Paris Agreement. Regions are anchored to their territories so are best placed to ensure that actions and policies are in line with the actual needs on the ground.
1.1. Not only ambition but tangible policies

The transition to climate neutrality encompasses different economic sectors and policy areas. Hence, the need for an integrated and cross-cutting approach. In the survey, respondents had the possibility to signal any sectorial strategies that contributed to the attainment of their mitigation objectives. The data was aggregated by macro-sectorial areas as shown in Figure 2. The specific measures can be found in the interactive map.

As shown by Figure 2, **89% of respondent regions stated they had adopted strategies specific to the energy sector.** When considering the specific measure as shown on the map, many strategies were focused on the development of renewable energy and improving energy efficiency. This may come as little surprise since the energy system accounts for 75% of GHG emissions in the EU.

Some CPMR regions are among the leaders in the development of renewable energy (e.g. solar or offshore), while others have progressed significantly with improving the energy efficiency of public buildings. The commitment of CPMR regions to an ambitious energy transition is evidenced in the CPMR policy position *EmPowering Regions in the Energy Transition.*

**46% of respondents mentioned transport policies and strategies,** including fostering sustainable mobility, fleet renewal or transport modes and infrastructure electrification. Transport is not only a key sector to decarbonise, but it is also vital for the social and economic development of many CPMR Members.

Figure 2 also shows that respondent regions have prepared specific strategies to address concerns in **other key sectors** including **circular and bioeconomy (22%), digital and innovation (14%), waste management (14%), and industry (11%).**

CPMR Regions are implementing measures in different policy areas and taking an integrated approach to deliver the transition to a climate neutral economy. Policies within regions are not only based on the territory’s needs and endogenous strengths, but also provide for a geographical coverage – from urban to rural – that is key to deliver a fair and territorially balanced transition to climate neutrality.
1.2. Local and Regional authorities identify relevant stakeholders and strengthen cooperation among them.

92% of respondents stated they were acting to ensure a broad involvement of stakeholders in the fight against climate change.

Many respondents stated they had developed specific strategies or communication plans aimed at supporting citizens to understand the challenges faced by the region, and the reasons and benefits of climate-related actions.

Regions cited the following tools as methods used to engage citizens and other key stakeholders (e.g. companies or scientific community) in developing a regional and context-dependent approach to climate action: fora of discussion, regional networks, public consultations, working groups.

It is to be underlined that many regional authorities had already carried out advanced mapping of relevant actors in the territory via the Smart Specialisation Strategies and the multiple helix approach. Furthermore, many regions worked closely with the national and supra-national level in different policy areas.

Regions are a key level of governance providing coordination at the local level between the actors in the territory and for cooperation between the national and local levels. Thus, providing the basis for a robust multi-level and multi-stakeholder approach.

2. Adaptation: meeting a global challenge with a place-based approach

Peripheral and maritime regions are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change which are not only linked to slow onset events, but also extreme weather events and hazards.

![Figure 3: Percentage of regions that indicated threats to their territories](image)

Results show that peripheral and maritime regions are facing challenges due to climate extremes such as storms, heavy rainfall and flooding or long periods of drought (46%), leading to water management challenges (43%) for inhabitants and economic activities. 41% of CPMR respondents were also concerned by sea-level rise and coastal erosion.
In many regions, periods of drought have led to forest fires (24%), especially during summer months, impacting the potential of forestry to mitigate the effects of climate change. Such weather and climate extremes have a direct impact on biodiversity and natural resources (24%), as well as on their capacity to deliver ecosystem services.

The social and economic contribution of maritime regions, which produce 40% of the EU GDP and are home to 40% of its population\(^1\), depends on the well-being of their natural ecosystems and their resilience to climate change impacts.

However, as underlined by the European Commission’s new EU Adaptation to Climate Change Strategy, maritime regions are increasingly under pressure from climate impacts which have far-reaching negative effects on key economic.

