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FOREWORD

Dear Readers,

We are proud to present you the 2020/2021 Activity Report of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions. In this period of crisis and change, we have proven as an organisation our ability to overcome the obstacles in our path, to foster cooperation and common action, to drive debate, and to keep up the purpose that unites us, working together for all citizens in our Regions and rising to the challenges ahead.

The CPMR has achieved important successes on issues of crucial importance to its member regions during this past year. In the following pages you will read about our biggest achievements regarding the work that we have done in our priority areas – Cohesion Policy, Transport, Maritime and Fisheries, Climate and Energy, Migration – and beyond. For instance, securing a stronger role for regions and a territorial approach in the EU Recovery instrument; reinforcing the accessibility of peripheral and maritime territories via the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) and the Motorways of the Sea; and helping increase the budget and improving the conditions for regions in the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund.

To complement our Activity Report, our recent publication ‘The Impact of the CPMR’ showcases our most important achievements influencing European policy and CPMR’s impact on European legislation in the past programming period. Indeed, influencing the course of EU policies relevant to our member regions is a long-term process, and we are already working on the policy and budgetary proposals which will emerge in 2025.

The 2020/2021 period has clearly been marked by an unexpected crisis setting in motion waves of changes in our Regions and at European level alike. Europe is committed to leave the crisis behind by achieving a green transition and building back a better world for the next generation. This crisis has given the European Union a boost to move forward, a call for change stemming from a pandemic that has affected all sectors of our society, as well as from a transforming world scene with armed conflicts and climate disasters that can lead to migratory flows of unprecedented magnitude. As regions, we are ready to contribute to the challenges arising from this context – which includes the growing anti-democratic, nationalist tendencies that threaten the unity and strength of the European Union – and we will emphasize our pro-European messages in our contributions to the Conference on the Future of Europe.

We hope this short publication will give you a grasp of the scope of our action and the influence of the CPMR in Europe. The battles are many, but together we will succeed!

Happy reading!

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

Eleni Marianou
Secretary General of the CPMR
Cohesion policy remains vital for CPMR members given its critical role in tackling territorial disparities and achieving the green transition.

The CPMR followed closely the last stretch of negotiations over the cohesion policy legislative package 2021-2027 and the first stages of the programming process. Particular attention was also dedicated to the rollout of the recovery package, notably the preparation and approval of National Recovery and Resilience Plans. The Brexit Adjustment Reserve and the regional state aid legislations featured also prominently in the cohesion team activities.

The CPMR developed extensive analysis, supported by in-house statistics and maps, on all these files focusing on both legislative and operational aspects of interest for its members. Advocacy activities ranged from meetings with key decision makers, including European commissioners (Ferreira, Gentiloni) and prominent MEPs, to political statements, press releases and op-eds published on European media, to amendments to legislative proposals (i.e. Brexit Adjustment Reserve).

A stronger role for regions in the recovery instrument
Since the EU recovery plan was presented in May 2020, the CPMR has advocated for a stronger territorial approach and fully-fledged participation of regional authorities in its deployment.

The drafting and submission process of the National Recovery and Resilience Plans, a key milestone of the Recovery and Resilience Facility implementation, was attentively scrutinized. Echoing the concerns of its members, the CPMR has been vocal on the need to strengthen the involvement of regional authorities in the definition of the recovery plans. It conveyed this message via various policy statements, media articles and exchanges with MEPs. These efforts culminated in a meeting between a delegation of Presidents of Regions from the CPMR and Paolo Gentiloni, European Commissioner for Economy, in May 2021.

In addition, the CPMR had a leading role in providing technical analyses on the Recovery and Resilience Facility from a regional perspective: in particular through an influential assessment of the territorial approach in the recovery plans and a survey among its members on the regions’ involvement in the recovery instrument and economic governance framework.

Cohesion Policy 2021-2027: from legislative negotiations to programmes’ implementation
The CPMR continued to monitor and influence the negotiations over the cohesion policy package, including the Just Transition Fund, until their very end. It provided to its members constant updates on the process along with detailed assessments as to the impact of new provisions.

Significant attention was devoted to the implications of the Recovery and Resilience Facility for cohesion policy. The CPMR was the first EU stakeholder to raise concerns over the parallel rollout of the EU Recovery and cohesion policy funds. Its work on the matter resulted in being the only organization invited by the Portuguese presidency of the EU to attend the Informal Meeting of Cohesion Ministers.

With the adoption of the cohesion policy legal framework the focus has started shifting towards
implementation: research, analyses and exchanges, notably in the framework of the cohesion core group, took place to provide a first assessment of the programming process.

**Brexit Adjustment Reserve** | The CPMR also took an active role in influencing the future shape of the Brexit Adjustment Reserve. Its lobbying activities on the file, through technical papers and meetings with relevant MEPs, led to a more inclusive governance and a greater territorial dimension of the instrument.

**Regional state aid** | On another note, a separate strand of activities focused on regional state aid. In this area the CPMR political bureau adopted a comprehensive policy position building on analytical work carried out in the previous months.

In the coming months, the CPMR will be closely monitoring the implementation of both the recovery plans and cohesion policy programmes. This work is aimed at identifying areas of concern across the CPMR membership and ensure they are conveyed to and addressed by the relevant EU actors. The role of regional authorities in the EU economic governance framework will be examined under the CPMR think-tank initiative “Territories Matter” which aims to promote a reflection on the governance of EU investment policies ahead of potential reforms. Additionally, preparatory work will be conducted to inform the reflection on the future of cohesion policy in view of the Cohesion Forum due in 2022.

