



**39th ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE CPMR ISLANDS COMMISSION**
21-22 March 2019, Corfu (Ionian Islands, Greece)

**FINAL DECLARATION ADOPTED BY
THE CPMR ISLANDS COMMISSION**
Corfu, 21 March 2019

The island regions, listed below, that are members of the CPMR Islands Commission gathered for their 39th Annual General Meeting in Corfu (GR) on 21/22 March 2019:

**Açores (PT) - Balears (ES) - Bornholm (DK) - Canarias (ES) - Corse (FR) - Cyprus (CY) -
- Gotland (SE) - Ionia Nissia (GR) - Kriti (GR, Obs) - Polynésie Française (FR) -
Saaremaa & Hiiumaa (EE) - Saint-Martin (FR) - Sardegna (IT) - Sicilia (IT)**

The CPMR Islands Commission members wish, first of all, to thank Mr Theodoros Galiatsatos, Regional Governor of the Ionian Islands as well as Corfu Island for the hospitality.

The President of the Islands Commission, Mr Gilles SIMEONI, President of the Executive Council of Corsica, extends his thanks to the regional authorities and honoured guests from the EU institutions and Member States who took part in the proceedings of the Islands Commission Annual General Meeting.



FINAL DECLARATION

On behalf of its members, the CPMR Islands Commission, gathering for its 39th Annual General Assembly in Corfu on 21 & 22 March 2019, unanimously adopted the following Final Declaration:

PREAMBLE

2019 marks an important stage in the history of the European Union (EU). The Member States and the European institutions will have to find some way of concluding the Brexit negotiations, respond to the clear and at times violent populist trend in public politics, agree on a legislative package governing the EU's policies and budget for the 2021-2027 period, and above all deal with the results of the upcoming elections to the European Parliament which will without doubt be the most unpredictable for the last fifteen years.

In this context, aware of the scale and scope of these challenges, the **CPMR Islands Commission** underlines the importance of relaunching the process of European integration on the basis of a political project that can guarantee a high level of transparency, equilibrium and social justice. To do this, the EU will need to adopt ambitious legislative and financial means to enable it to achieve its economic, social and territorial cohesion objectives. It will also need to review its policies and simplify and improve its methods of intervention in order to be able to respond more efficiently to the difficulties encountered by all its citizens, irrespective of where they live.

On this last point, the **CPMR Islands Commission** recalls that island regions suffer from severe and permanent natural and demographic handicaps which have led to structural disadvantage and a significant gap in the level of development and made their social and economic systems less competitive and more vulnerable in times of global crisis.

Consequently, in view of this territorial specificity, the **CPMR Islands Commission** calls on the Heads of States and of National Governments, the Presidents of the European Parliament and the European Commission, and the Members of the European Parliament and of the College of Commissioners, to strengthen the territorial dimension in the next EU budget and in the sectoral policies adopted for the 2021-2027 period, and to envisage special arrangements and compensation measures in favour of the island regions, with the aim of reducing the development gap and ensuring its effective integration. This should represent a first step towards the full application of the principles recognised in Article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). Concerning the outermost regions, recognised in Article 349 TFEU, the CPMR Islands Commission calls on the heads of states and of national governments, to confirm the special arrangements and specific measures proposed by the European Commission in favour of these regions for the 2021-2027 period, throughout the different policies, most of them, also supported by the European Parliament.

