

European Values and Territorial Equity matter more than ever: supporting Cohesion is an investment in our collective future!

Europe today faces unprecedented pressures brought about by multiple parallel challenges such as geo-political, climate, integration, enlargement and socio-economic issues that the newly elected EU leaders in office must address. The CPMR Regions are fully committed to seeking solutions and being part of the ongoing reflection on the future of the European project and call for the EU to guarantee that financial means meet Europe's ambition to be a global player and ensure all citizens across all territories in the EU have opportunities to succeed in an ever-changing global environment.

The European Union's resilience lies not merely in its role as an international marketplace, but in its identity as a Union bound by shared values and principles.

Either the EU risks drifting towards weakening its core values or it can seize a golden opportunity to strengthen them. The Letta report¹ on the single market introduces the notion "freedom to stay", recalling the importance of access to high-quality jobs and education, but also adequate services of general interest in all EU regions. The CPMR subscribes fully to this and warns that any decision compromising the provision of basic services risks undermining the benefits of Europe's peaceful integration, open markets, and democratic structures. We also underscore the need for the EU to fortify its foundational principles and safeguard its core democratic values. **These values hinge on social, economic and territorial cohesion**, fostering prosperity amid an unparalleled era of peace amongst Member States. Both the Letta and Draghi reports introduce the concept of the 'fifth freedom', in reference to the free movement of knowledge across Europe, complementing the four fundamental freedoms of the EU: goods, services, capital, and people. This fifth freedom is crucial for closing the innovation gap and maintaining Europe's competitiveness against other global powers. An increased focus on innovation and a sustainable green transition is of paramount importance to the well-functioning of the single market, sustaining our economic models and guaranteeing the well-being of all EU citizens.

The CPMR thus advocates for a **new generation of EU policies** guided by its motto "**Territories Matter**", grounded in **subsidiarity and multilevel governance, an enabling regulatory environment and supported by adapted and reinforced budgetary resources.**

Europe's peripheral maritime regions are currently facing multiple challenges, ranging from climate change, coastal erosion, extreme weather conditions and biodiversity loss, to bordering war zones and receiving refugees seeking shelter. Therefore, CPMR regions must be further empowered, better equipped and integrated in all relevant decision and policymaking processes at national, EU, and international level, enabling them to provide their effective solutions adapted to the local conditions. As the report on the single market states, there cannot be a single market and thus an economically strong Europe without territorial cohesion. It is imperative therefore that the new political framework, the **European Strategic Agenda 2024-2029** explicitly prioritises territorial cohesion alongside social and economic cohesion in accordance with Art 174 of the TFEU. Only a united Europe will be able to confront its many external challenges, and internal cohesion is a sine-qua-non element of this unity.

Together, we can forge a European project that represents the aspirations and needs of its citizens, prioritizing the wellbeing of both our people and our planet!

¹ Letta, Enrico (2024), "Much more than a market, speed, security, solidarity - Empowering the Single Market to deliver a sustainable future and prosperity for all EU Citizens", April 2024.

For the EU to address the incoming challenges and achieve its objectives, the CPMR:

