



CPMR **ISLANDS**
COMMISSION

43rd General Assembly of the CPMR Islands Commission
23 & 24 April 2024, Ponta Delgada (Azores, PT)

ISLANDS COMMISSION FINAL DECLARATION

Ponta Delgada Declaration

“Islands’ future in view of the next EU
elections”



PONTA DELGADA DECLARATION

On behalf of its members, the CPMR Islands Commission, gathering for its 43rd Annual General Assembly on 23 & 24 April 2024 in Ponta Delgada, unanimously adopted the following Final Declaration:

IN A NUTSHELL

Representing a variety of islands across Europe and different sea basins - including archipelagos, peripheral and outermost regions - the CPMR Islands Commission proudly recognizes and promotes the inherent diversity and richness of these territories, each with its unique cultural heritage, natural resources and growth potential. Nevertheless, it also fully acknowledges the shared struggle and aspirations that bind islands together in their endeavour towards equal opportunities for their communities in terms of economic, social and territorial development.

With sustainability as core principle of such development - in line with both the EU Green Deal and UN 2030 Agenda goals - islands face more than ever before new emerging challenges, that require a specific territorial approach in consideration of their permanent structural geographical constraints, as recognised by articles 174 and 349 of the TFUE.

With a view to the forthcoming EU elections of June 2024, the CPMR Islands Commission intends therefore to reaffirm its full commitment to the specificities and needs of EU islands, while urging again a place-based approach of EU policies, leaving no region behind. In this spirit, once more this year, it aims to propose a collective vision and coordinated action to further advance the interests and well-being of islands' citizens and territories, continuing to advocate for a Pact and Agenda for EU Islands, as requested in its previous Final Declarations of [Gotland](#) and [Palma](#).

Building on past CPMR and Islands Commission political positions, while not being exhaustive, this year's Declaration presents pivotal considerations on major priorities and concerns of its members, to be properly addressed by the renewed EU Institutions in the upcoming years, in order to fully align EU policies to islands' perspectives. Moreover, the reflections included in this Declaration should guide the CPMR Islands Commission lobbying efforts at EU level for the months and years ahead, ranging from a number of policy areas of high relevance.

On the eve of the next EU elections, together, let us chart a course towards a brighter and prosperous future for Europe's islands and this continent as a whole!.

Cohesion

1. **Recalls** the crucial role of Cohesion Policy as long-term investment policy to achieve a balanced territorial development across the EU and thus **expects** a reinforced commitment by the EU Institutions to the principles of multi-level governance, partnership and solidarity in the future of Cohesion Policy, ensuring that it will continue to promote harmonious progress while effectively addressing regional disparities and supporting economic, social, and territorial cohesion across all EU regions as per article 174 TFEU.
2. **Insists** that the development of a holistic and forward-looking EU Strategy for Islands, able to maximize the impacts of EU policies in these territories, remains a major priority for its members for the months and years to come. In this regard, it **regrets** the lack of EU political vision and will of the last years to further advance the integration of an insular perspective into the EU legislative process and **looks forward** to the future EU co-legislators to take the necessary steps forward, witnessing the realisation of such an ambitious goal.

Competitiveness

3. **Points out** that, since insular markets are generally small and remote, the supply of products or services by continental companies is less attractive. Indeed, as recalled by the [9th Cohesion Report](#) (2024), islands – as much as rural, mountainous and sparsely populated areas – continue to face specific challenges that hinder economic growth and development, stemming from lower physical and digital connectivity or limited education and training opportunities. It **stresses** in this sense that continued support for rural, remote and insular areas is needed to ensure that their citizens and businesses have access to the same competitive benefits of the single market.
4. **Considers** that maintaining a high level of human capital in islands poses particular challenges, especially those linked to the brain drain, the ageing of the population, the lack of appropriate training infrastructures and the lack of business presence and highlights that these factors combined have a significant impact on the attractiveness and economic competitiveness of these territories. It **hopes** thus that specific measures will be put in place to address these challenges, in particular by boosting investments in education and training, encouraging the establishment of innovative businesses, and developing the infrastructure needed to create a favourable environment for sustainable economic development in islands.

Connectivity

5. **Stresses** the need to further improve islands' accessibility and mobility, in consideration of their high dependence on a limited number of means of transportation, pointing out the strategic role of maritime ports and airports for their connectivity needs. It especially **reminds** that securing the necessary transport connectivity and geographical coverage at EU level is the only possible way to enable a fair economic development of all its islands - including archipelagos, peripheral and outermost regions - and consequently of the whole EU. This also requires special attention to internal mobility and related transport infrastructure in these territories.