The CPMR Islands Commission:

- 1. Notes** that the European Union, in exercising its legislative powers, has not managed to implement in its policies the “particular attention” in favour of the European island regions as provided under the third paragraph of Article 174 of the TFEU.
- 2. Welcomes** the specific measures adopted by the European Commission in its legislative proposals, for the period 2021-2027, aimed at adapting the European legislation to the specific reality of the outermost regions, on the basis of Article 349 TFEU, and calls on the Council and the Parliament to support these provisions in their trilogue negotiations
- 3. Considers** that the special initiatives for the islands implemented by the European Commission in the framework of its decarbonisation and energy transition strategy or its Horizon 2020 research programme can only be seen as a first and necessary, but not sufficient, step towards a broader policy approach that takes into account all the socio-economic sectors that are strategic for the European island regions (innovation, transport, tourism, climate change, blue growth, fisheries and agriculture, etc.).
- 4. Recalls** that on 4 February 2016 the European Parliament approved a resolution on the special situation of islands¹ which, among other points, *“encourages the Commission to provide a clear definition of the type of geographical, natural and demographic permanent handicaps that insular regions can suffer from, with reference to Article 174 of the TFEU”*.
- 5. Points out** that this resolution also called on the Commission to indicate *“how it intended to implement the wording of Article 174 of the TFEU regarding the permanent handicaps of insular regions that hinder their natural development and prevent them from achieving economic, social and territorial cohesion”*.
- 6. Supports** the opinion of the European Parliament that *“islands should have a proper definition/categorisation that will take into account not only their differences and specificities but also their specific situation”*. **It calls on** the European Commission, in association with island governments, to prepare a White Paper on island development, based on existing best practice.
- 7. Considers** that the special regime of the islands, based on their permanent and structural disadvantages, should be reflected in the corresponding regulatory changes that allow both European and national and regional bodies to act without the prior need to prove that they are not undermining the principles of the EU, such as the free market, and that this special regime only contributes to mitigate the disadvantages of a permanent situation of inequality.
- 8. Welcomes** the reactivation of the “Insular Regions” interregional group in the Committee of the Regions (CoR). **It notes** that this interregional group adds to and complements the political dynamic of the current [SEARICA](#) European Parliament Intergroup, which has made an active contribution, throughout the whole term of office of the Parliament, to the debates on the specific needs and opportunities of islands regions.

¹ European Parliament resolution on the special situation of islands (2015/3014(RSP)), adopted 4 February 2016

9. Points out that the existence of an increasing number of European bodies lobbying in favour of island interests clearly demonstrates:

- the inadequacy of the current European regulatory framework and existing provisions and measures;
- the need to urgently initiate and implement an energetic overarching policy to respond fully and effectively to the whole range of issues affecting European island regions.

EU BUDGET

10. Welcomes the [Interim Report on the Multiannual Financial Framework \(MFF\) 2021-2027](#) adopted by the European Parliament in November 2018, which advocates an EU budget equivalent to 1.3% of the Gross National Income (GNI) of the EU27 in order for the EU to be able to meet its policy commitments.

11. Shares the assessment of the European Parliament that, in its report, regrets that the European Commission's proposals for the MFF 2021-2027 *"do not contain measures that respond to the requirements of Article 174 TFEU in relation to northernmost regions with very low population density and island, cross-border and mountain regions"*.

12. Similarly, requests an increase in budget allocations from the MFF 2021-2027 for programmes for the outermost regions, especially POSEI and suchlike, on account of the crisis and vulnerability to structural disadvantages as specified in article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)

13. Calls on the Council to approve the following requests made by the European Parliament:

- maintain the financing of Cohesion Policy and the Common Agricultural Policy at least at the level of the 2014-2020 programming period;
- increase the level of funding for transport infrastructure through the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF-Transport);
- double the resources for tackling youth unemployment in the ESF+ (compared to the current Youth Employment Initiative);
- reinforce by 10% the level of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), in accordance with its new mission on the blue economy;
- introduce a specific allocation for sustainable tourism;
- introduce a specific allocation (EUR 4.8 billion) for a new Just Energy Transition Fund to address societal, socio-economic and environmental impacts on workers and communities adversely affected by the transition from coal and carbon dependence. Concerning this last issue, **it points out** that the European islands are in general heavily dependent on fossil fuels, given their remoteness from the mainland.

