



# INSULEUR

Network of Insular Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the European Union

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## POSITION AND PROPOSALS PAPER

### European Island Strategy

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In the context of the Call for Evidence  
Ref. Ares (2026)2435909 — 05/03/2026

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## Introduction: A Historic Opportunity for Europe's Islands

INSULEUR — the Network of Insular Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the European Union — submits this Position and Proposals Paper in the context of the public consultation launched by the European Commission for the development of the European Island Strategy (Call for Evidence, Ref. Ares(2026)2435909, 05/03/2026).

INSULEUR represents Island Chambers of Commerce and Industry from virtually all European island regions - from the Aegean islands to the Canary Islands, from Sardinia to Madeira, from Malta to Curacao. With more than two decades of institutional presence at European level, INSULEUR is the voice of island entrepreneurship in the EU - a voice representing hundreds of thousands of small and medium-sized enterprises operating on Europe's islands.

INSULEUR warmly welcomes the European Commission's announcement of a stand-alone European Island Strategy — an initiative the Commission itself describes as historically significant. This Strategy represents the culmination of decades of advocacy by INSULEUR, island Chambers of Commerce, the European Parliament, CPMR and the Governments of Member States with island regions.

 **Legal basis:** Article 174 TFEU explicitly recognises islands as territories with permanent natural and demographic disadvantages that justify special treatment. The European Island Strategy is the first opportunity to translate this recognition into binding policy instruments.

This Position Paper is organised around eleven thematic axes corresponding to the key dimensions of the island challenge. Each axis is accompanied by an assessment of the current situation, evidence of needs and specific action proposals. At the end, INSULEUR's key positions - which form the core of our submissions to the European Commission - are presented in consolidated form.

INSULEUR Representation Data	Data
EU island population	20.5 million citizens (4.6% of EU population)
EU islands	More than 2,400 inhabited
Leadership (since April 2025)	Giannis Roussos, President of the Cyclades Chamber of Commerce
INSULEUR founding year	1996
EU presence	EESC, Committee of the Regions, DG REGIO, CPMR

## 1. Islands as a Distinct Territorial Category: Institutional Recognition and Legal Safeguards

The fundamental principle underlying all of INSULEUR's positions is the recognition of islands as a distinct territorial category in European law, with their own characteristics, their own needs and their own rights to differentiated treatment. This is not a demand for privileges — it is a demand for equality: equal access to opportunities and services, regardless of geographical location.

### 1.1 The Unique Characteristics of Islandness

EU islands occupy a unique position in the European territorial system: they are not merely 'remote' or 'less developed' areas — they are territories with structural, permanent and unavoidable characteristics that are independent of policy choices. The sea that surrounds them is not a variable; it is a constant. And this constant produces an immutable web of consequences: higher transport costs, smaller markets, limited economies of scale, dependence on imports, and vulnerability to supply disruptions.

According to European Parliament data, 20.5 million EU citizens live on islands, representing 4.6% of the total EU population. These islands consistently display lower levels of economic activity, higher costs of living, faster demographic decline and reduced access to essential services compared with equivalent mainland areas. These imbalances are not accidental — they reflect decades of policy that treated islands as exceptions or special cases rather than integrating them systematically into planning frameworks.

### 1.2 The Requirement for a Stand-Alone Strategy Excluding Coastal Communities

INSULEUR clearly and unequivocally holds the position that the European Island Strategy must apply exclusively to islands and must not be broadened to include coastal communities on the mainland. This position stems from simple logic: the challenges of coastal communities differ fundamentally from those of islands. A coastal community has access to the road network, hospital resources and the labour market without needing to cross the sea. An island does not.

Merging islands and coastal communities in a single policy document would mean fragmented resources, generalised instruments and the erosion of the specific recognition that islands require. The Strategy would lose its island identity, and islands would gain nothing of substance.



**INSULEUR Position:** The European Island Strategy should be a stand-alone, distinct policy document dedicated exclusively to islands, grounded in Article 174 TFEU, without incorporating or referencing mainland coastal communities.

