DRAFT REPORT

on the role of Cohesion Policy in addressing multidimensional environmental challenges in the Mediterranean basin
(2022/2059(INI))

Committee on Regional Development

Rapporteur: François Alfonsi
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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the role of Cohesion Policy in addressing multidimensional environmental challenges in the Mediterranean basin
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The European Parliament,

– having regard to Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union and Articles 174 to 178 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),

– having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy\(^1\) (Common Provisions Regulation),


– having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments\(^4\),


– having regard to the Council conclusions of 19 April 2021 on a renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood – A new agenda for the Mediterranean,

– having regard to the Commission communication of 4 February 2022 entitled ‘8th Cohesion Report: Cohesion in Europe towards 2050’ (COM(2022)0034),

– having regard to the Commission’s communication of 9 February 2021 entitled ‘Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood’ (SWD(2021)0023),

\(^1\) OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 159.
\(^2\) OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 60.
\(^4\) OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 94.
– having regard to the Commission’s communication of 11 December 2019 on the European Green Deal (COM(2019)0640),

– having regard to the agreement adopted at the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) in Paris on 12 December 2015 (Paris Agreement)6,

– having regard to the opinion of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) of 29 October 2021 entitled ‘Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood – A new Agenda for the Mediterranean’7,

– having regard to the CoR opinion of 14 October 2020 entitled ‘Towards sustainable use of Natural Resources within the Mediterranean insular context’8,

– having regard to the CoR opinion of 11 October 2022 entitled ‘Towards a macro-regional strategy in the Mediterranean’,

– having regard to its resolution of 15 September 2022 on Economic, social and territorial cohesion in the EU: the 8th Cohesion Report9,

– having regard to its resolution of 15 September 2022 on EU border regions: living labs of European integration10,

– having regard to its resolution of 7 June 2022 on EU Islands and cohesion policy11,

– having regard to its resolution of 8 March 2022 on the role of cohesion policy in promoting innovative and smart transformation and regional ICT connectivity12,

– having regard to its resolution of 9 June 2021 on the gender dimension in cohesion policy13,

– having regard to its resolution of 20 May 2021 on reversing demographic trends in EU regions using cohesion policy instruments14,

– having regard to its resolution of 25 March 2021 on cohesion policy and regional environment strategies in the fight against climate change15,

– having regard to its resolution of 28 November 2019 on the climate and environment emergency16,

– having regard to its resolution of 13 March 2018 on lagging regions in the EU17,

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6 OJ L 282, 19.10.2016, p. 4
9 Texts adopted, P9_TA(2022)0326.
10 Texts adopted, P9_TA(2022)0327.
13 OJ C 67, 8.2.2022, p. 16.
– having regard to its resolution of 13 June 2018 on cohesion policy and the circular economy\textsuperscript{18},

– having regard to its resolution of 3 July 2012, entitled ‘Evolution of EU macro-regional strategies: present practice and future prospects, especially in the Mediterranean’\textsuperscript{19},

– having regard to the study conducted for its Committee on Regional Development entitled ‘Islands of the European Union: State of play and future challenges’, published in March 2021,

– having regard to the EPRS study ‘Working towards a macro-regional strategy for the Mediterranean’, published in October 2021,

– having regard to the First Mediterranean Assessment Report on Climate and Environmental Change in the Mediterranean, released by the Mediterranean Experts on Climate and environmental Change (MedECC),

– having regard to the 2021 Regional Progress Report on Gender Equality – Union for the Mediterranean Regional Dialogue on Women Empowerment in the Euro-Mediterranean region\textsuperscript{20},

– having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,

– having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Fisheries,

– having regard to the report of the Committee on Regional Development (A9-0000/2022),

A. whereas the Mediterranean basin, which consists of EU Member States, candidate and third countries, is the living environment of 250 million inhabitants, half of whom live in the European Union; whereas the strengthening of cooperation within and beyond the EU’s borders is of the utmost importance to address common challenges such as pollution and climate change;

B. whereas the European Regional Development Fund is required to allocate 30\% of its funds to environment and climate measures in the current programming period 2021-2027, with an overarching objective of supporting the transition to a climate neutral economy;

C. whereas the Mediterranean is a semi-enclosed sea with a very slow exchange of its waters, a rich biodiversity and a high proportion of endemic species;

D. whereas, in addition to continuous growth of the populations living in the coastal areas, the Mediterranean also hosts 31\% of world tourism on less than 6\% of the world’s land area;

\textsuperscript{17} OJ C 162, 10.5.2019, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{18} OJ C 28, 27.1.2020, p. 40.
\textsuperscript{19} OJ C 349E, 29.11.2013, p. 1.
E. whereas the density of waste has more than doubled in thirty years; whereas the
improper management and treatment of waste from rivers and urban areas make the
Mediterranean the area with the sixth largest accumulation of marine litter in the world;

