# Online Meeting of the CPMR Migration Task Force

**21 October 2021**

**Claire Street**, Project and Policy Officer, claire.street@cpmr.org

## Participants

**REGIONS**

**AZORES (PT)**
- André SANTOS, Regional Directorate for the Communities

**BASQUE COUNTRY (ES)**
- Amaia BELOKI, Brussels Delegation
- Carmen GUTIERREZ, Technician

**BREMEN**
- Antje GROTHER, Vicepresident, Bremen Parliament
- Tanja BAERMAN
- Melanie JANSSEN

**CANARY ISLANDS (ES)**
- Eva FARIÑA ESPINOSA, Policy Advisor
- Irina BETANCOR ALMEIDA, Junior Policy Advisor, EU Delegation in Brussels

**CATALONIA (ES)**
- Nuria BEDOS, Senior Policy Officer
- Soukaina EL YAZIDI, EU Policy Unit
- Marlen NIUBÓ EDELER, Senior Immigration Officer
- Màriam LUTFI ROYO, Policy Officer for the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean and Project Coordinator of the Shababuna EU Project (AMIF 2014-2020)

**EMILIA-ROMAGNA (IT)**
- Andrea FACCHINI

**GOZO (MT)**
- Gabriella GRIMA, Liaising Officer

**LISBON & TAGUS VALLEY (PT)**
- Tiago CRUZ, Head of Cooperation Unit

**MURCIA (ES)**
- Maria Teresa MUÑOZ IBAÑEZ, Head of Immigration Service
- Francisco RAMÍREZ, Officer

**NAVARRA (ES)**
- Jon ANTONMÁS PASCUAL, EU Delegation Brussels
- Carmen MIER, European Projects Office
- Leire RODRIGUEZ, Jefa negociado de proyectos europeos, Direccion General de Políticas Migratorias
- Patricia RUIZ, Director General Migration Policies

**OCCITANIE (FR)**
- Allan VIGOUROUX, Policy Officer

**ROGALAND**
- Beata REPPEN, Senior Adviser

**SKÅNE (SE)**
- Annika ANNERBY JANSSON, President and Rapporteur on migration issues to the CPMR Political Bureau
- Maria LINDBOM, Senior Advisor

**VALENCIA (ES)**
- Daria TERRADEZ, DG for EU Affairs
### 1. Welcome and introduction

*Annika Annerby Jansson, President of Region Skåne, Chair of the Task Force*

The CPMR’s main focus this year has been on advocacy based on messages set out in the Policy Paper “The New Pact on Migration and Asylum must not forget Regions” adopted in October 2020, and on monitoring the regulations related to the new funding instruments related to migration.

The Final Declaration adopted at the General Assembly last 14 October reiterates CPMR’s core messages in view of the Conference on the Future of Europe and its “Topic 3. managing migration through a predictable, balanced and reliable system”.

Regarding the current EU context, the main elements are:

- Slow progress of negotiations on the Pact and deadlock between Member States on some key points
- Some progress on legal pathways for labour migration
- New turn of events this year at the geopolitical level with 1) the instrumentalisation of migrants for political means as highlighted on the EU borders with Belarus and 2) events in Afghanistan with fears of a repeat of the 2015 refugee crisis
- New funding instruments related to migration entered into force this summer:
  - Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) with 90% co-financing rate for RLAs and 5% of the thematic facility directed to their action. There is also complementarity with other funds such as ESF+ and ERDF
  - Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI) which foresees 10% of the budget dedicated to migration and earmarks a specific budget of 500 million euros for local and regional authorities under the geographic programmes.

The CPMR is pleased to see that the European Commission is listening to the voice of regional and local authorities and recognising their important role in migration management and looks forward to continued fruitful dialogue.

### 2. State of play of the proposed new Pact on Migration and Asylum. What does it mean for Regions?

*Antje Grotheer, Vice-President of Bremen Parliament and CoR rapporteur on the Pact*

Ms Grotheer presented the main lines of the Committee of the Regions’ opinion on the Pact and the EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion.

