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CPMR speech at the SEArca Blue Economy Conference: A blue dimension to the Green Deal - The way towards a sustainable recovery of the blue economy in Europe

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- Representatives of the Commission, honourable Members of the European Parliament, dear participants and friends of Maritime Europe. It is with great pleasure that today I represent the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions and its 150 member Regions.
- The main topic of today's SEArca event is at the core of our business as maritime and peripheral regions. Let me be blunt: There has not been a better time to put the 'sustainable blue economy' right at the heart of the EU project!
- Think of the maritime investments that will need to be made in the next ten years to realise the ambition of the Green deal, the new skills requirements to see this through, and the territories that depend on it. This is my understanding of what 'sustainable blue economy' means. I just want to cover two issues briefly, which were raised as part of our contribution to the European Commission's consultation on the topic last December.
- **My first message relates to the key role that regions play in Europe's recovery efforts for the blue economy.** As EU policies supported by the new multiannual financial framework 2021-2027 are being implemented on the ground, it is important to recall the vital role that regions will be playing to implement the EU strategy for the Blue Economy on their territories. Regions are full partners in the European recovery strategy because they have the competences, they have already been delivering investment projects by means of the European structural and investment funds, and they are the democratically accountable actors in Europe's territories. So, let us be clear. There will be no recovery or sustainable blue economy without the full and meaningful involvement of regions, not just as another stakeholder but as a full credible partner.
- To see this through, it is, therefore, essential to envisage a different governance model of the Recovery and Resilience Facility and 'REACT-EU'. It is indeed crucial to ensure that regions are in the driving seat when it comes to identifying needs and guide investments where they can add most value, including towards the blue economy.



Regions know best their territorial needs and assets to bring long term investments and much needed recovery to the citizens of Europe.

- It will be important that EU investment policies are fit-for-purpose in being able to support the maritime economy. To give you a specific example, the **Roadmap**¹ identifies “rapid change” as a challenge to be tackled, notably including the new skills requirements. It is, therefore, necessary to explore how existing funds, such as the European Social Fund can be better integrated to support maritime skills. You have in front of you a former sailor so let me convey to you the importance and the urgency needed to address youth unemployment and reskilling or upskilling individuals for the maritime professions, traditional and emerging ones. The new generation is who we should aim to prepare so that investments and recovery have a meaningful purpose for Europe’s future and prosperity.
- Let us also not forget the pivotal role Regions play in interconnecting value chains to respond to the challenges of specific sectors. For instance, regions often play the role of connecting hubs between shipyard companies, ports and the marine renewable sector. They can, I believe use this facilitating function among the various sectors as a driver to deliver the success suggested by the European Commission’s Communication on the sustainable blue economy.
- Finally, I would like to stress the crucial role that islands regions could play as laboratories for innovative sustainable solutions for emerging blue sectors in terms of decarbonization, circular economy and marine renewable energies. CPMR represents all maritime territories including islands, urban or rural regions so we are able to intervene on land and sea boosting sustainable blue economy across Europe.
- **My second message is linked to my first one and refers to regional action in making the European Green Deal a reality, particularly when it comes to its maritime and oceans dimensions.**
- The Covid-19 crisis has shown us how hard our lives can be hit, when we ignore science for too long. The climate crisis is already a reality and urgent action is needed. Maritime and coastal regions deal with the effects of climate change daily. For us it is not a question of “what to do if”, it is rather a regular struggle to manage the disastrous effects of climate change on our costs. We, therefore, have great interest in setting and implementing ambitious sustainability and climate action targets starting ...yesterday.
- Starting yesterday, because maritime regions already deal with plastic pollution, declining fish stocks and biodiversity loss. They use their partnership with the larger maritime community to develop initiatives to tackle these challenges. As you know, the CPMR President currently is a Dutch so we do have some useful suggestions to make when it comes to managing water and keeping territories above it.

¹ [Maritime sector – a green post-COVID future \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/european-council/en/maritime-sector-a-green-post-covid-future)



- The CPMR therefore welcomes the new European Commission approach to promote a sustainable blue economy in the EU, especially in these times of crisis. Representing maritime regions, I can ensure you that we will contribute to implement this new approach by playing our central role in developing dynamic blue economy ecosystems, facilitating the creation of clusters, contributing to the Green Deal objectives.
- In this regard, I am pleased to announce that CPMR will soon publish the initial results of its 'Regions Act!' initiative, which shows the breadth of actions undertaken by maritime and peripheral regions ready and anxious to deliver the ambitions of the Green Deal on the ground. CPMR does not just deliver messages. It delivers actions and concrete proposals.
- Ladies and gentlemen, dear Commissioner, please rest assured that the CPMR and its Member Regions are key partners in this revitalized strategy for the Blue Economy! Count us in and we will be present and active towards this fundamental endeavour. Do count us however, as full partners and not as some cosmetic additions to consultations. Please remember. Regions are not just another stakeholder. We are partners in our own right in this journey towards sustainable recovery in Europe.
- Thank you for your attention.



The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) represents more than 150 regional authorities from 24 countries across Europe and beyond. Organised in Geographical Commissions, the CPMR works to ensure that a balanced territorial development is at the heart of the European Union and its policies.

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