6. **Is convinced** that the long-term decarbonisation path launched with the EU Green Deal for the transport sector - which accounts for a significant share of the EU total greenhouse gas emissions - represents an outstanding opportunity to shape a truly sustainable Europe. However, it **warns** about the substantial effects of certain related measures on transport fees, resulting in extra costs for islands' businesses and citizens. On this matter, it **urges** therefore for a tailored approach, along with proper compensatory solutions and increased investments in sustainable and resilient transport infrastructure for remote and insular regions to ensure a just twin transition of these territories.
7. **Stresses** the importance of supporting projects to enhance digital connectivity in the outermost regions. In this regard, **draws attention** to the issue of support for underwater cables, which remains a key challenge for the security of data flows, as well as for quality of service and affordability.

Energy

8. **Endorses** the increasing EU energy transition efforts to make Europe rapidly independent from fossil fuels and **advocates** in particular, for accelerating the switch towards renewable energy sources and low-carbon solutions, so to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, while enabling an inclusive transition for regions heavily reliant on traditional energy sectors, as it is the case for islands. It **observes** moreover that the current uncertain geopolitical and energy market context make even more urgent tackling islands' energy security and poverty issues, through diversified energy sources and considering islands' specificities and structural vulnerabilities.
9. **Underscores** at the same time the essential contribution of islands, which are often acting as living laboratories for the transition towards an energy-efficient, renewable energy-based, climate-neutral and resilient economy. It thus **calls for** appropriate financial support, notably aligned with their investments' needs, and tailored legislation to sustain such a transition, emphasizing the importance of leveraging their unique strengths and maximizing their high potential for pioneering the green economic growth.
10. **Supports** the development of innovative technologies and solutions for smart energy management (including storage), empowering local communities and regions to become active stakeholders in the transition, while contributing to create new employment opportunities in these territories and **recognises** the added value of related cooperation projects and initiatives that boost energy security and resilience.

Maritime Affairs

11. **Highlights** the strategic role of maritime industries for blue growth - including among others, coastal tourism, shipping, fishing and aquaculture - as key drivers in the sustainable development of insular territories and **calls for** integrated EU maritime policies that properly foster their competitiveness, economic growth and job creation, while also preserving their vulnerable marine ecosystems. In this sense, **urges** that the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), the Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) Directive, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) duly take into account the role and specificities of islands and their diverse marine and maritime

interests and activities. Indeed, this would encourage a more efficient multi-level marine governance towards shaping a more sustainable blue economy in the EU for the future.

12. **Considers essential** to further support the blue dimension of the Green Deal, which should be at the core of future generation of EU maritime policies, through the launch of a “Blue Deal”, involving specific resources and investments in research, innovation and digitalization. To this end, it strongly **believes** in the untapped potential of Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) and Interregional Innovation Investment Instrument (I3) in blue economy sectors.
13. **Recalls** the fundamental contribution of the European Parliament intergroup on Seas, Rivers, Islands and Coastal Areas ([SEArICA](#)) to the main policy reflections and advocacy efforts of relevance to islands in the past years and **reiterates** its hope that it will be renewed under the next legislative mandate.

Climate and Environment

14. **Shares** fully the EU ambitious climate action targets, urging for integrating environmental sustainability across all EU relevant policies. Despite a better consideration of the issue, in the latest years, it **reaffirms** the need for a transformative change urgently developing enhanced efforts to mitigate and adapt to the devastating impacts of climate change and extreme weather events, especially in highly exposed and vulnerable regions as islands. This implies increased related funding to compensate the higher adaptation costs of these territories as well as greater support for tailored climate-resilient plans and measures at local, regional and national scales, notably involving multi-level cooperation and citizen-based engagement.
15. **Stresses** the need of preserving and restoring islands’ rich biodiversity and their unique and vulnerable ecosystems, and in this regard, **recalls** its dedicated policy position paper including insights from an insular perspective on the implications of the recently adopted Nature Restoration Law, and more generally on the critical role of regions in its future implementation.
16. **Continues** to insist on the importance of supporting the sustainable use of the limited natural resources in islands - including land, water and raw materials - while promoting innovative nature-based solutions and circular economy practices that empower islands’ communities towards more resilient and sustainable models, progressively reducing their reliance on the mainland and external sources.

Migration

17. **Emphasizes** the need for a coordinated and coherent EU Migration Policy, calling for greater solidarity and shared responsibility by all Member States as well as a forward-looking vision in the new Pact on Migration and Asylum. In this sense, it **reaffirms** that multi-level governance, multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral approach to migration management remains crucial in the current geo-political context, to be applied both to its internal and external dimensions.

18. Draw the attention of the EU Institutions particularly on the crucial contribution and critical situations of some islands on the external maritime borders, obliged to face unprecedented migration flows, often involving also unaccompanied minors, with their very limited own resources. Although fully acknowledging the added value of these actions, it **urges** the EU co-legislators to effectively support these territories, providing adequate direct funding and assistance to address these emergencies, as well as the related social, economic, and integration challenges, in view of further building their capacity and ensuring long-term sustainability of more structured and impactful actions.

Unanimously approved