- 14. Is concerned**, in spite of the efforts made by the Austrian and Romanian presidencies of the Council, at the slow progress of negotiations in the Council on the MFF 2021-2027. In the light of this, **it recalls** that any delay in approving the MFF would affect the approval procedure for the entire post-2020 legislative package, including the Regulations relating to the future Cohesion Policy. This would have a very negative impact on the schedules for the preparation, adoption and launch of the 2021-2027 Operational Programmes on cohesion, to the detriment of the programme's Managing Authorities and beneficiaries. **It therefore calls on** the Member States and the Council to do their utmost to reach an agreement on the 2021-2027 MFF as soon as possible, so as to ensure the best conditions for the start of the programmes in 2021.
- 15. Invites** the European Union to adapt existing EU funds or to create new funds to help regions, which, on account of their economic and cultural interdependence with the United-Kingdom, will be more affected by this EU Member State's withdrawal.

TERRITORIAL AGENDA

- 16. Recalls that the [Territorial Agenda \(TA\) of the EU](#) (2007) is the outcome of an inter-governmental process, and that it underwent an initial review in 2011 as a result of which it has been defined as a strategic policy framework for the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy in the territories [\(TA 2020\)](#). As such, the TA provides a framework for coordinating EU policies to fully respond to the principle of territorial cohesion as enshrined in the Treaty and which aims to ensure the harmonious development of all the European regions in all their diversity.**
- 17. Welcomes** the Member States' decision to speed up, under the Austrian presidency, the TA review for the post-2020 period, and welcomes the provisional schedule of technical and political activities under the Romanian, Finnish, Croatian and German presidencies aiming to finalise a new document before the end of 2020.
- 18. Notes**, at the same time, the European Commission's intention to start a discussion on a renewed European strategy for the post-2020 period. According to its latest reflection paper [A Sustainable Europe by 2030](#), this could contribute to the implementation of the [UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and its 17 goals (SDGs). **It notes** that the European Commission proposes in particular scenario 1 "*An overarching EU SDG strategy to guide all the actions of the EU and its Member States*" and scenario 2 "*Continued mainstreaming of the SDGs in all relevant EU policies by the Commission, but not enforcing Member States' action*", explaining that the eventual outcome would likely be a combination of elements from each scenario.
- 19. Considers** that, whilst the European island regions and outermost regions do indeed face multiple economic, social and environmental challenges, broadly covered by the SDGs, any new European strategy to guide the EU's future investment policies and, in the case of scenario 1, those of its Member States and the Regions, should most importantly have a strong territorial dimension that takes into account the specificities of the different Member States and the

diversity of the EU's territories and their needs, as mentioned in the third paragraph of Article 174 and in Article 349 of the TFEU.

- 20. Points out**, in this context, that the EU's post-2020 Territorial Agenda plays a major role in integrating the principle of territorial cohesion, enshrined in the Treaty, in the EU's future development strategy. Moreover, it should facilitate the coordination of EU sectoral policies that have a strong territorial impact (cohesion, transport, maritime, digital, energy, etc.).
- 21. Calls** therefore **on** the Romanian presidency and successive presidencies to take into account, in their future work on the renewal of the TA, the political messages historically conveyed by CPMR and summed up in its technical note [The renewal of the Territorial Agenda: issues at stake for the CPMR](#), submitted to the Political Bureau in Brest on 7 March 2019. These messages can be summarised as follows:
- the territorial dimension of the EU's future sectoral policies needs to be reinforced;
 - all European territories, including the island regions, should have the same development opportunities;
 - the regions should be fully involved in the review and in the implementation of the TA.
- 22. Also asks that** the European Parliament be officially involved in the review process, in order to ensure a strategic and political link with the debate on the future of the TA and the co-decision procedure, on which the design and development of European public policies is based.
- 23. Lastly calls on** the European Commission to make full use of its shared competence in territorial cohesion and, more than ten years after the publication of its [Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion](#), to now pursue this essential strategic reflection by initiating a White Paper on territorial cohesion and presenting ideas for concrete actions by means of which this Treaty objective can be achieved.

