

# NEWSLETTER



ISSUE 32



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On April 4, 2025, Joseph Borg, President of INSULEUR, will deliver the opening greeting at a public hearing addressing how European Cohesion Policy can mitigate the economic impacts of climate change on island regions. Taking place at the EESC in Brussels, this session is part of the upcoming INSULEUR 2025 Spring General Assembly & Workshop, co-organized with the European Federation of Small Islands (ESIN).

As climate change continues to threaten the world's coastlines, islands stand at the forefront of this global challenge. Rising sea levels, stronger storms, and shifts in marine ecosystems all pose urgent threats to island communities. Under the leadership of President Joseph Borg, INSULEUR is taking decisive steps to turn these challenges into opportunities for sustainable growth and resilience.

A major milestone on this journey is the upcoming INSULEUR 2025 Spring General Assembly & Workshop, set for April 4, 2025, at the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in Brussels. Organized in partnership with the European Federation of Small Islands (ESIN), the event will feature a public hearing dedicated to exploring how European Cohesion Policy can mitigate the economic impacts of climate change on island regions. By gathering representatives from the European Commission, Members of the European Parliament, and stakeholders across insular municipalities, INSULEUR is creating a platform for collaboration and action.

President Borg has highlighted INSULEUR's commitment to bringing innovative strategies to the table. These include developing marine-based technologies, enhancing renewable energy use, and safeguarding local ecosystems. The upcoming workshop will serve as a key forum for exchanging best practices, building new partnerships, and crafting policy recommendations that can be implemented across the EU.

By championing climate resilience and sustainability, INSULEUR underscores the vital role of island regions in shaping Europe's green transition. Through collaboration, shared expertise, and forward-thinking policy, President Borg and INSULEUR continue to drive progress that not only protects island communities, but also inspires broader action in the face of climate change.



### INSULEUR 2025 SPRING GENERAL ASSEMBLY & WORKSHOP - 4.4.2024

Join the Network of Insular Chambers of the EU (INSULEUR), in partnership with the European Federation of Small Islands (ESIN), for a pivotal discussion on how European Cohesion Policy can mitigate the economic impacts of climate change on European islands.

**Date:** 04.04. 2025  
**Venue:** Brussels, EESC  
**Time:** 09:00 - 10:20 General Assembly (members only)  
 10:30 - 13:00 Workshop

This event brings together key stakeholders from the European Commission, Members of the European Parliament, the ECO Section of the EESC, the Committee of Regions, and representatives from insular municipalities and Chambers of Commerce and Industry. Engage in dialogue that shapes the future of island regions in Europe.

**Your participation matters—be part of the change.**



## INTERVIEW BY CRISTIANO ERRIU, SECRETARY GENERAL OF CAGLIARI - ORISTANO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



**Southern-Central Sardinia has a rich history and a diverse economy. How do you view the balance between preserving traditional sectors (such as agriculture and tourism) and fostering innovation in the island's economic development?**

The Chamber of Commerce of Cagliari-Oristano views the balance between preserving traditional sectors and fostering innovation as crucial for sustainable economic development. Traditional sectors like agriculture and tourism are integral to the region's identity and economy. However, fostering innovation is essential to enhance competitiveness and adapt to global market changes. The Chamber supports local businesses by promoting innovation, competitiveness, and internationalization while ensuring that traditional sectors are preserved and modernized through sustainable practices and technological advancements. Initiatives like the Premio Montiferru, which celebrates excellence in olive oil production, highlight the importance of maintaining traditional agricultural practices while encouraging innovation and quality improvement.

**What specific challenges does Southern-Central Sardinia face as an island economy, and how is the Chamber working to address these challenges for local businesses?**

Sardinia faces several challenges as an island economy, including limited access to markets, high transportation costs, and dependency on specific sectors. The Chamber of Commerce addresses these challenges by facilitating access to financing, promoting training and innovation, and creating networking and internationalization opportunities. Additionally, the Chamber collaborates with regional and international partners to enhance infrastructure, streamline administrative procedures, and provide fiscal incentives through Special Economic Zones (SEZs). The QMExport project for the blue and green economy is a significant initiative that supports the internationalization and digitalization of local businesses, helping them overcome market access barriers.

