In a context of recovery and green transition, Member Regions of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission sends the following messages to EU decision makers, national governments, regional authorities and stakeholders in order to build a resilient, sustainable, prosperous and competitive Baltic Sea Region within Europe.

**The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission**

a) **Calls for coherence and coordination between the various EU instruments in the implementation while ensuring a strong involvement of regions for a swift recovery of the Baltic Sea Region and EU**

b) **Calls for a strategic and effective implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region involving regional authorities and contributing to the recovery of the Baltic Sea Region**

c) **Emphasises the importance of a green recovery based on territorial strengths as an opportunity for sustainable growth in the EU and the Baltic Sea Region**

d) **Demands a sustainable and functional TEN-T to guarantee territorial accessibility within the Baltic Sea Region and in the EU as a whole**

e) **Calls for a smart and resilient recovery of coastal tourism and maritime sector in the Baltic Sea Region, enabling conditions for a sustainable blue economy**

f) **Calls for an ambitious future EU Arctic Policy based on territorial strengths, multi-level governance and involvement of regions**
a) Calls for coherence and coordination between the various EU instruments in their implementation while ensuring a strong involvement of regions for a swift recovery of the Baltic Sea Region and EU

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission:

- Calls for an optimal coordination between Cohesion Policy and the Recovery and Resilience Facility to avoid the risks of competition between funds and enable a timely and effective delivery for the period 2021-2027. A smooth coordination between EU funds is crucial to maximise their impacts and ensure an economic, social and territorial cohesion of Europe.

- Demands a close involvement of regional authorities in the implementation of National Recovery and Resilience Plans to enable a swift recovery and to tackle risks of overlaps, double-funding, delays, or administrative bottlenecks with other EU funds.

- Underlines that European Territorial Cooperation programmes (ETC) should be based on strong multi-level governance and partnership arrangements and based on territorial needs. At the start of a new programming period, the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission calls for a swift adoption of ETC programmes to reduce the gaps between the change of programming periods, and for the programmes’ implementation to start as soon as possible, for the benefit of beneficiaries, citizens and territories.

- Welcomes the stronger role of Smart Specialisation Strategies in the new programming period as a key tool for economic transformation at the local, regional and interregional level in modernising our economies, but also 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.

b) Calls for a strategic and effective implementation of the EUSBSR involving regional authorities and contributing to the recovery of the Baltic Sea Region

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission:

- Welcomes the adoption of the revised Action Plan for the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) in February 2021, by the European Commission under the German Presidency of the Strategy, and its more strategic focus. However, calls for closer involvement of the regional authorities in the governance and implementation of the EUSBSR, ensuring added value to all territorial levels. Is therefore committed to work in close cooperation with the National Coordinators Group, the Coordinators of the Policy Areas, the European Commission and other key stakeholders for the implementation of the new Action Plan that should help to build a more prosperous, competitive and sustainable Baltic Sea Region.

- Recalls the major role of Interreg transnational and maritime programmes in the support of the EUSBSR, and also the mainstream programmes to better exploit the potential of connecting regional development with macroregional cooperation.
• **Stresses the importance of the revised Strategy to support an effective and swift green recovery of the Baltic Sea Region**, in enabling strategic cooperation partnerships across borders, projects and processes, of added value for the whole Baltic Sea Region. Reiterates the policy messages included in the BSC policy position about the National Recovery and Resilience Plans ([HERE](#)), of the importance for Member States to rely on the regional authorities and the already existing mature projects’ possibilities, developed on a macro-regional scale, in the framework of the EUSBSR to identify projects for the implementation of the National Recovery and Resilience Plans.

• **Recalls its willingness to strengthen further multi-level, and cross-sectorial cooperation with other stakeholders and partners organisations from the Baltic Sea Region**, such as CBSS, BSPC, HELCOM, BSSSC, UBC to build jointly a more sustainable, competitiveness, resilient and prosperous Baltic Sea Region. Underlines the importance to continue the good dialogue with representatives of the EU institutions in shaping the Baltic Sea Region, trough EU policies and also the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

c) **Emphasises the importance of a green recovery based on territorial strengths as an opportunity for sustainable growth in the EU and the Baltic Sea Region**

**The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission:**

• **Calls on the EU and Member States to unlock the potential for growth and sustainable development based on territorial strengths.** It is imperative regional authorities are co-leaders to guide green investments, since they are strategic partners to achieve a green transition. Regions have the know-how to tailor EU funding to local needs and opportunities, while knowing territorial challenges. In a recovery context, green transition is an opportunity to redirect our societies towards a more sustainable, hence more competitive and resilient model, and to support job creation in the Baltic Sea Region.

