



NEWSLETTER



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Hosted by the Cyclades Chamber of Commerce, the two-day event held on 17 & 18 October 2025 gathered representatives from Spain, Italy, Malta, Greece, and Portugal, alongside European and national stakeholders, to highlight how the resilience of island economies depends on the strength of their primary sector – agriculture, fisheries, and local production.

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More than 60 participants attended **INSULEUR's General Assembly & Annual Forum, entitled "Building Resilience in Island Economies through Sustainable Agriculture."** Discussions focused on the pivotal role of the primary sector in ensuring the resilience and self-sufficiency of island regions. Three thematic sessions explored innovation, sustainability, and EU policy alignment. Renowned speakers discussed the integration of renewable energy and digital tools into agriculture, the protection of traditional varieties, and the need to link research with small-scale production. They underlined that islands can lead Europe's green transition by applying circular economy models, advancing the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem Nexus, empowering women farmers, and coupling tourism with sustainable agriculture. Speakers also called for the introduction of a permanent Island Clause in EU legislation, improved policy coordination between DG REGIO and DG AGRI, and enhanced access to funding for island SMEs and cooperatives. Taking advantage of the presence of key institutional representatives, and following a proposal by the General Secretariat for Aegean and Island Policy, a high-level technical meeting was held to establish a common approach between national and European bodies for the promotion and support of island entrepreneurship at the European level.

The Syros Declaration: A Landmark Stand for EU Islands

The Network of the Insular Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the EU (INSULEUR) has officially released the Syros Declaration. This position paper arrives at a critical juncture as the European Commission outlines the **post-2027 programming period**, demanding that the **unique structural realities of islands be placed at the heart of EU policy**. The Declaration places strong emphasis on connectivity as a fundamental right, encompassing transport, digital infrastructure and energy access. It also underlines the need for flexible emergency mechanisms tailored to insular vulnerability, addressing climate risks, natural disasters and economic shocks. Crucially, it highlights the importance of decentralised investment models that support sustainability, climate neutrality, circular economy solutions and nature-based approaches adapted to island ecosystems. The Syros Declaration is not merely a policy position – it is a strategic roadmap for ensuring that Europe's islands are fully equipped to contribute to the Union's green, digital and social transitions. For INSULEUR and its members, it marks a decisive step toward a future where islands are no longer treated as peripheral, but recognised as essential partners in Europe's cohesion, sustainability and resilience agenda.



The Syros Declaration: A Call for a Dedicated EU Strategy for Islands Beyond 2027

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As the European Union prepares its post-2027 policy framework, the Syros Declaration, adopted by INSULEUR, sets out a clear and urgent message: **Europe's islands must be recognised as a distinct territorial category, with dedicated policy tools and long-term strategic vision.** European islands face permanent structural constraints — geographic isolation, limited connectivity, higher operational costs, administrative complexity and vulnerability to external shocks. These challenges are well-established under Article 174 TFEU, yet current EU policy responses remain fragmented, sector-based and insufficiently adapted to insular realities. As a result, island economies continue to experience unequal access to funding, disproportionate administrative burdens and limited investment capacity, particularly for SMEs and micro-enterprises, which form the backbone of island economic life.

At the same time, islands represent strategic assets for the European Union. They are central to Mediterranean stability, maritime security, blue economy leadership, biodiversity protection, renewable energy development and sustainable tourism models. Far from being peripheral, islands are laboratories of resilience and innovation — yet without a coherent policy framework, their full potential remains underutilised.

Through the Syros Declaration, INSULEUR calls for a **structured, long-term and legally recognised EU approach to island development**, moving beyond scattered measures across Cohesion Policy, sectoral funds and temporary initiatives. This approach must be built on principles of **territorial fairness, guaranteed connectivity, proportional access to funding, SME-centred economic support, simplified procedures and participatory governance, with island actors formally involved in policymaking and implementation.**

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In its concluding call to action, INSULEUR expresses serious concern over recent policy signals suggesting the merging of island priorities with broader “coastal communities” frameworks. Such an approach risks diluting the **specific, permanent handicaps of islands by grouping them with mainland territories that do not share the same structural constraints.** INSULEUR therefore firmly calls on the European Commission to maintain a distinct policy pathway for islands and to honour its earlier commitment to launch a dedicated EU Strategy for Islands, developed through an inclusive consultation process and embedded at the core of the Union's territorial cohesion objectives.

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You can access the full article here: https://www.insuleur.org/noticia.php?Cod_not=327
Syros declaration: https://www.insuleur.org/documentos/D_715.pdf

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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**



After three years of implementation, the I-STARS Project (Island Sustainable Tourism Action through Resilient SMEs) is officially concluding!

