



Minutes of the Intermediterranean Commission General Assembly

3 July 2015 – Nafplio (Greece)

The President of the Peloponnese Region, **Petros Tatoulis**, welcomed the participants and thanked them for coming despite the difficult circumstances imposed by the current situation. He expressed regret that some were unable to come but expressed confidence that this meeting would be an opportunity to discuss the key issues facing European coastal regions in terms of territorial cohesion and regional development. **Petros Tatoulis** also congratulated the Intermediterranean Commission for their work, of which he is kept regularly informed, including, for example, the issue of transition regions, youth policy and anything related to macro-regional strategies. He concluded by highlighting the importance of all these development policies which will enable the Mediterranean to find its balance in a challenging environment.

Gunn Marit Helgesen, 1st Vice-President of the CPMR and Regional Councillor of Telemark Fylkeskommune (Norway) recalled the many challenges now facing the Mediterranean and the particular situation in Greece. She referred to the many themes of the work being jointly carried out by the Intermediterranean Commission and the CPMR, including the campaign launched by Michel Vauzelle "We are all Mediterranean!" which integrates directly into the work of the CPMR's Task Force on migration. She concluded by encouraging all the Mediterranean Regions to keep fostering the positive match with CPMR's core priorities as it can ensure the success of the CPMR activities as a whole. This is what guarantees relevant action in the long run.

After welcoming all the participants, **Georges Alexakis**, Vice-President of the CPMR for Greece and Regional Councillor for Crete in charge of European and International Affairs, explained that the voice of the Peloponnese and, more generally, the Mediterranean Regions is being well-heard in the CPMR and in the European regions. He recalled the context of the Mediterranean regions in Spain, Italy, or on the southern shore, and, of course, in Greece on the road to the shared European project. **Georges Alexakis** reviewed the objectives and work of the CPMR and the Intermediterranean Commission to protect the interests of the different member regions. He focused on the role of these bodies in various EU policies, such as the regional and cohesion policy, the maritime policy or the issue of macro-regional strategies.

After thanking the various speakers, **Michel Vauzelle**, President of the Intermediterranean Commission and the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region declared the approval of the conclusions of the plenary of Umeå in September 2014 (developed within the framework of the General Assembly of the CPMR) that were distributed a few weeks after the meeting held by the Secretariat.

Michel Vauzelle assessed the geopolitical situation in the Mediterranean and called for increasing discussions in order to find solutions to the various challenges in this area. As Peripheral regions, we have legitimacy to give our point of view because the populations in our regions are suffering, and we are direct neighbours to conflict zones. The question of migration is therefore of primary concern to us, and, as part of the "We are all Mediterranean" campaign, the Intermediterranean Commission has begun a consultation process and a series of actions in order to find a global response to the concrete problems being faced by our different communities. He therefore called for both a political and technical consideration of these issues and concluded with the idea that any temptations to fall back into this crisis situation must be avoided.

Towards a strengthened regional cooperation in the Mediterranean: socioeconomic, territorial and maritime socio-economic cohesion issues

Migrations, citizenship, cultural and interreligious dialogue

Apostolos Papafotiou, Regional Councillor of the Peloponnese Region, presented the experience he has of his region and recalled the transit position occupied by the Peloponnese which is at the crossroads of several continents bound for a range of different European countries. He also talked about the historical migration that Greece has faced in its past, as well as the tolerance of the Greek people, even though he also remarked upon the growing tensions related to the current crisis, both for Greece and for the individual countries from which the migrants come. Faced with these growing migratory movements, **Apostolos Papafotiou** also referred to the need for Greece to organise a migration policy and clarified that, in this context, an administrative process has already been put in place for asylum seekers. He called for an integrated migration policy in Europe and recalled that, for the moment, the Regions have no legal powers on this issue, although they are on the front line for the resolution of safety and health issues, etc. He concluded with an appeal for European solidarity and greater judicial cooperation between the different countries.

Nicolas Brookes, CPMR Director, read out the [speech of Hatem Atallah](#), Executive Director of the Anna Lindh Foundation, who in the end was not able to be in attendance in Nafplio.

Davide Strangis, Executive Secretary of the Intermediterranean Commission, in turn passed on the [message from the Toscana Region](#).

