No territory should be cut off from European solidarity:
Regions stand for an ambitious & green recovery
Approved by the CPMR Political Bureau by written procedure (10/07/2020)

The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions calls for a strengthened support of the transport sector that ensures green accessibility for all territories. Europe’s strong climate and environmental ambitions for transport must not be forgotten but help the recovery of a key sector for Europe.

We are in the middle of an unprecedented crisis. A crisis that our generation has never known, that tests us as citizens, as employees, as politicians, as Europeans and that will test the EU as a whole.

In the first place, we must respond to the urgency of the situation. Together, united and in solidarity. Today, the greatest urgency is obviously the protection and care of all affected. But because of the Covid 19 pandemic other crises are coming our way and like many other sectors, the transport sector is hit hard. Of course, to limit the spreading of the virus, we must limit mobility to the necessary minimum. All transport modes have seen their traffic collapse, while struggling to ensure that we get our means of subsistence everywhere in Europe and that we can access health care. The European Union quickly took the first emergency measures, notably modifying the de minimis state aid ceilings, suspending provisions of the slots regulation, identifying the cross-border sections which were to allow the movement of essential goods between States. These measures are welcome. They demonstrate Europe’s commitment to providing answers, to bring support to the Europeans.

The lessons learnt from the financial crisis taught us that the transport sector took time to get back on its feet, that the impact of an abrupt stop can last for years: the impact on transport is to be measured in the long run and will last for years. Unfortunately, the measures taken so far will not be enough to guarantee the survival of the sector after this crisis. Because survival is what is at stake as transport is affected, to protect the jobs and companies of the sector and those depending on it. And it is vital for our territories, to ensure the flow of essential goods and the movement of health personnel, especially in the most peripheral territories. At the heart of this crisis, no territory should be cut off from the world, cut off from European solidarity.

But our duty is then to turn our thoughts and anticipate what will come next. It is not about trying to predict what it will be, but to start getting ready for what may come. We will have to demonstrate that Europe is united, that it protects its citizens and that is prepared for the challenges of the future. Most importantly, this crisis cannot lead us to abandon our ambitions. We need a solid Europe more united than ever with an ambitious “European Green Deal” as a strong driving force for recovery. We also need a spirit of cohesion and shared destinies to prevent that the recovery results in a deadly wild competition within Europe.
Mobility is at the heart the Europe we imagined and built over the last 50 years. It brings us together, bridges us and binds us. It would be tragic to give it up. But we must do more than coming back to business as usual. It will of course be necessary to help the transport sector to recover, with the clear objective to connect Europeans to each other, to safeguard the existing jobs, create new ones and to ensure that our infrastructure is safe, adapted to climate change and new mobility modes. The Transport sector will need support to drive Europe in exiting the crisis while putting its economy on a path towards climate neutrality as quickly as possible. We cannot recover from this crisis by rushing to accelerate another one.

We must therefore continue to build a strategy for sustainable mobility as planned in the European Green Deal, with measurable objectives and ambitious deadlines. This strategy will have to follow a differentiated approach according to the variety of European territories. It must embrace the great diversity of spatial planning models for mobility that exist in Europe in order to adapt to the specificities and needs of all Europeans in terms of transport, whether they live in our major urban centers, in our rural areas, on our coasts or our islands. It must also ensure that existing jobs and business in the mobility sector will be protected and provided with the necessary support in the recovery from the Covid-19 crisis and transition toward climate neutrality.

In the context of the Recovery Plan, we must start building a real European industrial mobility strategy mirroring the strategy for sustainable mobility. The ambition of climate neutrality for transport will require colossal investments but will make it possible to build on the know-how of our industries and our workers, to create and protect industrial jobs and to contribute to the economic and social revival of Europe.

We also need to strengthen sustainable climate neutral solutions to ensure the territorial accessibility of peripheral and maritime regions. Rail links are to be our allies: strong, efficient connections, denser traffic, day and night, for passengers and freight to get the most out of our railways. We must seize the opportunity of the Year of the Rail in 2021 to take a step forward. Likewise, we should not forget that maritime and river transport is be a key enabler for a climate neutral transport system in Europe. Road freight transport, which has been essential in this crisis will also need to continue to adapt to the ambition of the Green Deal, as well as to contribute to intermodality. Air transport should be supported to enable it to continue its transformation into a greener and sustainable mode of transport.

We, peripheral and maritime Regions have been engaged in this direction for years. We are ready to take up the challenges ahead of us, together, united, and to work towards recovery alongside the European Institutions. We will make sure that no territory is left behind. Only together we will get out of this crisis, recover our economic strength and the trust in Europe, and advance towards our ambitious commitments with renewed stimulus.

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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