



REGION  
OF WESTERN  
GREECE

*full of contrast!*

**Candidacy of the Head of the Region of Western Greece,  
Mr. Apostolos Katsifaras,  
for the presidency of the Intermediterranean Commission (IMC)  
of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR)**

**STATEMENT OF INTENTS FOR THE 2016-2018 MANDATE**

The Mediterranean basin is a large and complex area, with unique features and a past that makes it the cradle of the Western civilization.

Geographically, the Mediterranean is a world in miniature. The Mediterranean is an inland sea whose shores encompass every type of terrain and climate - from wild deserts to fertile plains and from islands and minor seas to high mountains. It is also the crossroad of three (out of five) continents: Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Historically, it has been the meeting place of some of the greatest cultures, the battleground of races and nations, and the focus of three great religions.

Beyond doubt the countries around Mediterranean are bound by water, geography, history and culture, and since ages, these countries see the Mediterranean not only as a common sea with valuable resources, but also as a way of communication, interconnection, trade and cooperation.

Whether viewed historically, geographically, politically, economically, environmentally or socially, the interactions between countries have always been one of the key features of the Mediterranean Basin and the Mediterranean area is of vital strategic importance.

The Intermediterranean Commission (IMC) of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) plays an active, substantial and leading role in the wider region, promoting focus and convergence to the Med area, through active political dialogue, concrete actions, programmes and synergies in all sectors.

In this framework, I am expressing my will to continue the brilliant work done by all previous presidencies of IMC and I am presenting my candidacy for the Presidency of the IMC for 2016-2018, in my capacity as Head of the Region of Western Greece and in close cooperation with my Deputy for European and International Affairs of the Region of Western Greece and my Experts, and with the support of the staff and the services of the Region.

Region of Western Greece is highly linked to the Mediterranean basin and deeply committed to the maritime dimension and macroregional perspective.

From the very first time of its constitution as Regional Administration, in January 2011 (after the major administrative reform in Greece that replaced provincial governance by elected



REGION  
OF WESTERN  
GREECE

*Full of contrast!*

regional governance), Region of Western Greece is an active player in EU level and a strong promoter of the key role of the CPMR and the IMC.

During the 2012-2014 mandate, it held the Vice-Presidency of the IMC and in March 2014 it successfully hosted the meeting of the IMC Political Bureau in Patras.

In the outgoing bureau of the IMC, Region of Western Greece held the role of vice-president and since October 2015 it was the pro tempore representative of IMC to the ARLEM Commission of the Committee of Regions. And it was a strong supporter of all the initiatives brilliantly assumed by the IMC.

All the great work achieved by the previous presidencies of Catalonia and PACA, sets a concrete baseline of challenges and opportunities in which I intent to focus and move on.

In this framework, the main pillars of my candidacy will be:

**Encourage the emergence of sea-basin and macro-regional strategies in the Mediterranean towards an integrated strategy.**

The Mediterranean Sea is a huge resource and a precious asset, binding all countries in this region together. So, there is a strong need for cooperation for socioeconomic sustainable development, resource analysis and assessment, observation, monitoring and controls, as well as for the management of the goods and services and concrete joint flagship projects. In this sense, Macro-regional and Sea-Basin Strategies – developing synergies of funding, stakeholders and policies toward joint actions – constitute consistent instruments that can help all countries and territories to find concrete areas of cooperation and better approach common challenges and opportunities.

Despite the very fragile and still indeterminate situation prevailing in the Mediterranean, the conditions are in place, at least for a significant part of the Sea basin, to move ahead.

A maritime strategy (or initiative) and action plan for the Western Mediterranean - based on the Blue Growth concept and on the environmental challenges that the Sea faces - would promote sustainable economic and social development in the area. Moreover, it could constitute the base for an integrated maritime strategy in the basin (contributing to the implementation of the UfM Ministerial Declaration on Blue Economy).

Concerning Macro-Regional Strategies, an important first step has already been taken with the launch of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), which is based on an EU maritime strategy for the area and could also constitute a pilot or a building block for the rest of the Mediterranean.

Region of Western Greece had a vital role in the creation of the EUSAIR and now participates in the EUSAIR Governing Board, as I hold the presidency of the Adriatic-Ionian Interregional Group of the Committee of the Regions.



REGION  
OF WESTERN  
GREECE

*Full of contrast!*

All this experience will be used to boost a similar approach in the whole Mediterranean, in coherence with the works that have been already carried out by the previous Catalan and PACA presidencies, the results of the common projects developed in the region and the emergent West Mediterranean Maritime initiative.

In this context, the close cooperation with the various institutions and networks related to the area (UfM, ARLEM, UCLG, EESC, CoR, EP, Arco Latino, Med Cities, UNEP, Med Pan, etc.) is a high priority issue.

