CONCLUSIONS - CPMR Climate Seminar
Addressing Climate Vulnerability in Coastal Areas by Boosting Innovative Solutions on Adaptation and Increasing Resilience in CPMR Regions

The Seminar on Climate Vulnerability in Coastal Areas convened in Patras, Western Greece, on 21 March 2024, underlined the pressing need for immediate action in the face of escalating climate challenges. Throughout the sessions, a collective urgency resonated, emphasising the imperative to design adaptive strategies, particularly focusing on coastal erosion, while fostering international collaboration within the Mediterranean macro region. Fokion Zaimis, Deputy Governor from Western Greece opened the session welcoming all participants. It was acknowledged that strategies for adaptation to climate change, particularly in coastal areas, demand strong EU and national efforts and collaborative dialogue. In addition, the significance of international cooperation was highlighted as pivotal in achieving effective solutions on a global scale.

During Session 1 (“Climate Vulnerability: focus on challenges, lessons learned and best practices”), Irene Bonvissuto, Team Leader of EU Mission Adaptation to Climate Change, presented the progress made under the Climate Law, while acknowledging the gaps in integrating adaptation efforts in the National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs). Emphasis was placed on the acceleration of climate risk drivers, indicating critical levels of risk already reached and the lag in policy preparedness compared to the speed of environmental change. Specific attention has been paid to EU programmes and funding opportunities to support adaptation to climate change and enhance coastal resilience.

Maria Cruz Ferreira Costa, representing the Region of Murcia as the CPMR VP for Energy and Climate, highlighted the prevalence of drought, desertification, and water scarcity in some regions, such as Murcia, necessitating comprehensive and more ambitious adaptation policies and measures.

Bertrand Coppin showed the critical situation of coastal erosion in Hauts-de-France region and highlighted the difficulties of regional authorities in using EU structural funds to foster adaptation solutions, due to their current eligibility rules.

Massimo Sbriscia and Gaia Galassi briefly presented Marche Region’s Climate Adaptation Plan, emphasising the need for an integrated approach and long-term policies to combat climate change. They stressed the importance of legislative adjustments and EU funding to facilitate necessary changes in urban policies.

Ioanna Fanariotou, Head of Managing Authority in the Western Greece Region, pointed out the need for huge investments in the regions of southern Europe to increase coastal resilience, and Carlos Amaral (from the Azores Region) and Ioana Comsa (from Tulcea County Council) finalised the session by giving a detailed overview of specific risks and needs of the Outermost Regions and the Danube Delta respectively when it comes to adaptation to climate change.
In Session 2 ("CPMR Regions Act!: interregional and cross-border cooperation at the core of the future generation of EU adaptation policies"), reflections on the anniversary of the Bologna Charter were highlighted by Roberto Montanari, as well as the benefits of interregional and cross-border cooperation in addressing climate challenges. Proposals were made to revamp the Bologna Charter, suggesting its potential contribution to the European Strategy for the Mediterranean Macro-region.

To adapt to the increase in temperatures and fight against wildfires, Marino Spilotros, representing ASSET Agency from Puglia Region, presented the Silvanus project aiming to release a climate-resilient forest management platform and deliver innovative procedures and tools to prevent and suppress forest fires. Moreover, participants advocated for a holistic and collaborative approach, stressing the importance of engaging diverse stakeholders to identify comprehensive solutions, as mentioned by Marinos Kritsotakis, General Director of Sustainable Development of Crete Region.

Pontus Lindberg, Vice-Chair of the CPMR BSC Energy and Climate Working Group, stressed the key role played by nature-based solutions in enhancing adaptation to climate change. In this regard, it is worth reiterating that small-scale nature-based measures should not be underestimated and that coastal values can be promoted while safeguarding the coastal zone against weather conditions.

Luigi Cipriani, responsible for coastal erosion in Tuscany Region, highlighted the experience in interregional cooperation dating back to 2002 with the EUROSION project. As part of HORIZON’s climate missions, Regions4Climate aims to demonstrate climate-resilient societies through core innovative pillars like cross-border actions and multi-scale monitoring.

Recommendations from various regions, like the ones made by Sergio Arjona, Deputy Minister and Chair of the CPMR Climate Working Group, emphasised the need for tools to identify and address shared climate concerns, centralised platforms for collaboration, and proactive integration of adaptation measures in development policies. The significance of innovation, particularly in industrial practices, was underlined, with initiatives like "Produce More with Less" highlighting the importance of sustainable manufacturing strategies, mentioned by Dr Vicky Panagiotopoulou, representing Patras University.

In conclusion, addressing climate change adaptation requires several critical considerations. Firstly, there is a need for more comprehensive data. Secondly, innovation is key to enhancing efficiency. Thirdly, adequate funding and assessment are crucial. Flexibility within the legal framework is also essential to accommodate evolving challenges. Additionally, social acceptance and early engagement of local authorities are vital components for successful adaptation efforts.