**Sustainability is becoming a more important strategic priority for businesses worldwide. INSULEUR and the Southern-Central Sardinia Chamber of Commerce are currently collaborating on projects aimed at sustainability (e.g., MESA). How are Southern-Central Sardinia businesses adapting to these sustainability initiatives, and what role does your Chamber play in promoting green business practices?**





Southern-Central Sardinia businesses are increasingly adapting to sustainability initiatives by integrating eco-friendly practices and technologies into their operations. The Chamber of Commerce plays a pivotal role in promoting green business practices by providing support through consulting services, training, and financial incentives for investments in sustainable technologies.

Projects like MESA, in collaboration with INSULEUR, focus on promoting sustainable agriculture, helping businesses transition to more sustainable models. The Bilancio di Sostenibilità ESG project is another key initiative that encourages businesses to adopt comprehensive sustainability reporting, enhancing transparency and accountability in environmental, social, and governance practices.

**How has Southern-Central Sardinia's economy been affected by recent global developments, such as the pandemic or economic crises, and which strategies are being implemented to ensure resilience for the future?**

Southern-Central Sardinia's economy has been significantly affected by recent global developments, including the pandemic and economic crises. The Chamber of Commerce has implemented strategies to ensure resilience, such as facilitating access to financing, promoting digitalization, and supporting innovation. Additionally, the Chamber provides training and consulting services to help businesses adapt to new market conditions and enhance their competitiveness. The focus is on building a more resilient economy that can withstand future shocks. The eINS Spoke 4 project is a notable initiative that provides coaching and mentoring to local businesses, helping them strengthen their economic and financial structures and access capital markets more effectively.

**Looking ahead, which sectors do you believe hold the greatest potential for Southern-Central Sardinia's economic growth, and how can the Chamber support businesses wishing to expand or innovate in these areas?**

The sectors with the greatest potential for Southern-Central Sardinia's economic growth include sustainable tourism, high-quality agri-food, renewable energies, environmental technologies, digital technologies, and advanced services. The Chamber of Commerce supports businesses wishing to expand or innovate in these areas by providing access to financing, promoting training and innovation, and creating networking and internationalization opportunities. The Chamber also collaborates with regional and international partners to enhance infrastructure and provide fiscal incentives through SEZs. The above mentioned QMExport project and the eINS Spoke 4 project are examples of initiatives that support businesses in these high-potential sectors by facilitating internationalization and providing access to innovative financial solutions.

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# ONGOING PROJECTS



## MESA Project Events in Munich: INSULEUR Leading the Way

INSULEUR recently took center stage at the **MESA project's** events at the **Kustermann Center in Munich**, demonstrating its leadership in advancing **sustainable island economies** and fostering international cooperation. Collaborating closely with its partner Chambers from Rethymno (Crete), Cagliari-Oristano (Sardinia), and Mallorca (Balearic Islands), INSULEUR orchestrated a series of impactful activities that strengthened **commercial ties and showcased the unique value of EU island regions**.

### B2B Events

A standout feature of the visit was a series of B2B sessions that **brought together island-based producers, traders, and potential partners from across Europe**. These meetings forged new business relationships, explored collaborative ventures, and helped expand the market reach of island products.

### Press Conference

INSULEUR, alongside representatives from the partner Chambers, hosted a **press conference** to highlight the MESA project's objectives and achievements. Attendees, including media outlets and industry stakeholders, learned about the **project's focus on sustainability, innovation, and generating lasting economic benefits for island communities**.

### Gastronomy Workshop

Rounding out the Munich events was a gastronomy workshop. Participants tasted **local island delicacies** and gained insights into **culinary traditions shaped by each island's distinct environment**. This interactive session underscored the vital role of **preserving local culture and encouraging sustainable practices** within the EU agri-food sector.

These initiatives illustrate INSULEUR's commitment—together with the Chambers of Rethymno, Cagliari-Oristano, and Mallorca—to drive economic growth, foster collaboration, and advance the strategic aims of the MESA project. Further updates on MESA-related activities and outcomes will be shared in future communications.

