



Klaipėda District Declaration: Delivering Regional Maritime Growth

12 September 2024

The European Alliance (EA) Group at the European Committee of the Regions (CoR), at its extraordinary meeting in Klaipėda District (Lithuania), held on 12 September 2024, confirmed its commitment to actively contribute to delivering regional maritime growth and agreed on the following declaration.

The European Alliance Group:

- **Underlines** that the maritime economy and relevant sectors employ close to 4,5 million people in the EU and significantly contribute to European GDP, giving maritime regions a central role in finding solutions to pressing challenges, ranging from climate change, food sovereignty, environmental protection, industrial transformation and border security.
- **Stresses** the importance of preserving our seas and oceans, recognising their crucial role in environmental, social, and economic sustainability. The impact of climate change on maritime regions requires concerted efforts to safeguard communities and ecosystems through mitigation and adaptation; **emphasises** the need to allocate funding for advanced marine research and innovation projects to address climate change, food security, marine pollution and biodiversity loss, contributing to the sustainable management of ocean resources.
- **Recalls** the increasing water related risks faced by many regions **and reiterates** its call for an EU Blue Deal, which would constitute a long-term strategy aimed at establishing sectoral policy coherence on water management
- **Recognises** the strategic relevance of ports for the EU economy, trade, connectivity and as innovation and testing hubs for new technologies, notably in the energy transition. Ports and their cities offer significant opportunities in infrastructure, assets and skills for the development of new emerging industries and SMEs; **considers** investments in ports and port cities vital for revitalizing economies in times of multiple and successive crises, ensuring resilience of maritime supply chains, while enhancing the competitiveness of EU maritime regions amidst growing international competition.
- **Underlines** the urgent need for a skilled workforce for the future of maritime industries; calls on EU and competent authorities at national and regional level to support upskilling and

reskilling and provide specialised education and training programmes to harness the potential of modern marine and net zero technologies;

- **Stresses** the importance of integrating urban and rural landscapes with port activities to foster sustainable development, emphasizing the need for balanced port-city relations
 - **Highlights** that bioeconomy and aquaculture have increased in importance and carry enormous potential for job creation and sustainable economic activities. In this sense, **demands** the new European Commission to prioritise maritime affairs in the next mandate and propose a reinforcement of programmes supporting maritime sectors and fisheries in the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), while favouring an integrated and bottom-up approach;
 - **Points out** that a sustainable maritime economy is a prerequisite to achieve a green recovery; reiterates that the Green Deal must be built from the bottom up, fully involving maritime regions from the outset and equipping them with adequate technical and financial resources in order to accelerate renewable energies production, where opportune, and protect natural spaces
 - **Underscores** the key role of Cohesion policy in achieving those goals and calls on EU institutions to promote them through place-based solutions, smart specialisation strategies and creation of networks of Regional Maritime Clusters bringing together industry, local government, researchers and academia.
 - **Points out** that maritime regions have maritime borders not only with the mainland, but also with the other maritime regions close by; calls for stronger maritime cross border cooperation programmes to address shared challenges across sea basin, and for tailored support to islands and (peripheral) regions with natural and demographic constraints.
 - **Calls** the European Commission and Member States to uphold the role of maritime regions in governance of macroregional strategies and promote synergies with other EU programmes such as Interreg.
 - **Insists on** the need for diversifying and building resilience in the sustainable tourism sector through programmes aimed to promote cultural and natural heritage, and maritime leisure activities that generate local employment in a de-seasonalized tourism.
 - **States** the importance of engaging local communities in consultations and decision-making processes in order to ensure public acceptance of infrastructure projects, with due respect of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, while promoting co-ownership of those projects, which can benefit local communities.
 - **Instructs** its President to forward this declaration to the presidents of the European Commission, European Parliament and the European Council.
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