Stefano Rimini, Advisor to the Vice-Presidency of the Emilia Romagna Region, wanted to return to the European dimension of the migration issue. Given the urgency of the situation, he stressed the need for concrete responses to be set by the Regions, but also by all the EU states which have to face up to their responsibilities. Faced with the arrival of these migrants, there is no alternative. We must welcome them but with the dignity and respect of fundamental rights, which we are finding more and more difficult to guarantee. Emilia-Romagna is thus the first Italian region to have established a regional visitor centre, with a system that helps ensure the care of migrants, with a minimum level of health and social services.

Alfonso Garrido Ávila, delegated to action outside the Andalucía Region, recalled the moral commitment that symbolises the presence of the Regions of the Intermediterranean Commission in Nafplio. He emphasised the fact that Regions are being faced directly with the humanitarian aspect of the migration crisis. The local impact is very strong, all the more so given that migratory movements are increasing all the time. **Alfonso Garrido Ávila** also referred to earlier migration where the Andalusian, like the Spanish, also found themselves faced with the need to leave their country, hence a special sensitivity about the issue. He also talked about the establishment of an education plan for immigrants, with a specific budget and in spite of the crisis in the region. Lastly he concluded with the importance of cooperation for increasing the creation of links with the sole purpose of integrating people.

Mercedes Gallego, from the Directorate General of Institutional Relations and External Action in the Region of Murcia, talked about the findings of a seminar organised by her Region as part of the 4th Committee of the Regions Committee on decentralised cooperation. She recalled the change in approach required for the consideration of migrants in terms of human rights and participation in economic and social development. She also stressed the importance of greater European Commission collaboration with local and regional authorities, both in the host countries and the countries of origin, in order to establish appropriate development policies.

Petros Tatoulis welcomed the contributions made and the basic principles, such as solidarity, that were recalled and which are necessary in order to manage the crises we are experiencing today. He talked about the common currency which, according to him, is not limited to monetary policy issues but also calls for shared values in the broadest sense. The migration crisis, the issue of migrants and refugees require therefore a genuine common policy and call for a more comprehensive reflection necessary for democracy to be maintained in Europe. **Petros Tatoulis** asked that the EU Mediterranean countries be clearly helped because they are being directly faced with problems related to the actual hosting of migrants but also to the fight against all forms of trafficking that these population movements imply.

Michel Vauzelle concluded the session by recalling that it is often the poorest EU countries that offer their solidarity to welcome the migrants. He confirmed the importance of the fight against the mafia organisations that profit from these distressed people and called for a genuine single policy from Europe on the subject. He also referred to the importance of political dialogue with the countries of origin and the role of the media which do not sufficiently highlight the moral and ethical actions that aim to find positive solutions. **Michel Vauzelle** ended with the question of social racism which is also growing in Europe and against which action must be taken.

Entrepreneurship, social and solidarity economy and diaspora

Mohamed Sadiki, Vice-President of the Inter-Mediterranean-Commission and from the Regional Council of Rabat-Salé-Zemmour-Zaer, spoke via video conference to introduce the session: [Address by Mohamed Sadiki](#)

Roderick Egal, President of iesMed SCEL and co-founder of the MedESS process, gave a presentation ([Presentation by Roderick Egal](#)) on the social economy, a theme he considers fundamental to the economic development of the Mediterranean regions. He recalled the Tunis process for a united commitment and insisted on the quest for an economy where people are involved in the work and administration of companies with the aim of job creation and the implementation of projects with a direct impact for these people. The social economy or the economy of citizens represents a way of approaching the economy and contributing to overall development. He recalled that SMEs have ideas, knowledge and expertise but they lack resources, and they also need to talk with each other and share experiences. iesMed is an organisation that therefore proposes a list of tools and tips for entrepreneurship with the objective of establishing a Mediterranean ecosystem for a social and solidarity economy in a range of sectors. **Roderick Egal** concluded by calling on the Regions to cooperate in this regard.

Alfonso Garrido Ávila recalled the links and closeness that already exist between Andalusia and Morocco, and pointed out that all the opportunities need to be assessed in order to implement this collaborative mechanism.