The CPMR took part in several events, including with the participation of European Commissioner for Regional Policy, Elisa Ferreira and European Parliament Regional Committee Chair, Younous Omarjee, organized in the framework of the #CohesionAlliance, a coalition of leading European associations of cities and regions and the European Committee of the Regions to defend cohesion policy as a pillar of the future of the EU. These high-level meetings focused on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027, on cohesion policy files relevant for the Cohesion Alliance partners (November 2020), and on cohesion policy implementation with special emphasis on the role of the policy in the EU recovery plan (September 2021).
The role of transport in ensuring connectivity and territorial accessibility is of major importance for CPMR member regions’ interests.

While the CPMR kept a close eye on the final negotiations on CEF 2.0 and the drafting of its first Work Programme, the revision of the Trans-European Network for Transport (TEN-T) took most of its attention over the 2020/2021 period. The CPMR also continued to monitor the initiatives taken up by EU Institutions to answer the challenges generated by the COVID-19 crisis in the field of transport and raised the issues its member Regions were facing.

Influencing the Revision of the Trans-European Network for Transport (TEN-T) | 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 European Commission is set to present its legislative proposal for a renewed TEN-T later in 2021. The CPMR has therefore taken action to influence the drafting process.

A major step was MEP Jens Gieseke’s report on TEN-T. Thanks to the advocacy efforts of the CPMR, the report underlines the importance of the TEN-T for peripheral regions. Moreover, the European Parliament shares CPMR’s concerns regarding the major delays in implementing the Core Network and how it has a negative impact on the accessibility of our peripheries.

In parallel, the CPMR kept regular contacts with the Directorate General for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE) and prepared its contribution to the Public Consultation launched by the European Commission in February 2021. The CPMR transport Working Group debated its contribution after exchanging views and ideas with DG MOVE, the European Parliament, the Portuguese Presidency and key stakeholders of the whole Transport sector. This work resulted in a Policy Position stating CPMR’s expectations from the ongoing revision of the TEN-T Guidelines. A compilation of the amendments to the TEN-T maps resulting from the long-standing work of each Geographical Commission over the past few years was included in the document.

The Policy Position was widely disseminated to the EU institutions to call for a TEN-T that contributes to the Green Deal, meets its deadlines, enhances territorial cohesion, looks at the future and embraces the potential of waterborne transport.

“We are glad to see that ports and Motorways of the Sea are highlighted in Mr Gieseke’s report. We strongly believe that our Regions’ seaports and maritime transport are key in delivering smart and sustainable transport. In this regard, the report fully echoes the CPMR position”

ELENI MARIANOU, Secretary General of the CPMR
**Contributing to reinforce the Motorways of the Sea (MoS)** | Maritime is part of the DNA of the CPMR. Gathering Peripheral and Maritime Regions, the CPMR is convinced that maritime transport, and consequently the MoS, are key to achieving the EU climate objectives while contributing to ensure Europe’s cohesion.

The CPMR is regularly invited by the Coordinator for MoS, Prof Kurt Bodewig, to take part in an informal expert group to share its views on the Detailed Implementation Plan for MoS. The CPMR organised an exchange of views with Pr. Bodewig to discuss Maritime Transport key challenges and how they should be addressed in the revised TEN-T. It contributed to convey key messages, such as suggesting that a region-by-region approach for the new maritime pillar of the TEN-T is proposed. It also took part in convincing the Coordinator that revisiting the criteria for MoS projects could prove useful and should be further explored during the revision of the TEN-T Regulation.

The CPMR worked closely on MEP Karima Delli’s Report on ‘Technical and operational measures for more efficient and cleaner maritime transport’. As a result, the report addresses several points of importance for the CPMR. For instance, it recognises the cross-border dimension of maritime ports which would allow higher co-financing rates in the framework of the CEF 2.0. It also underlines the need for a revised concept of Motorways of the Sea and supports modal shift towards short-sea shipping.

**Joining forces to strengthen our impact** | The CPMR joined two initiatives to convey some of its key messages on how Transport was and is to be tackled in the COVID-19 recovery.

The CPMR along with other 23 associations from the aviation ecosystem joined the ‘Aviation Round Table Report on the Recovery of European Aviation’ calling for a European Aviation Relief Programme and EU Pact for Sustainable Aviation. The Report was handed, in a meeting on 16 November, to Executive Vice-President Vestager and Commissioner Vălean who welcomed it.

Together with 31 other organisations the CPMR also issued a Statement on the Recovery and Resilience Facility, calling on Member States and the European Commission to ensure that the transport sector receives adequate consideration in the National Recovery and Resilience Plans.

The TEN-T will remain a priority for the CPMR. A major challenge for the revised TEN-T will be to ensure that the core network is completed by 2030, while avoiding leaving our peripheries aside. The Policy Position on the TEN-T will be the tool for the CPMR to influence the next legislative steps of the proposal once it is published.

The CPMR will also monitor 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 and will closely monitor the first 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.
Maritime affairs is one of the core policies of the CPMR. Currently, its importance in achieving the Green Deal aims and its value as an economic sector is increasingly recognised.

The CPMR has been positioning itself as a key actor in the shaping of the new generation of EU blue policies, ranging from the EU Sustainable Blue Economy Strategy to the new European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund. Recent work has led to building contacts with the cabinet of Executive Vice-President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans on the concept of a maritime macro region, and to broader our influence beyond DG MARE.

Sustainable Blue Economy | The European Commission published its communication on a new approach for a Sustainable Blue Economy on 12 May. The CPMR participated in the consultation on the Sustainable Blue Economy Roadmap and published a technical paper on the position of its member regions. Later, a CPMR response was published reacting to the publication of the final communication, highlighting strengths and weaknesses in the Commission strategy and reinforcing key CPMR messages in relation to a sustainable blue economy.