### 1.3 A Legally Binding Definition of Island and an Islandness Clause

For more than two decades, INSULEUR has been advocating for a legally binding definition of 'island' in European legislation, based on objective multi-dimensional islandness criteria: distance from mainland

areas, population size, seasonality, dependence on maritime transport and energy autonomy. The first OECD Report on Islands (February 2026), developed with a focus on Greek island case studies, now provides this typology with scientific underpinning.

Furthermore, INSULEUR calls for the establishment of an *Island Clause* — a mandatory island impact assessment mechanism for every new EU legislative act, analogous to the existing *SME Test* and *Rural Rural Proofing* check. Without such a mechanism, horizontal EU regulations — such as the EU ETS for shipping — may inadvertently undermine the recognition of islandness guaranteed by Article 174 TFEU.

## 2. SMEs and Island Entrepreneurship: The Need for Specific Tools for Specific Needs

The island economy is by excellence an economy of small and micro enterprises. Unlike metropolitan markets where economies of scale and rich financial infrastructure support growth, island SMEs operate in a radically different environment: small markets, high import costs, limited labour supply, isolation from supply chains and dependence on seasonal demand.

### 2.1 The Diagnosis: A Triple Access Barrier

Island SMEs face a triple access barrier to financing and European policies:

- **Administrative complexity: funding programmes were designed for businesses with administrative structures that do not exist in small island enterprises employing 1–3 people**
- **Minimum funding amounts: minimum eligible budget thresholds de facto exclude micro-enterprises that form the backbone of the island economy**
- **High co-financing rates: businesses with low liquidity — especially outside the tourist season — are unable to meet the mandatory own-contribution requirements**

### 2.2 The Role of Island Chambers of Commerce

The island Chambers that constitute the INSULEUR network are not merely representatives of business interests. They are a living business support infrastructure on islands: providing registration, certification, training, advisory, digital support and networking services. In many cases, the Chamber is the only institution that provides a small island business with practical support in accessing funding.

A prime example is the Cyclades Chamber of Commerce: with more than 28,004 member businesses across 24 islands, 8 offices per island, modern digital services via the e-kyklades.gr portal with 8 million visits annually in 8 languages and full digitalisation of services since 2008. This infrastructure is a model that can — and must — be replicated with European funding on islands throughout the EU.

### 2.3 Proposals: The Island SME Window, Observatory and Open Data Space

INSULEUR proposes the creation of a dedicated *Island SME Competitiveness Window* within funding instruments such as ERDF, ESF+, Horizon Europe, CEF and LIFE, incorporating:

- Reduced minimum eligible budget thresholds (€5,000–30,000 for micro-enterprises),
- Increased subsidy rates (60–75%) for island investments,
- Simplified digital application procedures,
- An additional 10% bonus for businesses on islands with fewer than 3,000 inhabitants,
- A mandatory Island Proofing provision — an impact check for new policies on island businesses, analogous to the SME Test,

- Ensuring the adaptation of European Regulations such as the De Minimis Regulation, with due account of the specific challenges faced by island territories.

In parallel, INSULEUR proposes the creation of a European Island Business Observatory, building on the Island Entrepreneurship Barometer developed through cooperation between the Secretariat General for Island Policy of the Greek Ministry of Shipping, the OECD and DG REFORM - which was recognised as a good practice. The Observatory would provide comparable annual data on island SMEs across the EU to inform policy-making.

✓ **Good practice:** The Island Entrepreneurship Barometer — implemented in cooperation between INSULEUR, the Secretariat General for Island Policy, 21 Greek island Chambers and the OECD — was evaluated by DG REFORM as a good practice and is being used in discussions on the MFF 2028–2034.

To complement the European Island Business Observatory, INSULEUR proposes the creation of an “Island Open Data Space” to support evidence-based business planning and investment.

The current lack of reliable and real-time data significantly limits the capacity of island businesses to make informed decisions. Addressing this gap is essential to strengthen competitiveness and resilience.

