



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Smart Islands Forum

### PRESS RELEASE

#### **“EU islands come forward with proposals for the post 2020-era”**

22 representatives from 13 European countries with islands that are members to the Smart Islands Initiative met in Athens, Greece on 14 September 2018 to discuss how recent EU policy developments concerning islands can serve them best, in light of the on-going debate around the Union's post-2020 political priorities.

Keynote speeches were delivered by Greece's Deputy Minister for Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy Nektarios Santorinios, Athens FES Director Ulrich Storck and AEGEA's Director General Ilias Efthymiopoulos, who all stressed the significance of the Smart Islands Initiative as a genuine platform of cooperation between EU islands and one that should be further strengthened.

Already through the 1<sup>st</sup> Smart Islands Forum (Athens, June 2016) and Smart Islands Declaration official signing ceremony (Brussels, March 2017) the Smart Islands Initiative has offered islands the opportunity to voice their opinions on how smart, sustainable and inclusive development can be achieved on islands. DAFNI Director Kostas Komninos made special reference to the history of the Initiative, being the culmination of a number of EU funded initiatives and projects (ISLENET, ISLEPACT, Pact of Islands, SMILEGOV).

Building on this legacy, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Smart Islands Forum brought together those organizations that are proven to be the key drivers and delivery agents of decarbonisation on islands, namely island local and regional energy and environment agencies but also island local and regional authorities and their networks. The close relation these organizations maintain with island communities allows them to nurture consensus and cooperation among stakeholders and bridge the different, often opposing, interests, helping deliver projects that bring – besides technological – also environmental, economic and social benefits to constituents.

This experience was shared with Jeppe Jensen from the newly established Clean Energy for EU Islands Secretariat who provided an overview of the latter, announcing that 6 EU islands will be selected by the European Commission as pilots of the energy transition. Moreover, island representatives reflected on interventions by Eleni Marianou,

CPMR Secretary General and DG REGIO's Mario Rodrigues regarding the changes that the new MFF brings for the Cohesion Policy.

Last but not least, island participants worked in groups steered by Alkisti Florou and tabled proposals on how 4 key EU funding programmes (Horizon Europe, InvestEU, Digital Europe Programme and LIFE) in MFF 2021-2027 can better reflect the potential and challenges facing islands, empowering them to emerge as living labs of the energy transition, digital transformation, circular economy and innovative financing and so embark on sustainable and fair development pathways.

Ahead of the upcoming trilogues between Council and Parliament, Members of the Smart Islands Initiative will share the outcomes of the work in groups with their national representatives to inform the process.

*Countries with islands that were represented in the Forum include: France, Germany, Greece, Denmark, UK, Spain, Italy, Croatia, Cyprus, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden; and also the organizations Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe and European Small Islands Federation.*