



PRESS RELEASE

INSULEUR calls for a Dedicated EU Islands Strategy following High-Level Hearing at the European Economic and Social Committee

Chios, 23 January 2026

On Friday 16 January 2026, a high-level public hearing entitled “Strengthening Cohesion and Connectivity: Policy Solutions for EU Islands” was held at the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), under the auspices of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The hearing brought together Members of the European Parliament, representatives of EU institutions, national and regional authorities, social partners, experts and island stakeholders from across Europe, including Ioannis Vardakastanis (EESC), Giannis Roussos (INSULEUR), Elena Calistru (EESC), Eleni Marianou (CoE), Vangelis Meimarakis (EP, SEARICA), Tonino Picula (EP, SEARICA), Fredis Beleris (EP), Marie-Antoinette Maupertuis (CoR), Hugo Sobral (EC) and Eleftherios Kechagioglou (HSIN), to examine the structural challenges faced by EU islands and to explore policy solutions aimed at improving accessibility, territorial cohesion and sustainable development. Their participation underscored the strong institutional and political engagement around the future of EU island territories.

INSULEUR was represented by its President, Giannis Roussos, who intervened on behalf of the Network of Insular Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the European Union, conveying the long-standing positions of island chambers and SMEs regarding the future of Europe’s island territories.

In his intervention, Mr Roussos welcomed the EESC’s preliminary opinion and stressed that island territories require a systemic and cross-sectoral policy approach, rather than fragmented or sector-specific measures. He underlined that effective EU policy for islands - including outermost regions, peripheral island regions and lake regions - must address connectivity, economic diversification, social cohesion, environmental sustainability, resilience and geopolitical preparedness in an integrated manner.

Across the interventions from MEPs, institutional representatives and island stakeholders, a clear and converging message emerged:

There is an urgent need for a **dedicated EU Islands Strategy**, supported by a **robust legislative framework**.

Speakers widely agreed on the necessity to establish:

- a **European Islands Strategy (Islands Pact)** providing a coherent long-term policy framework, and
- a legally grounded **Islands Act** or “**insularity clause**”, ensuring that the specific constraints and permanent disadvantages of islands are systematically taken into account across all EU policies.



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Such a framework would enable ex ante assessment of the impact of EU legislation on island territories, similar to existing SME or rural proofing mechanisms, and ensure tailored solutions in key areas such as transport, energy, state aid, housing, labour markets, climate adaptation and economic competitiveness.

“EU islands do not need fragmented solutions. They need a systemic, cross-sectoral approach that recognises insularity as a permanent condition. A dedicated EU Islands Strategy, supported by an Islands Act, is essential to ensure that European policies truly work for island businesses, workers and communities”

Giannis Roussos, President of INSULEUR

For INSULEUR, the hearing confirmed that Europe's islands are not peripheral spaces, but strategic European assets - essential to territorial cohesion, maritime security, climate adaptation, innovation and the green and blue economy. Strengthening islands means strengthening Europe as a whole.

INSULEUR welcomes the strong political momentum generated by this hearing and reiterates its readiness to actively contribute to the design and implementation of a future EU Islands Strategy, ensuring that the voice of island SMEs and chambers of commerce is fully integrated into European policymaking



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