

## INSULEUR Workshop Highlights the Critical Role of the European Cohesion Policy for the mitigation and adaptation of climate change to EU Islands Economies

**Brussels, April 4, 2025** – On the same day as its General Assembly, the Network of the Insular Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the European Union (INSULEUR) held a hybrid workshop entitled “Impacts of Climate Change on Insular Economies: How the EU Cohesion Policy Can Support Resilience and Adaptation.” The event took place at the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in Brussels, in partnership with the EESC and with the cooperation of the CPMR Islands Commission and the European Small Islands Federation (ESIN).

The workshop opened with a welcome address by Mr. **Giannis Roussos**, newly elected President of INSULEUR, who highlighted the urgency of addressing the unique vulnerabilities of EU islands in the face of climate change. Emphasizing the vital role of the EU Cohesion Policy in supporting island adaptation and resilience, Mr. Roussos called for better representation of islands in policy discussions and the need for dedicated tools to ensure their long-term sustainability. He expressed gratitude to the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the Greek Deputy Minister of Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy Mr. Stefanos Gkikas, and the Secretary General of the Ministry Mr. Manolis Koutoulakis for their enduring support.

The workshop brought together experts, policymakers, and stakeholders from various sectors to delve into the pressing issues faced by EU islands and to discuss strategies for ensuring these regions are adequately represented and supported in future EU policies. The workshop also highlighted the urgent challenges faced by island communities due to climate change—particularly the growing threats to key sectors such as tourism, transport, and energy. Speakers discussed ways in which a tailored EU Cohesion Policy could address these vulnerabilities, helping insular areas to build resilience and foster sustainable growth.

### Key Points from the Workshop:

- **Introductory Remarks:**

Mr. **Ioannis Vardakastanis**, President of the EESC ECO Section, and Mr. **Stefanos Gkikas**, Deputy Minister of Maritime Affairs & Insular Policy, opened the workshop alongside the newly elected President of INSULEUR, Mr **Giannis Roussos**. They underscored how island economies need targeted, long-term support to adapt to the escalating impacts of climate change.

- **Keynote Presentation:**

Professor **Judit Carrillo** from the University of La Laguna (Canary Islands) provided an overview of climate-related challenges confronting island communities, emphasizing how geographic isolation can amplify the effects of rising temperatures, changing weather patterns, and coastal erosion.

- **Islanders' Voices:**

Moderated by Ms. **Irene Mikelis** (Project Officer, INSULEUR), this session featured Ms. **Claire Helly** (CPMR Islands Commission), Mr. **Eleftherios Kechagioglou** (President, Hellenic Small Islands Network), Capt. **Panagiotis Foinikis** (Graduate of Merchant Navy, Academy Club), Mr. **Gaetano Attilio Nastasi** (Member Board, Chamber of Commerce of Cagliari-Oristano), Mr. **Giovanni Satta** (Environment Department, Sardinia Region), and Mr. **Emanuele Cabras** (EuroMed Cooperation Advisor, Chamber of Commerce of Cagliari-Oristano). Together, they shared concrete examples of how climate change directly affects island livelihoods, underscoring the need for stronger digital connectivity, green infrastructure, and specialized funding to address environmental and economic pressures.

- **European Institutions' Responses:**

Moderated by Mr. **Manolis Koutoulakis**, Secretary General at the Ministry of Maritime Affairs & Insular Policy, speakers from European institutions—including Ms. **Gergana Miladinova** (DG REGIO, European Commission), Ms. **Céline Ollier** (Head of Task for Climate Change Adaptation, European Court of Auditors) and Mr. **Ioannis Vardakastanis** (President of the EESC ECO Section) discussed existing and forthcoming EU initiatives.

They stressed among others the importance of:

- Integrating an “island dimension” into post-2027 Cohesion Policy
- Streamlining funding mechanisms for climate adaptation projects
- Enhancing collaboration among EU bodies, national governments, and island stakeholders

Participants collectively agreed that adapting Cohesion Policy tools to the unique characteristics of islands—such as geographical remoteness and smaller-scale economies—remains crucial for ensuring sustainable development and resilience across these territories.

**Looking Ahead:** The recognition of islands and outermost regions in the Mid-term Review of Cohesion Policy and the committing to launching a consultation process for a dedicated Island Strategy, alongside an updated Strategy for Outermost Regions recently announced by Commissioner Fitto, was acknowledged unanimously by attendees and speakers as marking a critical policy shift, reinforcing the importance of tailored EU support for island economies. They welcomed this development and confirmed their commitment to ensuring that this recognition leads to concrete policy measures and funding.

**INSULEUR** welcomed this commitment and will continue advocating concrete actions to translate policy recognition into real economic and social benefits for islands.

**INSULEUR** also extends its heartfelt appreciation to all speakers and attendees for contributing to a vibrant exchange of ideas. The Network remains committed to advocating for the interests of EU island communities at every level of policymaking and to promoting evidence-based solutions that enhance climate resilience and safeguard the long-term prosperity of these regions.

For more information, please contact:

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