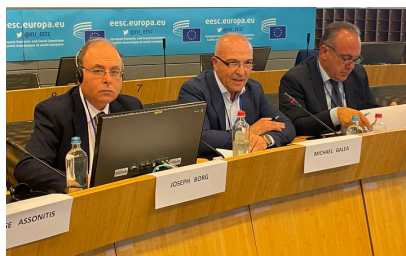




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- STUDY ON THE BUSINESS DEMOGRAPHICS OF EU ISLANDS
- ONGOING PROJECTS

SHAPING FUTURE POLICIES EU Islands and Post-2027 EU Cohesion Policy

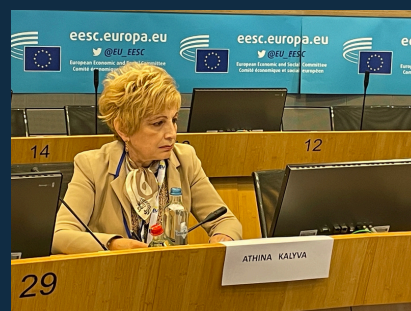


Joseph Borg, President of INSULEUR, presided over the General Assembly, presenting an overview of the Presidency's activities over the past six months. He emphasized the various initiatives aimed at supporting insular communities, particularly in terms of sustainability and resilience efforts. Borg highlighted INSULEUR's effectiveness in advocating for island issues and stressed the importance of continued collaborative efforts. The assembly also included detailed presentations on ongoing EU-funded projects and the approval of the 2023 budget. Key discussions centered on integrating the 'island dimension' into post-2027 EU Cohesion Policy.



The key topic addressed at the General Assembly was the impact of state aid on the competitiveness and attractiveness of island economies. The discussions highlighted the critical need for greater flexibility in state aid rules to account for the unique challenges faced by island regions, such as high dependency on maritime and air transport and the absence of economies of scale. The assembly underscored the importance of adapting EU state aid regulations to support the sustainable development of island territories, ensuring that they can effectively compete and thrive within the broader EU market.

Driving Change: Strategic Advocacy and Prominent Interventions



Notable interventions included Dr. **Athena Kalyva's** analysis of the implications of tax policy on the economic development of EU islands and **George Drakopoulos'** presentation on the challenge of carrying capacity in island destinations, using Santorini as a case study.

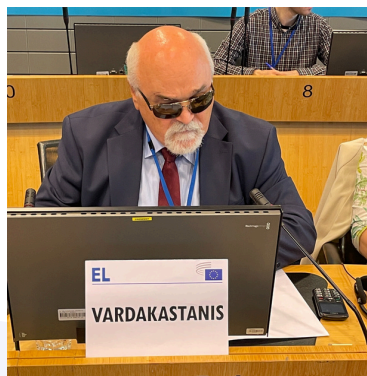
These contributions provided actionable recommendations for enhancing the sustainability and economic viability of island communities.

INSULEUR expressed deep gratitude for the diverse perspectives that shaped the dialogue, marking 24 years of unwavering dedication to promoting the economic and social sustainable development of islands in the EU. The Network remains pivotal in advocating for the interests of EU islands, ensuring their voices resonate at all policy-making levels.

The General Assembly also addressed institutional aspects of the Network, including the extension of the current mandate of the Board of Directors until April 30, 2025, and the election of Luis Padrón, President of the Chamber of Commerce of Gran Canaria, as INSULEUR's 1st Vice-President.



WORKSHOP - HIGHLIGHTS



During the workshop, **Ioannis Vardakastanis**, President of the ECO Section of the EESC, emphasized the necessity of a cohesive and inclusive approach to EU policies that consider the unique challenges of island regions. He advocated for targeted support and the implementation of the Islands Pact, stressing the importance of an integrated, place-based approach to ensure sustainable development for island regions. Vardakastanis highlighted the need for the EU to recognize and address the specific needs of islands to achieve upward economic and social cohesion.

ADDRESSING DESERTIFICATION AND CONNECTIVITY

Eleftherios Kechagioglou, President of the Hellenic Small Islands Network (HSIN), provided an overview of the increasing desertification of islands and the necessity for EU policies to address these issues. He emphasized the importance of inclusive maritime transport and the creation of specific indicators for islands to better integrate them into the broader EU economy. These insights set the stage for further discussions on how to mitigate the unique challenges faced by island communities and promote their economic resilience.

COMMITMENT FROM EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS

Manolis Koutoulakis, Secretary General for Insular Policy and the Aegean, Greek Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy, and **Benoit Nadler**, Deputy Head of Unit – Policy Development and Economic Analysis – Regional Policy – European Commission, acknowledged the concerns raised during the workshop. They demonstrated a commitment to addressing these issues in future policies, highlighting progress made through consultations for the post-2027 period. Both speakers emphasized the crucial role of islands as local partners in the implementation and development of cohesion policy, reinforcing their support for insular communities.

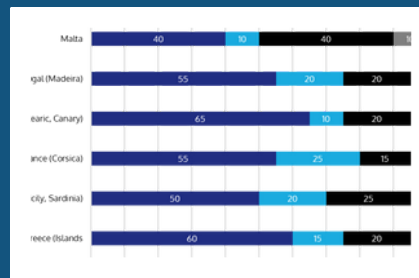
Mrs. **Claire Helly**, Project and Policy Officer at the CPMR Islands Commission, called for the European Commission to recognize the unique needs of islands in the upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework through a Pact for Islands. Her presentation highlighted the CPMR's advocacy work and stressed the necessity of dedicated policy measures for island regions. Additionally, Her Excellency the Ambassador of Greece to Belgium, Mrs. **Sofia Grammata**, made a compelling call to action for EU policymakers to acknowledge and address the specific needs of islands, underscoring the real-world impact of EU policies on island communities.





