

NEWSLETTER



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- **INSULEUR'S VOICE AT THE CORFU REGI CONFERENCE**
- **INSULEUR'S PARTICIPATION AT THE MEDIA CITY FORUM**
- **MEMBER INTERVIEW : CORFU CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**
- **CURRENT PROJECTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS**
- **OPEN CALLS**

From 15 to 17 September 2025, a delegation of the European Parliament's Committee on Regional Development (REGI) visited Corfu, seat of the Ionian Islands Region. The Members of the European Parliament met with national, regional, and local authorities, and visited projects co-financed by European funds. The aim of the mission was to assess the implementation of EU cohesion policy with a particular focus on island regions, and to collect first-hand insights into the unique challenges and opportunities of insular territories.

INSULEUR was actively present in this dialogue, with the President Giannis Giannis Roussos addressing the delegation. In his intervention, President Giannis Roussos stressed that Europe's islands are not "footnotes" in cohesion policy but strategic regions – "living laboratories of resilience, sustainability, and innovation." Representing more than 20 million European island citizens, he urged MEPs to ensure that the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) explicitly includes islands, in line with Article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU.

INSULEUR's key positions he highlighted include:

- Recognition of islands as a horizontal priority in all legislative and policy frameworks, beyond cohesion policy.
- Operational implementation of the EU Islands Agenda, including concrete tools, measurable targets, and pilot projects.
- Simplified and ring-fenced cohesion funding for SMEs, municipalities, and civil society in island regions.
- Investment priorities in climate-resilient infrastructure, digital connectivity, renewable energy, and biodiversity protection.
- Establishment of a permanent "Islands Office" within the European Commission to better coordinate island-related policies and funding.

This strong message echoed similar calls by regional representatives such as MEP Stefanos Ghikas, who emphasized that EU cohesion policy must explicitly recognize islands as distinct entities in both design and implementation. The Corfu mission highlighted both the potential and vulnerability of island economies. As President Giannis Roussos concluded: "The resilience of Europe's islands is a precondition for the resilience of Europe itself."

MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS



ΕΠΙΜΕΛΗΤΗΡΙΟ
ΚΕΡΚΥΡΑΣ

EUROPEAN ISLANDS FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE



Sustainable European agricultural products showcased excellence at ANUGA 2025

INSULEUR, coordinator of the EU-funded project "European Islands for Sustainable Agriculture – MESA," collaborates with the Cambra de Comerç de Mallorca, the Camera di Commercio di Cagliari-Oristano, and the Chamber of Rethymno to highlight how Europe's islands are redefining sustainable food production. From 4 to 8 October 2025, during the **ANUGA International Food & Beverage Fair in Cologne**, the partners presented the project's vision and products that embody responsible and climate-smart island farming. Our European island products and production methods reflect a shared commitment to reducing emissions, protecting biodiversity, promoting animal welfare, and ensuring top quality at every stage of the supply chain. For more information visit: <https://www.sustainagrislands.eu/>



ANUGA 2025
THE NO. 1 FOR FOOD & BEVERAGE BUSINESS

Cologne 4-8 October 2025

Co-funded by the European Union



INSULEUR AT THE HEART OF THE REGI MISSION IN CORFU: RAISING THE VOICE OF EUROPE'S ISLANDS

September has been a particularly active month for INSULEUR, with President Giannis Roussos representing the network in two major European events: the REGI Committee mission in Corfu (15–17 September) and the MEDA City Forum in Cagliari (20 September).



From 15 to 17 September 2025, the island of Corfu became the focal point of European discussions on cohesion policy and regional development. A ten-member delegation from the European Parliament's Committee on Regional Development (REGI) visited the Ionian Islands to meet with national, regional, and local authorities, and to assess the impact of EU cohesion funds on the ground.

The mission was of particular importance to insular territories, as MEPs sought to gather evidence on the unique challenges and opportunities islands face in accessing European funds and implementing sustainable development strategies.

A Clear and Firm Position from INSULEUR

INSULEUR, as the network representing the chambers of commerce of Europe's islands, was actively present. Its President, Giannis Roussos, addressed the delegation with a powerful message: islands must be treated as distinct entities in EU policy design and implementation, in line with Article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

In his speech, President Giannis Roussos underlined that islands are not peripheral actors but strategic regions whose resilience is essential to the resilience of Europe as a whole. He reminded participants that islands are home to more than 20 million EU citizens, and that their development trajectories cannot be addressed through one-size-fits-all approaches.

Key Priorities for Island Development

During his intervention, President Giannis Roussos presented INSULEUR's central positions and priorities: Recognition of islands as a horizontal priority across all EU legislative frameworks and funding programs, not limited to cohesion policy. The operational implementation of the EU Islands Agenda, ensuring it moves beyond declarations to include concrete tools, measurable targets, and pilot projects. Simplified access to funding for island SMEs, municipalities, and civil society organisations, who often face disproportionate administrative burdens.

The establishment of a permanent "Islands Office" within the European Commission to coordinate island-related policies and funding streams. Prioritisation of investment in climate-resilient infrastructure, digital and transport connectivity, renewable energy, and biodiversity protection.