• **Supports the idea of moving from RIS3 thinking to “smart specialization strategies for Sustainability” (S4), i.e., to support sustainability and climate neutrality and taking into account the carrying capacity of the environment (quintable helix model).** Smart specialization strategies are an important way to foster innovations, based on regional strengths, which in turn brings sustainable growth. They are important platforms for cooperation and dialogue (co-development) in the field of research, innovation and business from a regional perspective, and can actively produce new innovations and solutions in support of energy transition, green transition and climate work. For this reason, it should be promoted throughout Europe that S3 strategies become S4 strategies.

• **Takes note of the new EU Forest Strategy presented by the European Commission in July 2021 and recalls the messages included in the BSC contribution to the EU public consultation on a new EU Forest Strategy, available [HERE](#).** The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission stresses the importance in the implementation of the Strategy to be place-based and take into account the large regional variations and conditions within different parts of the EU when it comes to available forests, soils, forestry and biodiversity.
• Underlines the importance of recognising the multi-functional and cross-cutting role of forests. Indeed, forests provide a vital value in terms of human recreation, health benefits, outdoor activities, nature tourism and social life as well as wildlife. Furthermore, the forest sector represents major economic and job creation potential. It also plays a key role for national and regional economies around the Baltic Sea, with a significant number of people drawing their income directly from the forest and the forest-based value chain.

• Shares the overall objective of the new EU Forest Strategy to ensure healthy, diverse, resilient, and sustainable forests for the benefit of present and future generations. The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission underlines the critical role of active, sustainable forest management in mitigating and adapting to climate change, both as carbon sinks and in providing substitutional carbon-binding materials and products. Circular bioeconomy, including renewable and recyclable forest-based products, are part of the solution for targeting a climate neutral society. Bio-based energy, from forest industry by-products, should be further developed, as biofuels are needed in the short and long term to achieve the green transition.

• Welcomes the recognition of the involvement of a variety of landowners when it comes to the management of forests, from state owned forests to municipal forest ownership, to private forest owners, to large industries, to small and family forest owners. Regardless of the size of the ownership, it is important to create the conditions for people to become responsible forest owner.

d) Demands a sustainable and functional TEN-T to guarantee territorial accessibility within the Baltic Sea Region and in the EU as a whole

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission:
• Welcomes the revision of the TEN-T and the ambition to achieve a climate neutral transport sector and stresses the importance of completing the core and comprehensive networks within the defined targets of 2030 and 2050.

• Calls on the EU to develop a TEN-T policy that supports the coordination, planning and building of cross-border infrastructure, both within the European Union and with third countries. Therefore, the revision should comprehend minor adjustments to the design of the TEN-T in order to include key missing links and omitted urban nodes of great European added value, such as those identified by the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, available [HERE](#). In that sense, the definition of the urban nodes should be broadened to include the entire functional area, that is the peri-urban and regional areas around a city centre.

• Encourages the shift to Sustainable Mobility for both passengers and goods and emphasises that the 2050 target of 90% reduction of emissions from the transport sector should be accompanied by concrete intermediate targets for 2030, 2040 and 2050, together with a yearly follow-up.

• Highlights that the Baltic Sea Region is a very diverse geographical area, with urban, peripheral areas, rural, sparsely populated areas, islands, arctic areas, and long distances. Therefore, in order to strengthen the cohesion between regions the TEN-T regulation needs a flexible, territorial and place-based approach when designing criteria for the transport system, keeping in mind that one size cannot fit all when it comes to developing sustainable and efficient transport solutions.
e) Calls for a smart and resilient recovery of coastal tourism and maritime sector in the Baltic Sea Region, enabling conditions for a sustainable blue economy

The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission:

- **Is concerned about the major socio-economic impact on tourism in the maritime regions in the Baltic Sea Region due to the public health measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which represents an important part of the regional economy.** Calls therefore for adequate EU support to tourism businesses, which are mainly SMEs, and for the development of a safe, resilient and sustainable coastal tourism sector. For this purpose, a holistic approach including a strong cooperation between all levels of governance in the public sector, businesses, research and university sector as well as the relevant organisations of the civil society is needed. The development of sustainable tourism also implies an increased use of new digital tools, a better knowledge of environmental assets and use of data and to encourage further public and private collaboration, participatory process involving key territorial stakeholders in tourism management and planning, as well as the upskilling actors at all levels, including in private sector to support the need for adaptation and diversification.

