

Mrs Elisa FERREIRA
Commissioner for Cohesion and
Reform
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
1040 BRUXELLES

Ref. CRPMCOU200222

Brussels, 15 December 2020

Dear Commissioner,

A EUROPEAN STRATEGY FOR ISLANDS, MOUNTAINOUS AND NORTHERN SPARSELY POPULATED AREAS

Over the last 10 months, European regions and citizens have been fighting against the COVID-19, an unprecedented sanitary as well as economic world crisis. As a result, immense socio-economic impacts are hitting each Region, unravelling highly unevenly across Europe.

Facing this reality, the recovery will be much longer and much more difficult in some regions than others. This, unfortunately, is especially the case for many Islands, mountainous and sparsely populated areas, which are witnessing the bankruptcy of entire economic sectors such as tourism.

As an exhaustive example, according to the available data, some islands will record a loss of around 26% of their GDP¹, mainly generated by the direct and indirect impacts on the tourism sector.

The crisis also directly affects the daily life of many cross-border citizens in mountainous areas. For instance, in the Pyrenees, up to 89.4% of cross-border persons have stopped their socio-economic activities due to the closure of the borders.

For the Northern Sparsely Populated Areas, the decrease of not least international visitors do hit already very vulnerable small businesses in regions that have been increasingly dependent on tourism as a growing sector for job opportunities. Several areas see a decrease of 50-80% in tourism revenue.

As leaders of European organisations representing the interests of island governments, mountainous and northern sparsely populated areas, we are very concerned that, despite the efforts and exceptional measures taken by the EU institutions and Member States, territorial inequalities, alongside economic and social ones, will grow dramatically, as a result of the grave crises.

Today more than ever, **the European institutions should fully acknowledge the challenges faced by our territories, as per Article 174 of the Lisbon Treaty.**

To this end, **we count on all support to engage the European Commission to develop a strategy, which should outline specific fields for action required to deliver the recovery in all EU islands, mountainous and sparsely populated areas.**

¹ <https://www.caib.es/sites/ces/f/317625>

In the uncertain times in which we live, we believe that launching a structured dialogue among the European Commission, the European Parliament and our organisations to agree on a draft strategy ensuring the introduction and or capitalisation of tailored measures and initiatives in EU policies, represents the way to deliver the **territorial cohesion objective as per Article 174 of the Lisbon Treaty and ensure a balanced recovery across Europe.**

We look forward to hearing from you and remain,

Yours sincerely,



Cees LOGGEN
President of the CPMR
Regional Minister of Noord-Holland



Juanan GUTIERREZ LAZPITA,
President of Euromontana



Nils-Olov LINDFORS,
Chair of Northern Sparsely Populated Areas network

Mr Younous OMARJEE
Chair of the REGI Committee
Member of the European Parliament
Bât. ALTIERO SPINELLI
05E240
60, rue Wiertz
B-1047 BRUXELLES

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