



**8th INSULEUR FORUM
(LA REUNION, October 29th – November 1st 2008)
Common Declaration**

Whereas the economic structure of islands is characterized by a real mono-activity, a poor economic diversification, a seasonality of the activities, and a weak penetration of innovation in SMEs;

Whereas islands suffer from strong researchers, laboratories and patents shortages;

Whereas compared to the situation on the continent, islands are in a backward position as regards R&D, except in cases where there is a voluntarist policy from public authorities, or in others where a sector is so economically important that it allows to reach a threshold likely to create or support research activities;

Whereas innovation has become one of the cardinal principles of the policies and programs in the EU, more particularly through Structural Funds, State Aids, or CIP (Competitiveness & Innovation Program);

Whereas the EESC adopted, on 10/07/08, an opinion on “A better integration in the internal market as key factor for cohesion and growth for islands”;

Whereas ESPON will launch a study on “The development of the Islands - European Islands and Cohesion Policy”;

Whereas the European institutions decided to take into account the question of SMEs, through a “Small Business Act for Europe” aimed at, generally speaking, facilitating their life, and more particularly simplifying their access to innovation;

Whereas the European Commission adopted, on 03/09/08, a strategy for Research and Innovation in support of protecting marine eco-systems and developing sustainable maritime activities;

Whereas the European Commission adopted, on 17/10/08, a communication entitled “Towards world-class clusters in the EU: Implementing the broad-based innovation strategy”;

Whereas 2009 will be the European Year of creativity and innovation.

The INSULEUR Network:

Affirms that innovation should be widely grasped: in fact, it should be understood both in its technological and non-technological aspects. Thus the preservation of

ancestral know-how represents a dimension of innovation which must not be forgotten;

Believes the spreading of the new information and communication technologies in the EU is really an opportunity for the diversification of island economies;

Affirms that islands have a natural environment which is favourable to innovation (for instance: renewable energies, blue biotechnologies ...). Knowing that economic performance and innovation performance are linked, islands have much room to manoeuvre;

Urges public policies to help islands to develop renewable energy resources, to encourage entrepreneurs to resort to them, and to promote an efficient use of energy, while ensuring the protection of the environment and the preservation of natural landscapes;

Asks an easier access of SMEs to R&D, for instance thanks to tools like JEREMIE, or the improvement of their integration in clusters which have to lie within genuine regional innovation partnership strategies;

Asks the reinforcement of public research in order to compensate the weaknesses of private research;

Invites public institutions, on the basis of the actions considered by the Small Business Act for Europe, to favour innovative initiatives in European island SMEs by:

- encouraging cooperations between these SMEs, and with their non-EU counterparts;*
- promoting the upgrading of skills in island SMEs.*