For more information on the MESA project visit our website:

<https://www.sustainagrislands.eu/> and our Facebook page: [MESA](#)

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## ONGOING PROJECTS



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### THE I-STARS PROJECT ENTERS FINAL YEAR: 125 Island Tourism SMEs on Track for Sustainability Certification

As the **I-STARS project**—Island Sustainable Tourism Action through Resilient SMEs—enters its final year, **125 insular tourism SMEs from Greece, Cyprus, Italy, Spain, and Ireland** have reported significant progress in their sustainability journeys. **Many of these businesses are on track to achieve certification by July 2025**, reflecting their commitment to sustainable tourism practices.

The I-STARS project has provided these SMEs with tailored support, including grants of up to €5,600, to implement sustainable innovations. Participating businesses have engaged in capacity-building activities, adopted best practices in resource management, and utilized monitoring tools to assess their environmental and social impacts. This comprehensive approach has empowered them to enhance their operational efficiency, reduce their ecological footprint, and contribute positively to their local communities.

To further support these efforts, **I-STARS offers among other FREE valuable resources to all tourism SMEs:**

- **E-Library:** A comprehensive collection of best practices, transferable tools, and models for sustainable tourism, including certification schemes suitable for the industry. Explore the e-library to enhance your sustainability initiatives: <https://istars-virtual-library.pages.dev/>
- **E-Learning Courses:** Free, customized courses tailored for tourism enterprises, covering topics such as energy management, waste management, water management, food-waste management, stakeholder engagement, and digital upskilling to record customer experience and feedback. These courses are designed to boost your knowledge and skills in sustainability: <https://istars.talentlms.com/plus/login>

By leveraging these tools, tourism SMEs can start and/or continue to advance their sustainability practices, contributing to a more resilient and eco-friendly tourism ecosystem. Check them out!



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# ONGOING PROJECTS

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## MED-Routes



**The MED-Routes Project Accelerates Sustainable Tourism in the Mediterranean with Eco-Itineraries and Circular Practices**

The **MED-Routes project** is making strides in transforming Mediterranean tourism through sustainability and circular economy practices. By developing eco-itineraries within four Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, the project promotes **low-impact, locally driven tourism** that respects heritage and the environment.

As the Project enters its **2nd year of implementation**, key achievements include among other the completion of its second Transnational Working Group meeting in Paphos, the successful implementation of **6 participatory labs** gathering close to **150 stakeholders** in Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Croatia and Cyprus, the creation of a **Joint Roadmap for Cultural Routes**, and the launch of a Carbon Footprint Monitoring Tool. Stakeholder consultations have shaped draft eco-itineraries, while a **Green Label** is being designed to recognize sustainable tourism operators. A strong **communication strategy** has also been implemented, boosting visibility through digital platforms.

Looking ahead to **2025**, the project will finalize **two eco-itineraries per Cultural Route**, develop a **Transnational Strategy for Sustainable Practices**, and launch **capacity-building training for stakeholders**. The Green Label framework will be refined, ensuring long-term sustainability. Through these efforts, **MED-Routes is paving the way for a responsible, culturally rich tourism model that benefits both communities and visitors**. Visit the Project's website to view the Project video which was just released and stay up to date with more news and info: <https://med-routes.interreg-euro-med.eu/what-we-do/>

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# ONGOING PROJECTS

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CAROUSEL

IPA ADRION



## CAROUSEL Project Launches in Gerace to Foster Circular Lifestyles in the Adriatic-Ionian Region

*Sustainability*

The **CAROUSEL** project—Creating A Market Place for Up-cycled Products Second Life—officially commenced with a successful **kick-off meeting in Gerace, Italy**, in November 2024. Hosted in this historic village, the meeting gathered all the project partners to set the groundwork for fostering circular lifestyles in small communities across the Adriatic-Ionian region. Discussions focused on the project's main objectives, including the **development of a marketplace for upcycled products** and strategies to promote sustainable practices at the local level.

The project has also launched its **official website** at <https://carousel.interreg-ipa-adrion.eu/> providing comprehensive information on objectives, partners, and upcoming activities. To engage with the community and share updates, CAROUSEL has also established a presence on social media:

- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/CarouselAdrion/>
- **Instagram:** [https://www.instagram.com/carousel\\_adrion/](https://www.instagram.com/carousel_adrion/)

These platforms will feature news, events, and insights into the project's progress, fostering interaction with stakeholders and the public. Follow to stay up to date !