1. Encourages the EU to use the most appropriate policy instruments with a **correct balance of regulatory, budgetary, financial, and fiscal instruments**, to ensure the optimisation of public resources. This includes the need for policy coherence, ensuring that actions are mutually reinforcing EU objectives and not undermining each other.
2. Observes that **the new budget should be more efficient, transparent and endowed with the means to achieve the Union's objectives (Art. 311 TFEU)**. Notes that the formulas of the budget are designed with budgetary control and reductions as the main objective. Projections² show how these automatically erode the core budget over time, to maintain costs well below the ceiling of 1.4% of GNI for the Multiannual Financial Framework. The formulas do not reflect the expanding competencies and objectives of the EU. The CPMR hence advocates for an improved **EU budget**, prioritizing more effective attainment of European objectives by providing the right support to stakeholders across the EU. It also notes the capacity of the EU to create ambitious solutions when required, as exemplified by Next Generation EU, and calls for the EU to live up to the challenges ahead and not fall back into the usual budgetary zero-sum game debates.
3. **Calls for a more effective implementation of the subsidiarity principle and of Articles 174 and 349 of the TFEU in all EU policies and opposes the increasing centralisation of programmes at both EU and national levels.** The European model of development is based on a **partnership with the national and regional governments** grounded in the principles of **subsidiarity and ownership** through **trust and shared management**, in line with multilevel governance. **The regional authorities are often the most competent to set the strategies and manage the programmes. These are the closest to the inhabitants, have the best insight on territorial needs and ability to mobilise territorial stakeholders to promote place-based solutions and regional integration.**
4. **Underlines the key role peripheral maritime regions must play in addressing the growing risks and challenges the EU faces now and in the future.** These regions are expected to implement essential actions benefitting the whole of the EU and its neighbours in areas such as climate adaptation and mitigation, ocean pollution, sustainable land-use planning, safeguarding biodiversity, nature restoration, food, energy, security, trade, and migration.
5. Calls not only for the policy to be well endowed, but also that every **new generation of EU policies recognises the diversity of territories' needs by anchoring territorial proofing and Territorial Impact Assessments at EU level in a simplified future EU legislation and financial architecture.** This is essential to ensure that the **"do no harm to cohesion"** principle is respected. **Cohesion Policy has been successful** in lifting the economies and living standards of regions, but **its size is too small** to counter alone the agglomeration forces of the single market that lead to rapid economic concentration and intra-regional inequality, which could lead to more political discontent among the "left-behind". Territorial cohesion should thus be mainstreamed into all policies, as the decline in territorial cohesion can have negative repercussions on the trust that citizens place in public institutions and consequently jeopardise the stability of the EU.

² [CPMR \(2004\), Impacts of enlargement on Cohesion Policy and the EU regions, April 2024](#)

6. Supports the calls in the Letta report for the development of a **“European market”** based on common values and underpins the need to develop a model to update and expand the present four freedoms, to also ensure citizens have **freedom to stay**. In practice this requires promoting **territorial development and developing policies that reduce the emergence of regions in the so-called “development traps”** (i.e. regions in or at risk of being in a long-term stagnation or decline), enhancing opportunities for citizens to grow and develop wherever they live by investing in the potential of regions. Supports Mario Draghi’s emphasis on the need for a well-funded and coordinated European model of industrial policy with the right enabling regulation to boost competitiveness. Calls, however, for concurrent actions to improve the access across territories to research and innovation infrastructure, highlighting the importance of fostering cooperation between innovation hubs across regions. Additionally, further measures need to be taken to increase the investment in enhancing the productivity and market access of businesses. Territorial cohesion must be part of this European model of development, reinforcing cooperation and synergies, making the most of the **innovation potential of regions** as well as of their **smart specialisation strategies while developing economies of scale through enhancing networks and reinforcing supply and value chains**.
7. Emphasises the key **role of regions** in addressing the main challenges of the EU’s **triple social, green and digital transition** by participating in developing and implementing innovative solutions to build a more sustainable, climate resilient and energy independent EU, powered by clean energy. Regions can act as testbeds and innovation hubs for new technologies and nature-based solutions, taking into account the need to manage sustainably the sea and coastal areas when planning and building renewable energy facilities. For this transformation, regions need adequate funding, including support for capacity building, skills development and lifelong learning to meet the demands of the technological transition. Recalls that this transition will require rapid and large-scale deployment of technologies which are highly material intensive. Thus, warns that Europe largely relies on imports from countries outside the continent to meet its needs for critical raw materials (e.g. for batteries and wind turbines). Therefore calls for the speedy implementation of measures as identified by The Critical Raw Materials Act, such as systematic mapping of sources and simplification of permitting processes in compliance with the subsidiarity principle. This is important to reduce Europe’s harmful dependency on imports of critical raw materials.
8. Endorses the **need for administrative, legal and fiscal structural reforms** in Member States but underlines that introducing a reform conditionality within Cohesion Policy **needs to reflect the very different levels of competence of regional authorities across the EU as defined in the respective programmes**, requiring the full involvement of regions in defining those reforms. It also suggests that structural reforms should be further promoted in EEA and third countries represented in the CPMR membership as effective means to encourage organisational development with the involvement of regional authorities. In addition, regions could consider including a shift from process- to results-based systems, using performance-based instruments.