Coordinated by INSULEUR and implemented together with long-standing partners and friends of our network – the Chamber of Commerce of Mallorca, OTIE and the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry – the project supported 125 tourism SMEs across European islands in their journey toward sustainability through direct grants and many more through free tools and training.

Final Event in Mallorca

The closing conference took place in Mallorca in early November 2025, highlighting the project's achievements and the long-term value it brings to island tourism stakeholders.

"Welcome Back" Event in Athens

On 4 December 2025, INSULEUR hosted a dedicated "Welcome Back" session at the Union of Hellenic Chambers, bringing together Greek SMEs and sustainability consultants to exchange experiences, discuss results, and reflect on the project's added value.

Free Tools Available to all SMEs

Although I-STARS is coming to an end on 31/12/2025, its key tools remain free and accessible:

- the e-Library: <https://istars-virtual-library.pages.dev/>
- the self-monitoring tool for tourism SMEs: <https://eu.jotform.com/app/233484433886366>
- the e-learning platform with free training courses and webinars in 4 languages: <https://istars.talentlms.com/plus/login>

These resources support SMEs in embedding sustainable practices – fully aligned with INSULEUR's mission to strengthen island economies, promote competitiveness, and foster sustainable development.

Coming Soon – Video & Flipbook!

To celebrate the work of all participating SMEs, a dedicated flipbook and a video featuring their testimonies will be released before the end of the year.

Follow the project's social media channels to stay updated:

- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ISTARSproject>
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/i-stars/>

A heartfelt thank you to the dedicated sustainability consultants who guided the SMEs every step of the way and to all the participating SMEs for their commitment, enthusiasm, and hard work toward embracing a more sustainable future.

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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

On 20 November 2025, partners of the MED-Routes Project gathered in Athens for a Project meeting, hosted by INSULEUR. As the project approaches its conclusion on 31 March 2026, the meeting marked an important milestone, showcasing the solid collaboration, rich exchanges, and tangible results achieved so far. During the meeting, partners reviewed progress on the pilot actions, communication activities, and strategic outputs developed throughout the project. A central highlight was the presentation of the eco-itineraries promotional videos and interactive maps, illustrating how slow, responsible, and culturally rooted tourism can both preserve heritage and create meaningful experiences for visitors and local communities.

You may explore these videos, maps, and all public project results here:

<https://med-routes.interreg-euro-med.eu/what-we-achieve/>

Forum on the “Routes of the Olive Tree”

The following day, INSULEUR organised a dedicated Forum focusing on the Routes of the Olive Tree, bringing together stakeholders, experts, and local actors to discuss the cultural significance of the olive tree, the potential for micro-eco-itinerary development, and opportunities for sustainable cultural tourism across Mediterranean territories.

The discussions highlighted the importance of cultural identity, community involvement, and heritage safeguarding – core principles at the heart of the MED-Routes vision.

Explore the MED-Routes Knowledge Base

As MED-Routes moves toward its final months, we invite all stakeholders, tourism professionals, public authorities, and cultural organisations to explore the project’s website, which hosts valuable resources, methodologies, strategies, and tools for the development of sustainable cultural itineraries:

<https://med-routes.interreg-euro-med.eu/>

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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:

LIFE – Strategic Nature & Integrated Projects (SNaPs/SIPs) (Island-relevant nature/climate work that underpins sustainable tourism)

- What it funds: large-scale LIFE projects implementing climate/nature/environment plans and strategies (very relevant for Mediterranean islands where ecosystem resilience + climate adaptation directly supports sustainable tourism).
- Who can apply: eligible public/private bodies and consortia under LIFE two-stage rules (concept note → full proposal).
- Deadline: Full proposals: **5 March 2026** (for the two-stage SNaPs/SIPs calls).
- Official page: https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/funding-opportunities/calls-proposals/strategic-nature-and-integrated-projects-sip-clima-0_en

CALL 2:

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

- What it funds: "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

CALL 3:

BlueActionBANOS – Open Call for Transition Agendas (Blue Economy & Sustainable Tourism)

- What it funds: development of Transition Agendas supporting the sustainable transformation of blue economy sectors, including sustainable coastal and island tourism, marine ecosystem protection and climate resilience.
- Who can apply: public authorities, chambers, clusters, SMEs, research organisations, NGOs and other stakeholders from any EU country, active in the blue economy and coastal/island development.
- Deadline: **16 March 2026, 17:00 CET**
- Official call page: <https://opportunities.getonepass.eu/applications/bab/start>

VISIT OUR WEBSITE TO READ MORE ON CURRENT AND UPCOMING PROJECTS & EVENTS

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<https://www.insuleur.org/>

