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Common position paper of the 3 Member States and the 9 Outermost Regions

In the framework of the updating of the strategic partnership of the European Community with the Outermost Regions and of the adoption of the Communication for these regions

19 January 2022

THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES OF THE ORS:



WITH THE COLLABORATION OF THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS, THE TERRITORIAL AUTHORITIES AND THE REGIONAL AND DEPARTMENTAL COUNCILS OF THE OUTERMOST REGIONS (ORS):



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Statement by the French Minister for Overseas Territories



Under the slogans of belonging, power and recovery, the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union which began on 1st January 2022 intends to place the Outermost Regions (ORs) at the heart of its official programme and ensure the successful outcome of projects and regulations concerning these regions. The ORs are territories which respond to the ambitions held by France for the European Union. At the same time, the European Union has a responsibility to support the ORs in the economic, social and ecological challenges they are facing.

Belonging: the ORs are assets in promoting a feeling of belonging to the European Union across all the oceans, taking the common European imagination far beyond the frontiers of the continent. To ensure this feeling of belonging, it is crucial that the European Union must also remain an asset for the ORs, by continuing to deploy an ambitious policy of cohesion and by adapting standards in all areas where this proves necessary.

Power: in order to ensure the promotion of the values and interests of all of these territories in an increasingly competitive world, the European Union must enable the ORs to modernise their economies, promote regional integration, and strengthen equality between all of them to meet the challenges of the ecological and digital transitions. I hope that the ambition of a progressive Europe which France is promoting will also find expression in the ORs.

Recovery: the pandemic has proved the importance of the European Union in protecting the health of its populations and the economy. At the same time, it has served to underline the fragility and the isolation of the ORs. At a time when these regions and their populations have to face many natural catastrophes, a decline in tourism and unprecedented environmental challenges, the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union will promote the strengthening of their economies.

Therefore the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union strongly welcomes the intention of the Commission to renew its strategy towards the ORs. It shares the vision of a highly operational Communication whose proposals will meet the challenges that the ORs face.

Spain, France and Portugal and their outermost regions have agreed to make a common effort to identify regulatory barriers which need to be removed and European strategies which need to be introduced to accelerate the sustainable development of these regions, increase the opportunities for their populations and ensure security for all.

These discussions are taking place in the framework of preparatory work carried out in 2021 to facilitate the work of the Commission in the publication of a new OR strategy in 2022: from thematic working groups led by the OR unit of the DG REGIO, following to the final declaration of the Presidents of the ORs issued on 19 November in the Azores. This work enables us to put forward today a joint document on behalf of the nine ORs and the three Member States. This document aims to be ambitious and shared by all. As part of a strategic framework, this document covers all areas and will enable the outermost regions to become laboratories for the future of Europe by 2030.

The Europe 'on a human scale' promoted by the President of the French Republic will find its full expression in the outermost regions.

Enjoy reading it!

Sébastien LECORNU,
French Minister for Overseas Territories

Statement by the President of the Conference of the Presidents of the Outermost Regions



The Conference of the Presidents of the Outermost Regions, comprising the nine European Outermost Regions (ORs), has been working for many years to defend the interests of our regions whose status is recognised in Article 349 of the TFEU.

The structural constraints faced by our territories make it necessary to adapt European policies. This is precisely as foreseen in Article 349.

The new partnership strategy between the European Commission and the ORs is an opportunity to develop new tools for the integration of the ORs in the European legal framework. These tools should enable the ORs to profit from their European status, their membership of the interior market while stressing their assets, their geostrategic positions and their historical and economic links within their respective basins.

Major challenges are facing the ORs in the coming years. We are especially concerned in the short term about the implementation of new EU paradigms such as 'a greener and more digital Union'. Our territories have the capacity to play a full role in these new priorities which should act as drivers for redesigning our development models based on our assets. But we will not be able to reach these ambitious objectives without a real policy of adaptation taking into account our needs and specific characteristics, and the added values we bring to the building of Europe.

The present common position of our nine territories and France, Spain and Portugal, invites the European Commission to step up to its ambitions for the outermost regions, the blue economy, the battle against climate change and the appreciation of biodiversity. We must pursue our joint efforts, based on our common will to give full scope to Article 349, particularly in the present context of the unprecedented pandemic.

Martinique has taken over the Presidency of the Conference of the Presidents of the Outermost Regions, at the same time as France takes over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union for the first half of 2022. This presents an ideal opportunity to work on suitable solutions for our countries, European territories in the Caribbean, Atlantic, Indian and American basins.

Let us seize this opportunity to find collective solutions for the challenges of our time.

Serge LETCHIMY

Introduction

The Outermost Regions (ORs) are territories offering numerous opportunities for the European Union. European policies should sustain their potential and their growth while reinforcing the economic and social cohesion between and within these territories. Therefore France, Spain, Portugal and the nine European ORs attach great importance to the renewal by the Commission, of the European strategy for the ORs, and to adapt it to the new European context marked by the consequences of the Covid 19 pandemic and the challenges of the digital and ecological transitions.

The renewal of the OR strategy presents an opportunity to make the outermost regions into laboratories of public policies which may interest all European territories. France, Spain and Portugal have been working for several years to ensure that the special characteristics of the ORs are taken into account in deliberations of the European Union, and regularly seek to influence the OR strategies of the Commission.

France, Spain, Portugal and the nine ORs stressed that the strategy which will follow on from that agreed in 2017 – ‘the outermost regions and the EU: a privileged, renewed and strengthened partnership’ – should respond in an operational way to the structural and permanent constraints confronting the ORs, which are recognised at the highest legislative level by Article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). In this regard, France, Spain and Portugal welcomed the work carried out by the Conference of the Presidents of the ORs (CPRUP) which resulted in the submission of a joint political declaration containing concrete solutions at the XXVI CPRUP on 18-19 November 2021 at Ponta Delgada (Azores).

The renewal of the 2017 strategy is necessary to take into account new geostrategic data like Brexit, and the new priorities of the Commission and the Member States: a greener and more digitalised Europe within the new multiannual financial framework, the need to promote economic recovery and face up to the difficulties of the agricultural sector within the context of the development of the Common Agricultural Policy(CAP) and particularly in the Programmes of Options specific to the remote and insular nature of the outermost regions (POSEI), and taking into account the fluctuations in energy prices... The Commission strategy should therefore, within the MFF 2021-2027 decided by the Member States in the inter-institutional agreement of December 2020, propose: high unemployment rate, education and training for young people, connectivity, tensions from migration, economic and social cohesion, climate change as well as structural handicaps such as remoteness or exposure to extreme natural hazards (hurricanes and volcanic eruptions).

