The Islands Commission
Last year’s contributions led by the CPMR Islands Commission (IC) marked a turning point for European Islands, with tremendous challenges and opportunities unleashing with the post-COVID-19 recovery, a new programming period for 2021-2027, and the INI Report on European Islands and Cohesion Policy. The latter is expected to be the first step towards the development of a Pact/Strategy for EU Islands, that takes into consideration our specificities and fully applies the principles set out in art.174 of the TFEU, providing concrete, specific actions and compensatory measures to overcome key challenges faced by islands daily. Since November 2021, the Presidency of the Balearic Islands and the Executive Secretary of the Islands Commission have undertaken a round of bilateral meetings with all External Relations Officers of IC Member Regions to discuss the IC roadmap and action plan, as well as the islands socio-economic context and derived challenges.

This Activity Report - covering the period from September 2021 to April 2022 - highlights the extent to which the IC Secretariat and its Presidency remain active and committed to raising the voices of its members at the EU level and advocating for a visionary and inclusive strategy for European Islands.

PRIORITY AREAS

- Cohesion Policy
- Accessibility & Transport
- Energy
- Climate
- Maritime Affairs
- Tourism

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September

17 General Assembly of the Association of the Islands of the Ponant (Monks Islands/Île-Aux-Moines)

The Islands Commission participated in the General Assembly and 50th Anniversary of the Association of the Islands of the Ponant (AIP) and celebrated the close ancestral ties between the two organisations. In his speech, the President of the Regional Council of Brittany, Loïg Chesnais-Girard, underlined the European challenges faced by French islands at all administrative levels. Giuseppe Sciacca, CPMR Director of Maritime Affairs and Climate and former Executive Secretary of the Islands Commission, stressed the importance of the INI Report on EU Islands and Cohesion to oppose the current renationalisation of insularity.

The event also paved the way for a reinforced future collaboration between the Islands Commission and the European Small Islands Federation (ESIN) which celebrated simultaneously both its General Assembly and its 20th Anniversary.

21-24 SEAnergy Forum (Nantes, Saint-Nazaire and online)

Following the CPMR Islands Commission webinar on Challenges and opportunities of Marine Renewable Energy and Smart Grids in EU Islands held on 18 February 2021, the French region of Pays de la Loire, a pioneer in marine renewable energy, hosted SEAnergy 2021, an annual international forum dedicated to Marine Renewable and Offshore Wind Energy.

On 22 September, a conference session was dedicated to Non-Interconnected Zones and Island environments, presenting strategic markets for meeting their energy requirements and identifying large-scale solutions. It featured presentations from the CPMR, the Balearic Islands as the Presidency of the Islands Commission as well as DIKWE and Eco Wave Power. On 23 September, several sessions were dedicated to Hydrogen and Innovation talks. The 2021 event saw the launch of France’s first offshore wind farm.
October

1. **SEArica event “Towards an EU Strategy for Sustainable Tourism”**

The event was co-organised by the SEArica Intergroup and the CPMR, as part of the implementation of the WINTER MED project advocacy campaign, and was conceived as an exchange between Members of the European Parliament, the European Commission, representatives from the CPMR coastal and insular regions, and key territorial stakeholders of the tourist sector in EU coastal areas, following the COVID-19 crisis. Nagore Espinosa, external consultant from in2destination, presented WINTER MED transnational strategy for all-year-round tourism in Mediterranean Islands. The latter is a good practice of territorial cooperation promoting integrated sustainable tourism management in the islands, one that can inform policy and foster new cooperation opportunities.

6. **Clean Energy for EU Islands Secretariat Advisory Committee**

In 2021, the Islands Commission followed through with its partnership with the second phase of the Clean Energy for EU Islands Secretariat (CE4EU). This initiative of the European Commission is the central platform for the clean energy transition of European islands. As a member of the CE4EU Advisory Committee, the Islands Commission provided strategic input during the first meeting on the current activities of the CE4EU Secretariat and the work programme for the next year. The IC will keep following the activities of the Secretariat and will relay to its members opportunities for project support, technical assessment and financing held by CE4EU, as well as the related NESOI.

14. **49th General Assembly of the CPMR (online)**

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, the CPMR General Assembly was held online on October 14, 2021. The CPMR 2021 Final Declaration, covering specific topics of the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE), calls on the European Commission to fully address Cohesion Policy through the implementation of a strategic framework, which integrates all EU investment policies. It demands to secure a stronger role for regions and local authorities in the definition of investment measures. The CPMR also highlighted the role of peripheral maritime regions in the ecological transition and stressed the need to adopt a place-based approach to ensure a fair transition towards a climate-neutral economy.