Employment, training and mobility for youth in the Mediterranean

Stefano Rimini, Political Advisor of the Emilia-Romagna region, presents the situation in his Region, which unfortunately has a very high unemployment rate among young people, with a resulting lack of future prospects for this part of the population. This is characteristic of all the regions of southern Europe, a characteristic that isn't changing despite efforts and initiatives, including European ones. As a result, many young people find themselves in situations of social exclusion or poverty. This sometimes has dramatic consequences that lead some of them to crime or even networks linked to terrorism. Employment, education and training are extremely important issues that deserve the greatest resolve to facilitate the social inclusion of young people. In this context, the region of Emilia-Romagna has set up a system to create synergies between businesses, universities and government entities in order to facilitate youth employment, particularly in SMEs.

Emmanuelle Gardan, Programme Director at the Union for the Mediterranean, gave a [presentation](#) via video conference on the situation of young people in the Mediterranean. She recalled that young people, especially those under 25, are strongly affected by the economic crisis, with unemployment rates close to 30% for that part of the population. These figures are mainly due to the low level of skills of these young people but also to the incompatibility of their qualifications, including those from universities, with the requirements of the employment market. **Emmanuelle Gardan** also discussed the question of mobility and recalled the initiatives and UfM projects in favour of youth employment in the Mediterranean to promote their integration into the employment market.

A member of the Peloponnese regional council raised the question of unemployment among women on the southern shores of the Mediterranean. They are much more affected by unemployment than men. He also stated that youth unemployment is not uniquely linked to the issue of training, but also to job creation issues. Large companies can offer solutions, but it is less simple for SMEs. He questioned the local action being taken by the Regions in this field.

Apostolos Papafotiou recalled the situation of youth unemployment in Greece, where unemployment rates have risen to 50%. He questioned the real capacity of these projects to reverse the trend. He called for a strong change in society to take advantage of public capital in partnership with the private sector and believes that a strong message must be sent to society so that everyone, young or old, can become a driver for growth.

The Vice-President of the Peloponnese Region for education and employment issues shared his experience as both an entrepreneur and as a politician. He recalled that today most young people are studying, but expressed regret that insufficient importance is afforded to technical jobs. Of course, automation is responsible for this, but perhaps we have also placed too much emphasis on academic qualifications. According to him, we must return to a combination of employment and production, employment and growth in order to create real jobs and open up more opportunities for our youth.

Another member of the Peloponnese Regional Council recalled that unemployment is a key topic in the current situation of Greece, and even more so when it concerns young people who are the future of our country. But he called for a different approach to the problem, for example via the creation of a fund that seeks to encourage entrepreneurial initiatives and SMEs. He therefore discussed a fund distribution system in sectors that Regions themselves could identify as having the greatest potential for growth.

Michel Vauzelle thanked the various speakers and recalled the importance of maintaining balance in communication. Citizens need to be notified, not just of alarmist or pessimistic messages, but also of positive information about actions undertaken in their favour and that deliver results. This is a crucial point for democracy.

Alfonso Garrido Ávila discussed the Juncker Plan and the question of real policy and fictional policy, and wondered about the best formula for the Regions.

A member of the Peloponnese Regional Council supported the point of view of Andalusia. The Juncker Plan provides funding for projects that meet the bureaucratic requirements of Brussels. And he/she wondered what reactions the regions should have in order to face this situation.

Anne Valat, Head of the "[Mediterranean Shared History Textbook](#)" a project of the Villa Méditerranée, presented the draft. She explained the central idea of the project which is to complement the academic content offered to students through a variety of sources. She talked about the next meetings with the ministers of education in a number of countries on the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean, with the aim of integrating this new teaching material into the educational programmes of these countries.

Given the differences in viewpoints in the ministries of the various countries concerned and the rather centralist positions of some of them, a member of the Peloponnese Regional Council wanted to know the key argument to employ to convince the various parties to use this manual. She also gave an alternative for the wider distribution of this manual through blogs, for example, in order to reach more young people more widely.

Apostolos Papafotiou commented on the concept of time in relation to education issues and on the question of the variety of the populations living together in the Mediterranean basin: two important elements to consider for any message, particularly in relation to historical issues.

Michel Vauzelle summarised these issues specific to questions of information and explained the need for more emphasis on commonalities rather than differences, on the notion of Mediterranean solidarity. This manual therefore has a role to play to bring the Mediterranean people together.

