



## 44th General Assembly of the CPMR Islands Commission 23/24 April 2025 (La Palma, Canary Islands, ES)

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### La Palma Declaration

**“A resilient future for EU Islands in a world of multiple challenges: key priorities for the renewed EU mandate”**

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**Unanimously adopted by the 44th General Assembly of the CPMR Islands Commission, meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2025 in La Palma (Canary Islands, ES).**

#### IN A NUTSHELL

*Confronted with an increasingly complex geopolitical landscape, marked by economic uncertainty, security threats, climate emergencies and migratory pressures, Europe stands at a pivotal moment. In this challenging context, the EU must reaffirm its founding values of peace, democracy and solidarity, strengthening its role as a pillar of stability and prosperity for all its territories, especially the most vulnerable ones, like its islands - including archipelagos, peripheral and Outermost Regions.*

*The CPMR Islands Commission reiterates its full support to the European project, recognising the importance of EU integration in safeguarding cooperation, cohesion and sustainable development. In this sense, it acknowledges that the new European Commission's mandate presents a major opportunity for future policies to address territorial disparities, so that no region is left behind. Moreover, it insists on the fact that the EU's renewed commitment must translate into concrete actions that properly take into consideration the specificities of island territories, which are essential to the strategic development and resilience of the Union. Indeed, despite their unique structural and geographical challenges, islands play a crucial role in numerous sectors, including among others, energy transition, sustainable tourism and biodiversity protection.*

*In this critical phase, the CPMR Islands Commission urges the EU, once more, to embed insular and Outermost Regions needs within its core policies, starting from Cohesion Policy which must continue to serve as a cornerstone for islands to address development gaps, as enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty. It renews its firm commitment to tackling the unique challenges of islands, advocating for a place-based approach to EU policies and insisting on its call for a Pact and Agenda for EU Islands, as stressed in its past Final Declarations. This year's Declaration notably reacts to the main priorities highlighted by the new EU Commissioners in relation to a number of policy areas of high relevance, presenting concerns, but also insightful reflections and recommendations from the CPMR Islands Commission and its members.*

*As the new European Commission starts setting its strategic actions, the CPMR Islands Commission stands ready to engage in constructive dialogue and cooperation among its members and with the renewed Institutions to ensure that EU policies effectively foster a fair, inclusive, and sustainable future for Europe's islands in the years ahead.*

## The CPMR Islands Commission hereby:

### Cohesion

1. **Considers paramount** to safeguard Cohesion Policy's purpose as a long-term investment policy to achieve a balanced territorial development as per article 174 of the TFEU, rooted in the principles of multi-level governance, partnership and solidarity. However, in light of the multiple rising challenges faced by islands (including, among others, climate change), it **remains attentive** to the proposals for increased simplification and flexibility of Cohesion Policy funds.
2. **Reiterates** the principle widely proclaimed by the European Commission of '*no harm to cohesion*', rejecting outright any attempt to renationalise this important policy, including the management of European funds. It **calls** instead **for** the islands and European regions to be strengthened in their own development processes, ensuring that equal rights associated with EU citizenship for the people living in their territories.
3. **Reaffirms** that an effective answer to islands' challenges requires a place-based and holistic approach, breaking down silos and "island-proofing" all EU policies. Thus, it is **pleased** with the attention the European Parliament has given to island territories and with the European Commission's recent announcement to launch a specific consultation on a EU Strategy for islands, aligned with last years' IC call, while trusting the support of the next Presidencies of the Council of the European Union for this purpose.
4. **Emphasises** the uniqueness of the Outermost Regions of the European Union and of the regime provided for them in article 349 of the TFEU, calling for all EU legislation to reflect the specific circumstances and demands of building full European citizenship in these Regions.
5. **Requests** in particular the potential removal or revision of the distance limit of 150 km in cross-border cooperation for maritime areas in the post 2027 period to better accommodate all geographical realities of EU regions, especially islands. It engages in elaborating concrete proposals to share with the EU Institutions and Member States, based on studies.