INSULEUR therefore proposes:

- the development of a European open data platform dedicated to island territories and
- the provision of real-time data on key sectors, including tourism flows, energy, transport, water, waste and resource consumption.

This initiative would enhance transparency, improve investment planning and support more efficient and sustainable resource management across island economies.

### 3. Transport, Digital and Energy Connectivity as a Fundamental Right

Connectivity for islands is an existential prerequisite. Without reliable, affordable and consistent connections — in terms of transport, digital and energy — no island can function as a viable society. This recognition must be translated into concrete, binding and funded instruments.

#### 3.1 Maritime Connectivity

Ferry services are to islands what the road and rail network is to mainland Europe: a basic public infrastructure. Yet they are still treated in many countries as a commercial service, without European minimum service standards or European funding instruments.

INSULEUR supports the establishment of a European Public Service Obligation (PSO) framework for island maritime transport, ensuring minimum frequency of services, maximum fare caps and quality standards, with European co-financing for routes that are not commercially viable.

A critical issue is the EU ETS for shipping: its gradual extension to island routes without a compensation mechanism will lead to fare increases, reduced services and additional burdens for island communities that have no alternative. **The EU must recognise that a climate instrument cannot undermine territorial cohesion objectives.**

#### 3.2 Digital Connectivity

Digital connectivity is the second critical dimension. INSULEUR calls for a European commitment to universal broadband coverage of  $\geq 100$  Mbps on all inhabited EU islands by 2030, with a dedicated funding mechanism for islands that lag behind due to high infrastructure costs.

Experience demonstrates that digital connectivity significantly offsets geographical isolation. For example, the Cyclades Chamber of Commerce, with 12.3 million electronic communications annually with more than 28,000 members across 24 islands, demonstrates that digital services can eliminate geographical distance in business support. This model needs to be scaled up at European level.

#### 3.3 Energy Connectivity

Islands not interconnected with mainland grids depend on expensive fossil fuels for electricity generation at costs many times the mainland average. Energy interconnection or the development of autonomous island energy systems based on renewable energy sources is therefore not just a climate choice — it is an economic necessity and a matter of social justice.

#### 3.4 Maritime Freight Transport and State Aid Framework

Maritime freight transport, which is essential for supplying the island-based productive and processing

sectors, public aid aimed at leveling the competitive framework of agricultural and industrial companies, which is crucial to sustaining diversification and sectoral balance in island economies, should be granted an exceptional regime under the De Minimis Regulation.

This is because, although such aid is intended to equalize access to the market, it currently limits or even prevents access to other incentives and subsidy instruments in key areas for development, such as innovation, energy, and digital transformation, while also constituting an essential element of territorial cohesion.

## **4. Digital Transformation and Skills: Digital Equity for Islands**

Digital transformation is for islands both an opportunity and a necessity. An opportunity because it can offset geographical isolation by opening markets, enabling telework and providing services remotely. A necessity because without digital infrastructure, islanders and island businesses are progressively excluded from the digital single market.

### **4.1 Digital Innovation Hubs on Islands**

INSULEUR proposes the creation of a network of Digital Innovation Hubs on islands — one in each island region — providing digital skills training, access to digital platforms and applications, support for the integration of SMEs into digital value chains, and teleworking / co-working and networking spaces.

Island Chambers of Commerce, with their existing infrastructure on each island, are ideal host organisations for these hubs. INSULEUR commits to coordinating the creation of a network of such hubs at EU level — provided the corresponding European funding is secured.

### **4.2 Teleworking and Digital Nomads: New Patterns of Island Residence**

Teleworking is today one of the most promising avenues for reversing demographic depopulation on islands. Professionals able to work remotely — particularly young people aged 25–40 with high educational qualifications — can choose to live on islands while maintaining access to European and international labour markets. This model is already working successfully on islands such as Syros, Malta and Madeira.