The cooperation between the Mediterranean regions must be further consolidated with more common actions, projects and initiatives, and in this frame we must focus also on:

- the effective monitoring of the new European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) fostering the involvement of regions. This policy, together with the Union for the Mediterranean, represents the main framework for cooperation between the EU and Southern Mediterranean countries
- the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes (ETC Programmes) operating in the area, such as, for instance, the MED or ADRION Interreg Programmes and the Cross-Border cooperation Programmes as ENI CBC Med.

Our vision for the future in the long term perspective, remains an Integrated Mediterranean Strategy (Macro Region) encompassing the whole basin that shall meet the needs of the regions and the citizens in the area, and enable them to become more competitive, prosperous, safe and environmentally sustainable.

#### **Refugees crisis – More assistance to the Regions and Regions more involved in the decision-making process**

The refugees' crisis has certainly been a wake up call on some key administrative and political issues that were underestimated for too long (border control, asylum process, international cooperation, etc.). But this crisis has a strong humanitarian emergency, that poses a serious challenge, both to the welfare of refugees and of our societies.

So far the EU response is weak and the Mediterranean LRA's are facing this humanitarian crisis all alone, on an ad-hoc basis, and without the necessary resources and means. Moreover, despite their crucial role in confronting the crisis, LRA's are not included in the relevant political dialogue.

On the other hand IMC showed fast reflexes and promoted the creation of the inter-commission Task Force on Migration of CPMR, coordinated by Region of Sicily, with the political reporting to CPMR Buro by Region Skåne.

Based on the excellent work carried out so far by the Migration TF (letter to the Heads of States and Governments, letter to EC President Jean-Claude Juncker, meeting with EC President Jean-Claude Juncker, "We are All Mediterranean" campaign, meeting with EP



REGION  
OF WESTERN  
GREECE  
*Full of contrast!*

President Martin Schulz, articles, etc.) IMC will keep contributing to its works accordingly, aiming for:

- More assistance and resources to the LRA's, not only for managing the migration crisis (reception and integration), but also for coping with the side effects of the issue.
- The higher involvement of LRA's in the EU dialogue on the crisis and in the future decisions taken by the EU.
- LRA's to be included in a European integrated multi-level governance solution and, according to their competences, having distinct responsibilities and playing a complementary role to National Governments.
- A sustainable and efficient management of the flows as part of a wider strategy for the Mediterranean that address challenges of the common destiny that unites the peoples of the area.

Moreover, IMC must continue promoting the dialogue in the Mediterranean, the dialogue between refugees and the host societies in our regions, as well as, the cooperation in the area, and, thus, building trust and solidarity.

#### **Develop a “Mediterranean of projects” and Mobilize partners from the non-EU shores of the Mediterranean and especially the South**

There are enough promising opportunities in the Mediterranean that can be capitalized on, such as: the Blue economy, the tourism sector (especially maritime, coastal and cruise tourism), the energy sector, the natural beauty of the region, the local food and products, the potential for improved connectivity and intermodal transportation, the rich cultural, historic and archaeological heritage, the large biodiversity, the environmental challenges faced, etc.

Therefore, promoting cooperation between actors (especially LRA's) from all the shores of the Mediterranean region is a key factor for addressing common challenges and exploiting common opportunities. Moreover, such cooperation cultivates the necessary conditions for the faster emergence of a Mediterranean Macroregion.

So far, IMC with its thematic working groups led by its regions, has achieved great results by implementing and supporting projects (e.g. Maremed, Coastgap, MarInA-Med COM&CAP, Elihmed, PLATFORMA, among many others) that build capacity in the Med area, reduce disparities and promote synergies.

Regions in all shores of the Mediterranean are certainly among those that, generally speaking, face particular challenges and are most affected by the different contemporary crisis (economic, refugees, etc.). By using the available funds (ESIF, ENPI, IPA, etc.) efficiently, we contribute to the competitiveness not only of the Mediterranean but of the EU as a whole.



REGION  
OF WESTERN  
GREECE

*full of contrast!*

The aim of cooperation through projects, actions and initiatives is, to provide a catalyst that will enable people on both sides of the region to work together to make it attractive, both for job creation and to live in.

The IMC, with its thematic working groups, should continue and develop more its actions pursuing and working on projects that lead to the strengthening of economic, social and territorial cohesion in the Mediterranean region.

In this context, special focus must receive the attraction and involvement of more partners from the non-EU shores of the Mediterranean, and especially from the South.

During the previous presidencies, our network expanded significantly and several Regions from the south of the Mediterranean joined the Intermediterranean Commission. In the light of the revised European Neighborhood Policy, IMC should continue its efforts to expand to the other shores of Mediterranean and, thus, strengthen the political and practical (projects) cooperation with Regions and other relevant territorial stakeholders there.