- **Calls for accelerating the transition towards sustainable tourism in the post COVID-19 context.** The focus should be on high-quality products and developing and supporting sustainable tourism to ensure the best tourism sustainable experience for consumers, better protect the environment, mitigate climate impacts, reduce the burden and share the benefits with local communities. Maritime coastal tourism is strongly dependent on a healthy and clean Baltic Sea and therefore the BSC reiterates its commitment to boost the preservation and enable a cleaner Baltic Sea.

- **Supports the calls from the European Council on the European Commission, in its conclusions on the future of Tourism in the European Union from May 2021, to design a European Agenda for Tourism 2030/2050, to drive the green and digital transitions of the tourism ecosystem and strengthen its competitiveness, resilience, and sustainability, as well as to launch an overview of current funding sources for tourism in the MFF 2021-2027 and the Next Generation EU to facilitate access to information to the public authorities and stakeholders.**

- **Welcomes the communication on a new Strategy for a Sustainable Blue Economy, published by the European Commission in May 2021, and the recognition in this Strategy of the specific role and support for regions in delivering the Sustainable Blue Economy, as well as the reference for a holistic, ecosystem approach, and working in the framework of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region to foster a Sustainable Blue Economy.** Fully supports that cohesion policy and smart specialisation strategies are drivers to achieve a sustainable blue economy.

- **Calls for better conditions and stronger policy for sustainable and locally based commercial fishing to prevent over-fishing, ensure good ecological status, and preserve marine biodiversity in the Baltic Sea, where small-scale commercial fishing should be seen as part of the solution rather than part of the problem, and should be preserved and developed with local processing as a starting point as part of the Baltic Sea Region’s sustainable blue economy.**
f) **Calls for an ambitious future EU Arctic Policy based on territorial strengths, multi-level governance and regional involvement**

- **Welcomes the revision of the EU Arctic Policy as a major opportunity to strengthen the role of the EU in the Arctic through investments in sustainable regional development, unlock potential for innovations that can lead to the green transition and help the EU realise the Green New Deal, while at the same time fostering more people-to-people, research-to-research and business-to-business cooperation. The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission believes that a more prosperous Arctic will benefit the Baltic Sea Region, since it is a part of it, and overall, the European Union’s development.**

- **Emphasises the need for close involvement of regional authorities in the implementation of the new EU Arctic Policy, as they are the focal point for cooperation patterns, close to citizens and responsible for regional development.** The legitimacy and abilities for the EU to improve the peaceful and sustainable development of the Arctic depends strongly on alliances with stakeholders in and around the Arctic. Moreover, the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission stresses the key importance of investing in human capital and Arctic communities with specific know-how, in order to enable the development of this area.

- **Calls on the EU to seize the momentum of the revision to further promote a safe, sustainable and prosperous Arctic, based on territorial strengths.** The CPMR Baltic Sea Commission highlights the importance of adapted support, tailor-made policies and an ambitious investment policy with a territorial dimension for the Arctic in order to boost innovation, create growth and jobs, increase accessibility and connectivity, while transforming industries and promoting sustainability through multilateral cooperation and multi-level governance.

- **Underlines the importance of the EU raising awareness on Arctic issues through facilitating dialogue between public and private actors, universities and citizens, as well as mobilising relevant stakeholders, expertise and decision-makers.** Further integration between the EU Arctic Policy and place-based EU instruments and strategies, such as the structural funds and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, is necessary in order to tackle global challenges, for example the Arctic’s particularly pronounced climate changes. Arctic environmental, social and economic state of play is closely linked with the Baltic Sea Region, the European Union and overall, all parts of the world.