France, Spain, Portugal and the nine ORs consider that the next OR strategy should support cohesion and respond to the constraints of the ORs in the following areas:

Modernise the agricultural sector and the fishing and aquaculture sector

Agriculture and fisheries are vital sectors in the ORs, boosting employment and fostering the development model suited to the territorial characteristics,

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promoting the development of the territory and essential to the food security of these remote island regions and multi-insular territories. The importance of the agricultural and fisheries sectors has been highlighted by the Covid-19 health crisis. Their development should foster the increased local availability of fresh and diversified agricultural and fisheries products, contributing to the improvement of the local diet and thus to people's health.

To take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the seas and oceans boarding the ORs (Atlantic and Indian oceans, Caribbean Sea) is a major priority for the future so as to develop businesses promoting blue employment, through the exploitation of many neglected natural assets and by strengthening the competitiveness and attractiveness of these regions.

France, Spain and Portugal and all the ORs stress the importance of the agricultural and fisheries sectors for the development of these territories in terms of strengthening the economy, employment and trade balance, as well as the challenge of ensuring the competitiveness of the sector in a globalised world market. In addition, export activities need to be supported in their development as do diversification initiatives, and the agricultural sector needs to be guaranteed protection in international negotiations and support provided in renewing the fishing fleet, which will boost economic growth and the food security of these regions. These fishing fleets, even in their current poor state of repair and functionality, guarantee the present survival of the coastal communities and contribute to the food security of the ORs.

These sectors need to be supported as they develop technical, agronomic and organisational solutions to respond to climate change. The agricultural sector must be supported in its agro-ecological transition, in the maintenance or restoration of practices which respect the environment and in the development of organic farming, taking into account the special characteristics of the farming systems of the ORs. The prevention and reduction of land-based pollution (pesticides, coastal hyper-sedimentation, discharge of wastewater and plastics) is an essential element for the development of the agricultural sector.

These sectors are also the foundations of the development of a sustainable food system giving access to healthy food at affordable prices. So the 'Farm to fork' strategy must be fully deployed in the ORs.

Support to these sectors is in harmony with the objectives of the European Green Deal, which maintains that it is essential to manage the transition to a more sustainable food system, particularly by strengthening efforts by agricultural, rural and fisheries stakeholders to combat climate change, protect the environment and preserve biodiversity.

To ensure the responsiveness of European policies and the development of these sectors, all possible tools must be deployed (strengthening of the POSEI and increasing the co-financing rate to 85%, second pillar of the CAP, the EMFPF, adapting phytosanitary policies, commercial policies and application of equivalent standards to products coming from third countries trade policy) and when necessary, adapted in order to provide better support to the ORs. Depending

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on the outcome of the trade policy negotiations, the application of equivalent standards to goods originating in third countries could be considered.

Strengthening access to employment and social cohesion

The ORs are facing considerable social inequalities and poverty and unemployment rates¹ which are higher than in continental Europe. France, Spain, Portugal and the ORs would like to build on the European Pillar of Social Rights agreed at the Porto Social Summit to develop measures adapted to the ORs in the application of programmes activities for the period 2021-27. The OR strategy should enable the regions to be supported in the strengthening of social policies.

Spain, France and Portugal welcomed the support given by the European Union to the people of the outermost regions in the adaptation of their skills to new systems of production and new technologies particularly the digitisation of the economy, through the intermediary of the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the Next Generation EU.

However, to reinforce this social pillar, the OR strategy must target vulnerable groups which have fewer opportunities, particularly the unemployed and young people and promote their participation in the European programmes which are relevant to them, whether from Community programmes (ERASMUS+) or under shared management (ESF+, ERDF). Some ORs face a massive exodus of qualified young people because of the remoteness, the lack of infrastructure and the lack of local workplace opportunities.

France, Spain, Portugal and the nine ORs attach the greatest importance to the policy of cohesion of the Union and to the adaptations of this policy to the particular characteristics of the ORs. These adaptations must be central to the difference of treatment introduced by the next OR strategy. The adaptations to the policy of cohesion should be put forward by the Commission at the time of the drafting of the texts and before the negotiations within the Council and Parliament.

The OR strategy should also propose solutions promoting the empowerment of women in these territories and opposing the discrimination in employment which young people from the outermost regions may come across in the employment market.

Dropping out from school, illiteracy and poverty remain particular challenges in the ORs. These phenomena have a real impact on the social inequalities (school failure, unemployment, difficulties of accessing healthcare, etc) which the ORs have to face.

France, Spain, Portugal and all the ORs stress the need for education and training – especially higher education – in employment and as a solution for mobility for

¹ In 2018, according to Eurostat, the unemployment rate for young people (% of workers aged 15 to 24) was 20.9% in Metropolitan France as against 61.1% in Mayotte, 55.2% in Guadeloupe, 50.3% in Réunion, 39.2% in French Guiana and 49.4% in Martinique. The unemployment rate in Spain was 33.8% for young people aged 15 to 24, as against 38.6% in the Canary Isles, in 2018. The unemployment rate in Portugal for 16 to 34-year-olds is 10%, as against 17.6% in Madeira and 18.4% in the Azores.

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young people, especially those who are neither in employment, education or training and who are suffering from a lack of opportunities linked to the limited size of the employment market. The removal of restraints to employment in the remote areas and an adjustment of training available to match the needs of businesses are essential in the ORs.

The next OR strategy must provide concrete elements aiming to improve lifelong training, the development of digital skills, and the battle against illiteracy and computer illiteracy. The European policies applied in the ORs should stress the fight against unemployment, especially among young people, workers over 55 and women. France, Spain, Portugal and the ORs point out that European policies should also promote the empowerment of women and fight discrimination. France, Spain and Portugal and all the ORs stressed the necessity of paying due attention in European programmes to the problems of migrants, particularly unaccompanied child migrants, on account of the challenge that dealing with their problems presents for the administrations and public services.

These objectives are in line with the European strategy concerning skills promoting sustainable competitiveness, social equity and resilience. This strategy sets ambitious quantitative targets in the areas of further education (improvement of existing skills) and of retraining (training in new skills) to be met in the course of the next five years. Strengthening social cohesion is also in line with the aid priorities of the ESF+ in the 2021–2027 programme. Within the context of the European Youth Year in 2022, France, Spain, Portugal and the ORs look forward with interest to the proposals for developing policies concerning youth.

Guaranteeing regional integration and accessibility of remote territories

Set apart from mainland Europe, the ORs have to integrate with their local regional environments by cooperating with countries which are not members of the European Union. This regional integration is necessary to respond in a coordinated manner to the local and global challenges including among others the management and control of migratory flows, competition in international markets, the protection of biodiversity, the management of the oceans and the development of the blue economy. The strengthening of the regional integration of the ORs may also promote the economic and social development of their respective geographical zones by encouraging the increase of exchanges in goods and services. In this respect, France, Spain, Portugal and the ORs welcome the progress made by Interreg while stressing their need for operational synergies with the new framework programme Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), and in general with the external policies and instruments of the European Union.