COHESION POLICY

- 24. Notes** that, according to the latest regional statistics on gross domestic product published by the European Commission in February 2019, island regions and outermost regions **do not only** continue to lag behind mainland regions in terms of EU average per capita GDP, but there has not been a process of economic convergence with them either. The figures also show that this indicator is not enough to illustrate the specific characteristics related to the convergence of island and outermost regions.
- 25. Is concerned** to see this trend of regional disparities becoming wider not only between European regions but also within Member States. **It considers** therefore that the European Union should, as a matter of priority, implement an ambitious regional policy aiming to guarantee cohesion and balanced territorial development Europe-wide.
- 26. Points out**, in this regard, the impact of Brexit which will, according to a [recent analysis by CPMR](#), deprive the Highlands and Islands region, and therefore its island regions, of EUR 180 million in regional policy funding at a time when inequalities between regions in the United Kingdom are becoming more marked. It **supports** the Parliament's proposals to continue to promote

cooperation and exchanges with these regions after Brexit, in particular in the framework of European Territorial Cooperation (ETC).

27. Welcomes the progress made by the European Parliament with the adoption of its reports on the post-2020 Cohesion Policy Regulations, and **calls on** the Council to pursue the negotiations at technical and political level so that the programmes can be launched in January 2021.

28. Welcomes, in this respect, the inclusion in the European Parliament's reports of numerous amendments proposed by CPMR and its Islands Commission, such as the increase in co-financing rates and the return to thematic concentration at regional level, as well as the addition of several references to the Cohesion Policy's objective of territorial cohesion and the need to recognise and take into account the needs of the EU's specific territories as laid down in Articles 174 and 349 of the TFEU. **It therefore invites** the Council to align its positions with those of the Parliament.

29. Regrets, however, and this in spite of our repeated requests, that this recognition has not led to the introduction of concrete measures in favour of all island regions.

30. Therefore asks the European Parliament and Council to consider, during their future negotiations on the post-2020 Cohesion Policy Regulations, the following proposals:

- establish a uniform maximum co-financing rate of 85% for all island regions (Article 106, Common Provisions Regulation);
- on thematic concentration, apply a derogation to all island regions so that they are classified in "group 3" and can benefit from the maximum level of flexibility in the programming of the Cohesion Policy funds (Article 3, ERDF/Cohesion Fund), in order to facilitate a choice more adapted to each context and not to invalidate appropriate responses to the challenges arising in those territories;
- authorise all island regions to invest ERDF and Cohesion Fund financing in new or existing airport and port infrastructure (Article 6, ERDF/Cohesion Fund);
- envisage specific support measures for all island regions to facilitate the implementation of integrated territorial development strategies and the use of available territorial instruments, which are strengthened in the future Cohesion Policy. Support, in this respect, the proposal of the European Parliament's REGI committee to guarantee the allocation of at least 5% of ERDF resources at national level to integrated territorial development of non-urban areas facing natural, geographic or demographic handicaps or constraints, or areas which face difficulties in accessing basic public services (Article 8 ERDF/Cohesion Fund);
- Include geographical criteria, such as periphery and insularity, as permanent physical obstacles to regional and sustainable development, in the system for allocating the funds of the future Cohesion Policy, which would further strengthen its ultimate objective of reducing territorial disparities;
- Support the designation of island territories as "predetermined C areas" in the future regional aid map, in view of their greater fragility and economic vulnerability, and improve their conditions for access to this funding line for the productive network;

- Maintain a non-reimbursable aids logic aimed at strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion, and the non-obligation to use financial instruments that, in any case, should be adapted to the reality of fragile economies, such as island economies with reduced and fragmented markets.