### Connectivity

6. **Recalls** that the territorial discontinuity of insular territories implies their high dependency on air and maritime transport, which relies on the crucial social and economic role of regional airport and port infrastructures in islands and Outermost Regions (including archipelagos), when it comes to connectivity, mobility, public service obligations and competitiveness. Therefore, it **recommends** that these key infrastructures benefit from tailored support measures, including regarding state aid, as their often low profitability and strong seasonality make them unable to take part in the EU market under the same conditions as the mainland.
7. Fully **endorses** the EU commitment to environmental objectives and insular territories' contribution to this goal, and **highlights** the potential of ongoing reflections on sustainable fuels, electric aviation and maritime transport in islands. It nevertheless **insists** that compensatory measures for decarbonising air and maritime transport in islands remain fundamental, given their full reliance on these transportation means, to allow a fair green transition in these territories.

## Energy

8. **Welcomes** the renewed European Commission's stand in favour of fostering renewable energy and achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 and **recalls** the importance of tailored legislation and appropriate financial support, so as to ensure an inclusive transition for islands in this field as well, as they still rely heavily on fossil fuels. In particular, it **appreciates** the attention given by the European Commission to the critical issue of key infrastructure investments and grids, and **stresses** their strategic importance for the EU as a whole as well as their vulnerability in the face of climate change and security tensions.
9. **Highlights** the positive and essential contribution of islands to energy transition in Europe, paving the way towards a decarbonised future in the EU with innovative reflections and practices, including through increased energy system flexibility and efficiency, energy communities and renewable energy hubs. In this regard, it **is convinced** that the European Commission's tailored support to islands through the Clean Energy for EU Islands Secretariat is pivotal in accompanying insular territories in their journey towards sustainability and represents a best practice to be replicated in relation to other EU policies.
10. **Emphasises** the importance of integrating effective multi-level governance mechanisms in future energy-related legislation, especially regarding the planning and permitting of renewable energy projects in insular contexts where questions of spatial planning and multiuse and land-sea interactions are crucial. This would allow the effective involvement of islands communities and social acceptance of renewable energy projects in these territories.

## Competitiveness

11. **Recalls** CPMR's 'Vision for Territorial competitiveness in Peripheral Maritime Regions'<sup>1</sup> where all territories can thrive and provide opportunities for their citizens. This vision emphasizes the importance of resilient, strong, secure and interconnected EU territories that prosper within and contribute to the broader European economy. By expanding opportunities beyond a few economic centres, this approach ensures stability and security through thriving societies. The CPMR affirms that only policies anchored in the diverse territorial realities of the EU's regions can guarantee a resilient, secure, sustainable, and competitive European Union.
12. **Welcomes** the European Commission's approach to boost EU competitiveness through innovation and decarbonisation, supporting affordable and sustainable energy. However, it **stresses** the need for comprehensive impact assessments of the different EU sectoral policies on islands and Outermost Regions' economies, and societies, to better align all policies to their specific needs and thus guaranteeing fair competition and avoiding market distortions. In this sense, it also **calls** for a tailored state-aid framework to compensate islands' additional costs, ensuring that islands are on a level playing field with the mainland.
13. **Acknowledges** the ambition of the Clean Industrial Deal to promote sustainable industrial growth, boosting digitalisation and circular economy and providing support to decarbonise carbon-intensive industries. It however **invites** the EU co-legislators to effectively consider a multi-level governance approach and integrate in their proposal ongoing reflections on Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3), to avoid widening regional disparities and ultimately being detrimental to insular territories.

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<sup>1</sup> CPMR Reflection Paper "[A vision for Territorial competitiveness in Peripheral Maritime Regions](#)", March 2025

**14. Points** to the potential of the Outermost Regions at the most varied levels, from telecommunications to ocean management plans, space, environmental and climate monitoring and even European security and defence. It **challenges** the European Union to promote, in dialogue with these territories, the advantages they bring to the reconfiguration that is now required of the EU itself and of the international system. It **highlights** therefore the importance to guarantee, in particular, investment in these regions in science and scientific research, as well as in their connectivity, including via submarine cables.

