Final Declaration

2019 BBSC General Assembly
12 – 13 April 2019, Tulcea (Romania)

Adopted by the CPMR Balkan and Black Sea Commission in Tulcea on 12 April 2019
The Balkan and Black Sea regions listed below, members of the CPMR Balkan and Black Sea Commission, gathered for their Annual General Meeting in Tulcea (RO) on 12-13 April 2019:

- CALARASI (RO);
- EAST MACEDONIA AND THRACE (GR);
- IONIAN ISLANDS (GR);
- NORTH AEGEAN (GR);
- PELOPONNESE (GR);
- TULCEA (RO)

The CPMR Balkan and Black Sea Commission members wish, first of all, to thank Mr Horia Teodorescu, President of Tulcea County Council and Vice President of the CPMR, as well as Tulcea for their hospitality.

The President of the Balkan and Black Sea Commission, Ms Christiana Kalogirou, Regional Governor of North Aegean, extends her thanks to the regional authorities and honoured guests from the EU institutions and States who took part in the proceedings of the Balkan and Black Sea Commission Annual General Meeting.

**FINAL DECLARATION**

On behalf of its members, the CPMR Balkan and Black Sea Commission, gathering for its 2019 Annual General Assembly in Tulcea on 12-13 April 2019, unanimously adopted the following Final Declaration:

**PREAMBLE**

2019 marks an important stage in the history of the European Union (EU) and coincides with the 1\textsuperscript{st} Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU. The Member States and the European institutions will have to find some way of concluding the Brexit negotiations, agree on a legislative package governing the EU’s policies and budget for the 2021-2027 period, deal with the results of the upcoming elections to the European Parliament and, above all, further encourage collaboration between the Balkan and Black Sea Region States, both members and non-members of the EU.

**To this end, the CPMR Balkan and Black Sea Commission:**

1. Notes the political dynamism of the current SEARICA European Parliament Intergroup, which throughout Parliament’s whole term has made an active contribution to a broad range of topics that are also of interest to the wider Black Sea region, and looks forward to its renewal with an additional sub-group on the Danube and the Black Sea.

3. Shares the assessment of the European Parliament which, in its report, regrets that the European Commission’s proposals for the MFF 2021-2027 “do not contain measures that respond to the requirements of Article 174 TFEU in relation to northernmost regions with very low population density and island, cross-border and mountain regions”.

4. Calls on the Council to approve the European Parliament’s following requests:
   - maintain the financing of Cohesion Policy and the Common Agricultural Policy at least at the level of the 2014-2020 programming period;
   - increase the level of funding for transport infrastructure through the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF-Transport);
   - double the resources for tackling youth unemployment in the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) – compared to the current Youth Employment Initiative;
   - reinforce by 10% the level of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), in accordance with its new mission on the blue economy;
   - introduce a specific allocation for sustainable tourism.

5. Recalls that the **Territorial Agenda (TA) of the EU** (2007) is the outcome of an intergovernmental process, and that it underwent an initial review in 2011 as a result of which it has been defined as a strategic policy framework for implementing the Europe 2020 strategy in the territories (**TA 2020**). As such, the TA provides a framework for coordinating EU policies to fully respond to the principle of territorial cohesion as enshrined in the Treaty and which aims to ensure the harmonious development of all the European regions in all their diversity.

6. Notes the European Commission’s intention to start a discussion on a renewed European strategy for the post-2020 period. According to its latest reflection paper **A Sustainable Europe by 2030**, this could help to implement the **UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and its 17 goals (SDGs). It notes that the European Commission proposes in particular scenario 1 “An overarching EU SDG strategy to guide all the actions of the EU and its Member States” and scenario 2 “Continued mainstreaming of the SDGs in all relevant EU policies by the Commission, but not enforcing Member States’ action”, explaining that the eventual outcome would likely be a combination of elements from each scenario.

7. Points out that the EU’s post-2020 Territorial Agenda plays a major role in integrating the principle of territorial cohesion, enshrined in the Treaty, in the EU’s future development strategy. Moreover, it should facilitate the coordination of EU sectoral policies that have a strong territorial impact (cohesion, transport, maritime, digital, energy, etc.).

8. Calls therefore on the Romanian presidency and successive presidencies to take into account in their future work on the renewal of the TA, the political messages historically conveyed by the CPMR and summed up in its technical note **The renewal of the Territorial agenda: issues at stake for the CPMR**, submitted to the Political Bureau in Brest on 7 March 2019. These messages can be summarised as follows:
   - the territorial dimension of the EU’s future sectoral policies needs to be reinforced;
   - all European territories should have the same development opportunities;
   - the regions should be fully involved in the review and in the implementation of the TA.
9. Also asks that the European Parliament be officially involved in the review process, in order to ensure a strategic and political link with the debate on the future of the TA and the co-decision procedure, on which the design and development of European public policies is based.

10. Calls on the European Commission to make full use of its shared competence in territorial cohesion and, more than ten years after the publication of its Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion, to now pursue this essential strategic reflection by initiating a White Paper on territorial cohesion and presenting ideas for concrete actions through which this Treaty objective can be achieved.

