These past few months we have once again been subjected to restrictions and necessary constraints, that highly modified our daily lives to protect our health and our citizens. Within this peculiar context, however, the Islands Commission has continued to work hard to guard its members’ interests and to put forward their specific needs, in a time to also think about reconstruction and recovery.

On 20 October 2020, we gathered in a Plenary Meeting to discuss the impacts of the crisis in each of our territories and we collaborated together to discuss a better, greener and safer recovery. On this occasion, we not only launched the IC roadmap on Blue Economy but we also triggered an important discussion on the additional costs of insularity, today more than ever highlighted by the impacts of the COVID19.

In view of our next General Assembly on 15 April 2021, this Activity Report outlines the Islands Commissions fruitful activities between October 2020 and March 2021.

**PRIORITY AREAS**

- Cohesion Policy
- Energy Transition
- Tourism
- Circular Economy

Click on the newspaper icons to read the events’ full articles!
Islands Commission Plenary Meeting

After the cancellation of the General Assembly in April 2020 due to COVID 19, the Islands Commission met in plenary online. The meeting discussed the deep consequences of the sanitary crisis on insular economies and hardly hit sectors: tourism, maritime and air transport, energy storage and food supplies. Elected members showcased the specific needs for islands to strengthen their human and medical resources through a territorialized EU health response as well as the necessity to ensure a strong EU support to accompany island’s recovery. In this prospect, President Simeoni proposed to develop, together with DG Regio and the European Parliament, a study in order to better identify and quantify the additional costs of insularity. In this regard, the CPMR-IC reiterated its involvement for a specific support for Islands and Outermost Regions in the Just Transition Fund upheld by MEP and President of REGI Committee Younous Omarjee.

29th CPMR General Assembly and Political Bureau

During the CPMR General Assembly, the Islands Commission, through the intervention of President Gilles Simeoni, reminded the specific insular socioeconomic conditions that added to the COVID-19 impacts in islands, showcasing the additional costs of insularity. The Islands Commission also asked to introduce a new category in favor of insular territories within Art. 107.3.c of the TFEU on regional state aids, to ensure the efficiency of accompanying measures for EU islands. Finally, the meeting called in favor of a common policy and action plan for tourism. The deep crisis of the tourism sector brought the necessity to build a coordinated approach for its recovery, in which the Islands Commission is eager to participate, notably by constructing a dialogue with its Members national governments in this field.
November 18th

MAESHA Kick-Off Meeting

MAESHA - deMonstration of smArt and flExible solutions for a decarboniSed energy future in Mayotte and other European islAnds

Always seeking innovative activities that proposes concrete solutions for its Members, the Islands Commission participated in MAESHA’s kick-off meeting, a Horizon 2020 project aimed at deploying flexibility, storage and energy management solutions for a large penetration of renewable energies in the French island of Mayotte with replication possibilities in five other European islands - Wallis and Futuna, St Barthélemy, Canary Islands, Favignana and Gozo. Led by Electricité de Mayotte (EDM), the projects counts with the support of a 21 partners consortium. The CPMR, as associated partner, will communicate and disseminate the result of MAESHA to its member Regions to ensure greater impact and replication opportunities. The project is going well, and lead partners already had their first visit in Mayotte in December, plus MAESHA’s website was just launched!

23rd

Islands Commission Webinar in collaboration with BOFA

Opportunities for the implementation of full circular economy models through waste management in islands

Organized with the Bornholm’s Municipal Waste Management Authority, the webinar presented how EU islands can be pioneers in the green transition through innovative solutions. MEP Josianne Cutajar and Joanna Drake, Deputy Director General of DG ENVI discussed the new EU Circular Economy Action Plan and the crucial role of insular territories in its implementation. BOFA representatives showcased Bornholm zero waste vision 2032 and best practices from concrete project example on the field. Following this successful webinar, the IC is continuing its close partnership with BOFA and maintains strong commitment to circular economy in islands.

24th

E-Convention

Until 27th of November, the 3-day event gathered qualified speakers and insular representatives to discuss the sustainable transition of islands. The Islands Commission took part in the event as jury of the GTI awards, rewarding islands for their good practices in six different categories - agriculture, tourism, mobility, waste, energy and water.
Joint letter to MEP and REGI Committee Chair Younous Omarjee

With the aggravated and exogeneous impacts of the COVID-19 crisis that have been hitting remote, insular and mountainous regions, the CPMR, the NSPA and Euromontana addressed a letter to MEP and Chair of the REGI Committee Younous Omarjee asking to open a structured dialogue together with the European Parliament and the European Commission. Through his answer, President Omarjee underlined his commitment to revitalize the EU cohesion policy that should take account of the territorial inequalities, as per Art. 174 of the TFEU. The Islands Commission will closely follow the discussions to guarantee sufficient assistance for the disproportionately impacted EU insular territories.