F. whereas the impact of maritime transport, which carries 20% of the world’s trade
through the Mediterranean, generates between 100 000 and 200 000 tonnes per year of
intentional hydrocarbon discharges; whereas industrial activities and intensive farming
result in run-off into rivers and contamination of groundwater, and contribute, along
with offshore oil and gas refineries, to worsening sea pollution in the whole basin;

G. whereas Mediterranean marine mammal numbers have declined by 41% over the last
50 years and around 80% of fish stocks are suffering from overfishing; whereas the
objective of sustainable fishing is achievable, provided that Member States have the
political will;

H. whereas the Mediterranean basin is warming 20% faster than the global average;
whereas global warming will cause severe consequences that must be anticipated;
whereas meeting the Paris Agreement limit of 1.5 °C of warming calls for a halving of
the EU’s energy demand by 2050 compared to 2015 levels and requires the other
countries of the Mediterranean area to contribute through increased cooperation;

I. whereas several territorial cooperation initiatives have been developed over the years in
the Mediterranean, such as the Union for the Mediterranean, the EU Strategy for the
Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), the WestMED initiative, the European
Neighbourhood Instrument Cross-Border Cooperation (ENI CBC) programme, and the
NEXT MED, EUROMED, ADRION and MARITTIMO Interreg programmes;

J. whereas Member States should apply an ecosystem-based approach to Maritime Spatial
Planning, consistently with the EU Green Deal climate and biodiversity goals;

The Mediterranean: a challenge for Europe

1. Recalls that the Union is responsible for half of the Mediterranean basin and cannot
remain passive in the face of the multiple political, social, economic and environmental
challenges confronting the area;

2. Deplores the continuous degradation of the environment in the entire Mediterranean
basin, the loss of biodiversity and the increasing air and marine pollution;

3. Stresses that cohesion policy has an under-used potential for action to provide
appropriate responses to the challenges facing 110 million Europeans;

4. Is concerned about the increasing pollution by plastic and domestic waste and calls for a
historic effort to limit and manage them by promoting the circular economy;

5. Notes that the European shores of the Mediterranean suffer from degraded
environmental standards compared to the shores of Northern Europe (especially in port
cities that do not benefit from the protection of emission control areas to reduce airborne
emissions);
6. Considers that environmental problems are cross-cutting and complex, such that each entity, region or state acting alone can only provide partial solutions, and that it is necessary to broaden the common approach to embrace the whole Mediterranean area;

7. Considers that a dynamic of cooperation set in motion by the Union and its Member States and Regions can have a knock-on effect on the whole basin;

*The Mediterranean: potential and problems*

8. Highlights the potential of all the Mediterranean regions for the development of renewable energy sources and for a just and inclusive ecological transition;

9. Recalls that overfishing is still a threat to the survival of many species; is convinced that the development of a blue economy can support sustainable and inclusive development and quality jobs;

10. Draws attention to the increasing density of maritime traffic and the danger of oil spills;

11. Draws attention to the impacts caused by tourism due to its seasonality and its uncontrolled development (such as cruises, new polluting leisure activities);

12. Points out that the island territories face economic imbalances linked to the handicaps of insularity, which must be addressed with concrete actions as required by Article 174 of the TFEU;

*The Mediterranean: a common space to be structured*

13. Considers that the Mediterranean area shares a unique historical and cultural heritage and a Mediterranean climate resulting in similar environmental characteristics, and that it faces similar risks of natural disasters such as fires, floods, earthquakes, drought and increasing scarcity of water resources;

14. Welcomes the WestMed sea basin strategy in the Western Mediterranean and Interreg programmes such as MARITTIMO, as good examples of direct and diversified cooperation, including at regional level, with shared objectives;

15. Welcomes the progress of the Adriatic-Ionian macro-regional strategy (EUSAIR) which has mobilised the member countries and their regions, third countries and their local authorities; considers EUSAIR a successful example where the Union proved to be a driving force and a vector of openness; maintains that these same principles and a similar common approach must be applied to the other areas of the Mediterranean;

16. Considers that the diversity and the size of the territory concerned calls for the implementation of three distinct but coordinated strategies, namely strategies for the Western Mediterranean, the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, and the Eastern Mediterranean; calls for the support of the countries and authorities concerned and for a central role of regions in their governance;

17. Calls on the Commission to provide support for a macro-regional strategy in the Mediterranean taking account of its ‘new agenda for the Mediterranean’, in particular its point five on the ‘ecological transition, climate resilience, energy and the environment’;
18. Recalls that each successful cooperation experience contributes to the objectives of peace and security, prosperity, human development and good governance, which are the other cornerstone objectives of the agenda for the Mediterranean;

19. Invites the European Council to submit to the Commission a detailed macro-regional strategy for the Mediterranean with a view to its approval under the Spanish Presidency of the Union in the second half of 2023;

20. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national and regional parliaments of the Member States.