To further disseminate these key messages, the CPMR has spoken at a number of high-level events:

- President, Cees Loggen, opened this year’s European Maritime Day in May alongside Commissioner Sinkevičius, responsible for maritime affairs.
- CPMR Secretary General Eleni Marianou, spoke at a DG Regio event on the potential of the blue economy in Outermost Regions in October 2020.
- Most recently, CPMR Vice President for Maritime Affairs, George Alexakis, presented CPMR priorities at a DG MARE event on the contribution of Regional Smart Specialisation Strategies to the Sustainable Blue Economy. Six CPMR regions from different countries (Crete, Lisbon, Sicily, Västra Götaland, Azores, Basque Country), representing almost all CPMR Geographical Commissions spoke at this event opened by Christos Economou, Deputy Director at DG MARE.

The European Commission Communication on a Sustainable Blue Economy is much in line with CPMR values and messaging. For instance, it refers to a role for local and regional authorities, for a holistic, ecosystem approach, and to the importance of working within sea basins where there are common needs. It also promises the involvement of public authorities in the codesign and co-implementation of solutions and recognises the role for cohesion policy and smart specialisation strategies in achieving a sustainable blue economy, citing key sectors for coastal regions, such as tourism.

“In the next Programming Period 2021-2027, priority should be placed on new technologies on boats, support to inland and marine aquaculture. The EU should also boost the overall fishfood value chain, including processing factories, markets and restaurants”

GEORGES ALEXAKIS, CPMR Vice-President, Maritime Affairs - Vice-President of Crete Region
European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund

This last period has been a successful one in the area of Fisheries. Thanks to an early engagement on the post-2020 EMFAF regulation and numerous high-level meetings, the CPMR has raised the need for more budget for the EMFAF, the removal of the obligation to use financial instruments under EMFAF, new references to the role of regions in the development of Operational Programmes, greater co-financing for certain operations, and the reduction of the list of ineligible measures. The CPMR also prepared a Technical Paper benchmarking the different national and regional support schemes for the fisheries and aquaculture sector to help regions compare their own practices and learn from each other. The Fisheries and Aquaculture Working Group gathered in January 2021 to kick start a CPMR reflection on the implementation of the new EMFAF regulation, starting with a seminar on the use of financial instruments, where regions were able to ask questions to DG MARE and the EIB.

In the coming months, the CPMR will consolidate its maritime priorities to continue to position itself as a key partner and an essential actor in developing new blue policies. The CPMR will continue to focus on ensuring access to appropriate funding in order to support regions in the implementation of blue policies, as well as on strengthening the role of regional authorities in the governance of maritime policies.

The CPMR holds the Secretariat of the Seas, Rivers, Islands and Coastal Areas Intergroup since its debut in 2009. Currently, the Intergroup brings together 107 MEPs from 23 different Member States and 6 political groups. Since October 2020, the SEArica secretariat has organised 16 strategic events reaching over three thousand participants.

The events have enabled CPMR Member Regions from all the sea basins to interact with high-level representatives and to make their voice heard. They have covered a wide range of maritime issues such as:

- Marine litter in the Atlantic, following up on the work done in the previous legislature, and the new Atlantic Action Plan 2.0;
- Maritime industries, addressing the needs of the maritime industry to contribute to the Green Recovery of the EU;
- Marine biodiversity in a changing climate in the Baltic Sea, in the legislative context of the EU Biodiversity Strategy and the EU Climate Law;
- Regional frameworks and sustainable blue growth in the Black Sea;
- Fisheries and Aquaculture in the Danube and the Black Sea region;
- State aid rules for the recovery of maritime and insular regions, highlighting the danger of the rise of regional disparities, alongside social and economic ones, as consequence of the pandemic crisis;
- The regional response to the EU Strategy on climate adaptation, focusing on coastal erosion and sea level rise;
- Reduction of emissions from shipping, the potential of wind propulsion to contribute to the Green Deal and sustainable management of ship effluents.

During this past year, CPMR Member Regions have taken the floor alongside 30 Members of the European Parliament and high-level representatives, including Ms Charlina Vitcheva, Director General of DG MARE; Mr Hans Bruyninckx, Executive Director, European Environment Agency (EEA); Mr Pascal Lamy, Chair of the Mission Board Healthy Oceans, Seas, Coastal and Inland Waters; Mr Ricardo Serrão Santos, Portuguese Minister of the Sea; MEP Pierre Karleskind, Chair of the PECH Committee, and MEP Younous Omarjee, President of the REGI Committee.
The European Green Deal is at the heart of the COVID-19 recovery and is the cornerstone of a climate neutral, prosperous, and competitive Europe. CPMR Member Regions are well-aware of it, as shown by their climate ambition and concrete action on the ground.

Hence, in the last year, the CPMR focused on influencing the EU decision-makers by showing what its Member Regions are already doing to implement the European Green Deal and the indispensable role they have in the ecological transition. The CPMR advocacy efforts focused on different areas from adaptation to energy and were nourished and strengthened by the results and examples of the Regions Act! initiative, political statements, and opinion pieces.

**Meeting with the decision makers** | In the last year, the CPMR met with political and technical officials of the European Union institutions to convey its Members’ messages, concerns and achievements on a wide array of key dossiers.

In fall 2020, the CPMR met with Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission, and with the European Green Deal advisor of European Council President Charles Michel, to share the ambition and key contribution of regional authorities in the implementation of the Green Deal, and the importance of ensuring their involvement and of a territorially balanced transition and recovery.

In spring 2021, via the CPMR Climate Task Force and the European Parliament SEARica Intergroup, the CPMR engaged with key Members of the European Parliament, technical officials of the European Commission and of the Portuguese Presidency of the European Council on the new EU Adaptation Strategy. Concrete examples of water management and coastal adaptation by CPMR Members were presented and discussed. Key CPMR’s messages on the importance of the regional level in the Strategy implementation and the specificity of maritime regions were echoed, in particular by the European Parliament and the European Council.