9. Stresses the **need for an in-depth review, with the full involvement of the regions, of the indicators and eligibility criteria used for determining financial allocations under Cohesion Policy**, to ensure the policy is fully aligned to the realities faced and the European added value generated by investments in such areas as climate adaptation and mitigation and biodiversity. Is gravely concerned about the present lack of concrete actions in front of the increase and worsening of **extreme weather events and biodiversity loss, coinciding with other security risks**, with European-wide consequences.
10. Agrees with the calls for a **simplified and more performance-based cohesion policy but warns about the weaknesses of a Recovery and Resilience Facility model of support**. While the RRF provides a more simplified delivery model, **there is a well-founded risk that a more performance-based policy will exclude many important beneficiaries from taking part**. It also embeds a national rather than European and territorial vision, which hampers the absorption of funds and the economic and social transformation of the regions while exacerbating regional disparities. Its financial model also fails to protect the financial interests of the EU, as it breaks the link between the EU budget contributions and the projects financed. Hence, it calls for the EU to use the lessons learnt to simplify and increase the efficiency of Cohesion Policy to integrate regional economies across the EU, unleashing their potential and achieving a truly borderless single market. This also requires reinforcing **all INTERREG components** (cross-border, transnational, interregional, outermost regions cooperation) as well as better coordination tools with other EU funds to make Territorial Cooperation a more effective and central objective of the policy. This includes strengthening cooperation with the UK and EU neighbouring countries. Existing regional cohesion structures can be effectively utilised to swiftly respond to emerging challenges, as evidenced by the successful implementation of the REACT-EU in certain regions. This delivery model, if well designed in accordance with the subsidiarity principle, guarantees full regional involvement and dedicated budgets to achieve rapid and efficient outcomes.
11. States that the future needs stronger **macroregional and sea basin strategies and initiatives** to solve the complex common transnational challenges of the 21st century. It **urges that its [12 key messages](#)** addressed to the EU Institutions on their future development are **put into motion** and in particular to **set up emerging macroregional strategies** in key geographical areas such as the **Atlantic** and the **Mediterranean**, while reinforcing the role of regions in the existing ones, such as in the Baltic Sea where the Action Plan is currently updated. It also urges the European Union to strengthen its engagement in the **Arctic area**. In this perspective, the CPMR welcomes the designation of a new EU Commissioner for the Mediterranean Region by the President of the European Commission . It also offers its full support, knowledge and experience to the Greater North Sea Basin Initiative and calls on the North Sea countries and the EC to develop it, into a coherent joint vision or strategy, involving regions and providing the urgently needed basis for optimal use of the scarce space in this sea basin.
12. Emphasises that, today more than ever, economic competitiveness, food sovereignty, energy self-sufficiency and geopolitical security of Europe and its maritime regions are closely linked to the **control, management, protection and sustainable exploitation of the seas, oceans and their resources**. Hence, maritime affairs must become a top priority of the EU political agenda.

13. Believes that **the EU should promote a real “Blue Deal”** to deliver a more holistic and coherent policy framework for the future generation of European, National and Regional maritime policies. To this end it reiterates its request to the European Commission to publish a **green paper** to gather stakeholder consultations in a reflection process on the **“EU Maritime Agenda post 2030”**, **by spring 2025**. This could lead to a **white paper** delivering scenarios of policy changes on governance, EU financial support and delivery methods. In this respect, the CPMR has high expectations regarding the proposal made by President Ursula von der Leyen, in her [“Political Guidelines for the next European Commission”](#), aiming to set a **“European Oceans Pact”** to boost the development of the blue economy and ensure the good governance and sustainability of oceans.
14. Advocates that the reflection on the **future revision** of the **Common Fisheries Policy** (including the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund), of the **Maritime Spatial Planning Directive**, of the **Marine Strategy Framework Directive** and on the establishment of an ambitious **EU Maritime Industrial Strategy** should be consistent with the EU Innovation Policy and the new Vision for Food as announced in the Political Guidelines for the next European Commission
15. Stresses the strategic role played by the European Parliament in sparking the political debate on the future of European maritime policies and **advocates for the renewal of the [SEArICA](#) intgroup**.
16. Recalls that Europe’s single market, integration and security depend on **transport corridors** both within and outside the EU. Thus, calls for reforms to fully develop the internal market for transport which includes the need to establish **cross-border links and additional connections for peripheral maritime regions**. **Accessibility** of Europe **peripheries** is a fundamental **principle**. Promoting effective sustainable transport, connectivity and multimodal transport and mobility of goods and people is essential to achieve a balanced economic and territorial development in all of Europe’s regions, taking into account specificities in line with the subsidiarity principle. It is also a key to exploiting regions’ full potential for green and blue economic growth. In this regard the CPMR also fully supports a “wider EU Port Strategy focusing on security, competitiveness and economic independence”.
17. Welcomes the **revision of the TEN-T and expects the timely implementation of the revised regulation**, for a more sustainable, multimodal and resilient Trans European Transport network and urges the EU to guarantee that its ambitions are reflected in the EU budget. In particular, seeks to ensure that the budget of the **new Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) III** will be sufficient to increase multimodal infrastructures capacity and thus foster links to, between and within peripheral and maritime regions, ensuring territorial, modal balance, connectivity and full accessibility of all CPMR regions. Considering the current geopolitical situation and the Russian war on Ukraine, all CPMR regions and particularly those close to the EU’s eastern external border, which have been negatively affected by the Russian aggression are concerned by the implications regarding safeguarding good and stable transport connections. They should be supported in finding and receiving sufficient financial resources (e.g. CEF III) and alternative connectivity solutions, which need to support military mobility, as well as dual-use civil projects, including infrastructure.