By creating local circular ecosystems, CAROUSEL seeks to pilot approaches that encourage behavioural changes among citizens, enterprises, and local public authorities, contributing to a greener and more sustainable Adriatic-Ionian region.

# NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS



In 2014, the Heraklion Chamber laid the groundwork to develop two dedicated Diving Parks in the Heraklion Regional Unit. Collaborating with local municipalities and partners, the Chamber formed “DIVING PARKS,” a non-profit organization focused solely on creating, managing, and operating sustainable underwater parks.

Early activities included environmental impact studies, seabed mapping, and close cooperation with the Ephorate of Underwater Antiquities. Intensive research pinpointed two optimal locations—Mononaftis in Malevizi and Stalis in Hersonissos—making these the first licensed diving parks in Greece. Each site will host floating markers, mooring buoys, artificial reefs, and multiple diving routes to enhance recreational opportunities and protect marine biodiversity.

The establishment of these Diving Parks not only marks a significant step in marine tourism but also demonstrates the region's commitment to sustainable development. The diving parks' unique design features will allow visitors to explore underwater ecosystems while minimizing human impact on delicate marine habitats. The artificial habitats—created using advanced reef technology—will encourage biodiversity regeneration, providing a sanctuary for marine life. Through its structured collaboration with the Ephorate of Underwater Antiquities, the project addresses environmental conservation as well as the enrichment of Greece's cultural and natural heritage. The underwater locations of both parks are rich in biodiversity, and the introduction of artificial reefs aims to strengthen marine ecosystems and improve diving conditions. These parks are also expected to become important educational platforms, providing enhanced opportunities for scientific research, education, and environmental awareness. By hosting diving certifications and guided tours, these parks will serve as centers for both recreational and educational interaction with marine life. The project comes as part of the wider regional efforts to promote sustainable tourism and open new avenues for divers and eco-tourists. Visitors will not only get a unique perspective of the Cretan coast but also contribute to the preservation of the region's marine environments through responsible tourism practices. In addition to the ecological benefits, the parks will foster local economic growth, creating new job opportunities in the diving, hospitality, and tourism industries. The Heraklion Chamber anticipates that the diving parks will draw international attention and establish the region as one of Europe's premier diving destinations. Once fully operational, the two diving parks will feature state-of-the-art facilities to enhance the visitor experience. These will include safety measures such as trained staff, mooring systems, and improved accessibility for even novice divers. The continuous monitoring of each park, coupled with regular surveys, will ensure their ongoing sustainability and success for future generations to enjoy.





# OPEN CALLS

JANUARY 2025

## EU Funding Opportunity for the Promotion of European Agricultural Products



The European Commission's Research Executive Agency (REA) is now accepting applications for its "Promotion of EU Agricultural Products" funding call. This program aims to increase the visibility and competitiveness of European agri-food products both within the EU and around the globe, and offers substantial co-financing to help reduce overall project costs. Submit your proposal by **23 April 2025**.

### Why Apply?

- **Expand Market Presence:** Strengthen brand recognition for your products, whether you're seeking to reach new markets or reinforce your foothold in existing ones.
- **Showcase Quality:** Highlight the safety, sustainability, and distinctive qualities of EU agricultural products through targeted campaigns and events.
- **Foster Collaboration:** Form strategic alliances, build cross-border networks, and share best practices with other producers, trade bodies, and sector stakeholders.

### Key Details

- **Eligible Activities:** Marketing campaigns, trade events, promotional initiatives, and other actions that spotlight the unique advantages of EU agri-food products.
- **Who Can Apply:** Trade bodies, producer associations, chambers, and other entities within the agri-food sector.
- **Funding Information:** Generous co-financing options are available, significantly reducing project expenses.

Don't miss this opportunity to boost your product's visibility and establish new partnerships. For detailed information and application guidelines, please visit the official REA page:

[Promotion of Agricultural Products – REA.](#)

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

Read More



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