Macro-regional and Sea Basin Strategies in the Mediterranean

As a contribution to the debate on strategies (macro-regional, Mediterranean basin) emerging in the Mediterranean, **Lucien Chabasson**, President of the Blue Plan for the Mediterranean, gave a [presentation](#) recalling the variety of issues in the Mediterranean and the basis of Mediterranean dialogue that led to the development of a sustainable development strategy in this domain. The blue plan is the practical application of this global strategy. The objectives will be achieved through shared objectives, strong stakeholder investment, cooperation, solidarity and participatory governance. He recalled all the human activities involved in this strategy, particularly the six themes related to the Mediterranean: the sea and coastline, natural resources/rural development and food, sustainable cities, climate change, green economy and governance.

Apostolos Papafotiou referred to the Gulf of Corinth, to its particular configuration, and to the specific changes that affect it in the context of climate change. Climate change causes an acceleration of a set of natural phenomena and a response to these new configurations needs to be found urgently. A report will be drawn up in order to find an answer to these problems in the long term.

Georges Alexakis, Vice-President of the CPMR and Regional Councillor for Crete in charge of European and international affairs, gave a brief reminder of the strategies already in place on other basins (Danube, Baltic), in the Adriatic-Ionian region on and the work completed, as well as the prospects for the Mediterranean, which will be looked at in more depth at future meetings, given that the agenda has something of a backlog.

Jean-Claude Gayssot, special delegate for the support of macro-regional strategies and the sea basin in the Mediterranean, First Vice President of the Languedoc-Roussillon Region, spoke via video conference. He gave a reminder of the general crisis affecting the whole of the Mediterranean and called for a single European strategy with clear and realistic priorities to respond to all the current challenges. He emphasised the value of a macro-regional strategy in this field to find solutions that are as close as possible to citizens and therefore obtain support from the largest number of people in order to enhance the potential of the Mediterranean. He called on the EU to look to the Mediterranean and validate this strategy in order to initiate an integrated policy in the Mediterranean area.

Davide Strangis gave a brief reminder of the main news and the recent and future work of the Intermediterranean Commission on emerging strategies (prospects for a future maritime policy for the Western Med, consultations, SEARICA Intergroup, working groups, MarInA-Med, etc.).

Approval of political messages and internal questions

The Intermediterranean Commission General Assembly approved the [Final Declaration of Nafplio](#), which gathers the core themes debated during the General Assembly with a strong emphasis on the need for peace, dialogue and development, and for more solidarity on both migration issues and the situation of Greece. The Declaration also deals with the review of the Neighbourhood Policy South, the future of the cohesion policy, maritime affairs & transport, as well as with other complementary issues as climate change.

The Intermediterranean Commission General Assembly also ratified the following documents:

- The [Joint Declaration on Climate](#) with the Mediterranean Commission of UCLG;
- The http://www.medregions.com/pub/doc_travail/cles/11_en.pdf
- [Policy position on the Water Framework Directive](#) and the Mediterranean Regions;
- The [Policy position on the migration policy](#) and the challenges of managing the mobility of people in the Mediterranean;
- And the [position paper on the revision of European Policy on Neighbourhood](#) (ENP), [a joint complete response](#) of the CPMR Intermediterranean and Balkan & Black Sea Commissions that capitalises all previous reflections of the network in an integrated way and is based on fresh new contributions of the Intermediterranean Commission Regions.

The Intermediterranean Commission also approved the [Final Policy Paper of COM&CAP MarInA-Med](#) and its political messages on a Maritime Integrated approach, which is the result of one year of joint works of the 14 Maritime Projects of the MED transnational cooperation programme. The action involved several Intermediterranean Commission members in 8 COM&CAP thematic events including in the kick-off, mid-term and final conferences. The document was widely distributed to the key stakeholders affected and will form the basis for a change in the territorial and European policies as well as a basis for future projects in the Mediterranean.

Furthermore, the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission approved and signed a **Memorandum of Understanding** with the [Centre for Mediterranean Integration of the World Bank](#). The agreement will promote a multilevel governance and multi-stakeholder coordination in the Mediterranean basin, as well as a more effective dialogue in areas such as the exchange of experiences, the transfer of best practices, and the creation of a Mediterranean knowledge-based community.