In Summer 2021, two meetings were held via the Coalition for Higher Ambition, with the Green Deal advisor of Charles Michel on the ‘Fit for 55 package’. In the first meeting, prior to the package publication, the CPMR shared its expectations on the package’s proposals, stressing the key role of regions in its implementation by sharing key conclusions of the Regions Act! initiative, which were welcomed.

In the second meeting, following the package publication, the CPMR underlined the necessity to better ensure the involvement of regional authorities for a swift and territorially balanced implementation of the package.

Throughout the last year, the CPMR continued its advocacy work on the Offshore Renewable Energy Strategy by cooperating with the European Commission and with key Members of the European Parliament, whilst contributing with an opinion piece in the European Energy Innovation Magazine. It also shared with different stakeholders its Policy Position ‘EmPowering Regions in the Energy Transition’ setting its expectations for a transition that ensures secure, clean and efficient energy in all regions.
Regions Act! | In its June 2021 Political Bureau, the CPMR presented the report and interactive map of the ‘Regions Act! CPMR Regions acting for climate neutrality’ initiative. Regions Act!, via a survey, aimed at gathering data on CPMR Members’ climate action, to show their contribution to the European Green Deal and the Paris Agreement.

Moreover, data was collected on the major threats to peripheral and maritime regions caused by climate change – showing their inherent vulnerability needing of specific measures – and the concrete adaptation measures implemented by CPMR Members to counter such threats.

Regions Act! is also evidence of the critical role of cohesion policy for climate action, and the necessity to preserve the key principles of partnership and multilevel governance. Thus, ensuring that regions are provided enough leeway to address the sectors where there is most need to affect change, given their knowledge on the vulnerabilities and socio-economic ecosystem of their territory.

As Regions Act! shows, sectors needing support to reach a fair transition to a climate neutral economy differ from one region to another. Hence, the need for a place-based approach to which regions are instrumental, given their competences and knowledge of their territories.

The survey, based on the contribution of 37 Regions from 12 countries, clearly shows that CPMR Members mean business when it comes to climate action. 37% of the respondent Regions have an ambition that is even higher than the 2050 climate neutrality target.

Regions Act! also shows how regions are a key level governance to deliver the ecological transition. They have competences in critical policy areas (e.g. transport and energy) where they are implementing measures with an integrated approach and have been proactively involving stakeholders in the fight against climate change. They can play the role of coordinators at local level, ensuring that no territory is left behind, and provide for coordination between national and local levels.

“Regions are not only acting now for a climate neutral tomorrow, but also have a key role in ensuring that all territories – from urban to rural – can be part of the transition. Climate and energy legislation must recognise and support this to ensure that no one is left behind.”

RICHARD SJÖLUND, Vice-President of the CPMR, Climate & Energy - Vice-Chair of the Board, Regional Council of Ostrobothnia
The CPMR, in collaboration with the voluntary regions of its Migration Task Force, recalls that EU migration policies must not forget the regions.

While negotiations on migration and asylum at Member State level have been faltering over the past years, regional authorities continue to provide a pragmatic reply to needs on the ground and are facing the realities of migration flows, particularly in the regions of first entry.

The CPMR’s aim in this policy area is to promote the multi-level governance and multi-sectoral approach to migration management and highlight the needs and added value of regional action.

New EU Migration Package and Funding Instruments |
The main focus of the period was to analyse and react to the new European Pact on Migration and Asylum and associated legislative package published in September 2020, as well as to follow the last stage of negotiations on the financial instruments related to migration management.

The key messages of the CPMR Migration Task Force were set out in a Policy Position (The New Pact on Migration and Asylum must not forget Regions) in which it advocated for greater understanding of the role of regional authorities across all areas of migration and asylum policy and better programme and funding opportunities to strengthen capacities.

In January 2021, the CPMR Task Force organised a meeting with the Cabinet of Ylva Johansson, European Commissioner for Home Affairs, to discuss the regional dimension of the New Pact. On this occasion, several members were able to share views and experiences in relation to their challenges and needs on the ground, as well as actions and solutions they are implementing. Commissioner Johansson has been highly receptive of the CPMR’s messages, stating that cities and regions will be key partners for the Commission in its work to take forward the implementation and negotiation of all elements of the Pact.

In terms of funding, thanks to the CPMR’s advocacy work, the renewed Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) 2021-2027 includes several elements in favour of the regions, not least by targeting a minimum 5% of the Thematic Facility under direct management at local and regional authorities for the implementation of integration measures.

Promoting the regions’ role in integration and inclusion |
As one of the elements related to the new Pact, the European Commission announced a new Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion for the 2021-2027 period. It is of particular relevance to the regional authorities given their important role in ensuring the successful social and economic inclusion of migrants and refugees in their territories. The CPMR contributed to the open consultation on the Action Plan and was invited by DG HOME to take part in informal discussions on the topic. Many of the demands it submitted were taken on board in the Plan which was published in November 2020.
The two-year AMIF funded project has developed indicators known as “MIPEX-R” (Migrant Integration Policy Regional Index) - an adaptation of the existing national MIPEX - and a toolkit for regional authorities to improve policy performance, develop the EU knowledge base and build capacities on migrant inclusion.

The CPMR has been disseminating the project through its Migration Task Force, where the REGIN indicators in particular have raised much interest. Several other CPMR member regions have decided to join the six pilot regions to test MIPEX-R. There is therefore a good potential to scale up the use of these indicators at a wider EU level.