- 31. Is concerned**, in spite of the introduction by the European Parliament of numerous provisions aimed at strengthening multilevel governance and the partnership principle with the regional authorities, at the recent partial agreement reached by the Council on part of the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) which significantly weakens this partnership and governance dimension and even envisages making a Partnership Agreement optional for certain Member States. A Partnership Agreement remains an essential programming document at the national level, in that it allows for the development of a strategic approach to the use of Cohesion Policy funds, and in particular enables the question of territorial cohesion and the specific territories referred to in Articles 174 and 349 TFEU to be addressed. This point was made recently by CPMR in its open letter *“A Cohesion Policy based on strong partnership principles with regions at its core”*.
- 32. Welcomes** the European Parliament’s adoption of ambitious proposals concerning the future ETC budget as well as its broad support for maintaining maritime cross-border cooperation programmes within the cross-border cooperation component (component 1), without prejudicing the new components for outermost regions’ cooperation (component 3) and for interregional innovation investments (component 5).
- 33. Also welcomes** the proposals of the Committee of the Regions, in its [opinion on European Territorial Cooperation, adopted on 5 December 2018](#), to guarantee that maritime and cross-border programmes continue to benefit from at least two-thirds of the funding allocated for the 2014-2020 period (Article 9). **It supports** in particular, in the context of the new interregional innovation investments (Article 16), its proposal to introduce a specific initiative and budget allocation to encourage these investments in those regions which suffer from structural handicaps as mentioned in Articles 174 and 349.
- 34. Regrets**, however, that the above proposals have not been taken up by the European Parliament in the [report](#) it adopted on 16 January 2019. It therefore invites the Parliament and the Council to align themselves with the position of the Committee of the Regions.
- 35. Alerts** the European Parliament and the Council to the fact that the European Commission’s proposal concerning the allocation method for cross-border maritime cooperation (sheet 14 on the MFF 2021-2027) reintroduces the 150km limit defining eligibility of regions for cross-border cooperation, even though this did not appear in the Commission’s draft Regulation. **Recalls** the strong opposition to this territorial limit. In addition, the method proposed risks significantly reducing the amount of resources allocated to maritime cooperation for certain Member States (Annexe XXII, 8, CPR).
- 36. Calls** therefore **on** the Parliament and the Council to return to the allocation method used for the 2014-2020 period for the programmes under the cross-border and transnational strands, while retaining the method proposed by the Commission for 2021-2027 for outermost regions’ cooperation.

TRANSPORT

- 37. Underlines** that territorial discontinuity represents a major obstacle affecting, albeit to different degrees, all the European island regions in that it hinders the free circulation of people, goods, services and capital.
- 38. Recalls** that, in conformity with Article 170 of the TFEU, in order to promote its overall harmonious development, the Union must promote the interconnection and interoperability of national networks as well as access to such networks. In doing this, the Union “*shall take account in particular of the need to link island, landlocked and peripheral regions with the central regions of the Union*”.
- 39. Also recalls** that Article 4 of Regulation (EU) N° 1315/2013 states that the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) shall strengthen the social, economic and territorial cohesion of the Union through, among others, accessibility and connectivity of all regions of the Union, including remote, outermost, insular, peripheral and mountainous regions, as well as sparsely populated areas.
- 40. Considers** that the Union’s guidelines for the future development of the Trans-European Transport Network should adopt a methodological approach and innovative provisions that will enable the above-mentioned objectives to be implemented in an ambitious way. **It therefore calls on** the European Commission to set up a structured dialogue with the representatives of all European island authorities that make possible the necessary inclusion of island territories in the Trans-European Transport Network and in the different corridors. In this respect **it points out that** the current period of reflection, characterised by the launch of the public consultation on the TEN-T guidelines, represents a strategic opportunity for the European Union to identify innovative solutions for tackling the constraints of insularity and territorial discontinuity.
- 41. Regrets** that the European Commission’s proposal for the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) 2021-2027 does not mention any islands in the list of pre-identified sections on the comprehensive network (CEF Annex). This list includes only rail and route sections.
- 42. Welcomes** the modifications introduced by the European Parliament to the European Commission’s proposed Regulation on the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). **It underlines** in particular the important step forward represented by the inclusion of maritime sections in the definition of cross-border sections, and the addition of a criterion for evaluating projects relating to the contribution they make to improving “*connectivity and accessibility including that of island and outermost regions*”. **It therefore calls on** the Council to take into account, during the Trilogues, the modifications proposed by the European Parliament.
- 43. Notes** the allocation, in the framework of the CEF’s work programme for 2019, of EUR 65 million to comprehensive network projects dealing in particular with links to and the development of sea ports. This represents an opportunity for island ports in the TEN-T comprehensive network. **It regrets** however that this call is taking place at such a late stage in the 2014-2020 programming period and fails to provide an adequate response to the problems of territorial discontinuity and the challenges of accessibility which affect the island regions.