A European strategy specific to each of the geographic basins of the ORs would be welcomed with interest by the states and their ORs. This type of strategy should be based on a preliminary survey identifying the main common challenges and fixing specific objectives, taking into account the interests of the ORs, those of neighbouring countries and those of the EU as a whole.

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The remoteness of the ORs also implies the need for adapting European transport policies so as to compensate for the handicaps arising from the distances and isolation involved. Transport connectivity and sustainability are a prime example of the difficulty of adapting policies designed for a single and homogeneous territory to islands, archipelagos and territories very remote from the European mainland.

However, although the Commission took up the idea of a customised approach in its last Communication, it was not sufficiently developed in the policies where it is most needed. This approach should enable the OR dimension to be better integrated in the next revision of the regulation governing the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) and the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) financial arrangement. In the same spirit of adapting European policies for an effective implementation in the ORs and in the spirit of Article 349 of the TFEU, the economic and social impact on the ORs of measures concerning transport in the 'Fit for 55' package should be assessed and proposals for compensation should be considered. At the same time, France, Spain, Portugal, and the ORs request the Commission to make an adapted implementation of the 'strategy for sustainable and smart mobility' presented on 9 December 2020.

Ensuring recovery and competitiveness

The health crisis and its important economic and social consequences have revealed the dependence of the au are on the outside world, their economic fragility and necessity to increase their degree of self-sufficiency in all sectors. The report of the European commission on the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on the outermost regions of October 2021 shows that in the Canary Islands, the GDP fell by 20% in 2020 while the fall in Spain as a whole was only 10.8%. The economic activity of the French ORs fell between 18 to 28% during the period March to May 2020, while in France the largest fall in GDP was 18.6% in the second quarter of 2020. France, Spain and Portugal and the ORs welcome the rapid implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) but stress the necessity of investments, especially targeting infrastructural resources, to maintain competitiveness, growth and job creation. The economic recovery requires that businesses in the ORs should be set on a firm basis and that technologies and drivers of growth should be developed which will enable market share to be restored and wealth created. Despite a marked increase over the last 20 years, the internal expenditure for research and development (R&D) compared to GDP remain relatively weak in the ORs, compared to other European regions.

The competitiveness of businesses also depends on other factors such as governance, good strategic management, access to finance, export capacities and the maintenance of appropriate public assistance. In the industrial sector, the route of sustainability promoted by the new industrial strategy of the Union constitutes a particularly complex challenge for small businesses operating in the ORs which needs to be taken into account.

France, Spain and Portugal welcome the setting up of exceptional facilities relating

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to state aid during the health crisis and their temporary extension to the end of June 2022. These exceptional facilities show that adaptations are possible in the management of state aid. More generally, the framework of state aid should better take account of the collapses in the market in the ORs and better integrate the massive additional structural costs with which these regions are faced.

The tourism sector is a crosscutting economic activity which has a major effect on economic growth, employment and the development of these regions. The value chain of this sector is made up of four closely linked main key elements: transport, accommodation, experience and intermediation. It is at the heart of the economies of most of the ORs, both by its direct contribution to the regional GDP and through its capacity to generate and maintain employment, directly or indirectly, particularly for local young people. It also exerts a knock-on effect in other sectors of the economy. The Covid-19 health crisis has caused an unprecedented severe recession in the tourism sector.

The recovery of the sector depends on rethinking the traditional model of tourism and making more of the biodiversity and equilibrium of the territory (accommodation capacity, land, waste management, etc.).

This approach is in accord with the European Parliament resolution of 25 March 2021 'Establishing a Union strategy for sustainable tourism', and France, Spain, Portugal and the ORs stress the importance of European support to the ORs for this sector which is essential to their recovery.

France, Spain and Portugal and all the ORs recommend that the next OR strategy includes the tackling of recovery and competitiveness by the policy of cohesion, the adaptation of a framework of state aid and the recovery of the tourism sector through the adoption of a more sustainable model.

Promoting the ecological transition

In July and December 2021, the European Commission presented the 'Fit for 55' package, which comprises concrete action proposals to promote the struggle against climate change, reach climate neutrality in 2050 and keep to the target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990. This objective is part of continuing efforts already agreed by Europe which have led to a reduction in emissions of 23% between 1990 and 2018, making it the only continent in the world to prove that it was possible to reduce emissions while maintaining strong economic growth. Over the same period, emissions increased by 67% at the global level. These proposals will now be discussed in the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers

France, Spain, Portugal and the ORs further stress the importance of the ecological transition for the ORs, since they have been particularly exposed to the effects of climate change. In its Communication of 24 February 2021 which established a new strategy for adapting to climate change, the European Commission declared that the ORs are already "facing serious problems of adaptation". France, Spain, Portugal and the ORs recognise the necessity of contributing to European attenuation

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efforts. However, this ecological transition can only be done by adapting the framework to the characteristics of these territories. While European strategies and funds open up opportunities for the ORs, it will be necessary to ensure that the ecological transition does not take place to the detriment of economic and social cohesion and does not place a disproportionate burden on the ORs, thereby increasing the precariousness of households. In this respect, attention should be paid to the relationship between the border adjustment mechanism for carbon emissions and the customs and tax measures specifically applicable to the ORs, in order to request appropriate exceptions in their application to these regions, if necessary. Consideration should be given to the possibility of adopting derogations for maritime and air transport. This is because the special characteristics of the ORs, which are not connected to the national electricity grids, impose certain restraints which may slow down the ecological transition and inhibit meeting the 55% target of reducing emissions by 2030 unless more European and national facilities are made available to them.

France, Spain, Portugal and all the ORs stress that it is necessary to take advantage of the potential of the ORs as far as renewable energy and biodiversity are concerned. The ORs can act as laboratories for the rest of the European Union, provided that they are supported to ensure better exploitation of their renewable energies' potential. The ORs also have a very extensive natural wealth, recognised to be of international importance, and represent more than 80% of all European biodiversity. This exceptional wealth is recognised in the European Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. The new OR strategy must ensure that these strengths are taken into account.

Climate change also threatens the ORs with more severe extreme weather events. In this context, France, Spain, Portugal and the ORs recognise the important role of the EU Solidarity Fund (EUSF) for regions affected by natural catastrophes. This fund should however be better adapted to the range of natural catastrophes which affect the ORs (hurricanes or volcanic eruptions for example).

Implementing the digital transition

The digital transition constitutes a challenge for the ORs because it should enable these regions to take advantage of all their economic potential, to play a full part in their regional basins and to reinforce connectivity with the rest of the European Union. Since the Commission Communication of 2004, the improvement in the ORs' accessibility has constituted the first major development in European strategy in favour of the Outermost Regions.

France, Spain, Portugal and all the ORs identify several challenges linked to the connectivity of the ORs.