INSULEUR calls for a European policy to attract teleworkers to islands, including tax incentives for permanent residence on islands, fast-track authorisation for non-EU digital nomads, and funding for teleworking infrastructure (digital connectivity, co-working spaces).

### **4.3 Digital Education and Skills**

Digital education on islands shows significant gaps compared with mainland areas. INSULEUR proposes dedicated digital skills training programmes for island SMEs and workers, embedded in ESF+ and National Recovery Plans. Island Chambers of Commerce can serve as training centres, making use of digital platforms for distance learning.

## 5. Social Cohesion, Demography and the Right to Stay

The demographic challenge facing European islands is not new, but it is worsening. Population ageing, youth outmigration and the imbalance between seasonal and permanent employment create a vicious cycle that undermines the long-term viability of many islands. The 'right to stay' — the ability to live and work with dignity in one's place of origin — must be a central axis of the European Island Strategy.

### 5.1 Demographic Collapse: The Data

The data are alarming across the EU. According to a European Parliament study, many EU islands are losing population at a rate several times the mainland average. The Azores, one of the EU's most emblematic island regions, recorded a population decline of 2.7% between 2010 and 2023, with youth outmigration reaching 8.1% - three times the general population decline rate. In the Cyclades, islands with a negative population balance (e.g. Andros at -3.7%, Syros at -3.3%) contrast sharply with overtouristed islands (Mykonos, Santorini), highlighting the deeper imbalance within the island ecosystem.

### 5.2 Barriers to the Right to Stay

INSULEUR identifies six key barriers to the right to stay on islands, which the European Island Strategy must address through specific actions:

- **Seasonality:** the overwhelming majority of jobs on tourist islands are seasonal (4–5 months per year) making it impossible to build a stable livelihood
- **Housing:** the explosion of short-term rentals (Airbnb) has priced permanent residents out of the housing market on many tourist islands
- **Education:** demographic decline leads to school closures, and school closures accelerate demographic decline - a vicious cycle
- **Healthcare:** many small islands operate without permanent medical coverage — a problem that becomes a humanitarian issue in winter
- **Digital divide:** the lack of reliable broadband connectivity excludes islanders from teleworking and digital economy opportunities
- **Labour shortages and skills mismatch:** island economies face a significant gap between labour supply and demand, affecting both highly skilled and low-skilled positions. The continuous outflow of human capital further aggravates this imbalance. In addition, certain subsidised training and employment schemes, as well as the persistence of occasional undeclared work, may in some cases reduce labour market availability, making it more difficult for island businesses to recruit and retain workforce.

### 5.3 INSULEUR Proposals on Social Cohesion

INSULEUR calls for:

- A dedicated European island housing fund for affordable housing on islands under high tourist pressure
- Incentives for young entrepreneurs and professionals choosing permanent residence on islands
- European minimum healthcare coverage standards for islands with more than 500 inhabitants, with telemedicine funding for smaller islands
- A Business Relocation Scheme for islands: beyond attracting individuals, the Strategy should support the relocation and establishment of businesses in island regions. This should include targeted tax incentives, temporary support for operating costs during the first 2–3 years, and simplified fast-track licensing procedures
- Funding for non-seasonal employment with an enhanced bonus for businesses operating 12 months a year
- Territorial fairness indicators to monitor the balance of services between islands and the mainland

## 6. Clean Energy and Climate Resilience: Islands on the Front Line

Islands stand simultaneously on the front line of the climate crisis and the front line of opportunity: they are the most vulnerable areas to sea level rise, extreme weather events and water scarcity, while also possessing unique potential for renewable energy sources (solar, wind, wave, geothermal) and can become the EU's first fully energy-independent territories.

### 6.1 Island Clean Energy Acceleration Mechanism

INSULEUR calls for the creation of an Island Clean Energy Acceleration Mechanism with European funding, to include:

- Acceleration of permitting procedures for renewable energy on islands, with a dedicated 'fast track' for island projects
- Funding for energy storage and 'smart' energy grids (microgrids) for islands without mainland interconnection
- Support for island-based energy communities ensuring energy autonomy and fair distribution of benefits
- A dedicated island climate adaptation programme: addressing coastal erosion, water scarcity and biodiversity.