Some important results have also been achieved through the REGIN Project (Regions for Migrants and Refugees Integration), launched in February 2020 and coordinated by the CPMR as leader of a consortium of ten partners involving six of its member regions (Azores, Campania, Catalonia, Murcia, Puglia, Skåne).

Migration will continue to weigh heavily on the EU agenda in the coming months. The slow progress of institutional negotiations, lack of agreement between Member States and new crises emerging at the EU borders will continue to impact the regional level. The CPMR will continue to monitor developments, underlining the importance of taking into consideration the regional dimension. It plans to be a key partner in the establishment of a Forum of Forefront Regions that will be set up in the spring of 2022 under the CoR/EC Partnership with the aim of giving member regions the opportunity to raise awareness of their situation on the ground, identify areas where targeted support is needed and propose solutions and recommendations at EU level. It will continue dialogue with DG HOME on the implementation of the EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion and funding opportunities under the new programming period. It will explore opportunities to capitalise REGIN results, exchange political views and experiences and develop synergies with other European and international stakeholders on topics of common interest.
Promoting the Atlantic Macro-Region | Over the last year, an increasing deployment of activities has been articulated within the AAC on the promotion of an Atlantic Macro-Region. A political declaration has been adopted in December 2020, several meetings with Commissioner Ferreira and MEP Younous Omarjee were organised which led to a high-level meeting during the AAC General Assembly with the Portuguese and Spanish Secretaries of State, who both strongly backed the initiative. The Atlantic Macro-Region was proposed at the General Affairs Council in June 2021.

Looking forward | The AAC will intensify its actions towards the French Presidency of the European Council in 2022 to encourage the creation of an Atlantic Macro-Regional Strategy. It will also carry on the activities of its working group to achieve the objectives set by the AAC presidency and engage new activities under the Ocean Pollution working group, whose creation was validated by the AAC regions at the General Assembly in June 2021.

A developing cooperation | The BBSC keeps being open to new members from both the Balkans and the Black Sea, working on common priorities and challenges for the benefit of its territories and the well-being of its citizens. During the 2020-2021 period, as BBSC we had the pleasure to see two key cooperation projects for the Adriatic-Ionian and Black Sea regions - AI-NURECC PLUS ensuring deep and broad territorial coverage while enhancing Regional and Local Authorities’ appropriation of the EUSAIR main objectives and opportunities, and BRIDGE-BS addressing the resilient ecosystems goals of the Black Sea Common Maritime Agenda and Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda - being launched. Two key projects that will help us, the BBSC members, to promote our political objectives and vision for our region.

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. Such programmes and calls allow us BBSC members and partners from the covered territories 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 region help drive forward cooperation and development in the Balkan and Black Sea area.
“While the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission has celebrated this year its 25th anniversary, Member Regions have cooperated to foster a green recovery of the Baltic Sea Region. The adopted new Action Plan for the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region should help to boost resilience and recovery in the Baltic Sea Region, based on territorial strengths.”

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

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission has welcomed the adoption of a new Action Plan for EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, by the European Commission in February 2021. The inclusion of a climate perspective in all policy areas, and the reduction in the number of actions can contribute to easier and more efficient collaboration between Baltic Sea Region actors. A high-level event was organised to discuss concrete implications of the Action Plan for regions and how they can be involved in the implementation, in the presence of EUSBSR coordinators for Policy Areas.

**EUSBSR** | The BSC welcomed the adoption of a new Action Plan for EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, by the European Commission in February 2021. The inclusion of a climate perspective in all policy areas, and the reduction in the number of actions can contribute to easier and more efficient collaboration between Baltic Sea Region actors. A high-level event was organised to discuss concrete implications of the Action Plan for regions and how they can be involved in the implementation, in the presence of EUSBSR coordinators for Policy Areas.

**EU Arctic Policy** | The BSC has closely followed the revision of a new EU Arctic Policy, via a newly established Arctic Task Force led by Region Västerbotten (Sweden). The Task Force called on the EU decision-makers to closely involve regional authorities in its design and implementation. Regions can indeed help identify key investment priorities and through further cooperation, create the conditions to develop a sustainable Arctic Policy that benefits all.

**Looking forward** | The focus for the BSC will continue to foster interregional cooperation in different EU policy areas and promote local actions, that overall contributes to increase prosperity and sustainable development of the Baltic Sea Region. From promoting sustainable transport, to clean energy and a sustainable maritime ecosystem, the BSC will work to foster the green transition of the Baltic Sea Region, utilising the potential of a new EUSBSR Action Plan and promoting a Baltic Sea perspective in EU policies.

“Climate change is one of the issues we should keep working on. As representative of public authorities, we have the duty to remain optimistic without losing sight of the gravity of the effects of the climate crisis. These efforts need to be conjugated with the adaptation and mitigation of the current pandemic as well, in order to ensure our cohabitation to the best possible extent.”

Nello Musumeci, President of the Sicily Region
Presidency of the Intermediterranean Commission

**Global Mediterranean macro-region** | Reflections on a global macro-region for the Mediterranean are still part of the IMC’s core business and in the coming months, its members will take full advantage of the opportunity presented by the COTER Report (CoR) to support again the idea and bring it to a higher stage.

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**Looking forward** | Thematically speaking, the IMC’s activities on the blue economy and the recovery of its various sectors will keep going on, both through reflections with the members and through the activities of projects: for example, with the update of the survey and report on sustainable tourism in Mediterranean territories, maritime spatial planning, or renewable marine energies, to name a few. Lastly, the youth dimension will be strengthened, benefitting from synergies with other youth networks across the basin, while the newly launched axis on lagoons and the AGRIMED Task Force will start their activities.

