THE MEDITERRANEAN YOUTH COUNCIL, THE NORTH SEA YOUTH COMMITTEE, AND CRETAN YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES

CPMR General Assembly thematic restitution

October 28, 2022, Agios Nikolaos, Crete

Preamble

This declaration is the result of work on the CPMR’s themes. Youth exchange sessions took place during the 50th CPMR General Assembly. The Mediterranean Youth Council, the Youth Committee from the North Sea and the Young Representatives from Crete worked on this document in order to make the voice of youth heard by regional and European stakeholders.

This work took place in a context of climate, energy and economic crises, which are currently exacerbated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Sessions on cohesion policy, transport, maritime affairs and migration/solidarity with Ukraine were held consecutively during this General Assembly.

Cohesion Policy

Following multiple crises, modernising cohesion policies now seems to be a necessity in order to enable the proper development of regions. Indeed, cohesion policies must be proactive, adaptable, place-based and planned for the long term. Several instruments are available to the regions to implement these cohesion policies. However, the procedural burden and the lack of resources do not allow regions to fully benefit from the available funds. This could be crucial for them to implement policies that respond effectively to these crises and thus contribute to their good management in full autonomy. To achieve this, the standardisation between national and regional programmes must be strengthened. This will make it easier to address the challenges of the blue economy, biodiversity protection, climate change, and energy sovereignty among others.

Faced with these challenges, it is now necessary to find sources of opportunities. This is why it is important to involve youth among the stakeholders. Indeed, youth have been greatly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, by the economic and energy crises as well as by the climate crisis. As a result, they need to benefit from new employment and educational opportunities through innovation, especially by promoting apprenticeships and vocational training. This is to equip young people with the skills needed for the current and future labour market.

We, the youth, are a source of change and positive action. The Mediterranean Youth Council, the North Sea Youth Committee and the Cretan youth representatives support the proposal to simplify procedures and cohesion instruments to make it easier for regions to develop. Above all, we are an essential lever for taking a long-term view of cohesion policies.
Maritime Affairs

The future of the ocean and fisheries clearly depends on how we manage them now. The blue economy plays a key role for society, it is a source of wealth and job creation. However, it needs to be managed in a sustainable way that respects ecosystems and biodiversity as much as possible. To achieve this, it must work collaboratively and in a coordinated manner, ensuring that policies are well balanced in all aspects. The involvement of different key actors must be guaranteed, and the necessary support must be given to the public authorities at different levels but particularly at a local level, reviewing existing policies and adapting them to the current context to achieve the objectives set.

From the point of view of youth and taking into account the current state of the oceans with threats such as overfishing, plastic pollution, climate change and loss of biodiversity, it is necessary to consider the needs of future generations. Young people must ensure a sustainable use of natural resources. Some suggestions include promoting other forms of consumption, reducing the pressure on our oceans, promoting careers in the blue economy, protecting ecosystems, ensuring access to finance, as examples.

Transport

In the context of peripheral and maritime areas, transport is a key element in connecting all regions and enabling citizens to access basic needs as well as widening mobility opportunities. Indeed, the issue of transnational and European infrastructure is also raised. To support the green transition of transport and the resilience of networks, we need infrastructure, funds and an appropriate legal framework. By investing in research and development we can achieve this. The issue of accessibility to transport seems to be a fundamental issue: it is about improving the quality of transport, with reasonable prices, so that it can be used by all citizens, taking into account the most vulnerable citizens. The issue of awareness-raising and positive lobbying of citizens is essential so that their habits also change in this direction. In the current context, the energy crisis influences the relationship with transport.

The special place of mobility in the lives of young people, especially in relation to access to higher education, makes us an essential stakeholder in the development of transport infrastructure.

The issue of transport accessibility is central for young people, who are among the most economically fragile citizens. We also have a predominant role in the ecological transition of transport because we are particularly in demand and willing to change our mobility habits. Nevertheless, an adapted offer is necessary at regional, national and international levels.

We can be the spokesperson for the needs and good practices implemented in certain countries and promote them in the different territories we represent.

Migration & Solidarity with Ukraine

Due to the ongoing war in Ukraine and its consequences, there has been a focus on the refugee crisis and their integration and inclusion in the hosting countries. In matters of education, language barriers and intercultural environment and many other areas. The Ukrainian ambassador emphasised that the Ukrainian people see their future in their own country not elsewhere. Therefore, it is clear that there should be a focus on building plans for their future in Ukraine. The goal for those in Ukraine is to survive
the winter due to the lack of power supply. As a result, there is a dire need for humanitarian aid, something which can come from collaboration between sister cities.

There was encouragement for young Ukrainians to develop entrepreneurship skills and mention of youth participation in the CPMR. We would have liked to see more mentioned about the impact on young people and how young people could help. *Our suggestion would be that youth could be a part of the integration process and be responsible for an informal welcoming and education process for other young people.*

Several phenomena, such as climate change or conflicts, can cause migration and we have to take into account the future migration flows in all the CPMR regions.