#### **Foster the emergence of Mediterranean citizenship**

Citizens around our shared sea, especially the younger Mediterraneans, are increasingly interested in the politics, economics and cultures of their neighbors, and expressing their willingness for more democracy and freedom of expression in the area.

So, it is of great importance to raise the awareness of the civil society on what a Mediterranean cooperation represents for citizens, on what is its added value, enforcing the identity and reputation of the Mediterranean region as a common ownership to be protected and to be developed for a better quality of life of the Mediterranean citizens themselves.

The Intermediterranean Commission must continue to support this process and encourage the active participation of young Mediterraneans in the action of civil society and also in politics.

The successful setting-up of the Mediterranean Macroregion depends greatly on the mobilization of civil society of the citizens for the Mediterranean and the emergence of a Mediterranean identity built around our shared space and values.

The affirmation of a Mediterranean citizenship will promote the Mediterranean identity, which is crucial to building a sustainable area of peace, cohesive development and prosperity.



## Apostolos Katsifaras



Apostolos Katsifaras was born in 1959 at Kalentzi of Achaia, Greece. He is married and father of two children.

After graduating in **Management and Economics** from the Technological Institute of Patras, he was **executive** at the **Greek National Tourism Organisation (GNTO)**.

He was first elected as **member of the Prefectural Council of Achaia** in 1994, and then, he was re-elected in 1998 and 2002. During his mandate, he was appointed twice **Vice-Prefect** (1997-2000 and 2003-2004).

In the national elections of 2004, 2007 and 2009, Mr. Katsifaras was elected **Member of the Greek Parliament** with PASOK (Socialist Party). From October 2009 until the regional elections in November 2010 he was **member of the Greek Government** as **Vice-Minister of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights** (in November 2010 he resigned from his office in order to be candidate President for the Region of Western Greece).

After winning the regional elections of November 2010, he served as **the first elected President (Regional Governor)** of the newly formed Region of Western Greece, From January 2001 till August 2014.

During his first mandate as President of the Region of Western Greece, Mr. Katsifaras was:

- Vice-President of the **Union of Regions of Greece**.
- Full member of the **European Committee of the Regions (CoR)**.
- Member of the **CoR's Commission for Education, Youth and Research (EDUC)**.
- Member of the **CoR's Commission for the Environment, Climate Change and Energy (ENVE)**. *[till December 2013]*
- Member of the **CoR's Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy (COTER)**. *[from December 2013]*
- 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President of the **CoR's Interregional Group "Adriatic-Ionian"**.
- Vice-President for Sustainable Development of the **PES Group in the Committee of the Regions**.
- Member of the **Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR)**.
- Vice-President of the **CPMR's InterMediterranean Commission** *(represented by the Vice-Head for Regional Development, Mr. Giorgos Aggelopoulos)*.

In May 2014 he won again the regional election and **re-elected as President of the Region of Western Greece** for a 5 years mandate (1 September 2014 – 31 August 2019).

During his second mandate as President of the Region of Western Greece, Mr. Katsifaras is:

- Member of the Board of the **Union of Regions of Greece**.
- Full member of the **European Committee of the Regions (CoR)**.
- Member of the **CoR's Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture (SEDEC)**.
- Member of the **CoR's Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy (COTER)**.
- 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President of the **CoR's Interregional Group "Adriatic-Ionian"**. *[till April 2015]*
- President of the **CoR's Interregional Group "Adriatic-Ionian"**. *[from April 2015]*
- Vice-President of the **PES Group in the Committee of the Regions**.
- Member of the **Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR)**.
- Vice-President of the **CPMR's InterMediterranean Commission** *(represented by the Deputy for European and International Affairs of the Region, Mr. Konstantinos Karpetas)*.





**HELLENIC REPUBLIC  
REGION OF WESTERN GREECE  
HEAD OF THE REGION**

Patras, 28 April 2016  
Ref.No.: 113809/1563

**TO:** Mr. Davide STRANGIS  
*Executive Secretary of the Inter-  
Mediterranean Commission of the  
Conference of Peripheral Maritime  
Regions of Europe*

Dear Mr. Executive Secretary,

I have the honor of presenting you with my candidacy in response to the Call for Applications for the 2016-2018 Presidency of the Intermediterranean Commission (IMC) of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR).

Please find attached my statement of intents for the 2016-2018 mandate, as well as, my Curriculum Vitae, where you will find further information.

I would be most grateful if you could forward my program and my CV to all member regions of the IMC.

Yours sincerely,

Apostolos Katsifaras

Head of the Region of Western Greece