The CPMR Intermediterranean Commission has been developing crucial reflections on the future of the Mediterranean basin, particularly following the publication of the European Commission’s Communication on the New Partnership for the Southern Neighborhood. A specific statement has been ratified by its General Assembly on the matter, underlining the importance of involving Regions in the articulation and implementation of the EU Neighborhood policy.

**EUSBSR** | The BSC welcomed the adoption of a new Action Plan for EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, by the European Commission in February 2021. The inclusion of a climate perspective in all policy areas, and the reduction in the number of actions can contribute to easier and more efficient collaboration between Baltic Sea Region actors. A high-level event was organised to discuss concrete implications of the Action Plan for regions and how they can be involved in the implementation, in the presence of EUSBSR coordinators for Policy Areas.

**EU Arctic Policy** | The BSC has closely followed the revision of a new EU Arctic Policy, via a newly established Arctic Task Force led by Region Västerbotten (Sweden). The Task Force called on the EU decision-makers to closely involve regional authorities in its design and implementation. Regions can indeed help identify key investment priorities and through further cooperation, create the conditions to develop a sustainable Arctic Policy that benefits all.

**Looking forward** | Thematically speaking, the IMC’s activities on the blue economy and the recovery of its various sectors will keep going on, both through reflections with the members and through the activities of projects: for example, with the update of the survey and report on sustainable tourism in Mediterranean territories, maritime spatial planning, or renewable marine energies, to name a few. Lastly, the youth dimension will be strengthened, benefitting from synergies with other youth networks across the basin, while the newly launched axis on lagoons and the AGRIMED Task Force will start their activities.

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COVID impacts in EU Islands | This year, the Islands Commission and its new Presidency have been at the forefront of EU lobbying to address the severe socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 in EU islands. The Islands Commission works intensely to urge the European institutions for specific actions in favor of insular territories and to ensure an adequate and targeted support for the recovery, the latter in particular through supporting the DG Regio study on the impact of COVID in Outermost Regions. The IC political messages are supported by numerous on-hands activities, underlining the important role played by islands in topics such as climate neutrality, the future of tourism or the Sustainable Blue Economy.

Looking forward | The Islands Commission will continue to push for the elaboration of a specific statute for EU islands and to obtain an institutional recognition of the insular specificities at EU level. For that, it will closely monitor the progress of the EP report on EU islands. It will further develop its commitment to showcasing islands as laboratories for the green and digital transition, expanding its involvement in hydrogen, circular economy, clean transport, and blue technologies.

North Sea Region Strategy | In November 2020, the North Sea Commission adopted the North Sea Region 2030 Strategy. It focuses on four areas: a productive and sustainable North Sea; a climate-neutral, connected and smart North Sea Region. The strategy is the basis for the NSC’s own work in the coming ten years. It is also a contribution to North Sea cooperation in general. Several ideas from the strategy have found their way into the new Interreg North Sea Region programme.

Looking forward | Climate change is a major concern. Regional governments have an important role for boosting the inevitable transition through more cooperation on innovation, new transport solutions, renewable energy, energy efficiency, etc. Exchange of experience and coordination of efforts will continue on how to mitigate climate change and to adapt our societies to its effects, both between regions and by influencing national and international legislation and practice.

The environmental status of the sea is another concern. The NSC will have a continued focus on preventing marine pollution.

There are encouraging signs of increasing coordination between national governments across the North Sea Region on topics such as offshore energy, maritime spatial planning and marine research. The NSC will encourage discussions on an even closer strategic cooperation, motivated also by the effects from Brexit.
The CPMR organised with MEP Pierre Karleskind and MEP Catherine Chabaud a SEARica Intergroup event to share the results of CleanAtlantic towards high-level representatives of EU institutions in October 2020. The CPMR launched with CETMAR the CleanAtlantic Knowledge Tool, a user-friendly inventory of marine litter resources generated in the frame of research projects or specialised organisations. It also engaged a cooperation with the Global Partnership on Marine Litter under the UN Environment Programme. The CPMR finally participated to the CleanAtlantic Final Conference in June 2021. Around 150 participants attended the conference and learnt about project contributions to tackle marine litter.

CLIPPER organises its final conference and promotes its latest results

The overall aim of the project was to develop better public policies to support the competitiveness of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) working in maritime industries in Europe. In the context of the project, the CPMR organised a SEARICA conference involving MEPs and EU institutions, that contributed to the disseminate CLIPPER and CPMR messages on maritime industry. A CLIPPER toolbox is now available on the project website. It gathers the SWOT studies of all CLIPPER partners, the identified good practices and political recommandations on four axis: industrial performance, collective performance, internationalisation, and risk sharing. Gathering over 300 participants, the CLIPPER Final Conference provided an opportunity for maritime industry stakeholders and CPMR member Regions from across the whole of Europe to come together.

SAFER: a catalogue of innovative services fostering the development of the seafood sector in the Atlantic and beyond!

Complementing the activities of transfer of innovation to several Atlantic seafood enterprises, CPMR developed a catalogue mapping innovative best practice in the seafood sector across the Atlantic Area. It was presented to the Atlantic Arc Commission (AAC) member regions during the AAC Hub Meetings in April 2021 and to the overall CPMR membership on September 20, at SAFER final conference, organised in the context of the CPMR Fisheries Working Group. This event was the occasion to share the overall project’s results to regional authorities from different sea-basins and further boost reflection on innovation in the seafood sector.

What’s in it for CPMR members?

With the CleanAtlantic Knowledge Tool, member regions have the opportunity to get inspired by initiatives led to fight against marine litter. The project has also enabled our network to gain visibility at EU institutions and international levels.

What’s in it for CPMR members?