In addition, the Intermediterranean Commission's [2014-2016 action plan](#), discussed at the last Political Bureau in Marseilles, was also ratified. It aims to promote the development of an integrated macro-regional strategy in the Mediterranean by the development of a project-based Mediterranean, the mobilisation of partners from the southern shore and the emergence of a Mediterranean citizenship. Finally, following a brief presentation by the co-presidencies and the Secretariat of the Intermediterranean Commission, the [action plans of four new working groups](#) of the Intermediterranean Commission were themselves also ratified (Working Groups on "Territorial cooperation and macro-regional strategies", "Water and Energy", "Transport and Integrated Maritime Policy" and "Economic and social cohesion") with its 8 co-presidencies.

In the [report of activities](#), **Davide Strangis**, Executive Secretary of the Intermediterranean Commission, updated the members on the Intermediterranean Commission's projects, with special attention paid to [COM&CAP MarInA-Med](#), "Vasco da Gama Med" and the strategy for presenting new [projects](#) to the upcoming 2015 calls of the **INTERREG MED Programme** (indicating the possible priority initiatives for the network in the framework of the Specific Objectives: 1 on Blue Growth, 2.1 on Energy Efficiency in Buildings, 3.1 on Tourism, 3.2 on the Environment). With the agreement of the Intermediterranean Commission Political Bureau and the CPMR General Secretary, the Intermediterranean Commission will participate as a partner only in strategic projects aligned with the core political and technical priorities of the network. These projects shall involve possibly more than one Intermediterranean Commission Region or territory and capitalise results of previous CPMR projects. The future actions shall also foresee a specific role for networks and multilevel governance, underlining the transnational dimension of cooperation. Moreover, the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission could also plan to participate in some other relevant initiatives proposed by the Regions and external stakeholders as "associated partner" (without legal or financial liabilities) and foster the research of potential partners for its members on these kinds of projects and other interesting ones that will not imply its direct/formal participation. In this sense, all members were invited to share – as soon as possible – their project proposals among the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission network, which will be pleased to help them in the partner search through its contacts.

The Executive Secretary presented the activities from September 2014 to July 2015. And the General Assembly ended by approving the **financial records** of the Intermediterranean Commission, as well as the **membership** of new Regions: Molise (Italy), Laayoune-Boujdour-Sakia El Hamra (Morocco) and Tirana (Albania).

With regard to the Moroccan Regions, it should be noted that a new territorial organisation is underway that will impact on the participation of Moroccan Regions in the network. Croatian and Tunisian Regions have also been approached with a view to membership.

Lastly, the Executive Secretary informed the participants of the [calendar](#) and the Commission's activities for 2015 and beyond. The next meetings of the decision-making bodies are:

- **Plenary meeting of the Intermediterranea Commission in the framework of the 43th CPMR General Assembly in Florence** (Tuscany-Italy), on 5 November 2015 (NB: the CRPM General Assembly will be held on 4/6 November 2015 - it is important to note that a specific session will be devoted to the question of migration at this General Meeting).
- **Intermediterranea Commission Political Bureau:** on 26 November 2015 (afternoon) in Rabat (Rabat-Salé-Zemmour-Zaer - Morocco). Further seminars on issues of decentralisation and regionalisation are currently being studied. Synergies will be developed with the MED Committee of the UCLG which will hold its Political Council in Rabat.

Note

Despite the complex situation that Greece is experiencing, the latest geopolitical developments at Mediterranean level (including the terroristic attacks in Tunisia), the post-elections phases in Italy and Spain (with the constitution of the new governments), the new territorial organisation and the pre-electoral period in Morocco, several CPMR Med Regions managed to gather in Nafplio for the IMC GA or to participate via video-conference. On the one hand, this allowed the works of the IMC to continue, avoiding the cancellation of an important meeting of the organisation due to external factors. Besides, together with the quality of the debates and enriched by the intervention of external quality speakers, the involvement of the members is to be considered a very positive element and a symbol of the vitality and soundness of the network. On the other hand, the Presidency and all the members physically present in Nafplio stressed that it is very important for the future to ensure a stronger participation at technical and political levels. In particular, for the upcoming Plenary in Tuscany and the next Political Bureau in Rabat, all the members that were not present in Nafplio for various reasons should make an effort to come and participate actively.