- Regions are not considered as worthy as partners as Member States, although they are the ones active on the ground and bearing financial burden of integration.
### SUMMARY OF DEBATES

- The CoR questions how the proposed system of solidarity will work. It needs to be balanced.
- The criterion of first entry for defining the country of application for asylum should be abolished. This already does not work and is not likely to work in the future. Pressure on frontline regions must be eased. By allowing asylum seekers to apply in the country of their choice, this would also help to prevent secondary movements.
- Asylum decisions should not be made on the basis of recognition rates alone but take into account the individual case.
- In crisis situations, Member States should have the discretion to grant immediate protection.
- Screening procedure should be done at an early stage to detect vulnerabilities. There should be more focus on care for children and vulnerable persons, eg. women, LGBTQI, persons with disabilities.
- Eurodac and collection of biometric data should not concern children under 12 years of age.

In short, the Pact should be revised in a way to provide more support for regional authorities under pressure, ensure protection for the vulnerable and reduce the time migrants spend in reception centres at the EU borders.

The impact assessment discussed by the LIBE committee of the European Parliament in September 2020 mentioned some of the same points as the CoR. Collaboration is in progress with LIBE committee of the European Parliament to make constructive proposals for improvement.

**Francesco Fusaro, Policy Officer, European Commission DG HOME C.2. Legal Pathways & Integration**

Migration is still a divisive topic, and Member States still do not agree on the issue of solidarity. At the same time, we see migration patterns are changing, and the recent events of Afghanistan and Belarus highlight the vulnerability and fragility of the EU.

The European Commission conceived the Pact to provide the necessary tools to face current and future challenges balancing responsibility and solidarity and addressing the internal and external policies related to migration and asylum.

Regarding the recent positive developments, there has been approval of the Blue Card Directive and agreement on the new EU Asylum Agency.

Although the Resettlement Framework still needs to be agreed, there have nevertheless been continued efforts by the European Commission and Member States to resettle vulnerable persons. This shows that there is not always the need to pass through legislation to find pragmatic responses.

There is still much work ahead in particular regarding the Screening Regulation, the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation and the Crisis and Force Majeure Regulation where Member States must reach compromises.

In addition to asylum procedures and resettlement, another major part of the pact is legal and labour migration and integration. Here the EC is working specifically...
with RLAs, since they are the ones who know best their economic and social needs. For example, the EC has conducted labour mobility pilot projects where regions in the EU and in third countries had a key role on account of their closeness to the needs of their territories.

Integration is a process that must have a multi-level governance and a multi-stakeholder approach. The new Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 gives prominence to the regional and local level by dedicating 5% of the thematic facility of the AMIF (representing 30% of the fund managed directly by the EC) to RLAs with a 90% co-financing rate. The EC is providing support to RLAs through complementarities in funding and a comprehensive approach.

The partnership principle of the funding regulation is also a key element, where national programmes must demonstrate that they have involved regional authorities in setting objectives as well as in the implementation.

Finally, the European Commission has set up a partnership with the Committee of the Regions. An event was held on 28 September to present the new funding instruments (click here for more information).

- **Debate**

**Catalonia** (Marlen Niubó) first welcomed the announced dedicated 5% for RLAs under the new AMIF. She then asked if with regard to the partnership principle there would be measures in place to hold Member States accountable for ensuring the measures they decide on do take account of regional needs.

**Antje Grotheer** emphasised that she regretted there had been no territorial impact assessment of the Pact. If this had been done, the burden on regions would have been more clearly understood in light of their competences in different policy areas related to integration for example. Regions need to be supported with solidarity not only at EU level but also from their own Member States.

**Francesco Fusaro** indicated that there is a clear acknowledgement of the role of regions in integration both in the EU Action Plan and in the AMIF Regulation and other migration related funds (ESF+, ERDF, etc.) in which the partnership principle is also clearly stated.

In practice, the European Commission will share knowledge to RLAs through the partnership with the Committee of the Regions, but also by providing direct technical support through conferences and by facilitating sharing of experiences to boost capacity building.