\(\text{Figure 4 highlights the sectors identified by respondents as being the most vulnerable to climate change. Agriculture (38%), infrastructure (35%), and health (35%) were cited as the most vulnerable.} \)

\(\text{Figure 4: Percentage of regions that indicated specific sectors most at risk in their territories} \)

38% of regions felt that the agriculture sector was the most vulnerable to climate change, while infrastructure and health were both seen as highly vulnerable sectors according to 35% of regions.

27% of respondents felt that energy and transport infrastructure were the most vulnerable in their regions, 24% felt tourism and culture were heavily threatened, while 5% felt the fisheries sector was at great risk from climate change.

\(\text{The high percentage of respondents with their own adaptation strategies (86%) or impact studies on the environmental and social effects of climate change on their territories (73%) is evidence of the importance that regions place on preparing their citizens and local economies for the unavoidable impacts of climate change and to forge a resilient future.} \)

\(^1\) EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change.
3. Regions can mobilise existing funds to better integrate them for climate action

In the 2014-2020 programming period, respondents estimated that the total average amount of investment per region from ERDF for climate action was 176,465,589 Euro (2020 prices). Thematic Objectives 4, 5 and 6 of the previous programmes were directly linked to the climate agenda. However, some regions stated they had allocated investment under other Thematic Objectives (mainly 1 and 7) in support of their climate objectives.

Regions are using Cohesion Policy funds (the ERDF, the ESF and the Cohesion Fund) to integrate climate investments in the territory, particularly focused on energy (29%) and smart mobility (21%).

![Figure 5: Percentage of projects financed by Cohesion Policy funds by macro-areas](image)

Of the respondents who were able to comment in advance of the 2021-2027 programming period, almost all predicted that the amount of ERDF funds allocated to climate action would be similar to or slightly higher than the investment made in the 2014-2020 period. In general, a share of around 20%-35% of the ERDF fund to be allocated to climate action is assumed.

Peripheral and maritime regions are increasingly vulnerable to climate change impacts. Their main economic sectors are most at risk, putting the well-being of their citizens at risk. Furthermore, their geography makes transport infrastructure vital to economic survival and to avoiding communities being cut off, and many already face challenges as regards grid connectivity and capacity.

CPMR regions know the realities of their own territories and they are already acting to make them more resilient. These actions and expertise should be recognised and supported. No territory is the same, so measures must be tailored to territorial specificities and vulnerabilities.

Regions can mobilise existing funds, for which many have a management and coordination role, such as the ESIF, to better integrate the funds to deliver the ecological transition. Many local and regional authorities have competences in areas linked to climate change mitigation and adaptation, such as skills, innovation and SMEs support. Through European funds, regions have implemented projects to counter the consequences of climate change.
4. A just transition needs to encompass different dimensions

The top three sectors for which peripheral and maritime regions felt more support would be needed to achieve climate neutrality were identified as industry (35%), skills and jobs (32%), and transport (28%).

As shown by Figure 6, the ecological transition presents a number of socio-economic challenges linked to industrial practices, such as the use of fossil fuels or agriculture, as well as already existing challenges related to transport infrastructure or grid connectivity and capacity, and skills shortages.

Supporting industry to become greener and to shift away from the use of fossil fuels was identified as the challenge of greatest need for extra support from EU level (35%), while the challenge of reskilling and upskilling the local workforce was also seen as a major challenge requiring more support (32%).

For peripheral regions dependent on good transport connections, the cost of greening the transport sector was seen by 28% of respondents as in need of increased support. Regions also felt that more support would be required for the energy transition (22%), the shift to a circular or biobased economy (11%), and for tackling grid capacity issues (8%), while 8% felt the agriculture sector required extra support to become greener.

The variety of sectors mentioned by CPMR Members needing support to reach a transition to a climate neutral economy shows that the concept of a ‘just transition’ is inherently place-based and region-specific. A just transition must encompass different sectors and should be embedded within all policies, starting from the EU level.

Figure 6: Percentage of regions that selected specific sectors as requiring extra support

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The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) represents more than 150 regional authorities from 24 countries across Europe and beyond. Organised in Geographical Commissions, the CPMR works to ensure that a balanced territorial development is at the heart of the European Union and its policies.

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