

17 February 2012

Summary

Islands, as regions with severe and permanent natural handicaps, need to be better taken into account in the various European Union policies. Islands need to be paid a “particular attention”, as stated in the treaty on the functioning of the EU (article 174). This principle needs to be implemented in the legislation resulting from the treaty, especially in some key issues for the islands:

- 1. In the framework of the current regional policy and structural funds revision as well as in the regional States aids guidelines.**
- 2. In the tourism sector, which is a key sector for the islands from where the INSULEUR members come from, the EU needs to play an active role, assigned by the Lisbon treaty, in order to give the possibility to the European destinations:**
 - ⇒ to be competitive compared to third countries destinations:
 - by guaranteeing a certain service quality harmonization
 - by promoting quality (through the creation of a “destination Europe” brand for instance) among both European and non-EU tourists
 - ⇒ to help “mature” tourist destinations to avoid “obsolescence”
 - by developing innovation and diversification within the tourism sector
 - ⇒ to ensure that local businesses (especially SMEs), and through them the island territories, fully benefit from tourism.
- 3. Maritime and air transport, which is crucial for islands, needs to take into account the specific characteristics and needs of these territories:**
 - ⇒ The over costs and additional difficulties faced by islanders make them impossible to compete on an equal footing with businesses from the mainland
 - ⇒ European policies and legislations are more expensive and more difficult to implement in the islands (eg: the CO2 reduction objectives)

The UE could compensate part of these handicaps via the competition policy, for example by giving the opportunity for an increasing number of islands to benefit from state aid for regional purposes, or allocating specific derogations in specific areas.

- 4. Even if the EU needs to compensate the imbalances faced by the islands due to their natural characteristics, the EU should also benefit from the assets islands have, especially in the field of renewable energies and sustainable development. The EU must support islands in developing this economic sector through programs, funding and by supporting initiatives such as the “Isle Pact” initiative.**

For each of these issues, INSULEUR proposes in his contribution **several concrete measures** to be taken by the EU. We ask the European institutions to take them into account in the currently discussed legislation and in future EU actions.