18. Firmly adheres to the **principles of solidarity, equality, respect for human rights and non-discrimination** on which the EU has been built. Regional authorities are key in achieving a **Union of Equality**, including gender equality through the pursuit of social cohesion thus bringing prosperity and well-being for all citizens, irrespective of their territories.
19. Advocates for these **principles to be upheld in the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum** recalling that peripheral maritime regions are often the first entry point for migrants and refugees coming to the EU and play a key role in ensuring reception, integration and social inclusion. Given their position and the distribution of competences across various levels of public administrations in the EU, these regions have the legitimacy to have a say in migration strategies that ensure relevant funding and support, whilst maintaining full respect to the point 18 of the present declaration. In this regard, calls for **tailored measures considering the regional specificities in line with the principle of subsidiarity for regions (for outermost regions, islands, and regions on external maritime and land borders)** facing complex challenges due to geography, as well as more programmes and funding opportunities for interregional cooperation on migration, including decentralised cooperation actions with countries of origin and transit.
20. Proposes to **increase measures to support vulnerable groups of migrants**, including unaccompanied minors, young people and migrants in transit, and calls for clarity regarding the future of Ukrainians benefiting from temporary protection. Highlights that regions may also deliver services to cover basic needs of undocumented migrants. In fact, some regions incur significant expenses to guarantee coverage of the basic needs of these people and the protection, support and care necessary in the case of minors who are not accompanied by any adult. It calls for this reality to be considered within relevant support mechanisms.
21. Recalls the strategic role that several CPMR regions play in international defence and security collaboration, including in the context of NATO. Considering that the facilities located on the ground operate as networks, any deepening of EU collaboration on security and defence matters should also involve all NATO allies and strategic partners"

Adopted unanimously

The Peripheral Maritime Regions listed below met for the 52nd CPMR Annual General Assembly in Gozo (Malta) on 3 and 4 October 2024:

AÇORES (PT), AGDER (NO), BALEARES (ES), CALABRIA (IT), CALARASI (RO), CENTRAL OSTROBOTHNIA (FI), DYTIKI ELLADA (EL), EMILIA-ROMAGNA (IT), FLEVOLAND (NL), GÄVLEBORG (SE), GENERALITAT DE CATALUNYA (ES), GENERALITAT VALENCIANA (ES), GOBIERNO DE CANARIAS (ES), GOBIERNO DE CANTABRIA (ES), GOBIERNO DE NAVARRA (ES), GOBIERNO VASCO (ES), GOTLAND (SE), GOUVERNEMENT DU QUÉBEC (CA), GOZO (MT), HALLAND (SE), HELSINKI-UUSIMAA (FI), IONIA NISSIA (EL), JÄMTLAND HÄRJEDALEN (SE), JUNTA DE ANDALUCÍA (ES), KRITI (EL), KYMENLAAKSO (FI), LA RÉUNION (FR), LAPLAND (FI), LAZIO (IT), LISBOA E VALE DO TEJO (PT), MADEIRA (PT), MAYOTTE (FR), MIDTJYLLAND (DK), MØRE OG ROMSDAL (NO), NOORD-HOLLAND (NL), NOORD-NEDERLAND (NL), NORDJYLLAND (DK), NORRBOTTEN (SE), NORTE PORTUGAL (PT), NOTIO AIGAIIO (SOUTH AEGEAN, EL), NORTHERN & WESTERN REGIONAL ASSEMBLY (IE), NOUVELLE-AQUITAINE (FR), OCCITANIE (FR), ÖREBRO (SE), ÖSTERGÖTLAND (SE), ØSTFOLD (NO), OSTROBOTHNIA (FI), OULU (FI), PÄIJÄT-HÄME (FI), POLYNÉSIE FRANÇAISE (FR), PUGLIA (IT), REGION MURCIA (ES), RÉGION SUD (FR), ROGALAND (NO), SAINT-MARTIN (FR), SARDEGNA (IT), SKÅNE (SE), SICILIA (IT), STEREA ELLADA (CENTRAL GREECE, EL), SOUTHWEST FINLAND (FI), STOCKHOLM (SE), SYDDANMARK (DE), TELEMARK (NO), TOSCANA (IT), TRØNDELAG (NO), VÄRMLAND (SE), VÄSTERBOTTEN (SE), VÄSTERNORRLAND (SE), VÄSTRA GÖTALAND (SE), VESTFOLD (NO), VESTLAND (NO), VLORË (AL), WALES-WELSH GOVERNMENT (UK), WEST-VLAANDEREN (BE), XUNTA DE GALICIA (ES), ZEELAND (NL), ZUID-HOLLAND (NL)

Annex to the Final Declaration 2024

- Compendium of supporting papers & policy positions -

The CPMR seeks to expand its policy messages underlined in its Final Declaration 2024 by raising attention to its last relevant specific policy positions and papers that can be consulted by targeted EU, National Institutions and stakeholders, to better comprehend proposals and supporting analyses.

I. KEY CPMR POLICY POSITIONS AND PAPERS BY POLICY AREA

EU Budget:

- [Policy position on the future EU Budget post 2027](#) (Gozo, October 2024)

Cohesion Policy:

- [Policy position on the future of Cohesion Policy](#) (Patras, March 2024)
- [Technical paper on “A modern EU budget supporting a European economic model based on territorial cohesion](#) (Gozo, October 2024)
- [Policy position on the future of INTERREG](#) (Patras, March 2024)
- [Study on the impact of the enlargement on Cohesion Policy](#) (April 2024)
- [Technical note on the governance of EU Macro Regions](#) (June 2024)
- [Report on development traps](#) (July 2024)

Maritime Affairs and Fisheries:

- [Policy position: “Let a Sustainable and Resilient European Seafood Value Chain Be our Legacy!”](#) (Gozo, October 2024)
- [Technical note: “CPMR contribution to the EC’s call for evidence to assess the Common Fisheries Policy \(CFP\)”](#) (September 2024)

Climate:

- [Policy position "Forging a climate-resilient Europe: Need for a more ambitious EU and national action on adaptation"](#) (Gozo, October 2024)

Transport:

- [Initial Policy Position on the future of the Connecting Europe Facility on Transport](#) (Gozo, October 2024)
- [Policy position on the Greening freight package](#) (Patras, March 2024)

Energy:

- [Policy position: "Integrating Peripheral Maritime Regions into EU’s hydrogen economy: an essential part of the energy transition"](#) (Gozo, October 2024)

Migration

- [Policy position: “the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum: Perspective of peripheral maritime regions”](#) (Patras, March 2024)

II. KEY POLICY POSITIONS OF CPMR GEOGRAPHICAL COMMISSIONS

- [Final Declaration of the Atlantic Arc Commission](#) (Sines, April 2024)
- [Final Declaration of the Islands Commission](#) (Ponta Delgada, April 2024)
- [Final Declaration of the Baltic Sea Commission](#) (Kotka, May 2024)
- [Final Declaration North Sea Commission](#) (Bergen, June 2024)
- [Final Declaration of the Intermediterranean Commission](#) (Online meeting, July 2024)
- [Priorities of the CPMR Balkan and Black Sea Commission Zaimis's Presidency](#) (May 2024)