With respect to the islands, the CPMR called for a stricter interpretation of Article 170.2 TFEU to better answer islands and peripheral regions’ connectivity needs and further EU support in the transition towards climate-neutral transport, while taking into consideration the case of islands and outermost regions that benefit from a limited range of motion modes to ensure their connectivity.
In 2021, the Islands Commission contributed to a study on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the outermost regions. Carried out on behalf of the European Commission DG REGIO, the study provides a preliminary socio-economic analysis of the impact of the crisis on key economic sectors, labour market, healthcare, and society in outermost regions. Based on this analysis, the publication provides key recommendations for a sustainable recovery in the outermost regions. In this respect, the CPMR Islands Commission made sure the recommendations from IC members were properly considered.

The IC also supported Ecorys in the finalisation and publication of the Regions’ factsheets, each one presenting an overview of the socio-economic impact of the pandemic and identifying key orientations and proposals to address these specific issues encountered in each Outermost Region. Factsheets are available in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese.
November

Statutory meeting

4  Plenary Meeting of the Islands Commission (Palma and online)

Chaired by Francina Armengol I Socías, President of the CPMR Islands Commission, the Plenary meeting welcomed MEP Younous Omarjee, President of the REGI Committee of the European Parliament, to discuss the contribution of the Islands Commission and its members to the INI Report on Islands and Cohesion. Both stressed the crucial importance of this report to pave the way toward a real strategy for islands in the European Union and underlined the need for European institutions to properly consider the specificities of islands in all EU policies. The Islands Commission will keep advocating for the insular dimension to be considered in the implementation of the National Recovery and Resilience Plans. It was also the occasion to welcome the new Executive Secretary of the Islands Commission, Claudia Guzzon.

5  Balearic Islands event on the Conference on the Future of Europe (Palma and online)

The Balearic Islands hosted several events in the framework of the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE) focusing on Mediterranean islands and the European Union. A side event of the CoFoE was organised back-to-back with the IC Plenary Meeting in Palma in November. Claudia Guzzon, Executive Secretary of the Islands Commission, Antoni VICENS VICENS, General Director for External Relations of the Balearic Islands Government and MEP Younous Omarjee discussed the main challenges for insular territories to be considered in the EU debate and reiterated the necessity of the full application of Art.174 of the TFEU for MED islands for their recovery. MEP Omarjee also emphasised the central role of islands in international negotiations concerning climate change, which were taking place simultaneously at the COP26 in Glasgow.

16-17  Second MAESHA consortium meeting (online)

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

MAESHA organised its second Consortium Meeting on November 16 and 17. Partners gathered online to review the progress of activities of the past year and envisage the upcoming steps. Notably, Hudara presented the local energy community and market ecosystem assessment of Mayotte. The Islands Commission presented its work in the energy transition and climate fields to discuss potential synergies with other relevant activities.
**December**

9

**Workshop “Shaping the best competitive ports in EU islands” with the support of the CPMR Atlantic Arc Commission (online)**

The CPMR Atlantic Arc (AAC) and Islands Commissions organised a workshop to discuss the challenges and future opportunities of the diversification and modernisation of island ports. Elise Wattrelot, AAC Executive Secretary, presented the Atlantic Smart Ports Blue Acceleration Network (AspBAN), a European Maritime and Fisheries-funded project acting across the Atlantic, creating opportunities for ports beyond their current activities and become active ecosystems enabling the development of blue and sustainable businesses. Islands Commission members participated in this debate, presenting key insights on their regional perspectives in relation to the readiness of ports to boost Blue Economy start-ups and the modernisation of related infrastructures.

Following the event, an informative note “AspBAN Project: How can the AspBAN vision be replicated in Islands?” was published in April 2022, which aimed to provide elements and avenues of reflection allowing the replication of the project’s key measures in island ports.

10

**High-level Conference on Costs of Insularity organised by Sicily (Rome and online)**

The conference, organised by the Sicilian Regional Government in Rome, welcomed the President of the Committee of the Regions, Apostolos Tzitzikostas, representatives of insular authorities, and members of the Islands Commission -Azores, Balearic Islands, Sicily and Sardinia- to discuss the additional costs linked to insularity. Several representatives from Universities and Research Centres presented relevant data results on the costs of insularity. They discussed how these costs should be acknowledged and integrated into multi-level policy making.