CPMR members were able to follow the activities of the project related to the CPMR work on Marine Energies & Maritime Industries. The project out-comes will feed-in CPMR long-term work and are available for its member Regions.
The primary objective of Kleroterion is to promote the direct participation of local citizens in cohesion policy programmes. To this end, the project consists in applying the format of citizens’ panels/assemblies to the preparation process of the 2021-2027 programmes. This is tested in three European regions that are members of the CPMR - Western Greece, Central Greece (EL), Alentejo (PT) - in collaboration with their regional authorities. CPMR developed a guidance to set up and run the citizens’ panels in the framework of cohesion policy. Bilateral and collective meetings took place with the three regional authorities participating in the project to plan the activities: the citizens’ panels will be held in September and October 2021. In November-December 2021 the CPMR will organize a technical seminar and release a paper listing recommendations as to how scale up these practices.

REGIN partner regions are implementing migrant integration actions, designed using tools developed within the project. Each region benefitted from the analysis of policy indicators as part of MIPEX-R, identifying areas with room for improvement. Using the REGIN Project toolkit, regions gathered relevant stakeholders by enhancing their capacities and their regional staff’s skills through capacity building and training sessions, contributing to an evaluation framework of regional integration practices.

REGIN also collaborated with the European Committee of the Regions and the European Commission (DG HOME) through an Online Workshop for Local and Regional Authorities, sharing project results and lessons learnt.

CulTourE4Youth aims to develop a regional paradigm as capacity building initiator for empowered youth entrepreneurship. The project will run until the end of 2021 and engage with young people (18-30y.o.), government agencies, business operators and training institutions in coastal communities in the geographical area of Turkey, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine, consolidating the results in a dedicated workshop organised by the CPMR BBSC in Batumi (Ajara Region, Georgia).

The project will provide background information and analysis on how youth entrepreneurship is promoted by existing policies and initiatives, and how can it be better supported to address local and regional challenges, such as youth unemployment and brain drain.

What’s in it for CPMR members?

The project is developing a methodology for best engaging citizens in the design and implementation of cohesion policy programmes. All regions could in future use this framework which has been tested within the project.
ongoing projects

minE-emi: Maritime Innovative Network of Education for Emerging Maritime Issues

iSOL-MET: Innovative SOft SkilLs to Maritime Education and Training

these two Erasmus+ Projects are complementary. MINE-EMI focuses on the elaboration of a Joint Master Programme (JMPs) that facilitates developing skills and competences to raise awareness on emerging maritime issues in the wider Black Sea region in order to promote sustainable management of the maritime sector in the region. IsOL-MET focuses on the creation of a comprehensive Maritime skills course programme for multidisciplinary and multicultural groups of students – through case study methodology – aiming to bridge the gap between the shipping world requirement and the needs of maritime universities’ students and maritime professionals.

What’s in it for CPMR members?

MINE-EMI aims to establish a “Black Sea Community of Maritime Education and Training Institutions” to contribute to boosting sustainable European maritime economy, Blue Growth, and Integrated Maritime Policy implementation. iSOL-MET will design a case study Handbook collection, evaluation tools for soft skills based on the Assessment Centre concept, provide the link between academia and industry, and therefore contribute to making maritime professions in the BBSC membership more appealing and competitive.

The WINTER MED, DestiMED PLUS and HERIT DATA projects, although having accumulated some delays in the implementation of their testing and transferring phases due to the global pandemic, are entering the capitalisation phase, the most critical phase to ensure the sustainability of their results beyond the projects duration. This phase will result in the creation of a transnational integrated strategy for all-year-round sustainable tourism and a policy document for WINTER MED, the creation of a Mediterranean Ecotourism Consortium (MEC) and a Policy Roadmap for DestiMED PLUS, the creation of a Mainstreaming Model and a MoU for HERIT DATA.

The three projects respond to the challenges posed by the seasonality of tourism. The results of these projects are part of a sustainable revival of the tourism sector in threatened sites or in poorly exploited territories.

What’s in it for CPMR members?

The projects enable CPMR members to activate synergies and cooperation to share specific solutions on integrated, sustainable and responsible management of tourism ecosystems.
Over the last months, the MBPC “community building” activities have consisted in the promotion of two capacity building webinars, and the participation to a workshop for tackling marine litters in MPAs. As for the transferring activities, the Ecosystem-based Management applied to Maritime Spatial Planning training course took place online in March, while the Adriatic-Ionian ecoregion working group prepared its first online workshop on transboundary governance mechanism on the South Adriatic Ionian Straight Ecologically and Biologically Significant Marine Areas. It is also worthy to mention the participation to the EU Green Week, with the webinar on “Zero pollution impacts on biodiversity and health”, and to the IUCN World Congress with a campus session on tested ecosystem-based tools developed by MBPC and Sustainable Tourism Community projects.

**What’s in it for CPMR members?**

CPMR members are invited to sign the Declaration for an Ecosystemic Approach, and can benefit from the online tools of the project. Other capacity building and transferring activities deserve the regional authorities interest, such as the workshops and training course. A Med Academy to train public authorities on MBPC projects main results will also be delivered in Spring 2022.

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Over the last year, the Blue Growth Community (BGC) has been focusing its efforts on transferring and capitalisation activities. Informative meetings were held with several Mediterranean maritime regions in order to identify actors willing to apply mature and already tested tools developed by the Modular projects of the community. Four thematic Working Groups (Marine renewable energies, Circular blue economy and funding (including circular blue economy), Maritime and coastal tourism (including yachting and recreational boating) and Maritime surveillance have been set up to foster the transfer of tools, exchange of best practices. Capitalisation activities (including strategic liaising and advocacy ones such as the drafting of a position paper on the Commission’s Communication on sustainable blue economy) are also foreseen in the coming months around these themes.