On one hand, it is possible to reinforce the digital sovereignty and security of the ORs within their regional environment, notably by the maintenance and installation of ecological data centres. These data storage banks need to be both low in CO₂ emissions and fully functioning in terms of cooling in tropical and subtropical zones. This significantly adds to the costs of meeting the objective fixed by the

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Commission of carbon neutrality for data centres by 2030. Financing should be also made available for cybersecurity projects, particularly in supporting exchanges of good practices between the territories.

On the other hand, the international connectivity of the ORs could be strengthened by means of suitable technical installations. France, Spain, Portugal and the ORs welcome the possibility of receiving support for projects to create or modernise backbone networks, including through submarine cables deployed between Member States and between the Union and third countries, within the framework of the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). The digital connectivity projects in the Outermost Regions should be awarded a higher rate of co-financing. The ORs and the Member States emphasise the importance of this measure, because of the extra engineering and intrinsic investment costs required for digital connectivity infrastructures, particularly to ensure resilience to the climatic extremes which these territories experience. The regulations on state aid should also be adapted to better take into account these difficulties, and the Wifi4EU programme should be reintroduced, with facilitated access for the ORs. Finally, France, Spain, Portugal and the ORs emphasise, as did the European Parliament in its resolution 2020/2120 (INI) of 14 September 2021 'Towards a stronger partnership with the EU Outermost Regions', that "satellites provide uninterrupted very high-capacity connectivity, which is essential for overcoming the digital divide, particularly in the ORs; calls on the Commission, therefore, to update the European Space Strategy, adopting specific measures for the ORs". Satellite technology should also be borne in mind for some territories like French Guiana, where some populated zones cannot currently be entirely connected with fibre.

Finally, France, Spain, Portugal and the ORs emphasise the importance of support for businesses, especially for very small companies, to give them a better command of digital technology.

Responding to the challenge of migration

The ORs have limited capacity for managing migration, and consequently the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) should be adapted to their special difficulties. The European Union is moving towards the implementation of policies in consultation with Member States following the principle of solidarity and equitable sharing of responsibilities. The proposals relating to the new Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the Internal Security Fund for the period 2021-2027 provide member states with the resources to help their regions to sustainably manage migration and the situations of migratory pressure which some of the outermost regions are faced with.

France, Spain, Portugal and all the ORs request that the next OR strategy should ensure a better grasp of the tensions arising from migration within certain ORs in the ISF and AMIF programmes, particularly as regards the direct management of these funds. Irregular immigration of unaccompanied minors is a particularly difficult problem for some ORs which requires special consideration. Furthermore, the Union should make available European tools for tackling criminal networks (drug-

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trafficking, illegal immigration organisations), which destabilise local economies.

All these factors have a considerable social impact on the ORs and their 5 million people. The interventions of the European Commission and the operational measures proposed by the three Member States and the ORs in this paper should act to reduce the development gaps between the ORs and the other regions of Europe. The effort to catch up should allow, in the spirit of national and European solidarity, a specific development route for each territory, adapted to its geographical, economic and social context.

OPERATIONAL PROPOSALS

Agriculture/Rural development

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR THE OUTERMOST REGIONS:

- **Adapting to climate change** through technical, agronomic and organisational solutions.
- **Support in making an agro-ecological transition** promoting the development of organic agriculture in the ORs taking into account the special characteristics of the farming systems in the ORs, including the agropedoclimatic conditions.
- **Improving food sovereignty and rolling out the 'Farm to fork' strategy.**
- **Applying all possible policies to support the ORs in their agricultural development** (CAP, POSEI, trade, state aid and environmental policies, phytosanitary measures, veterinary and animal welfare measures) and their adaptation on the basis of Article 349 of the TFEU as soon as necessary.

OPERATIONAL MEASURES PROPOSED:

- *Take into account the special characteristics and needs of each of the ORs (island or archipelago status, remoteness, dependence on imports and on a small number of products, exposure to certain specific risks, etc.) when making impact reports linked to the development of legislative initiatives arising from the 'Farm to fork' Communication and the 'Fit for 55' package.*
- *Bear in mind the specific constraints linked to the agropedoclimatic production conditions of the ORs in terms of medicinal plant products and ensure that the Horizon Europe finance packages for agriculture result in solutions for the ORs in terms of combating pests and diseases.*
- *Creation of a system of registration for medicinal plant products better suited to the small production centres specific to the ORs.*
- *Evolve the EU approach on the ex-anti and ex-post impact studies of trade agreements (particularly in the impact study of sustainable development) so as to provide accurate sectoral and regional figures covering the ORs, and improve the transparency and communication on the accumulation and the consumption of concessions agreed to by the EU within the framework of bilateral trade agreements and WTO agreements and make a global follow-up.*
- *Continually bear in mind the sensitive products of the ORs, both during negotiations and the implementation of the EU trade agreements.*
- *Ensure that the same standards are applied to imported products with the same social, environmental and health standards as for products originating in the ORs.*
- *Promote the export of OR products and encourage their commercialisation on the European market in recognising the social and environmental quality of their*

OPERATIONAL PROPOSALS

Agriculture/Rural development

methods of production. In particular promote tropical fruit and vegetables and products made from them, as well as the traditional products of the ORs.

- *Adapt the EU rules on promotion to the special characteristics of the ORs, enabling the products of these regions to be the subject of several consecutive promotion campaigns in the same market.*
- *In the context of the revision of regulations on animal welfare, it is important to take into account the special characteristics of the ORs, particularly concerning the transport of live animals by sea, bearing in mind the constraints of the ORs and the seasonality of animal rearing.*

OPERATIONAL PROPOSALS

Blue economy/Fisheries

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR THE OUTERMOST REGIONS:

- **The development of a sustainable blue economy:** ensuring sustainable food production so as to contribute to the food sovereignty of these territories, to a balanced management of the resources and to the development of the trade (renewal of the fishing fleet, strengthening of professional training, working conditions of fishers).
- **Transformation of value chains of the blue economy, promoting the sustainable management of resources, protection of biodiversity and adapting to climate change.**
- **The creation of conditions for sustainable governance** including increased knowledge of local environments and resources, the improvement of the management and planning of the maritime space.
- **A better appreciation of the advantages of the sea basins of the ORs** when drawing up legislation and in awarding financing specific to the sustainable blue economy, as well as strengthening action to control illegal fishing.