On behalf of the Presidency of the Islands Commission, Rosario SÁNCHEZ GRAU, Minister for Finance and Exterior Affairs of the Balearic Islands, highlighted the crucial role of the INI report on Islands and Cohesion to move toward a thorough application of Art. 174 of the TFEU. She stressed the opportunity of the coming Swedish and Spanish presidencies of the Council of the EU to support the IC members’ request for a specific EU strategy for islands.
The Islands Commission published a technical note entitled **COVID-19 impacts on the tourism sector in EU islands: What future for the EU tourism governance?**

The note gathers data on the impact of the pandemic on the tourism sector in island regions, as one of the hardest-hit sectors and territories, examples of recovery measures, as well as reflections and recommendations on the governance of tourism at EU level and how it should evolve to better support island territories for a successful, inclusive and sustainable recovery of the sector.

In the framework of the **MED Sustainable Tourism Days** from 14 to 17 December, different Interreg MED projects and Euro-Mediterranean actors gathered to contribute to a smart and green recovery of the tourism sector, including DestiMED PLUS, in which the Islands Commission is highly involved. On December 15, the **Inter-Mediterranean Commission (CPMR-IMC) Task Force on “Culture & Sustainable Tourism”** presented existing efficient tools addressing evidence-based sustainable tourism planning, tourism stakeholder’s empowerment, ecotourism development in Protected Areas and cycling tourism development at transnational level. The Task Force meeting was also the opportunity to gather insightful feedback from CPMR members, including Islands Commission Member Regions.
January

1 Launch of the Programme of Exchanges on climate change adaptation in EU Outermost Regions

Following the first study on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the outermost regions, Ecorys, CPMR and CEDRU were selected by the European Commission DG REGIO for a second service contract request. This new contract consists of a Programme of exchanges on best practices and solutions to common challenges for climate change adaptation in Outermost Regions (ORs) and their neighbouring countries, with the objectives:

- To provide an analysis of existing initiatives on the ORs on climate change adaptation;
- To organise workshops for the exchange of good practices and solutions;
- To provide a compendium of good practices and solutions on climate change adaptation in ORs.

This programme will last up to summer 2023. The Islands Commission will support ECORYS by ensuring the involvement of French-speaking stakeholders in contact with the French Outermost Regions members.

25 CPMR Transport Working Group meeting on TEN-T (online)

Rui COUTINHO, Regional Director for Air and Maritime Transports of the Azores Government, represented the Islands Commission in the CPMR Transport Working Group meeting on the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), with a presentation that focused on the importance of islands’ connectivity. He emphasised the need for TEN-T regulations to consider the concrete needs of remote, small or ultra-peripheral regions and to facilitate financial opportunities to allow islands to become pilots for sustainability in Europe. In this context, the CPMR drafted a technical note that analyses, from a regional point of view, the principal updates on the TEN-T Regulation revision published by the European Commission on 14 December 2021.

31 Submission of two project proposals to Horizon Europe

As part of the Horizon Europe Programme, the Islands Commission participated in the submission of the two project proposals, for which the evaluation process should conclude this summer:

- **TwinSolar** is a project improving research and innovation to reach a massive integration of solar renewables. The Islands Commission would support the communication/dissemination of activities towards EU islands, and develop synergies with key actors to promote the replication of results.
- **NEB174** is a project on social innovation and transformation of EU’s Art 174 territories. The proposed action’s overall objective is to address the demographic challenges related to climate change, and build more sustainable and inclusive future ways of living by deploying, through domesticity networks, lighthouse demonstrators that can trigger a territorial transformative process.
February

11 One Ocean Summit’s Coastal Regions’ Forum “200 million users of the sea” (Brest/online)

The Coastal Regions’ Forum was hosted by the CPMR and Brittany Region in the framework of the One Planet Summit for the Ocean and took place in Brest (Brittany, France) under the patronage of the French Presidency of the European Union, following the Political Summit held during the morning of February 11, 2022.

It counted with the participation of IC members - Sicily, La Réunion, Saint Martin, French Polynesia, Guadeloupe- in the roundtable discussion “Financing sustainable blue economy in EU peripheral maritime regions”.

23 IC Political Bureau meeting (online)

The Islands Commission Political Bureau met for the first time online to discuss its political priorities and key actions. Rosario SANCHEZ GRAU, Regional Minister for Finance and External Relations of the Balearic Islands Government, recalled that the IC actively participates in the discussions concerning the development of the European strategy for Islands. Claudia Guzzon, Executive Secretary of the Islands Commission, and Antoni VICENS VICENS, Director General of External Relations of the Balearic Government, presented the roadmap and a first draft of the Action Plan guiding the activities of the Islands Commission in the coming months.

