

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

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

George Alexakis - CPMR Vice-President

- Ladies and Gentlemen, dear President, dear colleagues. It gives me great pleasure to be here today as Vice-President of the CPMR responsible for Maritime Affairs.
- I would like to spend the next few minutes to recall some of the CPMR messages relating to the consultation on the sustainable blue economy, building on what Mr. Cees Loggen said earlier and in line with contributions from speakers who took the floor earlier today.
- As we have heard already today, European policies concerning blue economy are numerous. They include policies in the areas of competition, trade, research and innovation, energy and climate, cohesion, training, and access to finance.
- The CPMR welcomes the European Commission's willingness to fight compartmentalization and to define a common policy framework for the maritime economy. As we are gathered today to talk about the future of our maritime sectors, I must stress that a key issue to address is their attractiveness. We must address training and knowledge gaps and attract new workers, avoid social dumping, innovate for more sustainability and competitiveness so that the maritime sector gets a bright future.
- The CPMR calls on the EC to develop a holistic policy framework that embraces the interconnection of value chains in blue economy sectors. Traditional shipbuilding industries are indeed sources of skills and infrastructures that are essential for the development of marine energies. **In short: we call for a holistic approach to the blue economy and maritime industries!**
- Secondly, the future Blue Economy Strategy is an opportunity for Europe to assert itself as a global leader on the decarbonisation of the maritime economy, including maritime transport. It should support European interests via appropriate state aid and competition rules. Maritime industries have major challenges ahead which also represent enormous opportunities for the contribution of the blue economy to climate mitigation, such as renewable marine energies and offshore energies. Let us not overlook, therefore, the importance of marine industries in terms of industrial employment in European regions, and of the development of emerging and strategic sectors.



- Finally, I would like to stress the need for investments and innovation in two traditional yet sometimes overseen sectors of the blue economy: tourism and fisheries. Fisheries and aquaculture - challenged by the current COVID-19 crisis, climate change, and Brexit - should be integrated in the new blue economy strategy. These challenges hamper the attractiveness of the fishing sector and lower employment in coastal regions. This social dimension should be considered both within the new approach for a sustainable blue economy and in the revision of the Common Fisheries Policy in 2022. In that regard, the European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund should better support life on board and the modernisation of boats to attract young generations of fishermen. The transition towards a sustainable blue economy should foster investments in human capital as the different sectors require skilled workforce.
- Maritime and Coastal tourism have also been severely struck by the Covid-19 crisis and cannot seem to see the light at the end of the tunnel. This is particularly true in my home region of Crete! The new blue economy approach should provide adequate support to enable a sustainable, safe maritime and coastal tourism. The Covid-19 “start over” effect must trigger structural changes tied to sustainability needs and outcomes, and facilitate the shift from high-volume, low-value tourism to other forms of sustainable and cultural tourism, promoting the co-evolution of human activities and natural systems. We also propose to align the new strategy with the 13 guiding principles for the future of tourism, proposed by hundreds of organisations in the sector, which, I am sure, we will hear more about in this panel. When developing these strategies, we should always envisage appropriate coordination mechanisms with Neighbourhood countries, as most of tourism and climate related challenges have no boundaries.
- I would like to thank the European Commission (DG MARE) and the President of the SEArca Intergroup, Tonino Picula, for organising this event. Please count the CPMR as your ally to realise the ambition of the sustainable blue economy strategy!



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.



Rond-Point Schuman | 1040 Brussels, BELGIUM
info@crpm.org | +32 (0)2 612 17 00

6, Rue Saint-Martin | 35700 Rennes, FRANCE
(siège) info@crpm.org | +33 (0)2 99 35 40 50