## Maritime Affairs

**15. Recalls** the crucial need for insular territories to be fully considered in a "Blue Deal", addressing the blue dimension of the EU Green Deal. This should foresee adequate investments and resources to leverage the untapped potentialities of islands in terms of blue research, innovation and digitalisation, and optimise Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) and the Interregional Innovation Investment Instrument (I3), as fundamental tools to notably bridge Maritime Spatial Planning to regional blue economic development.

**16. Highlights** the relevance of the EU Oceans Pact for insular territories and **endorses** a holistic and multilevel approach to ocean governance which should consider the role and specificities of islands in boosting Blue Economy, support insular coastal communities, guarantee the sustainability of our oceans and advance the collection of oceanographic data that enables the adoption of evidence-based policies. Indeed, it **points out** that key maritime sectoral activities (including small-scale fisheries and aquaculture) are interlinked with a prosperous development of insular communities and that further dedicated support should be envisaged by the European Commission - notably in relation to the Common Fisheries Policy Regulation. It **reaffirms** also that seas, just like oceans, face similar challenges, opportunities, and needs, and must therefore be fully included in the reflections and initiatives related to the EU Oceans Pact

**17. Welcomes** the renewal of the European Parliament intergroup on Seas, Rivers, Islands and Coastal Areas (SEArICA) and **reaffirms** its willingness to contribute to its main policy reflections – in particular on the future of the Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) Directive, the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), and the EU Oceans Pact - and advocacy efforts of relevance to islands to be conducted in the upcoming months.

## Tourism

**18. Recalls** that islands are highly popular tourist destinations facing the major challenge of shaping a long term economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable tourism model that ensures the competitiveness and the resilience of the sector. Indeed, overtourism is causing rising discontent among residents and a poor experience for visitors, compromising local communities' well-being and leading to extreme concerns about its social, climate and environmental impacts. In light of its reflections set out in its latest adopted Policy Position "*A New Vision for Sustainable Tourism in Islands*"<sup>2</sup>, it **reiterates** that insular tourism models are in pressing need of transformative change and sustainable strategies. It is highly important that European Institutions are aware of the main recommendations provided in the framework of this Policy Position, so that specific measures and decisions are taken at EU level. In this regard, it underlines the importance of islands in pioneering the way towards tourism sustainability for

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<sup>2</sup> [IC Policy Position "A New Vision for Sustainable Tourism in Islands"](#) adopted in Gozo, 3rd October 2024.

all European regions, given their experience and concentration in this key industry, a reason why they require tailored legislative and financial support.

- 19. Will pay a particular attention** to the recently announced European “Strategy for Sustainable Tourism”, which will be based on the Agenda 2030 and **calls for** urgent policy actions by the EU Institutions and national governments to prioritise sustainable tourism policies that balance sectoral interests with local community well-being and **environmental** protection. Strengthening cooperation with insular regions is necessary to develop efficient place-based sustainable tourism plans, allocate adequate funding and resources, and promote responsible tourism practices that generate sustainable jobs, support local products, tackle climate change and protect marine and coastal ecosystems.
- 20. Acknowledges** the valuable contribution of global initiatives like the Glasgow Declaration and European projects<sup>3</sup> and programmes, providing a pivotal framework for sustainable tourism development through concrete territory-based actions having an impact on the development of tourism as a source of wealth, encouraging the quality of the destinations, protecting natural areas as a scarce and highly valuable resource, promoting the revaluation of traditional and ancestral culture as a fundamental asset in front of globalising uniformity, and ultimately improving the well-being of the resident population and visitors.