- 44. Repeats** its call to the European Commission to carry out an impact assessment on the results of European economic and legislative provisions in helping to reduce the accessibility constraints of island regions. Such an assessment should take into account all the actions co-financed by the CEF during the current programming period, and would facilitate the preparation of a pertinent review of the TEN-T Regulation in 2023.
- 45. Invites** the Commission and the Member States to make use of the results of the MedAtlantic Ecobonus project, presented in 2018, to propose a mechanism to encourage a modal shift towards maritime transport.
- 46. Points out** that the impact analysis on Regulation 1008/2008, due to be published by the Commission in the spring, could lead to the introduction of changes in the conditions and requirements of Public Service Obligation (PSO) that could entail changes in the number of routes concerned by PSOs. Given the importance of this mechanism for the islands, which face a combination of the constraints of territorial discontinuity and the small size of their domestic markets, the Islands Commission will closely monitor the progress of this impact assessment and remain vigilant with regard to any changes in the Regulation.
- 47. Notes** the European Commission's decision to extend the validity of the General Block Exemption until 2022 and to carry out an assessment of this Regulation, as well as of the guidelines on State aid to airports and airlines, by 2020. **It calls on** the European Commission to involve the island governments and airline representatives in this assessment by organising a European symposium on air transport for the islands.
- 48. It considers** timely the revision of the Regulation (EU) No 1407/2013 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to "de minimis aid", in order to eliminate barriers against promoting the exportation of products originating in the island regions, as well as for the importation of raw materials necessary to produce them, so as to put them on an equal competitive footing with the mainland regions.

CIRCULAR ECONOMY

- 49. Underlines that** the island regions and the outermost regions, as closed eco-systems remote from the mainland, represent strategic test beds for the transition to a circular economic model. There are both threats and opportunities in terms of finding solutions to chronic problems, in particular waste management, the recycling of agricultural products and the re-use of treated waste water. In this respect, **it points out that** the circular economy helps to make island regions more resilient by limiting their dependency on incoming flows of resources, reducing export and import costs, and promoting job creation.

50. Considers that, to optimise the development opportunities provided by the circular economic model, the European island regions need to adopt targeted policies and/or initiatives to help them to:

- identify, exchange and replicate best practices that can be applied to each step in the value chain: production, consumption, repair and remanufacturing, and the management of waste and of secondary raw materials which can be reintroduced into the economy;
- reorganise traditional economic sectors (agriculture, fisheries, tourism, energy, etc.);
- create new markets and/or boost existing markets;
- create and ensure access to venture capital;
- ensure the provision of vocational training for young people and continuing education to develop the necessary skills for the transition to a circular economic model;
- raise the awareness of and mobilise public authorities, private enterprise, universities and research centres as well as the populations, in particular young people, of the island regions;
- test new technological solutions.

51. Points out that the European Union plays a fundamental role in creating the structural conditions necessary for the transition to a circular economy. **It thus welcomes** the approach taken by the European Commission and the Parliament, consisting in placing the product life cycle at the core of all the efforts and policies aiming to facilitate the transition to a circular economy.