OPERATIONAL MEASURES PROPOSED:

- *Implement the Commission's commitment to support the renewal of the fishing fleets in the ORs in line with its Communication for 'a renewed and strengthened strategic partnership' of October 2017 and the general guidelines governing the scrutiny of aid to the fisheries and aquaculture sector, as modified in November 2018. Even in their poor state of conservation and functionality, these fleets currently guarantee the survival of the coastal communities and contribute to the food sovereignty of the ORs. It is thus essential to provide financial support for the renewal of the fishing fleets in the ORs.*
- *Adopt implementing rules for the mechanism of entry and exit of the fishing capacity, so as to allow that the permanent exits from the OR fleet segments can be used for the improvement of safety and working conditions on board the boats, without ever exceeding the maximum capacity limits fixed by segment.*
- *Encourage the mixing of age groups and the renewal of generations through the creation of qualified seagoing jobs by introducing training appropriate for the ORs. Aid for promoting jobs in aquaculture and jobs for young fishers are essential for the renewal of the generations and economic support for the new production units being launched.*
- *Improve scientific knowledge, especially of fisheries resources, and of the economic or technical data relating to the sustainable management of the blue economy, through financial support of studies carried out by the new blue economy monitoring centre.*
- *Develop and implement plans for the management of coastal fisheries.*

OPERATIONAL PROPOSALS

Blue economy/Fisheries

- *Support traditional, selective and sustainable fishing by deploying techniques and devices adapted to the special characteristics of the ORs, by authorising further recourse to state aid for the financing, in some ORs, of anchored Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs), further to what is authorised in article 38 paragraph 2 of Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 of the European Parliament and Council of 15 May 2014 concerning the European Fisheries Fund.*
- *Recognise the special characteristics and structural handicaps of the fisheries in the ORs within the future common fisheries policy (regulation replacing EU Regulation 1380/2013 of the European Parliament and Council), by including an article dedicated to the ORs underlining the need to adapt European public policies on the basis of Article 349 of the TFEU.*
- *Look into the possibility of applying specific state aid to the ORs in the sector of the blue economy through the introduction of guidelines. The ORs need investment and public support different from other regions of the EU and it is necessary to formalise the possibility of public support in guidelines, so as to enable the real mobilisation of authorised state aid. These guidelines would ensure that Member States do not infringe the conditions of implementation which are inapplicable in the ORs, which do not take into account the constraints specific to these regions and effectively prevent any public support.*
- *Create a flexible mechanism for implementing rapid response to the consequences of extreme weather events on the fishing and aquaculture infrastructures and the coastal populations.*
- *Encourage the synergies between the ORs and develop bodies to promote them (consultative Council of the ORs dedicated to sea fishing, ORs forum, etc.) including in the aquaculture sector.*
- *Extend by five further years the opt-out arrangements for Mayotte, particularly the authorisation to introduce new capacity in the different segments without removing equivalent capacity.*

OPERATIONAL PROPOSALS

Employment and social cohesion/Education and mobility

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR THE OUTERMOST REGIONS:

- **Strengthening the quality and effectiveness of educational and training systems** so as to mitigate the remoteness of the territories and the lack of training infrastructure which lead to skills drain to continental Europe.
- **Improving the employability of young people** through opposing discrimination in employment, the support of young people through international and regional mobility via Erasmus+, the creation of training not available in the ORs bearing in mind the needs of local businesses, and removing barriers to employment.
- **Helping train young people** for the ecological transition and the digital economy.
- **Support for women and equality** by improving the balance between professional and private life, help for families, reduction of wage inequality, improving and making more visible the social participation of women and the strengthening of equal opportunities.

OPERATIONAL MEASURES PROPOSED:

- *Organise a conference on the topic in the ORs to help the regions discuss and adapt the results of the Porto Summit dealing with employment, social cohesion and gender equality, based on the European Pillar of social rights.*
- *Generate the availability of professional training for skills in short supply in the ORs through:*
 - *a Commission initiative for examining the existing training possibilities financed by technical assistance from the policy of cohesion or INTERREG;*
 - *setting up working groups to identify common needs by regions and professions;*
 - *predictive management of jobs and skills leading to clear training strategies aimed at promoting the full participation of women by combating horizontal segregation. For example, it could be decided to implement a plan for retraining unqualified young people for deployment in skills linked to green growth. This type of plan will allow the impacts of green growth to be anticipated by providing training facilities for young people.*
- *Strengthen communication with the ORs concerning the existing EU programmes linked to employment and professional training (such as EURES and ALMA) in order to reach the targeted populations. This could take the form of specific campaigns and the setting up of offices in each OR.*
- *Support the development of apprenticeships by including, for the ORs, the possibility of auditing and boosting the skills of training organisations (through targeted investments if necessary) and in working towards a recognition of third country qualifications.*

OPERATIONAL PROPOSALS

Employment and social cohesion/Education and mobility

- *Extend all European programmes for young people to European citizens aged under 30 (following the example of the extension of the notion of NEET), as decided in 2018.*
- *Combat illiteracy and computer literacy in order illiteracy so as to find provide jobs for young dropouts and long-term unemployed in the ORs, with support from the funds of the EU cohesion policy.*
- *Reduce the digital divide among vulnerable people in the isolated regions of the ORs.*
- *Introduce measures to strengthen the prevention and fight against all forms of violence to women and domestic violence, particularly in terms of support structures and services, and responding to the specific needs of all these groups of victims.*
- *Provide specific support to managers of projects developed by the ORs by strengthening their administrative capacity and giving to the authorities managing them greater financial support to enable more funding to be given to the project recipients. Another alternative would be the introduction of support by the European Investment Bank in requests for funding. The question of aid to project recipients is not only financial. The project recipients need more sustained support to strengthen their administrative capacities. The creation of an agency for supporting project recipients in the ORs could be considered.*
- *Promote the development of higher education infrastructures in the ORs.*
- *Propose an extension of the ERASMUS+ programme by geographic basin (specifically Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Amazonian and Caribbean) to encourage effective mobility from and towards the third countries adjoining the ORs. This extension could take the form of an experiment for the scheduling of the period 2021-2027.*
- *Guarantee the effective and equitable access for young people of the ORs to the ERASMUS+ programme and create an Erasmus programme for young entrepreneurs, making full use of the possibilities offered by these programmes in terms of inclusivity.*

OPERATIONAL PROPOSALS

Health

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR THE OUTERMOST REGIONS:

- **Tackle certain specific diseases and pathologies** as well as population ageing in certain regions and the prevalence of a number of chronic diseases (for example diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, obesity etc.)
- **Reduce social inequalities in nutrition** and improve the nutritional state of the populations of the ORs concerned.
- **Combat health inequalities and the problems of accessing care**, made worse by a shortage of health professionals, often unequally distributed in their regions. Further investment is also needed to support the digital transition.
- **Resolve the difficulties in signing up to the calls for action for various European programmes such as 'EU4Health'**: give local skills and engineers priority to overcome barriers to constructing, implementing and following up projects. The requirements for accessing the 'EU4Health' programme are considered too restrictive for the ORs.
- **Change the paradigms to emphasise what the ORs can contribute to the whole of the European Union** and recognise the expertise which the ORs have in certain areas of health policies (sharing knowledge and good practice, training in the ORs, etc.).
- **Experiment with the introduction of new practices and organisational structures** so as to better support health professionals, improve the provision of health care in urban areas and promote access to e-health.

