CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Maritime Working Group Meeting

Towards a sustainable Blue Economy supporting regional development in the Baltic Sea Region

Introduction

a) Context

In view of the meeting of the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission Maritime Working Group on the Blue Economy, on 1 December 2020, this paper provides a brief overview of the main implications of the Blue Economy roadmap launched by the European Commission on the Baltic Sea Regions.

b) European Commission’s new approach for a sustainable Blue Economy

The European Commission has undertaken a new approach towards a more sustainable Blue Economy, to be in line with the objectives of the Green Deal Agenda. A Roadmap for a new approach for a sustainable blue economy was published on 14 October 2020, which is open for feedback until 7 December. This consultation is an opportunity for regions to provide feedback on how to adapt the maritime sector to the Green Deal agenda. The European Commission will present a communication about a sustainable Blue economy in Q1 2021.

c) Key issues at stake for the Baltic Sea Regions regarding the new approach

The role of regions in the transition of the Blue Economy; funding resources and budget support from the EU; recovery and resilience of the Blue Economy sectors; the role of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region; the role of digitalisation; the importance of having a holistic and cross-sectoral approach in the transition.
Key messages regarding a new approach for a Sustainable Blue Economy

The CPMR BSC Maritime Working Group stresses that the maritime economic sectors and these territories can contribute significantly to Europe’s Green Deal objectives, in terms of preserving marine biodiversity, fostering clean and decarbonised maritime transport and a sustainable maritime tourism and fishing sector etc. The transition towards a sustainable Blue Economy represents an opportunity for growth, prosperity and employment in the Baltic Sea Region. Therefore, we welcome the roadmap and the efforts of the European Commission to develop an approach for a sustainable Blue Economy.

The CPMR BSC Maritime Working Group emphasises that the future Blue Economy Strategy should:

1. **Foster the recovery and resilience of the Blue Economy sectors while fostering its sustainability.** The new Blue approach should provide the basis for an ecosystem of blue innovative businesses and maritime clusters, fostering cooperation between science, industry, regional, national authorities, academia, and business. The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region could play a driving force in fostering the transition towards a sustainable Blue Economy in the Baltic Sea Region and be a platform to encourage synergies between actors.

2. **Provide adequate support to enable a sustainable, safe maritime and coastal tourism and rebuild the tourism value chain differently and accelerate the transition towards sustainable tourism in the post-COVID-19 context.** The transition towards a sustainable and resilient coastal tourism and maritime tourism, requires strong budgetary support to businesses, especially SMEs, which need to adapt their infrastructures and protocols but also make full use of innovation and digitalisation. For this purpose, a holistic approach, with strong cooperation with all level of governances, regions, businesses, education sectors, is needed.

3. **Help to preserve the competitiveness of maritime industries by fostering strategic investments in innovation and in sectors such as shipbuilding and maritime equipment, offshore wind energy and ocean energies, and other maritime technologies which are severely hit.** In addition, foster investments in human capital in maritime related sectors. In order to achieve Blue Economy growth, highly qualified and skilled professionals are needed. We will need to explore how existing funds, such as the ESF can be better integrated to support maritime skills. Future Interreg programmes should promote Blue economy sectors and support projects enabling the recovery and resilience, and maritime related sectors.

4. **Enable local and sustainable energy solutions.** Future sustainable energy solutions will be more local, consist of more diverse resources and be less global. New innovations for solving the energy sustainability question should need to be supported. Seas, coastal areas and neighbouring agricultural areas can provide biomass to biomass plants which serve as nutrient removers as well as an energy source, but most of all biomass plants enable circularity in nutrient recycling.

5. **Rely on a place-based approach, taking into account specific regional characteristics while promoting multi-level governance.** This requires the direct involvement of regions in the design and implementation of a sustainable Blue Economy strategy. The regional framework is essential to foster a sustainable Blue Economy, in terms of encouraging investments. The Blue Economy must be recognised in the Recovery and Resilience Plans of Member States. Furthermore, the new approach should foster interregional cooperation of Smart Specialisation Strategies in the sectors related to the Blue Economy. The RIS3 framework must facilitate synergies between investments co-financed by the regions and European centrally-managed programmes, and project holders should be supported in identifying and accessing EU tools. The new approach should also provide adequate support to actors, especially SMES, to enable a digital transition of the Blue Economy.