52. Recalls the strategic importance of initiatives such as “*CirCle 2019 - Challenges for the Islands in the era of Circular Economy*” and **calls on** the European Commission to continue to support such initiatives. **It calls on** the Member States and the European Parliament to make the necessary changes to EU and national legislation in order to create a legislative framework conducive to the introduction of green public procurement, which plays a crucial role in directing investment towards the transition to a circular economy.

CLIMATE AND ENERGY TRANSITION

53. Points out that the islands are on the front line of climate change. **It further points out** that, because of their territorial characteristics, the islands remain very vulnerable and, as a result, need ad hoc policies and provisions in order to be able to tackle the environmental, economic and social challenges arising from changes affecting the climate both at the scale of the European continent and on a global scale. In this respect **it underlines**, for example, the strategic role played by the Valletta (MT) Political Declaration and initiative on “Clean Energy for EU Islands”.

54. Follows with interest the preparation and discussion phase of the National Energy and Climate Plans. **It considers** that, to ensure the development of a strategic vision that takes account of all the needs and priorities of each Member State, the local and regional authorities, including those representing regions with permanent geographical handicaps (islands, outermost regions,

sparingly populated areas and mountainous areas), must be involved in the national public consultations aiming to identify priorities for action and pilot projects and which will form the basis of each Member State's action plan for achieving EU targets and objectives by 2030.

- 55. Recalls** that the islands and the outermost regions play a key role as “innovative test beds” in relation to the transition to a low-carbon economy and the development of the production of energy from renewable sources.
- 56. Underlines** nonetheless that, because of the specific characteristics of their infrastructure and the actual possibilities of their access to the European energy market, the islands and the outermost regions face important additional costs in terms of energy production, as well as costs relating to the conversion and restructuring of their economic sectors.
- 57. It therefore calls on** the Council to follow up the European Parliament's proposal to introduce a specific allocation of EUR 4.8 billion into the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework for the creation of a new fund to address the societal, socio-economic and environmental challenges arising from the process of transition to a low-carbon economy. In this respect and in the light of the above-mentioned elements, **it also calls on** the Council and the European Parliament to ensure that the distribution key of this new fund will enable specific national allocations to be made to local and regional island authorities.
- 58. Welcomes the** introduction of measures under the HORIZON 2020 programme, such as the creation of a “European Islands Facility” (Unblock financing for energy transitions and supporting islands to develop investment concepts) and the “Decarbonising energy systems of geographical islands” action². **It considers** that the high number of proposals submitted to these programmes demonstrates the considerable interest in and pertinence of this kind of initiative for the European island regions.
- 59. Recalls** the importance for the island regions of being able to mobilise and benefit from the expertise of highly qualified experts and technicians in the renewable energies sector. In this respect, **it underlines** the high value added of European programmes and funding specifically aimed at training young people.

BIODIVERSITY AND ISLAND ENVIRONMENTS

- 60. Underlines** that the European islands and the outermost regions possess a unique terrestrial and marine biodiversity and that as a result they require specific sustainable development policies and environmental protection measures. **It recalls** in this respect the strategic role played by the European Union and its legislative framework (Marine Strategy Framework Directive - MSFD, Common Fisheries Policy – CFP, Birds and Habitats Directives, etc.) in achieving good environmental status of natural ecosystems and their biodiversity.
- 61. Calls on** the European Commission, the Member States and the European Parliament to include a special island dimension in the future mandate of the MARE and ENVI Directorates of the European Commission, along the lines of that in the ENER Directorate concerning

²Decarbonising energy systems of geographical Islands, H2020-LC-SC3-2018-2019-2020.

decarbonisation and energy transition. This should ensure the necessary conditions for a better analysis and understanding, at the scale of the European Union, of the needs and challenges affecting the terrestrial and marine ecosystems of the island regions.