As he stated: "The resilience of Europe's islands is a precondition for the resilience of Europe itself."

Echoing Voices and Shared Concerns

The positions of INSULEUR aligned closely with calls made by other island representatives during the mission. In particular, MEP Stefanos Ghikas stressed that EU cohesion policy should explicitly recognise islands as distinct entities in both policy design and implementation, reinforcing the urgency of this demand (see article here).

These combined voices painted a clear picture for the REGI delegation: islands cannot remain an afterthought in European policymaking. Their geographical isolation, limited connectivity, dependence on imports, and vulnerability to climate change require targeted and tailor-made solutions.

As President Giannis Roussos concluded in his speech: "Europe cannot afford to leave its islands behind. Recognising their strategic role and addressing their unique needs is not a privilege—it is a necessity for the balanced development of the Union."

FROM INSULARITY TO INNOVATION: INSULEUR HIGHLIGHTS ISLAND PRIORITIES AT THE CAGLIARI MEDA CITY FORUM



FROM INSULARITY TO INNOVATION: INSULEUR AT THE CAGLIARI MEDA CITY FORUM

Only days later, President Roussos spoke at the MEDA City Forum in Cagliari, hosted by Unioncamere. He recalled the pioneering role of Italian partners in the creation of INSULEUR and praised the fruitful cooperation, particularly through the MESA project.

In his speech, he highlighted both the challenges and opportunities of insularity: while high costs and limited connectivity persist, islands hold great potential in renewable energy, the blue economy, culture, and entrepreneurship. He called for:

- Stronger transport and digital links
- Promotion of sustainable energy solutions
- Greater investment in young entrepreneurs and SMEs
- Closer cooperation between chambers and institutions

Concluding, he extended an open invitation to the Italian insular chambers to strengthen their engagement within INSULEUR, underlining that “insularity must not be seen as a limitation, but as a source of innovation.”

Through these interventions, INSULEUR reaffirmed its role as the unified voice of island chambers in Europe, consistently working to ensure that island territories are no longer treated as footnotes in EU policy but as laboratories of innovation, resilience, and sustainability.





Corfu Chamber of Commerce on Island Growth and Sustainability

*Interview with the president of the Corfu Chamber of Commerce,
Mr. Konstantinos Mouzakitis*

How is the Corfu Chamber supporting local businesses in adapting to the green and digital transition, and which specific initiatives do you consider most important for an island economy?

The Corfu Chamber of Commerce supports businesses through awareness campaigns, training seminars, and collaborations with universities and research institutions. We focus on energy efficiency, the circular economy, and digital skills—all of which are crucial for an island economy like ours.

Connectivity—both physical and digital—is a strategic issue for islands. How does Corfu address challenges in transport and digital infrastructure, and what improvements would make the biggest difference for local businesses?

Connectivity is indeed a strategic priority. Corfu needs reliable ferry and air routes year-round, as well as investments in high-speed networks. We are close to reaching an agreement with an airline to establish a Corfu–London route operating twice a week throughout the year, as well as a Corfu–Istanbul connection, which has become an important hub. Improving accessibility will strengthen tourism, trade, and the outward orientation of our businesses.

Tourism is a cornerstone for many island economies but also a source of vulnerability. How does Corfu balance the need for sustainable tourism with the diversification of its economy?

We aim for a sustainable tourism model that protects the environment and our cultural heritage. At the same time, we support initiatives in sectors such as agri-food, the creative industries, and innovation, in order to promote greater diversification of the local economy.

What role do European programs and cohesion policy play in supporting Corfu’s development priorities, and how can EU institutions better address the specific needs of island regions?

European programs are a key tool for financing infrastructure, business development, and training. We need more flexibility and targeted actions that take into account the unique characteristics of islands—their size, geography, and business structure.

Beyond taxation, what do you consider to be the biggest challenges currently facing Corfu as an island economy (e.g., water scarcity, infrastructure, environmental pressures), and how can the Chamber help address them?

The main challenges include infrastructure deficiencies, water sufficiency, environmental pressures, and the seasonality of economic activity. The Chamber seeks to bring together public authorities, the local community, and entrepreneurs to develop sustainable solutions that promote both growth and quality of life.

For more information, click here: <https://www.corfucci.gr/>

LOADING ...



ONGOING EU PROJECTS



MESA promotes sustainable agri-food products from Crete, Sardinia, and Mallorca, highlighting their environmental and animal welfare benefits. Through targeted publicity and B2B initiatives in Germany, the project aims to increase awareness and boost exports by €12 million over three years.

For more information and updates on the project click here:

<https://www.sustainagrislands.eu/> and our Facebook page: **MESA**



123 Island Tourism SMEs Complete Their Sustainability Transformation

The I-STARS project is entering its final phase and INSULEUR is proud to have contributed to this collective achievement where results speak for themselves:

- ✓ 123 tourism SMEs across Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Spain and Ireland have now completed their sustainability journey through I-STARS, guided by dedicated sustainability consultants.
- ✓ Many have already achieved official eco-certifications, improving their market positioning while reducing their environmental footprint.
- ✓ Businesses report lower operational costs, greater customer trust, and renewed pride in contributing to a more resilient island economy.