BUSINESS DEMOGRAPHICS FOR EU ISLANDS

Mrs. Danaí Krokou, Project Officer at INSULEUR, presented insights from the first comprehensive demographic study of insular economies within the EU. This study is critical because it provides detailed data on the dynamics of company births and deaths across island regions, offering a clear picture of economic activity and stability. Understanding these demographics is essential for identifying the unique challenges and opportunities faced by insular economies. The data helps policymakers design targeted interventions to support business growth, improve connectivity infrastructure, and address economic vulnerabilities. By highlighting the specific needs of island economies, this study lays the groundwork for informed policy-making that promotes sustainable development and resilience in these regions. Additionally, Krokou emphasized the need for a dedicated Observatory of insular economies to continuously monitor and analyze these trends, ensuring that the policies remain effective and responsive to the evolving economic landscape.



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ONGOING PROJECTS

The **MED-Routes** Project Advances with Key Milestones:

This EU-funded project focuses on developing eco-itineraries within the Mediterranean region, emphasizing sustainable tourism and the rich cultural heritage of the area included within 4 of the cultural Routes of the Council of Europe by incorporating innovative practices

Throughout this period, we have hosted several productive meetings with project partners and the Sustainable Tourism **Interreg EURO-Med** community in Faenza, Rome, and Varna. These collaborations have been instrumental in shaping the project's direction and ensuring its successful implementation. The project is now in full swing, with numerous activities completed and ongoing. Some of the key achievements to date:

Micro-Itinerary Development: Locations and detailed information for the Mediterranean regions involved have been identified, setting the stage for immersive cultural slow-tourism experiences.

Operator Assessment: An assessment of identified operators in these regions has been drafted, ensuring that the best possible partners are involved in delivering high-quality, sustainable tourism services.

Service Mapping and Best Practices: Key services and best practices have been mapped, providing a comprehensive overview of the resources available and their potential impact on cultural tourism and mediterranean heritage

Circular Economy Toolkit: A transnational working group toolkit aimed at integrating circular economy principles into the cultural routes is in development. This working group, which has already convened once, is scheduled to meet again in Paphos before the end of the year.

Additionally, the MED-Routes project has maintained a strong focus on minimizing its environmental impact. Regular carbon footprint reports have been generated to monitor and reduce the project's ecological footprint.

Communication efforts have also been robust. The project website is now live, offering extensive information about the Projects, its goals, and progress. Moreover, the project's Facebook page provides ongoing updates and engages with a broader audience interested in cultural heritage and sustainable tourism initiatives.

For more information about MED-Routes and to stay updated with the latest news, please visit our website <https://med-routes.interreg-euro-med.eu/or> and follow us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MEDRoutes/>

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ONGOING PROJECTS

I-STARS Project Reaches Halfway Milestone



Funded by the European Union, the **I-STARS Project** which INSULEUR is implementing, aims to support the sustainability journey of tourism SMEs located on islands in Ireland, Italy, Spain, Greece, and Cyprus. Having reached the halfway point in its three-year timeline, the project has already achieved considerable success, with more promising developments on the horizon.

Over the past year and a half, island tourism SMEs have actively engaged with I-STARS by applying for grants designed to assist them in adopting or enhancing **sustainable practices and/or achieving sustainability certifications**.

We are delighted to announce that the grants have now been awarded, marking the commencement of the technical assistance phase where expert sustainability consultants will now begin working closely with the SMEs, providing tailored support to ensure the effective implementation of sustainable strategies. In addition to the grant program, **I-STARS offers six free online training courses** specifically developed for tourism SMEs. These courses cover a range of themes essential to **sustainable tourism practices**, equipping businesses with the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in a sustainable future. We encourage all tourism SMEs to take advantage of these valuable educational resources which also include Live Webinar series, delving deep into sustainable tourism practices, designed to provide invaluable insights and practical knowledge for tourism SMEs. I-STARS Project Reaches Halfway Milestone

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Looking ahead, I-STARS is also set to launch a **free access e-library**, which will house a wealth of resources tailored to the needs of tourism SMEs. This digital library will serve as a comprehensive repository of information, tools, and best practices, further supporting the journey towards sustainability.

In a recent development, project partners convened in Dublin to discuss the next steps and future activities of I-STARS. This meeting was pivotal in refining our strategies and ensuring the successful implementation of the project as we move into the second half of its timeline.

For more information Follow I-STARS on [Facebook](#) & [LinkedIn](#) and stay up to date with news on Sustainable Tourism.

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ONGOING PROJECTS



Mediterranean Islands
for Sustainable Agriculture



The "**Mediterranean Islands for Sustainable Agriculture**" (**MESA**) **project**, overseen by the Network of Insular Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the European Union (INSULEUR), aims to raise awareness about the sustainable agri-food products and production methods from three Mediterranean islands. Key milestones of the MESA project include the development of a comprehensive **communication plan** and **public relations activities** designed to inform the German public about the sustainability aspects of these products. Additionally, the **organization of the upcoming trade fairs in Germany** is a significant milestone. These fairs will serve as a platform to showcase the **sustainable agricultural practices** and products of the Mediterranean islands, facilitating **B2B interactions** and expanding **market reach**. Our efforts aim to increase knowledge and perception among German consumers and create a robust ecosystem of committed producers, ultimately aiming for a substantial economic impact through enhanced exports and market presence in Germany.

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

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