- 62. Underlines** the gap that currently exists, in terms of biodiversity protection, between the conclusions of scientific research and the content of European public policies. **It considers** it is imperative to encourage the conversion of scientific results into methods and instruments that can be applied to the management of natural ecosystems. In this respect, it **calls on** the European Commission and Member States to support the creation of an exchange of best practice programme for the protection of terrestrial and marine ecosystems, drawing on the experience acquired in the Marine Protected Areas (MPA) network, such as MED-PAN, and in the context of the Mediterranean Biodiversity Community funded by the INTERREG V B Programme in 2014 -2020.
- 63. Considers that** European protected areas, if they are properly selected and managed, can be very effective mechanisms for protecting biodiversity and sustainably managing natural resources. In this respect, **it calls on** the European Commission and Member States to support initiatives that promote networking and capitalising on best practices identified in the context of protected island areas.
- 64. Is closely monitoring** the activities of the PANACeA transversal capitalisation and communication project representing the Mediterranean Biodiversity Protection community, funded by the INTERREG V B MED Programme in 2014-2020, **and supports** the principles and content of the declaration on “Ecosystem-based approaches for biodiversity protection and management” presented in Brussels at an event organised in collaboration with the European Parliament’s SEARICA Intergroup on 5 December 2018.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

- 65. Recalls** the importance of the tourism sector for the economic development of island communities. **Points out however** that, due to the particular vulnerability of their ecosystems, it is imperative that the EU should be able to continue to support island authorities in planning and developing tourism products and/or services that are more sustainable. In this respect, **it welcomes** the European Parliament’s proposal to create a specific sustainable tourism programme and **calls on** the Council and the European Commission to support this initiative.
- 66. Underlines** the strategic importance of the results achieved by the European project CIVITAS DESTINATIONS in developing sustainable mobility solutions in island cities. It **welcomes** the Political Statement to be approved in Elba (IT) in April 2019 and **encourages** island governments to support and co-sign it.
- 67. Welcomes** the decision of the 2014-2020 INTERREG V B MED Programme to include the development of sustainable tourism in the island regions as one of the specific objectives in the specifications of its latest call for proposals under Axis 3.1 (enhance the development of a sustainable and responsible coastal and marine tourism in the MED area). **It points out** that

tourism is one of the economic sectors which best justifies targeted and exclusive cooperation between island regions. **It therefore calls on** the European Commission and Member States to introduce, in the most appropriate 2021-2027 transnational territorial cooperation programmes (for example MED and BALTIC), thematic sub-programmes aimed at island regions and concerning the development of sustainable and responsible tourism.

68. Underlines the importance of encouraging scientific research for a better analysis and understanding of the nature of tourism flows. The production of models and the creation of statistical tools to help adjust public policies (management of water and electricity, domestic mobility services, waste collection and processing operations) are of vital interest to policy-makers and decision-makers, especially at the level of the local and regional authorities in the island regions. **It therefore welcomes** the objectives and the outcomes (decision-making tool for public authorities, [open platform](#) for tourism indicators and data, etc.) of territorial cooperation projects such as MITOMED+, COEVOLVE and BLUEISLANDS and **calls on** the relevant ministries in the Member States, as well as the European Commission, to renew their financial and strategic support for these initiatives.

69. Recalls the existence of a considerable number of territorial cooperation (in particular transnational and cross-border) projects aiming to develop statistical tools and new protocols to enhance levels of sustainability and responsibility. **It highlights** the efforts made by cooperation programmes in disseminating and capitalising on the outcomes and deliverables produced by the different partners involved in implementing these projects. However, **it underlines** the need to increase the opportunities available for capitalising on the outcomes and replicating the initiatives. In this respect, **it welcomes and follows with interest** the implementation of the PANORAMED governance programme (INTERREG MED, Axis 4) as a pilot action which could be replicated in areas outside the Mediterranean, whilst ensuring a thematic earmarking of resources in favour of island initiatives.

Unanimously approved