### 6.2 Water Scarcity: A European Priority

Water scarcity is already an urgent reality for many European islands. For example, 39 Aegean islands are experiencing water stress with demand exceeding available reserves. Many islands depend on high-cost desalination units, the cost of which is ultimately passed on to residents and businesses.

INSULEUR calls for European funding for: integrated rainwater collection systems, modern RES-powered desalination units, modernisation of water supply networks and smart demand management systems, with specific provision for differentiated pricing between permanent residents and tourist use.

**⚠ Urgent need:** In 2024, a very large number of EU island municipalities declared a state of emergency due to water scarcity. Water scarcity is not a future scenario — it is a present crisis that requires European intervention now.

### 6.3 EU ETS: Necessary Compensation for Islands

The extension of the EU ETS to shipping from 2024 and its full application to island routes from 2030 creates a fundamental contradiction: a climate instrument that burdens the territories with the greatest territorial vulnerability, without a compensation mechanism. Islands have no alternative to maritime transport and therefore cannot respond to increased costs by changing their behaviour.

The existing exemption (Implementing Decision 2023/2895) covers only islands with fewer than 200,000 inhabitants and no land connections. Larger islands such as Sardinia, Sicily, the Balearic Islands, Madeira, the Azores and the Cyclades are exposed to the full ETS cost despite comparable dependence on maritime transport.

INSULEUR proposes:

- a) extension of the exemption or differentiated ETS application for larger islands based on objective dependency criteria,
- b) earmarking part of ETS revenues for a 'Major Islands Transition Fund',
- c) establishing a mandatory ETS island impact assessment before any future regulatory extension of the ETS.
- d) providing specific protection for maritime routes ensuring territorial continuity;

## 7. Innovation in Water and Waste Management: Islands as Laboratories for the Circular Economy

The geographical particularity of islands — limited natural resources, closed ecosystems, distance from central infrastructure — makes them ideal territories for piloting circular economy solutions. What may be a choice for mainland areas is a necessity for islands, and this necessity generates innovation.

### 7.1 Water: From Crisis to Solution


The water scarcity challenge already faced by hundreds of European islands can be turned into an opportunity to develop innovative water management solutions. INSULEUR calls for European funding for pilot projects that will serve as replicable models on islands throughout the EU:

- Integrated rainwater collection and storage systems at island level
- Energy-efficient desalination units powered by RES — eliminating the dual dependence on fossil fuels
- Smart water management networks with real-time leak detection
- Wastewater reuse systems for irrigation — reducing pressure on groundwater aquifers
- Water pricing that differentiates between permanent residency, tourism and agricultural use.

### 7.2 Circular Economy and Waste Management

Islands face disproportionately high waste management costs due to the lack of infrastructure at scale and high transport costs. At the same time, tourism creates extreme seasonal pressure on collection systems. INSULEUR proposes:

- European funding for small-scale, modular recycling and waste treatment infrastructure adapted to island conditions
- Cross-border cooperation between island regions for joint management — making use of Interreg programmes
- Pilot 'zero waste islands' programmes with European recognition and financial incentives.

 **Good practice:** The Azores have developed an integrated waste management system with a recycling rate exceeding 50% on some islands — far above the European average — demonstrating that island necessity generates innovation that surpasses mainland performance.

## 8. Islands as Geopolitical Outposts of the EU: Strategic Value and Responsibilities

EU islands are not merely 'peripheral regions' — they are European sovereignty at sea. Every inhabited island represents a coastline, an exclusive economic zone, a position of control over maritime routes. The viability of islands is therefore also a matter of national security and European strategic autonomy.