Curious what this transformation looks like in practice for small family hotels to diving centers, travel agencies, traditional guesthouses and sailing operators?

👉 Read the SME testimonials and transformation stories on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/ISTARSproject> &

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/i-stars/posts/>

Even though the project is reaching its end, free tools and methodologies developed by I-STARS remain available to any tourism SME wishing to embark on a similar sustainability path – no cost, no obligation, only opportunity. INSULEUR will continue promoting and supporting their use across European islands:

✓ <https://istars.talentlms.com/plus/login>

✓ <https://istars-virtual-library.pages.dev/>

✓ <https://eu.jotform.com/app/233484433886366>

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ONGOING EU PROJECTS



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MED-Routes



MED-Routes Enters Its Final Phase with Eco-Itineraries Ready for Launch

As the MED-Routes project moves into its last six months, major results are coming to life across the Mediterranean with 8 Eco-itineraries having now been fully developed within 4 Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe and marking a key milestone in the project's mission to promote low-impact, culturally rooted tourism. INSULEUR indeed represented MED-Routes at the Sustainable Tourism Mission 2nd Annual Meeting in Tirana on 1-2 October 2025, where the project was recognised as a strong example of how cultural heritage, sustainability and climate action can be aligned through coordinated regional strategies. The event helped connect MED-Routes with peer initiatives working on innovation, circularity, climate resilience and biodiversity. The next months will be dedicated to testing, validation and showcasing the eco- itineraries through local and transnational events:

📍 Athens Project Meeting – 20 November 2025

Partners will gather to assess progress and finalise joint actions for the closing phase.

📍 21 November 2025: Dedicated Forum on the Routes of the Olive Tree

Hosted in Athens, this public hybrid event will bring together local authorities, SMEs, cultural organisations and tourism actors to present and promote the newly developed eco-itinerary of the Routes of the Olive Tree.

Register here > <https://med-routes.interreg-euro-med.eu/events/med-routes-forum-to-promote-eco-itineraries-within-european-cultural-routes-focus-on-the-routes-of-the-olive-tree/>

📍 Three additional Forums will take place by December 2025, each focusing on one of the other 3 Cultural Routes involved in the project – ensuring broad territorial activation and visibility across the MED space.

💡 To ensure long-term uptake, training sessions will be delivered to SMEs, destination managers and policy makers across 7 EU MED regions.

✅ Action Plans developed by the Project will be integrated into Project Partners (PPs) and their respective Cultural Routes 'operational agendas with the 1st signature of a Letter of Mutual Commitment & Support already mutually signed !

Through these combined actions – formal commitments, public forums, structured training and high-level visibility – MED-Routes is positioning its eco-itineraries as fully operational and transferrable tourism models for the Mediterranean and beyond.

🔗 Stay updated and discover more at: <https://med-routes.interreg-euro-med.eu/what-we-do/>

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IPA ADRION

CAROUSEL

INSULEUR participated in the first day of the **CAROUSEL** workshop on upcycling and circular economy practices, contributing to discussions on how the Municipality of Chalki can design its local pilot based on its unique characteristics and community strengths. Local SMEs and representatives involved in recycling and environmental initiatives brought valuable insights to the table. INSULEUR presented the CAROUSEL project's goals and vision for fostering sustainable innovation across Mediterranean islands. The workshop concluded with an engaging exchange of ideas, paving the way for Chalki's green transition.

Stay tuned for the next workshops to come: <https://carousel.interreg-ipa-adrion.eu/>



OPEN CALLS



EU Funding Opportunities



CALL 1:

Interreg South Baltic – 5th Call for Proposals (focus includes sustainable tourism)

- What it funds: cross-border projects in the South Baltic area; priorities include sustainable & innovative tourism, green transition, and SME support.
- Who can apply: public bodies, NGOs, chambers, clusters, universities, etc. from eligible programme areas.
- Deadline: **12 November 2025, 16:00 CET.**
- Official call page: <https://southbaltic.eu/for-applicants/calls-for-proposals/southbaltic.eu>

CALL 2:

EIT Food – Biotech Innovation Call 2025 (agri-food sustainability)

- What it funds: biotech innovations tackling agri-food challenges (e.g., sustainable production, processing, safety, nutrition) with a clear path to market.
- Who can apply: consortia or single applicants from EIT Food regions (industry/SMEs, research, universities, startups) meeting EIT eligibility rules.
- Deadline: **17 November 2025, 17:00 CET.**
- Official call page: <https://www.eitfood.eu/open-calls/biotech-innovation-call>

CALL 3:

Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership – 3rd Joint Transnational Call (SBEP 2025)

Theme: “Digitalisation and Innovation for Resilient Marine Ecosystems, Businesses, and Communities.”

- Pre-proposal deadline: **17 November 2025, 15:00 CET**
- Full proposal (provisional): **17 June 2026**
- Official call page: https://maritime-forum.ec.europa.eu/apply-now-sustainable-blue-economy-partnership-3rd-transnational-call-open_en

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