



CPMR INTERMEDITERRANEAN
COMMISSION

STATEMENT

FOR THE 2ND PANHELLENIC ONLINE MEETING OF THE REGIONAL RESEARCH AND INNOVATION COUNCILS OF GREECE

Prof. Gaetano Armao

Vice-President of Sicily

**Presidency of the Intermediterranean Commission (IMC)
of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR)**

29 gennaio 2021

REGION OF WESTERN GREECE
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REGIONAL RESEARCH AND INNOVATION COUNCIL OF WESTERN GREECE

2nd Panhellenic Online Meeting of the
Regional Research and Innovation
Councils of Greece

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AGENDA

(EET, local time in Greece)

• FRIDAY 29 JANUARY 2021

SESSION 1- THE KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR THE NEW PROGRAMMING PERIOD 2021-2027

MODERATORS:

Fokion Zaimis, Deputy Governor of Entrepreneurship Research and Innovation, Region of Western Greece (RWG)
Ioannis Kalavrouziotis, Professor, Dean of the School of Science and Technology, Hellenic Open University (HOU)- President of Regional Research and Innovation Council, RWG

11:00-11:30- Welcome Remarks

Nektarios Farmakis, Governor of Region of Western Greece
Athanasios Papadopoulos, Mayor of Kalavryta

11:30-12:30 – Brief Interventions

Christos Dimas, Deputy Minister of Research and Technology
Andreas Katsaniotis, President of the Special Permanent Committee on Research and Technology, Hellenic Parliament
Yossi Amrani, Ambassador of Israel to Greece
Jean- Pierre Halkin, Head of Unit D1, Directorate- General for Regional and Urban Policy, European Commission
Nektarios Tavernarakis, Vice President of the European Research Council (ERC)

12:30-12:45 –Break

12:45-14:00 – Speakers

Athanasios Kyriazis, General Secretary for Research and Innovation (GSRI)
Christopher Pissarides*, Professor of Economics –Nobel Prize in Economics
Carsten Rasmussen, Head of Unit, Cyprus & Greece, Directorate- General for Regional and Urban Policy, European Commission
Gaetano Armao, Vice-President and regional Minister of the Region of Sicily, Member of the European Committee of Regions, Presidency of the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission
Manuel Palazuelos, Team Leader of the Smart Specialisation Platform S3, Joint Research Centre

14:00-15:00- Break

15:00-15:30- Brief Introduction of *Regional Research and Innovation Councils*



Dear Ministers, Regional Ministers and fellow colleagues,

Dear Organizers and colleagues from Western Greece,

Dear Researchers and Participants,

It is with great pleasure that I am joining today the discussions of the *2nd Panhellenic Online Meeting of the Regional Research and Innovation Councils of Greece*.

First of all, in my position of Vice-President to the Regione Siciliana, and in behalf of President Of the Regione, Nello Musumeci, I would like to thank the organizers for their kind invitation to Sicily and as Presidency of the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission.

An indeed, Sicily has been ensuring the Presidency of the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission since last October 2020. Gathering more than 40 Regional governments across Mediterranean shores, our network is articulated around three different main axes, very much aligned and benefitting from efficient transnational relations across the Mediterranean.

These axes constitute our priorities for cooperation, research and innovation over the current mandate, and actually also respond to the theme of this present session about “our key strategic priorities for the new programming period 2021-2027,” which is why I will focus on them.

They read as follows:

- (1) Boosting the sustainable blue economy and cohesion in the Mediterranean area
- (2) Operationalizing the shift towards sustainable economies through a project-based cooperation in the basin, consolidating alliances and involvement in concrete actions and solid partnerships
- (3) Mobilizing the Mediterranean Youth as a key enabler for the present and future of the basin.

Regarding the first axis, (1) “Boosting the sustainable blue economy and cohesion in the Mediterranean area,” we know that the



Mediterranean has been one of the most affected areas by the COVID-19 crisis. Notably because its most popular but also most affected sectors is tourism. As a matter of fact, the Mediterranean is the world's leading destination with more than 300 million tourists per year, but we saw in 2020 that international tourism has suffered to a great extent due to travel restrictions to contain the spread of COVID-19.

In the Mediterranean, domestic tourism could still happen to some extent in some regions which ensured a substantial economic activity, but not necessarily for all territories. For example, some islands did not receive as much domestic tourism as they used to, while their Spring and late Summer seasons have known much lower fluxes of tourists, if none.

the tourism crisis has had negative effects on the Italian Regions, in particular in the south and especially in the island regions such as Sicily.

The Association of Italian and Sicilian tourist companies prepared a Study Center that recorded in 2020 minus 78 million arrivals and minus 240 million tourist presences in Italy, to which must be added the further loss of the approximately 36 million Italians who did not go abroad. And the tourist balance of payments surplus was 620 million euros (it was 1,697 million in the same month of the previous year). The hands of the tourism clock have gone back 30 years.

