A green recovery and just transition, leaving no regions behind!

Adopted by the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission General Assembly on 21 October 2020
Policy Position developed by the BSC Energy and Climate Working Group

The Baltic Sea Commission Member Regions are aware that both mitigation of, and adaptation to climate change requires policies and actions at all levels: local, regional, national, European, and global. Regarding climate policies and targets, within the EU there is an agreement to reach Climate Neutrality by 2050, at the latest, as mapped in the Regions Act! Initiative.

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission

- Welcomes the recovery package which will contribute at least 30% to climate objectives and stresses that the efforts to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 should remain an EU priority in relaunching and modernising the economy after the COVID-19 outbreak;

- Calls for the implementation of multi-level governance that secures the role of regional actors and involves the private sector in designing and implementing the green transition;

- Expects that the evaluation of the TEN-E regulation, guidelines and infrastructure will serve the implementation of the EU Green Deal;

- Underlines the critical role of forests as carbon sinks and of sustainable forestry in order to secure renewable resources for circular economy.
a) Welcomes the recovery package that the European Council has agreed on, including the Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021–2027 and the recovery instrument Next Generation EU which will have to contribute at least 30% to climate objectives, as well as the establishment of the Just Transition Fund. However, regrets the cuts in the MFF proposal from July 2020 on EU programmes supporting the EU’s climate neutrality objectives such as Horizon Europe and in particular the reduction of the Just Transition Fund from EUR 40BN to EUR 17BN. Calls on the co-legislators to reach an agreement on the EU long-term budget that reflects the ambition of a green transition while preserving the global competitiveness of Europe’s economy.

b) Stresses that the efforts to achieve climate neutrality sooner than by 2050 should become an EU priority in relaunching and modernising the economy after the COVID-19 outbreak, as this target creates a great opportunity to redirect our societies towards a more sustainable, hence more competitive and resilient model, and to support job creation.

c) Expects that the criteria for EU funding will empower and enable regions to take decisive climate action, as well as acknowledges that a variety of projects are needed at regional level and that even smaller-scale projects may have great long-term impact. Also, in sparsely populated regions with only a few project partners available, funding should be available for infrastructure projects that are prerequisites for the implementation of climate targets.

d) Expects that the on-going evaluation of the TEN-E regulation, guidelines and infrastructure will serve the implementation of the EU Green Deal in the most efficient manner possible. The revision of the TEN-E regulation will need to ensure that the network will be able to efficiently transfer massively increased amounts of renewable energy, wind power in particular, as well as provide storage capacity for excess energy, and distribution solutions for various needs of mobility, housing, consumption and production. The BSC highlights the great potential of the region to become a global frontrunner in green hydrogen technologies.

e) Underlines the critical role of forests as carbon sinks and of sustainable forestry in order to secure renewable resources for circular and biobased economy. The BSC supports taking into account all economic, social and environmental aspects of the forest-based value chain, as expressed in the European Parliament resolution of 8 October 2020 on the European Forest Strategy - The Way Forward.

f) Calls for the implementation of multi-level governance in designing and implementing the green transition, since regions are at the forefront in the fight against climate change (e.g. circular economy action plan...). As regional actors have specific knowledge and competences it is crucial to engage them in the processes of the green transition.

g) Calls for better use of the potential of existing cooperation structures such as the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region to achieve the green transition by selecting flagship projects in strategic areas for a sustainable recovery.

h) Stresses the need to increase public and private investments in clean innovation and green technologies through EU funding. EU incentives in green investments for SMEs, the industry sector, and public sector (infrastructure as well as policy tools and guidance) should be a key priority in strategic sectors such as renewable energy, development of hydrogen technologies in particular, energy efficiency (e.g. renovation of public housing) and efficient infrastructure.

i) Highlights the potential of digitalisation to find sustainable solutions in the areas of transport, maritime affairs, and energy sectors. Stresses the need and calls for support for the development of professional skills at all levels, as well as education, research and development that are needed for new innovations and the creation of new jobs implementing the green transition.

j) Emphasises the importance of involving and working together with the private sector, civil society as well as the higher education sector to achieve the green transformation.