## Climate and Environment

- 21. Welcomes** the adoption of the RESTORE (Regional Emergency Support to Reconstruction) package and the flexibility it provides to regional authorities to access ERDF and Cohesion Funds for disaster reconstruction. However, in view of the announced European Climate Adaptation Plan, it **urges** the EU Institutions and national governments to further consider continuing support in relation to climate risks and disaster preparedness for insular territories, which are particularly vulnerable to sudden climatic catastrophes, as witnessed in the recent years, especially the Mediterranean and the Outermost Regions which face significant risks from heat, drought, and sea level rise. In this regard, it **stresses** that clarifying risk ownership, ensuring equity in accessing resources and financial support, promoting best practices, data and knowledge sharing are essential to ensure regional level responsiveness to urgent climate threats and achieve EU-wide climate resilience and adaptation.
- 22. Requests** a clear pathway and recommendations within the European Climate Law to support islands’ decarbonisation processes in achieving the EU’s net-zero greenhouse gas emissions targets by 2050 and **recalls** the key role to be played by insular territories in driving down emissions in line with targets. In this sense, it notably **expects** that the insular perspective will be taken into account in the upcoming 2026 review of the Emissions Trading System (ETS), especially in the maritime sector’s progress assessment and in the allocations of the Social Climate Funds (SCF) created alongside the ETS2 to support vulnerable households and micro-enterprises.
- 23. Recalls** the importance of integrating insular and regional perspectives in the development of a comprehensive and effective European Water Resilience Strategy, currently in the legislative process. Strengthening water management policy, combating water pollution and scarcity, investing in digitalisation and innovation throughout the water cycle to respond to the fluctuations of water demand at territorial level, are among the highest priorities for islands. They call for dedicated funding for water resilience in the next Multiannual Financial Framework

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<sup>3</sup> The IC took part in the Interreg Med projects [WINTERMED](#), [Destimed +](#) and is currently involved in the Interreg Euro-Med [NaTour4CC](#) and [Community 4 Tourism](#).

(MFF). In addition, the IC **looks forward to** the future Bioeconomy Strategy to support islands' resilience with more sustainable and circular production, consumption and use of biological resources.

## Social & Cultural Development

- 24. Recalls** that islands are particularly exposed to Europe's labour market transformation, while facing skills gaps and labour shortages that should be fully addressed in the future EU Union of Skills. It **expects** more effective social and employment policies to guarantee that EU islanders, like any other European citizen, can benefit from a sustainable social development model, based on an accessible and inclusive labour market aligned with demographic challenges such as aging population and brain drain, modernised workers protection and quality jobs, so as to maintain a high level of human capital and thus ensure the effective "right to stay" in these communities.
- 25. Invites** the EU Institutions to properly consider the current islands' housing crisis and deliver tangible solutions for permanent island residents, especially within the development of the new European Affordable Housing Plan, including the necessary reforms to support social housing. In addition, it **emphasises** that insular local communities' long-term well-being and prosperity should be preserved via a continuous improvement of public services and healthcare access.
- 26. Reaffirms** its commitment to protect the diversity of insular traditions and cultural and linguistic heritage as opportunities for islands to promote island identity, create virtuous economic development and social cohesion.

## Migration

- 27. Recalls** that multi-level governance, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral approach to migration management is key to ensuring shared responsibility and solidarity in implementing the new EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. Regions deal directly with migration management and consequently, they should have the tools, the competences, and enough funding to tackle this situation, without necessarily passing through the intervention of their respective Member States. Therefore, the IC **welcomes** the European Commission's intention to urge Member States to recognise the importance of including regional and local authorities in the Pact's implementation, according to their distribution of competences, to ensure its full success.
- 28. Is concerned about the lack of attention** given to the crucial and challenging situation faced by some insular territories on the external maritime borders of the EU, who work closely with these issues on the ground, often acting as first point of reception, integration and social inclusion. Moreover, it stresses the need for specific consideration to be given to unaccompanied migrant minors (UMMs), whose particular vulnerability requires adapted mechanisms of reception, protection, and long-term integration. The IC also **continues to push** for adequate programmes and funding to strengthen the migratory management and hosting capacities of islands and Outermost Regions which, due to their geographical conditions, experience more intense migration pressures that they are often unable to handle without further support from the national and EU levels.

*Unanimously adopted*