Beyond this, let's remind ourselves that the Mediterranean economic tissue made out of micro and small enterprises for the majority is clearly in crisis. It will be very important that recovery measures and tools such as the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative or REACT-EU consider the particularity of this socio-economic environment to ensure a successful impact. **It will also be necessary for research and innovation centers to contribute to this recovery effort, and even more so regarding the sustainability of traditional and innovative sectors in the Mediterranean.**

This brings me to shift to our second main objective as a network of regional governments throughout the Mediterranean, which is

(2) Operationalizing the shift towards sustainable economies through a project-based cooperation in the basin, consolidating alliances and involvement in concrete actions and solid partnerships.”

For now, our priority is of course articulated to avoid a two-paced recovery between Mediterranean EU and non-EU countries; this is key for the future of the basin. This is the reason why it is fundamental to insert recovery tools and measures **within cooperation frameworks and programs already in place or currently being defined**, for example **by proposing additional budget resources and adaptative planning**. Along the same lines, using **capitalization and mainstreaming** to optimize successful and sustainable practices is of utmost importance to ensure a recovery aligned towards the fulfillment of the Green Deal’s and 2030 Agenda’s objectives from the very beginning. **Capitalization and mainstreaming of innovative and strategic projects results are also of utmost importance to make sure that innovation actually reaches a greater and sound impact on the territories.**

If we were to think about innovation and research more precisely then, let’s think about what it would mean for “**governance**” in the Mediterranean, and in particular for territorial and transnational cooperation.

Indeed, networks and platforms such as the innovative **Mediterranean Cooperation Alliance**, of which the Intermediterranean Commission is a full partner, constitute key instruments to foster the integration of innovative and sustainable practices into territories while supporting capacity building for recovery.

Indeed, **Regions are key implementers of initiatives and the landing of global objectives and related funds on the territories.** They act as a strong link for the integration of strategies, initiatives and institutions already in place in the basin.

The best examples I could quote for now are of course the **Union for the Mediterranean**, with which, as CPMR Intermediterranean Commission, we have had a **specific** and very successful **agreement** to collaborate notably on the **blue economy agenda**, and which we streamline through the MedCoopAlliance.



Another example is that of various **initiatives** or **strategies** in place in the basin such as **WestMED**, **EUSAIR** or **BLUEMED**, in which the CPMR Intermediterranean contributed as **observer** and therefore supports the representativity of Regions within these frameworks.

At the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission, our reflections for the MedCoopAlliance go as well on to innovative **operational aspects** that are directly tied to **cooperation programmes** such as **Interreg MED** or **ENI CBC MED**. At this level, **the main challenge is to ensure that the funds coming from these programs actually respond to territorial challenges on the one hand, while being properly implemented on territories on the other hand.**

And this brings me to one of the key messages of the MedCoopAlliance, mainly that **synergies between the Alliance and Mediterranean cooperation programs should be strengthened**, notably at the level of the **governance of programs, alongside EU and national authorities**. This would ensure a concrete representativity of territorial challenges at program levels, but also allow the programs, beyond the sheer project framework, to **be in touch with regional and local authorities to make sure that the funds they manage safely and efficiently land on the ground and are properly mainstreamed.**

All these reflections remind us of the reason why **multi-level governance dynamics should be safeguarded, strengthened and further developed through innovative patterns** across the Mediterranean. **Multi-level governance cooperation is the key to a better integrated Mediterranean, and especially nowadays in the current situation, to ensure the sustainable recovery and future of the basin.**

Lastly, with each economic crisis comes the question about the youth and generations now entering the job market. At the Intermediterranean Commission, answering to our last global objective

“(3) Mobilizing the Mediterranean Youth as a key enabler for the present and future of the basin,” we have created the Intermediterranean Commission Youth Council. After some **research across our Member Regions** to understand how they worked with the Youth on their respective



territories, **we have created this innovative Council to foster youth voices within our activities and policy recommendations.**

The idea is to reinforce democratic participation of the Youth through our regions, while making sure that they are heard at the level of our Commission, and that the recommendations that we will provide in the future serve them to the best possible extent as well. Whether it be to **enter the job market**, make sure that **educational and training offer bear state-of-the-art and innovative contents to better answer the needs of the job market**, or simply allow them a **stronger voice at institutional level**.

With the COVID-19 crisis though, there remains to understand the extent to which both EU recovery instruments such as REACT-EU and Research and innovation programmes or centers will provide tools to Regions or the Youth to thrive through this crisis.

Now reaching the end of my intervention, I thank you for your attention and in particular our fellow Greek Regions already very active in our network. I therefore extend the invitation to other fellow regions from Greece to work with us all to fulfill these objectives, and would be happy to take any question.