OPERATIONAL MEASURES PROPOSED:

- *Make eligibility for the 'EU4Health' programme more flexible in future working programmes in order to facilitate the design, implementation and follow-up of the projects by the project implementers by removing the obligation for a consortium of at least three member states and taking a more regional approach in the programme.*
- *Develop and facilitate, in the framework of the work programme of 'EU4Health':*
 - ▮ *action to reduce inequalities in the state of health and access to care between different population groups, European countries and regions through collaboration and partnerships involving the ORs;*
 - ▮ *actions for combating diseases particularly prevalent in some ORs;*
 - ▮ *innovative solutions adapted to the special characteristics of the ORs (telemedicine micro-project for instance).*
- *Introduce in the annual work programme of 'EU4Health', under the scope of the general objective to "improve medicinal products, medical devices and crisis-relevant products", action to expand research into the local traditional pharmacopoeia.*

OPERATIONAL PROPOSALS

Health

- *Promote and strengthen existing research in the 'EU4Health' programme, especially in the area of vector-borne diseases, by increasing the possibilities of financing for the achievement of projects aiming to prevent, survey and fight these diseases. Also strengthen research into the study of the impact of genetic factors in the development of pathologies and in the field of environmental health (exposure to heavy metals, pesticides, etc.).*
- *Define the measurement of added sugars in European Regulation 1169/2011 (FIC) concerning consumer information on foodstuffs so as to reduce the rates of added sugars in products manufactured and sold in the ORs, particularly the French ones.*

OPERATIONAL PROPOSALS

Digital connectivity

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR THE OUTERMOST REGIONS:

- **Digital sovereignty and security of the ORs in their regional environment:** support the ORs in their development towards digital sovereignty and the protection of their data.
- **International connectivity of the ORs through suitable technical installations:** support projects of digital connectivity in the ORs through a higher co-financing rate, in partnership with international actors, and promoting in the ORs the creation of the necessary infrastructure to achieve very high-capacity networks.
- **The digital transition of businesses:** support the ORs in measures for businesses to improve the introduction of digital tools..

OPERATIONAL MEASURES:

- *Support the ORs in achieving digital sovereignty through projects to install ecological data centres, with financing which takes into account the extra costs linked to cooling in tropical and subtropical environments.*
- *Support the ORs in their actions to improve cybersecurity by promoting the exchange of good practice, resilience, and strengthening of their administrative capacity and giving the territories sustainable means to strengthen their cooperation and their understanding of the phenomenon (e.g. cybersecurity monitoring centre). Cybersecurity project appeals should be included in the next CEF to support this type of initiative.*
- *Support the ORs in their projects for strengthening their connectivity, using the best technology for each territory: support for submarine cables remains an essential element of securing data transmission, and also service quality and cost of access. As an example, Réunion and the autonomous region of the Azores will soon have to face up to the obsolescence of its SAFE submarine cable. Satellite technology should also be considered for some territories like French Guiana, where some populated zones cannot currently be connected with fibre.*
- *Extend the Wifi4EU programme by integrating facilitated access for the ORs.*
- *Adapt the state aid regulations in the digital sector to prevent inhibiting the achievement of projects which, on account of conditions particular to the ORs, are more complex in setting up and financing.*
- *Strengthen support for the increase in digital activity for businesses, in particular small businesses, by asking for examples in the ORs which cannot be currently financed.*
- *Since connectivity and digitalisation projects often involve higher functioning costs, which are often influenced by the circumstances and context of the ORs, it is important that these costs can also be co-financed by the Union.*

OPERATIONAL PROPOSALS

Digital connectivity

- *Promote adoption measures to boost the digital skills of the population of the ORs, particularly through the educational system.*

OPERATIONAL PROPOSALS

Transport

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR THE OUTERMOST REGIONS:

- **Reducing the lack of access to the ORs** and the effective introduction of regular reliable and affordable air and sea links to these regions.
- **Steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transport** and dependence on fossil fuels without harming the economic development of these regions, the reliability of transport links and the mobility at an affordable cost of their citizens.
- **Transport projects within the ORs, between the ORs, and with the European mainland:** improve the connectivity of the ORs, some parts of which are difficult to access on account of the fragmentation of the territory, isolation or the congestion of the road network. The development of sea transport is another route to facilitate transport between ORs within the same basin. Thus the development of maritime cabotage could facilitate regional integration (e.g. creation of a Short Sea Shipping (SSS) route linking the Guiana Shield to the Caribbean). The Commission could also encourage the development of secondary port infrastructure to cut down on road traffic.
- **Development of public transport based on exclusive lane public transport** and the promotion of soft transport modes in the design of urban development projects.

OPERATIONAL MEASURES:

- *Ensure that the implementation of the 'Fit for 55' package allows for adaptations specific to the ORs, on the basis of Article 349 of the TFEU, and linked to dedicated impact studies.*
- *In keeping with the overall timetable for the approval of texts, adapt the proposals which have an impact on transport (directive EU-ETS, Red II, AFID, ReFuelEU Aviation, FuelEU Maritime, DTE).*
- *Extend the exclusion of the ETS system system from departing flights to and from the ORs (including international flights), and flights within the ORs, on the basis of Regulation 2017/2392 of 13 December 2017, in order to guarantee the territorial cohesion and accessibility of these European regions.*
- *Bear in mind the special characteristics of the ORs in the application of the Social Climate Fund, particularly that these regions have isolated energy systems and very limited access to mobility solutions and alternative and affordable transport solutions.*
- *Facilitate the access of the ORs to EU financing instruments (Connecting Europe Facility, CEF) for investments for transport and connection between existing infrastructure, particularly port infrastructure (including secondary port*

OPERATIONAL PROPOSALS

Transport

infrastructure) and terrestrial infrastructure. This access must take account of the level of infrastructure existing in these areas and their exploitation costs.