**What’s in it for CPMR members?**

The members of the Intermediterranean Commission are involved in and regular updated on the community’s activities. In the future, there will be further opportunities to collaborate on new issues i.e. circular blue economy, maritime and coastal tourism including yachting and recreational boating, maritime surveillance, etc.

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Over the last year, BLUE BIO MED has been seeking to develop a governance model of innovation policies to tackle complex challenges as part of the main priorities of blue bioeconomy i.e. sustainable marine aquaculture, marine bioenergy production, ecosystem and coastal areas valorisation and protection, blue biotechnology exploitation. So far, several testing activities have been implemented including a conceptual framework and mapping methodology for RIS3 related to the blue economy, RIS3 country reports and policy factsheets, as well as BLUE BIO MED’s Call to action toward the sustainable development of blue bioeconomy sectors. In addition, partners are currently setting up policy experiments consisting of workshops where quadruple helix stakeholders work together in identifying potential activities to tackle sustainable development challenges.

**What’s in it for CPMR members?**

CPMR members (in particular Intermediterranean Commission ones) are encouraged to support the call to action initiative and get involved in the creation of an Alliance for innovation in blue bioeconomy sectors, which is the project’s final goal.
During the second year of the project, partners continued to exchange good practices of soft digitalisation measures, especially during two Policy Learning Events (Dec 2020 and May 2021) and connected with a broad range of stakeholders at the regional and European level, strengthening the community around the project. A workshop on the topic of Citizen Participation and Digital solutions was organised in March 2021, presenting case studies implemented in Finland, Sweden, Ireland and France. Next2Met will coordinate a workshop at the EURegionsWeek 2021 under the thematic cluster “digital transition”. A fifth Policy Learning Event will be organised in Fall 2021.

Started in May 2021, AspBAN aims at fostering an acceleration services platform for EU Atlantic ports to function as an open innovation ecosystem of the blue economy. To this end, the project will connect the existing actors of the Blue Economy around ports and bring in private investors. AspBAN will also work in close connection with the EEA, transatlantic and other relevant EU and non-EU maritime basins. AspBAN is an opportunity for ports to go beyond their current services by diversifying their activities, and to become the main ecosystem to develop blue businesses and support a sustainable ocean economy.

AspBAN is an opportunity for regions to assess new opportunities for ports development in digitalisation, green transition, and new businesses related to blue economy.

The project contributes to the digital transition of territories surrounding metropolitan areas by implementing soft digitalisation measures and improving policy instruments, with the aim of increasing the attractiveness of these places and allowing them to retain knowledge, people and capital.

What’s in it for CPMR members?

The AspBAN project: connecting ports to foster sustainable and innovative Blue Economy

AI-NURECC PLUS, coordinated by the CPMR with the support of four partners from the area, supports the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Sea Region (EUSAIR) implementation, ensuring deep and broad territorial coverage while enhancing Regional and Local Authorities’ appropriation of the EUSAIR main objectives and opportunities in the EUSAIR cross-pillar topics: “Research and Innovation”, “SMEs Development”, and “Skills Development”. AI-NURECC PLUS will therefore foster entrepreneurship, transnational clusters, and digital innovation hubs activities for the EUSAIR. It will also contribute to the implementation of the Cultural and Creative Regional Ecosystems (CCRE-S3) thematic area’s objectives in the EUSAIR area. AI-NURECC PLUS will operate in the following fields: Sustainable Tourism, Cultural and Creative Industries, and Circular Economy.

What’s in it for CPMR members?

What’s in it for CPMR members?

The project aims at encouraging multi-actor networking and collaboration between the CPMR Members in the Adriatic-Ionian region and relevant EU, national, regional and local, public and private sector stakeholders.
The main objective of the SolaQua project is to increase the share of renewable energy consumption in Europe by facilitating the market uptake of solar irrigation in the farming sector. During the first year of the project, project partners have developed materials and tools to address the technical, economic and legal issues that act as barriers to the market adoption of solar irrigation. To disseminate the SolaQua results among their wide network, the partners have undertaken actions, such as the organization of events targeting specific stakeholders, and have contributed to various communication activities.

The main objective of MAESHA is to decarbonise the energy system of the French outermost of Mayotte by fostering the deployment of renewable energy through customized innovative flexibility services based on a close study and modelling of local energy systems and community structures. Potential replicability will be studied on 5 other EU islands. Started in November 2020, the first studies, data gathering, and the architecture of the energy system modelling tool are now being finalized while local community engagement is well underway.

BRIDGE-BS proposes a multidisciplinary, multisectoral program building on regional and international initiatives as a critical contribution to the science-based policy needed to preserve the Black Sea ecosystems for the benefit of citizens dependent upon their sustainability. The project will develop predictive tools and capabilities necessary to understand and predict the impacts of climate-driven and anthropogenic multi-stressors on the services stemming from Black Sea ecosystems. These services and their responses to stressors will be mapped, monitored and modeled in order to identify a safe operating space within which a sustainable blue economy can flourish. BRIDGE-BS is structured around “three” interconnected nodes: Service Dynamics, Blue Growth Incubators and Empowered Citizens.

The SolaQua project will provide CPMR member regions with knowledge and tools to promote the use of solar irrigation in their territories. More specifically, to improve existing regulations on photovoltaic irrigation systems and to improve their Rural Development Plans using EAFRD financial instruments.

MAESHA is tackling common challenges regarding energy supply in islands and will deliver a user manual which will be disseminated for replicability measures through IC members. The project will also link with similar initiatives within NESOI – European Islands Facility projects and from the Clean Energy for EU islands Secretariat.

BRIDGE-BS will be implemented by addressing the respective goals of the Black Sea Common Maritime Agenda (CMA) and the Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA). It will strengthen collaborations between scientists and stakeholders, policymakers, industry representatives and societal interest groups, to create a connected Black Sea community.