In reply to Catalonia, Mr Fusaro explained that there is a process of approval of national programmes when it comes to funding. The Member States are then encouraged through a Commission policy document to adopt their strategies. The EC will monitor these national strategies and policies and illustrate with available data the benefits of how they are contributing to the integration of non-EU migrants.
# SUMMARY OF DEBATES

## 3. “Should I stay or should I go?” CPMR reflections on the migration-climate change nexus

*Presentation of briefing note, Claire Street, CPMR Policy and Project Officer*

Link to [CPMR Policy Brief – Climate Change and Migration](#) / Link to [Powerpoint Presentation](#)

The main lines of the presentation were as follows:

- **Background to the migration-climate nexus**
  - No internationally recognised legal framework for protection of persons migrating because of climate change (no such thing officially as a “climate refugee”)
  - Complexity of migration drivers – climate change is only one factor often in combination with others
  - Most climate induced migration is internal within the wider geographic area
  - Migration through legal mechanisms can be an adaptation strategy
  - External dimension through development cooperation to improve resilience of vulnerable populations to climate change

- **Regarding the positions of the EU institutions**
  - The European Commission focuses on the external dimension providing support to third countries to tackle climate change
  - The European Parliament is most proactive regarding efforts to build a framework for protection of climate migrants
  - At Council and Member State level currently no political move on the issue.

- **Ideas for CPMR action**

  **On Migration and Asylum aspects:** develop policy messages calling for protection of climate migrants. This could be done through the organisation of a workshop/session in CPMR statutory meeting.

  **On the External Dimension:** contribution of regional authorities to climate resilience and preparedness through their international partnerships. This could be done by working through the CPMR Geographical Commissions and extending the scope of the [Regions Act!](#) Initiative to include international actions.

  **On Internal Displacement within Europe:** Launch reflection on knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon. This could be done through a member survey and exchange of experiences through the CPMR Migration and Climate Task Forces.

- **Debate**

  **Catalonia** (Marlen Niubó and Màriam Lutfi) confirmed interest in this topic, linking it to the issues of legal migration and the regional contribution to the external dimension. First, economic instability linked to climate change would result in more economic migrants and thus the need to develop better legal pathways. Second, Catalonia is actively working with third country partners on migration

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<td>CPMR General Secretariat to survey CPMR members to ascertain if there is interest to take forward work on specific topics raised taking into account available resources</td>
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management, for example on a joint project with L’Oriental Region in Morocco raising awareness among young people of the risks of irregular migration and the legal alternatives.

Davide Strangis, Executive Director of the CPMR indicated that there had also been some expressions of interest in the climate-migration nexus from other regions that were not present at the meeting. The CPMR General Secretariat will make some initial contacts with these regions to discuss ideas for action.

The Task Force Chair added that the climate-migration nexus is a new area for the CPMR which needs consideration on how to shape and define possible work. Member regions need some time to reflect on the subject. As a first step a simple survey could be carried out by the CPMR General Secretariat to gather views.

4. Update on CPMR activity on migration policies

Claire Street, CPMR Policy and Project Officer

Link to PowerPoint presentation

Highlights of future CPMR activities on migration include:

- Plans to organise a high-level meeting with Commissioner Johansson and a CPMR delegation (end 2021/beginning 2022)
- President Cees Loggen has been appointed member of the Conference on the Future of Europe Working Group on Migration. Regular meetings will take place between now and March 2022
- CPMR involvement in the CoR/EC partnership on integration and inclusion. Event on LRAs in migration management with focus on border regions planned to be held in Greece in June 2021
- Capitalisation and dissemination of the REGIN Project (Regions for Migrants and Refugees Integration) including final conference in February 2022 and MIPEX-R webinar in April 2022.

5. Summing up

Annika Annerby Jansson, President of Region Skåne, Chair of the Task Force

The Chair thanked the guest speakers and the CPMR General Secretariat for their input, as well as the member regions for their participation.

She hoped for continued dialogue within the Task Force, on all aspects of migration policies of concern to CPMR regions.
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.

Rond-Point Schuman | 1040 Brussels, BELGIUM
info@cpmr.org | +32 (0)2 612 17 00

6, Rue Saint-Martin | 35700 Rennes, FRANCE (siège)
info@cpmr.org | +33 (0)2 99 35 40 50