- *With regard to the Global Network, remove the requirement of a minimum distance of 200 km between ports (specified in article 20.2.d), so as to take into account the geographical realities of the ORs.*
- *Consider investment in new transport infrastructures, particularly ports which can prove indispensable for the regional economies and accessibility of the ORs.*
- *Continue to progress the inclusion of the ORs in the networks of the TEN-T, so that these communities can have access to financing of their equipment notwithstanding regulatory restrictions on quality and standards.*
- *Introduce into European transport policy a particular concern for the ORs beyond the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF).*
- *Develop the rules concerning state aid (objectives of the aid to air transport and sea transport) to better take into account the reality of the ORs and to better support the launching of regional transport links: an important consideration for people and goods without any means of access to modes of surface transport, regional airline routes and sea and river routes only serving third countries.*
- *Support construction projects aiming to do away with bottlenecks.*
- *Support the ORs in the deployment of electric vehicle charging points.*
- *Provide aid to the opening up of the interior and internal communications in the ORs, particularly to support the archipelagos.*
- *Include projects supporting river transport in Community aid.*
- *Develop an emergency transport plan specially designed for the ORs, in order to mitigate the impact of the health crisis on the tourism sector in these regions.*

OPERATIONAL PROPOSALS

Ecological transition/Waste/Circular economy

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR THE OUTERMOST REGIONS:

- **Take into account the special characteristics of the ORs** in the rollout of the 'Fit for 55' package on the basis of a specific impact study on the implementation of the package in the ORs.
- **The implementation, with special financing for the ORs, of the BEST/LIFE+ horizontal programmes** for the period 2021-2027.
- **The development of the circular economy** aimed at the sustainable management of resources.
- **The management and reduction of waste**, particularly problematic in the ORs.
- **The development of local initiatives for the prevention or recycling of waste and the transfer of waste outside the ORs.**
- **The sharing of waste deposits between territories or treatment companies** to strengthen the technical and economic feasibility of recycling solutions.
- **The circular economy:** modify the use of the circular economy which is currently limited, due to a regional cooperation agreement regulated by the European Union.
- **Informing and mobilising the relevant stakeholders on these topics.**

OPERATIONAL MEASURES PROPOSED:

- *Carry out studies on the impact of climate change in the ORs and develop tools for measurement and follow-up.*
- *Conduct an impact analysis on the costs of implementing the 'Fit for 55' package for the ORs.*
- *Support the ORs in activities aimed at better protecting their ecosystems and better understand their future development.*
- *Adapt the environmental standards and restrictions to the ecosystems of the ORs, taking into account drawing on the provisions of Article 349 of the TFEU.*
- *Adapt the TEN-T to the reality and specific characteristics of the isolated energy systems of the ORs, since the programme aims to reduce the isolation of less well-off and remote regions like the ORs, and strengthen territorial cohesion.*
- *Finance projects linked to the security of energy supplies of the ORs, by developing renewable energy solutions and storage systems and the interconnection of electricity within a single OR, between ORs in the same basin and with third countries, when these projects are technologically and economically viable.*
- *Publish specific calls for projects within the framework of the CEF for the ORs in order to provide them with access to the financing of projects linked to renewable energy sources.*

OPERATIONAL PROPOSALS

Ecological transition/Waste/Circular economy

- *Support investment into the exploration of renewable energy, especially into emerging techniques such as renewable marine energy, and into storage solutions which will reduce the dependence on fossil fuels and take advantage of the local potential.*
- *In a mitigation initiative, revise the criteria of the EU Solidarity Fund, the deadlines for submitting applications and using the financial contribution, as well as expanding eligibility and adapting the aid calculation method (bearing in mind the geographical characteristics of the ORs, natural catastrophes occurring there will always be described as 'regional' precluding the possibility of accessing the maximum rate of financing reserved for major natural catastrophes) to manage and repair the damage caused by extreme phenomena which are often peculiar to the ORs (volcanic eruptions, hurricanes).*
- *Support the development in the ORs of vehicles which are more efficient from the environmental point of view, particularly hydrogen vehicles.*
- *Deploy new initiatives in European financing to bring waste treatment infrastructure up to standard, carry out large-scale projects, and improve the skills of local stakeholders.*
- *Develop the possibilities of pooling waste management projects while meeting the constraints of the Basel Convention.*
- *Support the ORs in the Indian Ocean who lack direct sea routes between Mayotte and Réunion.*
- *Support the ORs in reducing quantities of waste produced.*
- *Initiate accurate diagnosis of the needs of the ORs for professional training in skills which are in short supply in the circular economy (particularly engineering and the social economy).*
- *Improve the access of the most deprived regions to existing channels of support in the area of the circular economy.*
- *Make the ORs into real experimental areas in the field of the circular economy.*

OPERATIONAL PROPOSALS

Post-Covid economic recovery

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR THE OUTERMOST REGIONS:

- **Economic recovery through support to research and innovation** by targeting technologies and growth industries which will help in recovering market share and creating wealth.
- **Support to the competitiveness of businesses** by supporting good strategic management, access to finance, internationalisation and improved access of the ORs to international markets and regional alliances.
- **The recovery of the tourism sector maintaining a model of sustainable development.**

OPERATIONAL MEASURES PROPOSED:

- *Develop adapted marking for building materials in the ORs. The declaration of performance and the 'CE' marking should be replaced by marking specific to the marketing of construction materials in each outermost region which requests it and whose remoteness requires special treatment. It is proposed that the products manufactured and used in the ORs could be exempted from the 'CE' marking, if requested by the manufacturer or the final user, when one of the two can demonstrate that the quality of use and the job security of the product are insured.*
- *Support the recovery through exceptional measures for all micro-enterprises and SMEs in the tourism sector for the next programming period.*
- *Support sustainable, responsible and intelligent tourism by rapidly devising a route map for sustainable tourism which includes measures of innovative investment to preserve the accessibility of the ORs, reduce the climate and environmental footprint of the sector, diversify the type of tourism offered, stimulate new cooperation initiatives, and implement new digital services. This measure should be accompanied by the introduction of a special arrangement for aid for a period of five years to benefit tourism sector businesses which are offering sustainable tourism projects or embark on a process of energy transition.*
- *Carry out regular European communication campaigns to promote tourism in the ORs.*
- *Strengthen the understanding of 'overtourism' by improving knowledge of quantitative and qualitative data, according to a reference framework which should be established by Eurostat to collect data on sustainability, 'overtourism', 'slow tourism' and working conditions.*
- *Setting up a European database on sustainable buildings in the area of hotel tourism for all new projects financed by EU funds throughout all territories of the European Union (recycling, bio construction materials, as well as the appli-*

OPERATIONAL PROPOSALS

Post-Covid economic recovery

cation of environmental quality standards, promoting a systematic review of air conditioning).