28 SEArica Event on Fit for 55 Package (online)

As announced during the December 2021 SEArica event “Towards a Maritime Sector Fit for 55”, the SEArica Intergroup co-organised with the CPMR a follow-up session on the Fit for 55 package. The event counted with the participation of the SEArica Vice-Chair for Outermost Regions Claudia Monteiro de Aguiar and, among others, the Balearic Islands, represented by Antoni Vicens Vicens. The second session focused on the state of negotiation of the Social Climate Fund, and its expected socio-economic consequences on coastal and peripheral territories. The third session concerned ReFuelEU aviation and its expected impact and implications for islands territories, which depend on aviation for access and connectivity. For further information access the recorded event.
March 12

After the pandemic, the first in-person meeting of the CPMR Political Bureau was held in Barcelona in March 2022. Several members of the Islands Commission intervened in the different debates to underline the islands’ perspective. Rosario Sánchez Grau, Minister for Finance and Exterior Affairs of the Balearic Islands, representing the IC presidency, reiterated the need for a specific EU Strategy during the Cohesion-focused session. Jesper Skalberg, Deputy Mayor and first Vice-Chair of the Regional Executive Board of Gotland highlighted Gotland’s potential to expand its production of renewables and fossil-free energy. With respect to the CPMR Membership strategy, Antoni Vicens Vicens, Director General for External relations of the Balearic Islands, emphasised the need for all geographical commissions to consider the role of islands in the different policy areas to allow the deployment of a specific European strategy.

All CPMR member regions showed their support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine by adopting a dedicated statement at the meeting.
April 4 The Islands Commission joined the Celebrate Islands initiative

In April 2022, the CPMR Islands Commission joined the Celebrate Islands initiative as an official partner. Highlighting the sustainable initiatives led on small islands and the insular stakeholders, Celebrate Islands is an annual event co-organised by the Conservatoire du littoral and the NGOs PIM and SMILo since 2014 and represents an occasion to put forward the work of the Islands Commission, and to support the creation and recognition of an International Islands Day (May 18).

The 9th edition of Celebrate Islands (11 to 18 May 2022) aims to celebrate island ecosystems and the actors who act for their preservation by promoting initiatives carried out around the world.

5 Webinar “A contribution from Europe’s islands to the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE)” (online)

The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the CPMR Islands Commission co-organised a webinar focusing on European islands’ contribution to the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFoE), on behalf of a wide interregional island initiative led by Sardinia Region, and in the framework of the #CohesionAlliance. On this occasion, regional leaders of European islands, including Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), focused on the need for a long-term strategy for EU Islands to reduce regional disparities.

A short report of the event can be found on the website of the CoFoE.

28 SEArica Conference on Islands & Cohesion Policy

Hosted by MEP François Alfonsi, SEArica Vice-Chair for Islands, the webinar brought together the main supporters of the INI report within the EP and insular regions to provide insightful contributions and discuss the follow-up of the report. Several members of the Islands Commission intervened, including Rosario Sanchez Grau (Balearic Islands – IC Presidency), Gaetano Armoo (Sicily), Nanette Maupertuis (Corsica), Christian Solinas (Sardegna) and Jesper Skalberg Karlsson (Gotland). A recording of the event is available.
Upcoming Activities

May 11-18, 2022: Celebrate Islands’ Week

May 23, 2022: INSULEUR Workshop on Cohesion Policy and Entrepreneurship in Islands in partnership with the EESC and ESIN, Brussels (Belgium)

May 31, 2022: WINTER MED final project and capitalisation event - Rhodes (Greece)/online

June 16, 2022: CPMR Political Bureau meeting, Helsingborg - Skåne Region (Sweden)

June 20-21, 2022: DestiMED PLUS project’s final event, Rome (Italy)

September 15-16, 2022: online workshops for the Caribbean basin (ECORYS/DG REGIO)

September 26-30, 2022: European Sustainable Energy Week, online/Brussels (Belgium)

October 5-6, 2022: online workshops for the Indian Ocean basin (ECORYS/DG REGIO)

October 10-13, 2022: 20th European Week of Regions and Cities, Brussels (Belgium)

October 27-28, 2022: CPMR General Assembly and Islands Commission Plenary Meeting, Crete (Greece)
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