11. Welcomes the progress made by the European Parliament with the adoption of its reports on the post-2020 Cohesion Policy Regulations, and calls on the Council to pursue the negotiations at technical and political level so that the programmes can be launched in January 2021.

12. Asks the European Parliament and Council to consider, during their future negotiations on the post-2020 Cohesion Policy Regulations, to include geographical criteria, such as periphery and insularity, as permanent physical obstacles to regional and sustainable development, in the system for allocating the future Cohesion Policy funds, which would further strengthen its ultimate objective of reducing territorial disparities.

13. Welcomes the European Parliament’s adoption of ambitious proposal concerning the future ETC budget as well as its broad support for maintaining maritime cross-border cooperation programmes within the cross-border cooperation component (component 1), without prejudicing the new component for interregional innovation investments (component 5).

14. Recalls that Article 4 of Regulation (EU) N°1315/2013 states that the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) shall strengthen the social, economic and territorial cohesion of the Union through, among others, accessibility and connectivity of all regions of the Union, including remote, outermost, island, peripheral and mountainous regions, as well as sparsely populated areas.

15. Points out that the current period of reflection, characterized by the launch of the public consultation on the TEN-T guidelines, represents a strategic opportunity for the European Union to identify innovative solutions for tackling the constraints of insularity and territorial discontinuity.

16. Considers that, to optimize the development opportunities provided by the circular economic model, the Balkan and Black Sea regions need to adopt targeted policies and/or initiatives to help them to:
   - identify, exchange and replicate best practices that can be applied to each step in the value chain: production, consumption, repair and remanufacturing, and the management of waste and of secondary raw materials which can be reintroduced into the economy;
   - reorganize traditional economic sectors (agriculture, fisheries, tourism, energy etc.);
   - create new markets and/or boost existing markets;
   - create and ensure access to venture capital;
   - ensure the provision of vocational training for young people and continuing education to develop the necessary skills for the transition to a circular economic model;
   - raise the awareness of and mobilise public authorities, private enterprises, universities and research centres as well as the populations, in particular young people;
   - test new technological solutions.
17. Points out that the European Union plays a fundamental role in creating the structural conditions necessary for the transition to a circular economy. It thus welcomes the approach taken by the European Commission and the Parliament, consisting in placing the product life cycle at the core of all the efforts and policies aiming to facilitate the transition to a circular economy.

18. Follows with interest the preparation and discussion phase of the National Energy and Climate Plans. It considers that, to ensure the development of a strategic vision that takes account of all the needs and priorities of each Member State, the local and regional authorities, including those representing regions with permanent geographical handicaps (sparsely populated areas, mountainous areas and islands), must be involved in the national public consultations aiming to identify priorities for action and pilot projects and which will form the basis of each Member State’s action plan for achieving EU targets and objectives by 2030.

19. Recalls the importance for the Balkan and Black Sea regions of being able to mobilise and benefit from the expertise of highly qualified experts and technicians in the renewable energies sector. In this respect, it underlines the high value added of European programmes and funding specifically aimed at training young people.

20. Underlines that the wider Black Sea region possesses a unique terrestrial and marine biodiversity and that as a result they require specific sustainable development policies and environmental protection measures. It recalls in this respect the strategic role played by the European Union and its legislative framework (Marine Strategy Framework Directive – MSFD, Common Fisheries Policy – CFP, Birds and Habitats Directives etc.) in achieving good environmental status of natural ecosystems and their biodiversity.

21. Underlines the gap that currently exists, in terms of biodiversity protection, between the conclusions of scientific research and the content of European public policies. It considers it is imperative to encourage the conversion of scientific results into methods and instruments that can be applied to the management of natural ecosystems. In this respect, it calls on the European Commission and Member States to support the creation of an exchange of best practice programme for the protection of terrestrial and marine ecosystems.

22. Considers that European protected areas, if they are properly selected and managed, can be very effective mechanisms for protecting biodiversity and sustainably managing natural resources. In this respect, it calls on the European Commission and Member States to support initiatives that promote networking and capitalizing on best practices identified in the context of protected areas.

23. Supports the principles and content of the declaration on “Ecosystem-based approaches for biodiversity protection and management” presented in Brussels at an event organised in collaboration with the European Parliament’s SEARICA Intergroup on 5 December 2018.

24. Recalls the importance of the tourism sector for the economic development of local communities. Points out however that, due to the particular vulnerability of their ecosystems, it is imperative that the EU should be able to continue to support regional and local authorities in planning and developing tourism products and/or services that are more sustainable. In this respect, it welcomes the European Parliament’s proposal to create a specific sustainable tourism programme and calls on the Council and the European Commission to support this initiative.
25. Underlines the importance of encouraging scientific research for a better analysis and understanding of the nature of tourism flows. The production of models and the creation of statistical tools to help adjust public policies (management of water and electricity, domestic mobility services, waste collection and processing operations) are of vital interest to policy-makers and decision-makers, especially at local and regional authority level. It therefore welcomes the objectives and the outcomes (decision-making tool for public authorities, open platform for tourism indicators and data, etc.) of territorial cooperation projects in which the CPMR is involved through its other Geographical Commissions, such as the CO-EVOLVE Project and is interested in an Intercommission collaboration with the aim of replicating relevant ideas in the BBSC area.