### 8.1 Islands as Bearers of European Sovereignty

Inhabited islands secure sovereign rights under international law (UNCLOS) - exclusive economic zones (EEZs) encompassing vast maritime areas rich in natural resources, hydrocarbons, renewable energy potential and biodiversity. The depopulation of islands undermines these rights and constitutes a direct threat to European geopolitics.

INSULEUR calls for explicit recognition of the geopolitical dimension of islands in the European Strategy, and dedicated funding instruments to support habitation on strategically important islands facing extreme demographic decline.

### 8.2 Islands as Hubs for Energy, Research and Security

European islands can take on the role of hubs for:

- Renewable energy sources and interconnections — exporting energy to mainland Europe
- Maritime surveillance and border management — strengthening the European security architecture
- Marine research and biodiversity — exploiting the unique marine ecosystems
- Resilience supply chains — as intermediate hubs between Europe and third countries.

Recognition of this strategic role requires corresponding funding, for example from the External Action budget, the European Defence Funds, HORIZON Europe and the European Maritime Fund. Islands do not only need cohesion — they need recognition as a strategic investment.

## 9. Governance, Monitoring and Implementation: A Strategy That Delivers Results

Even the best Strategy remains a dead letter without effective governance. INSULEUR has observed over decades European policies that promised much and delivered little, because they lacked the necessary implementation, monitoring and accountability mechanisms. The European Island Strategy must avoid this trap.

### 9.1 European Islands Coordination Platform

INSULEUR proposes the creation of an EU Islands Coordination Platform with institutional standing and binding competencies, to include: the European Commission (DG REGIO, DG MARE), Member States with island regions, island authorities and local government, and representatives of Island Chambers of Commerce through INSULEUR.

The participation of Chambers is not a formality — it is substantive. Chambers possess something no governmental structure has: a direct, daily relationship with island businesses and residents. They are the organisations that translate European policies into action.


### 9.2 Islands Pact and Annual Report

Analogous to the Urban Agenda and the Rural Pact, INSULEUR proposes the conclusion of an Islands Pact — a multilevel partnership framework that will commit European, national and local authorities to implementing the Strategy.

In parallel, it is proposed to establish an annual Island Implementation Report with demographic, economic, environmental and service quality indicators to monitor progress and inform policy-making.

### 9.3 Institutional Participation of Chambers

INSULEUR proposes the institutional recognition of Chambers within the governance framework of the European Island Strategy, for example through their participation in Monitoring Committees for Cohesion programmes, in hearings of DG REGIO, and in all legislative review processes relating to island areas. This recognition should match that already enjoyed by other European business representation networks (e.g. Eurochambres, BusinessEurope).

 **INSULEUR Position:** Institutional participation of INSULEUR as the institutional representative of island entrepreneurship in all monitoring and implementation bodies of the European Island Strategy.

## 10. Remote Islands: A Distinct Category with Multiple Disadvantages and Strategic Assets Requiring Policy Consistency

The European Union's Outermost Regions (ORs) are strategic assets that reinforce its geopolitical presence, maritime sovereignty and global reach. They play a key role in maritime security, blue economy development, climate and biodiversity protection, and digital connectivity, while ensuring the integration of remote territories into the internal market.

Within the broader island ecosystem, remote islands constitute a special sub-category facing cumulative disadvantages: extreme geographical isolation, very sparse population, non-existent or minimal transport connections, extreme exposure to climate risks and total absence of economies of scale. These islands require differentiated treatment even within the island policy framework.

At the same time, ORs face permanent structural constraints - remoteness, insularity and higher costs - recognised under Article 349 TFEU, which justifies differentiated and stable policy support.

Dedicated instruments such as POSEI, specific ERDF provisions and higher co-financing rates have proven essential in strengthening their resilience. However, emerging policy discussions at EU level raise concerns about the consistency of support for outermost regions, particularly in relation to future budgetary frameworks and trade developments.

### 10.1 The Data on Extreme Vulnerability

The aggregate data is eloquent. The Azores, an outermost region of the EU, experienced youth outmigration of 8.1% — three times the general population decline rate. Small islands across the EU are experiencing structural distortions combining: monopolistic or oligopolistic transport markets, multiple supply chain links, extreme seasonality and inadequate coverage of digital, energy and social services.