- Develop initiatives for nautical and coastal tourism including the recognition of skippers' qualifications, VAT regulations for boats, marinas and anchorages, the challenges of seasonality, the promotion of nautical tourism routes, the pilot project on the 'Charter of good practices for sustainable cruising tourism'.*
- To strengthen the attractiveness of the ORs, guarantee that the future European Tourism Agency will promote the ORs, taking into account the assets and characteristics of these regions. The conference of the Presidents of the ORs meeting on 18-19 November 2021 supported the choice of the Canary Isles as a base for the new agency, with a branch in each of the OR geographic basins.*
- Propose a new European inclusive tourism mechanism on the model of the Calypso initiative, which would enable vulnerable or handicapped social groups to use national coupons to go on holiday in the ORs.*

OPERATIONAL PROPOSALS

Research and innovation

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR THE OUTERMOST REGIONS:

- **Reduce the isolation of the OR ecosystems by strengthening their integration with regional or European ecosystems.**
- **The promotion of the innovations of the ORs at the international level.**
- **Drawing on the geostrategic and geographical advantages of the ORs to strengthen the research programmes.**
- **Facilitating the access to financing from Horizon Europe.**

OPERATIONAL MEASURES PROPOSED:

- *Improving communication of the European research programmes in the outermost regions.*
- *Launching appeals for specific thematic projects dedicated to the ORs (for example on tropical diseases, coral reefs, volcanic risks, promotion of biodiversity, agro-ecology, eco-materials and culture).*
- *Provide financial support to the creation of a research development agency within the ORs, following on from the Forward programme promoting research in the ORs and promoting partnership research at the European or macro regional level. Such an agency aiming to develop stakeholder networks and project engineering networks could be financed by the Interreg Europe programme.*
- *Facilitate the access by the ORs to European funding dedicated to research (Horizon Europe) in the promulgation of Horizon 2020.*
- *Strengthen the potential for research and innovation of the ORs within the framework of the Horizon Europe programme for the period 2021-2027, by helping in the financing of technical facilities and innovation platforms.*
- *Systematise the phase of the call for expression of interest before the calls for projects in European programmes so as to enable those implementing projects to express interest in projects.*
- *Support the ERDF management authorities in the revaluation and deployment of their smart specialisation strategy so as to adapt their innovation ecosystems to the most promising sectors for the resilience of the OR territories (sustainable agriculture and food, bio-sourced and tropical building materials, e-health and pharmacopoeia, research linked to the maritime domain, the blue economy and tourism).*
- *Make more systematic use of multilingualism and of the publication of work programmes in the national languages, send out calls for European projects open to the ORs in the national languages of these communities and accept to receive responses written by these communities in their national language without discrimination as far as the language is concerned.*

OPERATIONAL PROPOSALS

State aid

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR THE OUTERMOST REGIONS:

- The competitiveness of the economies of the ORs and compensation for their lack of accessibility
- More regular recourse to the idea of purely local activity.
- Prolongation of the time limits for state aid for the ORs.

OPERATIONAL MEASURES PROPOSED:

- *It would be useful for the European Commission to draw up a checklist of criteria for providing/defining a purely local activity which would provide a better legal security for state aid facilities. These criteria would allow/provide a better appreciation of the purely local character of an activity to be appreciated and thus/therefore of the capacity of the public aid awarded to it to affect trade between member states.*
- *Evaluate the impact of the temporary framework of state aid set in place during the pandemic and consider the maintenance of the simplified arrangement if it does not jeopardise free competition.*
- *Increase the maximum aid ceiling to at least €500,000 and the thresholds for agriculture (to €50,000 apart from aid provided through POSEI) and fisheries (to €60,000 apart from aid provided under the Plans for Compensation for Additional Costs)*
- *Support the national connections by allowing:*
 - ▮ *that aid for the launching of new air routes from or to airports in the ORs should not be limited to 50% of airport taxes and that it can be adjusted according to the distance of the new route and its risk, in order to cover all the costs (marketing, running costs, airport taxes) during the first years of operation;*
 - ▮ *that aid could be permitted for the strengthening of existing routes, in order to improve connectivity and the competitiveness of the ORs with markets that are poorly served but which have growth potential.*
- *Amend the state aid rules on maritime transport to authorise the creation of regional maritime companies in the ORs, including those running maritime services between ORs and third countries.*
- *Adjust aid for the launching of new airline routes from or to airports in the ORs according to the distance of the new route and its risk, so as to cover all the costs (marketing, running costs, airport taxes) during the first years of operation.*
- *Extend financial support to the construction, planning, safety and maintenance of airport and maritime infrastructures, and ensure that the investment opportunities are not limited to purely environmental considerations.*

OPERATIONAL PROPOSALS

State aid

- *Maintain a regulatory framework for state aid in the ORs which would permit the continuation of economic, fiscal and customs aid in the ORs and the maintenance of their fiscal regimes (increase in financing for regional aid, such as the free zone of Madeira).*
- *Maintain for the ORs the derogations from the common rules for the internal electricity market.*

OPERATIONAL PROPOSALS

Regional integration

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR THE OUTERMOST REGIONS:

- The political and economic integration of the ORs in their respective basins.

OPERATIONAL MEASURES PROPOSED:

- *Integrate the ORs in the future Green Alliances within the foreign policy of the EU in order to promote regional cooperation of the ORs with their neighbours on these green themes. This integration requires the mobilisation of financial resources for regional cooperation through the NDICI.*
- *Support the ORs in their cooperation with the neighbouring countries and states on connectivity and digitisation.*
- *Plan for a framework of specific intervention between the ORs in the same basin and between the ORs and their neighbouring countries so as to support the exchange of knowledge and practices and encouraging cooperation. Support the interoperability of information systems.*
- *Promote economic programmes of regional integration and support businesses in their moves towards internationalisation, introducing measures to provide engineering support to businesses, otherwise many of them will have no access to aid facilities to promote internationalisation. The framework for state aid in the ORs should be developed to encourage the internationalisation of businesses.*

OPERATIONAL PROPOSALS

Migration

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR THE OUTERMOST REGIONS:

- A full assessment of the special characteristics of the ORs in the application of European migration policies especially concerning the management of unaccompanied child migrants.

OPERATIONAL MEASURES PROPOSED:

- *Ensure that the special characteristics of the ORs are fully taken into account in the ISF and AMIF programmes, both as far as shared management and direct management is concerned. Strengthen the support to local authorities in the ORs and to civil society organisations working on the integration of migrants and refugees, by strengthening the technical and financial instruments.*
- *Fully integrate in the European programmes (AMIF and ESF+) the care required for unaccompanied migrant children arriving in the ORs, which stand at the final frontiers of the European Union in Africa and the Americas.*
- *Help the ORs in facing up to the additional pressure imposed by the phenomenon of irregular migration on their public expenditure, especially concerning the reception and integration of unaccompanied minors.*
- *Plan for appropriate European support to help deal with the mass return of Portuguese citizens from Venezuela to Madeira.*

OPERATIONAL PROPOSALS

Institutional issues

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR THE OUTERMOST REGIONS:

- **The importance of the boost given by the DG REGIO to the OR Unit** in its role of interservices consultation for the backing of policies concerning the ORs.

OPERATIONAL MEASURES PROPOSED:

- *Strengthen the visibility of the OR Unit of the DG REGIO and in its relations with other Commission DGs, so as to reinforce its powers of interservice coordination.*
- *Organise information sessions specific to the ORs with civil society to demonstrate the opportunities offered by the EU and promote video meetings to ensure the full participation of civil society stakeholders.*
- *Finance a platform for territorial engineering in the ORs with the aim of improving local knowledge of European policies and programmes and support project stakeholders.*