Start of the Study

ECORYS

On the impact of COVID-19 in European Outermost Regions

Following the European Commission’s strategies in favour of peripheral territories and specific areas, ECORYS has won the Call for Proposals to support the implementation of a Strategic Partnership with the EU’s Outermost Regions launched by DG REGIO, alongside CEDRU and the Islands Commission. The study, meaning to look at the sectorial impact of the COVID-19 crisis is well under way, with the interim report already submitted to the European Commission on 31st March 2021. For each OR, ECORYS is drafting fiches that will depict the context of the crisis, its main impacts, European, national and regional measures implemented as well as potential gaps in aid to fill. As a subcontractor within the project, that will last up to Autumn 2021, the CPMR-IC is performing interviews with relevant stakeholders, public and private, in the French Outermost Regions.
Launched in November 2019 and led by Lazio Region, the DestiMED PLUS Interreg MED project is aimed at creating eco-tourism itineraries based on the MEET methodology in order to foster the integration of tourism and nature conservation policies in 9 Mediterranean regions. The Islands Commission and the Intermediterranean Commission are working together on the capitalisation activities of the project and provide their support with communication. Since the beginning of 2021, the IC and the IMC are developing a draft capitalisation plan and contributed to the development of the ecotourism package of the "Bouches de Bonifacio" and of the Local Ecotourism Cluster of the Corsican Tourism Agency. Finally, the capitalisation strategy envisages to create the Mediterranean Ecotourism Consortium that will bring together regional actors and policymakers at the Mediterranean scale.
SEARICA Webinar

What State aid rules to support the recovery in maritime and insular regions?

Co-organized by the SEARICA Intergroup of the European Parliament and the CPMR, this webinar was the occasion for the members of the IC to exchange with the European Parliament and the Commission on the future of state aid rules for islands. Although significant assistance that will be provided through the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027, numerous MEPs highlighted the specific challenges insular areas of the EU will encounter in their recovery from the pandemic. Considering the distortion of competitiveness for insular territories in their recovery from the current crisis, insular MEPs urged to adopt a flexible approach in the allocation of resources provided by the European Commission’s state aid rules.

Islands Commission Webinar co-organized with Solutions & co (Pays de la Loire) and the Atlantic Arc Commission

Challenges and opportunities for Marine Renewable Energies and Smart Grid Systems in EU islands.

Following the publication of the European Commission Offshore Renewable Energy Strategy in November 2020, the Islands Commission proposed a fruitful discussion between various stakeholders about the objectives of the Commission’s action plan and the possibilities of implementation of renewable technologies in EU islands. Members of the European Commission (DG MARE) through the presence of Xavier Guillou, the European Parliament with MEP François Alfonsi, and member of Pays de la Loire Regional Council Laurent Gérault, presented the policies and action plans in the field of marine renewables. Business representatives completed the webinar by showcasing innovative renewable solutions and technologies for insular territories. Stakeholders’ interventions demonstrated the opportunities of job creation and competitiveness offered by Marine Renewable Energies and Smart Grid Systems proving that insular territories have high potential for the industry. The Islands Commission thanks the speakers for the constructive collaboration they enabled and looks forward to find innovative solutions for EU islands.
March 30th

Launched in November 2019, the WINTER MED Interreg MED project aims at developing year-round tourism in Mediterranean islands in order to limit the consequences of seasonal and mass tourism on local societies and environments. On 30th March, following the progress of the project in the last months, a first transnational policy exchange workshop co-organized by the Islands and the Intermediterranean Commission, gathering numerous representatives from Mediterranean islands to foster solutions for sustainable and year-round tourism, key features for viability of insular economic models. During the opening, MEP Josianne Cutajar showcased that islands can grasp the opportunity to switch the tourism paradigm through a stronger involvement of stakeholders and local authorities. The six partner regions involved – Balearic Islands, Corsica, South Aegean Region, Tuscan Archipelago, Cyprus and Dubrovnik-Neretva - shared their Regional Action Plans to discuss key common objectives.

1st TRANSNATIONAL POLICY EXCHANGE WORKSHOP:
From Regional Action Plans to a Strategy for Sustainable Year-round Tourism in Mediterranean Islands

JOSIANNE CUTAJAR
MEP & member of SEARICA
ISLANDS MATTER! WE BELIEVE IN IT & WE WORK FOR IT!
Islands stand together