### 10.2 Specific measures for remote islands

INSULEUR calls for, specifically for remote islands:

- Higher co-financing rates (up to 85–90%) for projects on islands with fewer than 500 inhabitants
- Special PSO regimes for transport ensuring a minimum weekly connection 12 months a year
- Priority funding windows from ERDF, ESF+ and EMFAF for remote islands
- 'Remote islandness' indicators in impact assessments to ensure that extreme isolation is systematically taken into account
- A dedicated essential services programme: guaranteed healthcare, education and digital services for islands unable to provide them through the market,
- Youth entrepreneurship and retention incentives specifically for islands with fewer than 1,000 inhabitants.
- POSEI must be preserved as an autonomous, dedicated and adequately funded instrument, in line with Article 349 TFEU. Safeguarding this mechanism is essential to ensure cohesion, fairness and the credibility of the European project across all its territories.

**⚠ Critical note:** The European Island Strategy cannot treat islands as a homogeneous category. What works for a large tourist island does not apply to a remote island of 200 inhabitants. The islandness typology must reflect this difference, and policy instruments must be scaled accordingly.

## 11. Summary of INSULEUR's Key Positions

INSULEUR summarises its positions in the following key proposals, which form the core of its submissions to the European Commission, the Member States and the European Parliament:

#	INSULEUR Position	Required Action
1	Recognition of islands as a distinct territorial category	Incorporation of a legal definition in the CPR MFF 2028–2034
2	A stand-alone European Strategy dedicated exclusively to islands	Separate Commission Communication — without coastal communities
3	Mandatory Island Impact Assessment for every new EU legislation	Establishment of an Islandness Clause analogous to the SME Test
4	Specific instruments for island SMEs and micro-enterprises	Island SME Competitiveness Window στο ΠΔΠ 2028-2034
5	Simplification of access to European funding	Reduced minimum thresholds, increased subsidies, digital applications
6	Connectivity as a fundamental right	European PSO framework for island maritime transport & exceptional regime under the De Minimis Regulation for maritime freight transport
7	Acceleration of clean energy on islands	Island Clean Energy Acceleration Mechanism
8	Differentiated ETS framework for islands	Tailored application — Extending principles of existing derogations to larger islands
9	Youth, healthcare and housing on islands	Dedicated funding lines in the MFF 2028–2034
10	Resilience against climate and other crises	Dedicated emergency mechanisms for island vulnerabilities
11	Empowering Chambers for innovation and training	Institutional recognition of INSULEUR / European Observatory and Open Data Space
12	International island cooperation and island diplomacy	Integration into EU external action / Interreg
13	Islands Pact and Coordination Platform	Islands Pact + EU Islands Coordination Platform
14	Ensuring the application of European Regulations such as the De Minimis Regulation with due account of the specific challenges facing island territories.	Integration into EU external action
15	Specific measures for remote islands	Integration into EU external action & Safeguard POSEI, as the expression of the common agricultural policy in the ORs

European island communities have been waiting for decades for a comprehensive, binding and adequately funded European policy that addresses their specific needs. The announcement of the European Commission on the European Island Strategy — the first in the EU's history — opens this window of opportunity. INSULEUR and its members commit to contributing actively to every phase of consultation and implementation.

The challenge is clear: **20.5 million European citizens live on islands and deserve equal access to opportunities, services and wellbeing.** Distance from the mainland must not entail exclusion from the European Single Market, from European social rights or from European funding instruments.

INSULEUR reminds the European Commission that the value of policy is measured by its impact on people's lives: on the fisherman in the Aegean, the young entrepreneur in the Canary Islands, the nurse serving on a small Mediterranean island, the farmer cultivating PDO products in Sardinia. These are the people the Strategy must reach, and these are the people whom the island Chambers represent.

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*This Position Paper is based on the following sources:*

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