Towards a sustainable recovery of the Baltic Sea Region based on territorial strengths

*Adopted by the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Executive Committee on 7 April 2021*

“Next Generation EU”, the recovery plan for Europe, is a major opportunity for the Baltic Sea Region, and the EU as a whole to recover from the current crisis and create the conditions for sustainable, inclusive competitiveness while achieving the twin green and digital transitions. As national governments are finalising their draft Recovery and Resilience Plans which list the reforms and investments in each Member State ahead of the 30 April deadline, the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission calls on the Member States from the Baltic Sea Region to take into consideration the following policy messages.

1. **Act together with Regional Authorities to prepare and deliver successful Recovery and Resilience Plans.** Regions need to be given a clear role in the design, governance and implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Plans, given their knowledge, expertise and competences in areas targeted by the recovery plans. Regions have clear understanding of the investments needed for territorial development. The development of the national RRRs should be based on a multi-level governance approach and cooperation across all levels of government. CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Members deeply regret the very low level of engagement from the side of national governments concerning the preparation and development phase of the RRRPs. National RRP planning processes have tended not to fully engage regions, and even not involve them at all in some cases. A centralised approach has prevailed so far, and early signs point to the financing part of the RRRPs being centrally managed, making it difficult to ensure that regional needs are accurately understood and targeted. There are also examples where the RRF has become a simple item in the national budget and thus risks not showing the EU's ambitions to restart Europe's economy.

2. **Act beyond national borders to enable a balanced territorial development.** The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission stresses the importance to include a strong cross-border dimension to the Recovery and Resilience Plans, enabling cross-border investments of benefits of the overall recovery of the Baltic Sea Region. Strong synergies between the national plans are needed, since many topics of the recovery are interlinked and have a cross-border dimension, such as energy, digital, transport. Member States need to fully embrace the possibility of developing and planning together multi-country investment projects.

3. **Act on the basis of already existing mature projects.** The investments in reforms and projects of the RRRPs should be done by 2026, which is a short timescale. Therefore, when selecting the projects, parts of the recovery plans, Member States should rely on the regional authorities and the already existing mature projects’ possibilities, to select and finance projects that will enable the recovery. Member Regions should use the potential and already existing projects developed on a macro-regional scale, in the framework of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region to identify projects of common value for the Baltic Sea Region.
4. **Act in coordination to avoid the risks of competition between funds.** It is important to ensure an effective coordination between the recovery fund and other EU funds to avoid a risk of competition between the RRF and structural funds. Regional authorities should be in the driving seat when it comes to creating strategic links between the Recovery and Resilience Facility and Cohesion Policy to make EU funding delivery effective and avoid overlaps and unnecessary competition.

5. **Act to unlock the potential for growth and sustainable development based on territorial strengths.** The Recovery and Resilience Plans should enable investments in areas of territorial assets, therefore they should strongly be linked to regional Smart Specialisation Strategies, as both a territorial enabler of Europe’s twin green and digital transitions, and a key element of a territorial response to the COVID-19 crisis. Regional ownership and local knowledge are important success factors which should guide the design of all investment. Fostering sustainable links between regional ecosystems based on smart specialisation can help to increase the competitiveness and resilience in the Baltic Sea Region, accelerating the recovery and enabling long-term development of the EU.

---

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. One of these Commissions is the Baltic Sea Commission gathering 18 Regions from Estonia, Finland, Germany and Sweden.